

# Report to Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel



**Date of meeting: 22 April 2010**

**Subject:** Epping Forest Tracker Survey 2009 Research Report

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**Committee Secretary:** Adrian Hendry

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## Recommendations/Decisions Required:

**To consider the Epping Forest Tracker Survey 2009 Research Report.**

### Report:

1. In 2008, The Government produced a new performance framework for Local Authorities, outlined in the *Strong and Prosperous Communities* White Paper. This Paper contained the new National Indicator measures to address improvement in quality of life in 'places' and enable provision of better public services across the country.

2. The 'Place Survey' was introduced as a mechanism for measuring public opinion on local services provided, which contains 18 National Indicator questions within the new National Indicator Set. Within Essex, BMG Research was appointed to undertake the 'Place Survey' across the District and Borough Councils. The survey carried out for Epping Forest District took place in November 2008 and included functions provided by the Council and its' local partners involved in the Local Strategic Partnership, 'One Epping Forest'.

3. Some of the Essex District Local Authorities chose to undertake a further non-statutory 'follow up' survey, in order to track any changes in resident's perception and to identify areas of improvement and those in need of further development. The Council appointed Ipsos Mori to undertake this work and a 'Tracker Survey' was carried out in November 2009. A postal questionnaire was distributed to a random sample of 1,013 residents, who were asked exactly the same questions as in the 'Place Survey', about where they live, their views on public services and perceptions of social cohesion.

4. The following chart is taken from the 'Tracker Survey' report and shows the District Council's results against the National Indicators and a comparison to the Place Survey results of 2008. The net difference is highlighted in percentage points. The report does not currently compare Epping Forest District's results with other districts, as it was not designed as a compulsory tool. It also does not give reasons for significant changes in responses and does not analyse public opinion at ward level.

### Key Findings

Place Survey National Indicator Results for Epping Forest			
	2008/09 %	2009/10 %	Difference
NI1: % of people who believe people from different	78.3	78.0	0.3

backgrounds get on well together in their local area			
<b>NI2:</b> % of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood	62.6	62.1	<b>0.5</b>
<b>NI3:</b> Civic participation in the local area	12.7	13.9	<b>1.2</b>
<b>NI4:</b> % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality	25.2	28.8	<b>3.6</b>
<b>NI5:</b> Overall/general satisfaction with local area	86.7	84.8	<b>1.9</b>
<b>NI6:</b> Participation in regular volunteering	25.2	26.1	<b>0.9</b>
<b>NI17:</b> Perceptions of anti-social behaviour	17.8	15.5	<b>2.3</b>
<b>NI21:</b> Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime issues by the local council and police	24.2	n/a	<b>n/a</b>
<b>NI22:</b> Perceptions of parents taking responsibility for the behaviour of their children in the area	26.3	28.9	<b>2.6</b>
<b>NI23:</b> Perceptions that people in the area treat one another with respect and consideration	29.6	25.7	<b>3.9</b>
<b>NI27:</b> Understanding of local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime issues by the local council and police	18.4	n/a	<b>n/a</b>
<b>NI37:</b> Awareness of civil protection arrangements in the local area	12.1	27.3	<b>15.2</b>
<b>NI41:</b> Perceptions of drunk or rowdy behaviour as a problem	26.5	25.2	<b>1.3</b>
<b>NI42:</b> Perceptions of drug use or drug dealing as a problem	25.5	25.6	<b>0.1</b>
<b>NI119:</b> Self-reported measure of people's overall health and well-being	76.5	72.4	<b>4.1</b>
<b>NI138:</b> Satisfaction of people over 65 with both home and neighbourhood	86.6	91.3	<b>4.7</b>
<b>NI139:</b> The extent to which older people receive the support they need to live independently	22.3	22.1	<b>0.2</b>
<b>NI140:</b> Fair treatment by local services	74.1	78.5	<b>4.4</b>

Please note: NI 21 and NI 27 were not asked in the EssexWorks Place Survey Tracker 2009/10. Not all differences are statistically significant, and it is not automatically the case that every time there is an increase in the figure that it implies a positive finding.

Consequently, we have used colour coding to identify the meaning behind the differences.

\_ Differences in font colour **red** are statistically significant and negative.

\_ Differences in font colour **green** are statistically significant and positive.

\_ Differences in font colour **grey** are not statistically significant.

## 1.0 Significant improvements

1.1 There were four indicators which significantly improved from 2008 to 2009. These were:

1.2 (NI4): The percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality (+3.6); The Council continues to enhance its candidates' information pack which is available via the website or in hard copy by application to the Council. When nomination details are sent, this advice pack is included. Generally the pack is well received. The Constitution & Member Services SSP discussed the possibility of holding a candidates' briefing session to build on the information in the pack but this did not find favour at member level. This was due:

a) to the difficulty of agreeing when the session would best be held, and

b) the confidentiality for the prospective candidates which was sought by the political parties.

Such a session was not ruled out for the future however.

- 1.3 A great deal of work has been carried out with the local Youth Council on local democracy and this together with more material being placed on the website about registering to vote and how elections operate may explain in part why public perceptions have been more favourable. The imminent General Election may be relevant too.
- 1.4 (NI23): Perceptions that people in the area treat one another with respect and consideration (+3.9); More people agree that parents are taking responsibility for their children (up by 3%). An overall 2% improvement in volunteering. Overall perceptions of anti-social behaviour has dropped by 3% in the year 2008 to 2009.
- 1.4 (NI37): Awareness of civil protection arrangements in the local area (+15.2); Public perception. Huge amounts of information were issued at local and national government agency level in order to raise public awareness of swine flu. The issue received massive amounts of local and national media coverage. Few people were unaware of swine flu at the time and this may have had an impact on this particular indicator.
- 1.5 (NI140): Fair treatment by local services (+4.4). Whilst there is no single action that can be identified as responsible for this significant improvement in people's perception, an assumption could be made that improved communication and opportunities for residents to be involved in local decision making will have contributed to this result.

## **2.0 Significant negative changes**

- 2.1 There is only one negative change (NI119): Self-reported measure of people's overall health and well-being (-4.1).
- 2.2 Health services are one of the most important services to residents in the district. Residents' perception of health related issues vary considerably with location and age. The latter is understandable given that health often worsens with age and the need to access health facilities increases. There are locations which are some distance from health facilities or are located between two Primary Care Trusts (PCT) and residents find themselves being passed between facilities. This added to often poor transport infrastructure limiting access to facilities will produce a high level of anxiety in some residents.
- 2.3 Although these results are representative of the particular sample of residents involved in the survey, it must be assumed that this is an issue for the district as a whole. Therefore, in order to support the improvement of well being of Epping Forest residents we will need to support the development of work of One Epping Forest Healthy Communities Subgroup to ensure residents concerns and wishes are heard, understood and where possible acted upon.
- 2.4 Additionally, at a local level, the Council's Community Services teams will continue to work closely with the PCT and voluntary agencies, to deliver a wide range of activities and initiatives to address health inequalities across the district, including providing targeted services to children, young people and the elderly and, addressing key geographical areas that are identified within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

**Reason for Decision:**

To identify what action is necessary in relation to the findings of the Tracker Survey 2009 and subsequent Comprehensive Area Assessment.

**Consultation undertaken:** None

**Resource implications:** None

**Budget provision:**£6,000.

**Personnel:** None

**Land:** None

**Community Plan/BVPP reference:** None

**Relevant statutory powers:** *Strong and Prosperous Communities* White Paper, 9 July 2008

**Background papers:** Communities and Local Government, National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships

**Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications:** None

**Key Decision reference:** (if required) None