

Executive – 28 May 2009

PLACE SURVEY 2009

Report of Head of Improvement

Statutory Powers: None.

Financial Implications: None at the present time

Purpose

To advise Executive of the outcomes of the Place Survey, including the areas identified as important in terms of defining a 'good place to live' and also areas identified by the public as requiring improvement.

The attached results analysis will provide a fuller picture of the issues raised and the general levels of public satisfaction in the District.

This links to Council priorities CP1, 2, 4 and 5.

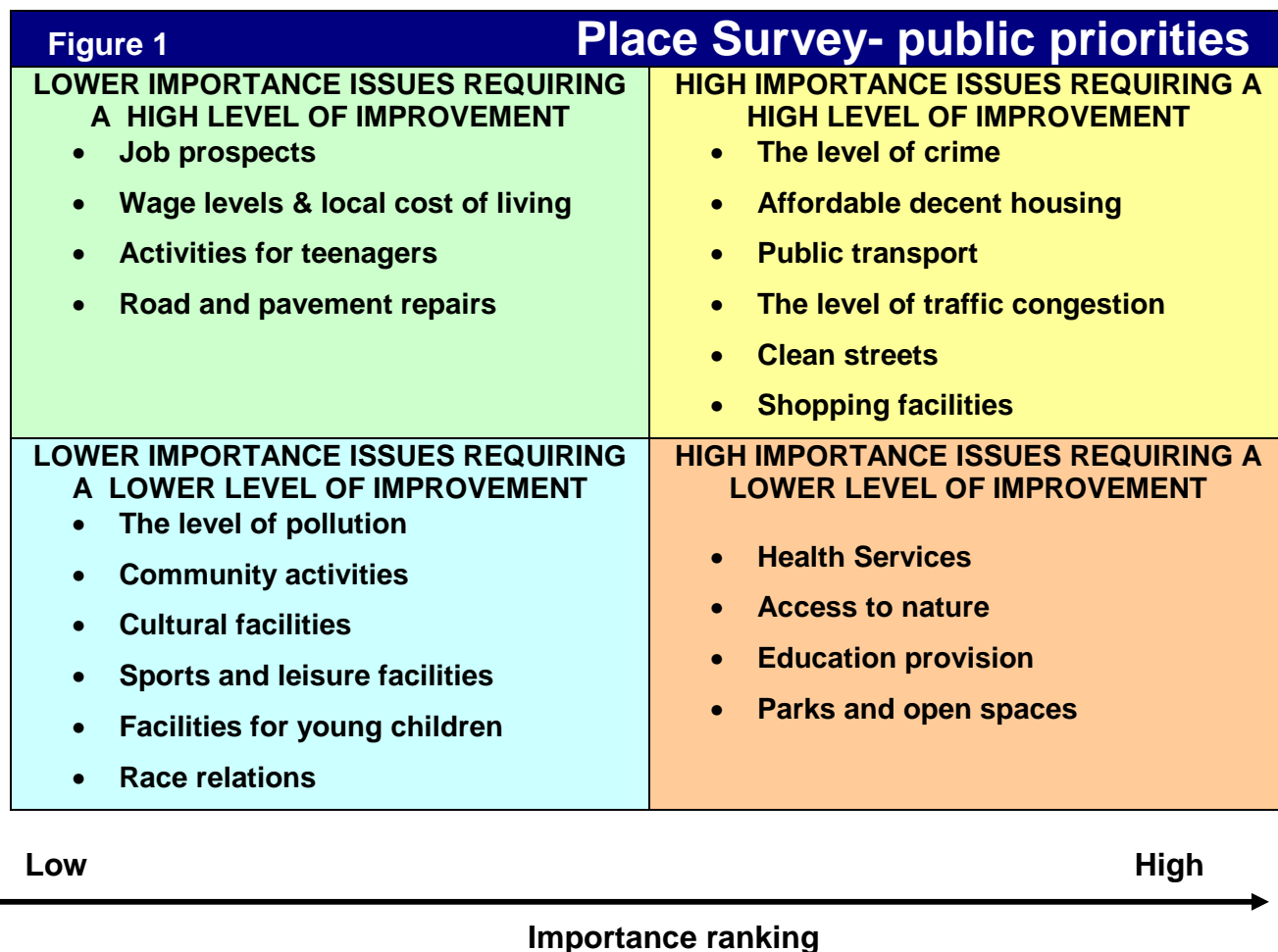
RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive considers the information contained within the report and the possible future implications with regard to corporate priorities and the new Duty to involve both partner agencies and the local community.

Background/The Issues

1. The Place Survey essentially replaces the biannual satisfaction surveys which were carried out under Best Value. It is one of a number of ways in which enable us to listen to feedback from our residents. Each Local Authority carried out the survey and a random sample of 3000 residents was asked to provide their views on a wide variety of issues. These ranged from their use of local services to their general health and well being; and from support for older people to tackling crime. For South Hams we had around 1400 responses to the survey.
2. Respondents were asked which factors they considered were most important when considering somewhere a good place to live, and also which of these factors were considered to be most in need of improvement. Figure 1 below, illustrates the results in terms of importance and requiring improvement. Clearly there is linkage with corporate priorities, with affordable decent housing (CP1) rating as a high priority/high improvement issue, but there are also other issues which feature highly such as the level of crime; public transport and traffic congestion. Addressing such issues will require joint action with key partners. Interestingly economic issues (CP2) do not feature as highly important in terms of considering somewhere a good place to live, but they are recognised to be in need of a high level of improvement.

3. Activities for teenagers is identified as an area for improvement which links to one of the cross cutting themes identified by the council. High importance issues requiring a lower level of improvement include 'access to nature', and 'parks and open spaces', which link to CP3 and CP4
4. As this is the first national survey of its kind members may wish to consider revisiting priorities in the light of the information it contains. Ward profiles are currently being developed with a view to each member being given a community profile for their area. National and county wide data will also be fed into the analysis when available.



5. In addition, several of the questions within the survey will be used as baseline information for the purposes of monitoring the Duty to Involve. This Duty places a requirement on the authority to inform, engage with, and consider the views of the community when assigning priorities for service delivery and corporate direction. Guidance also indicates that a greater degree of involvement between authorities and the Local Strategic Partnership is required in order to deliver the stronger communities agenda. Further information will be presented to members in due course.
6. As an example of data which will be scrutinised by government, the authority will need to consider how we engage with the local community as, whilst 44% felt reasonably well informed about how to get involved in local decision making, only 34% felt that they could influence decisions affecting the local area to any degree. Clearly under the Duty to Involve we would need to demonstrate an upward trend in these percentages when the next survey results are published. Plans are currently in preparation to deliver the necessary changes.

7. Community spirit is, however, good in the South Hams with 58% of respondents having provided unpaid help to any groups, clubs or organisations in the last 12 months. Only 13% thought that there was a problem with people not treating each other with respect and consideration in their local area. 59% of respondents were very or fairly satisfied with the way the council runs things, and 94.1% were very or fairly satisfied with the South Hams as a place to live.

8. The details of the Place Survey are attached as appendix 1.

Risk Assessment

9. The following are the significant risks and opportunities identified:

Opportunity	Issues / Obstacles	Benefits
The data affords an opportunity to review existing priorities and direction of travel for the authority.	Failure to absorb the information may mean the authority continuing with corporate priorities which do not match those of the public it serves.	Actively responding to publicly voiced concerns will result in the authority pursuing public priorities and will increase relevance and standing within the community.
The information contained provides a baseline set of measures against which the authority may track progress against the requirements of the Duty to Involve.	Failure to recognise and improve engagement may damage the authority's political standing with both the government and the community.	Improvement will clearly demonstrate the authority's progress towards achieving the Duty to Involve and building stronger communities.
The results and the Duty also afford the opportunity to revitalise and restore links with the LSP and partner organisations to deliver public priorities.	Failure to work more closely with the LSP will mean the authority failing in its duty.	Working with the LSP on public consultation activities will enhance participation and reduce duplication of effort, avoiding 'consultation fatigue' within the various community groups.
From an equalities perspective the data gives an insight into community views and also a demographic profile of the respondents.	Failing to consider the views of the community directly contravenes the Equalities agenda.	The authority can demonstrate a clear link between the views of all community groups and their part in the decisions it takes.

Conclusion

10. The Place Survey is an important vehicle for measuring progress against a range of government agendas and Duties placed on the Council. Members are requested to consider what steps may now be appropriate in the light of the information given within the report.

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Executive
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