

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

16 May 2014

PLANNING USER SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS 2013/14

Report of the Director of Planning

Recommendation: **That Members consider and note the report and the findings of the latest user satisfaction survey.**

1 Introduction

1.1 As part of the Authority's performance monitoring framework a biennial planning user satisfaction survey is carried out. The last survey was carried out in 2011/12 and indicated a 90% satisfaction rate against the Authority's target of 80%. This report sets out the findings of the survey carried between October 2013 and March 2014 for Members consideration.

2 Survey results

2.1 Members are referred to the summary of the survey findings, see Appendix 1 to this report, together with a written summary of the main points extracted and quotes from respondents, attached at Appendix 2. Just over 300 questionnaire forms with a Freepost envelope were sent out to applicants who had received decisions in the period set out above. The sample size of response required to make the survey statistically accurate was at least 20%. A total of 61 responses have now been received. Those responses have now been analysed and the highlights can be summarised as follows:

- 72% of customers who asked for pre app advice were very or fairly satisfied
- 59% of customers said they would not be prepared to pay for advice
- 57% of customer responses were in relation to householder applications.
- 73% of customers were given advice and help in submitting their applications
- 62% of customers felt they were kept informed on progress
- 84% of customers felt they were treated fairly
- **89% of customers were very or fairly satisfied with the planning service**
- **95% of customers received an approval.**

By comparison the main survey results for 2011 were as follows

- The largest percentage of application types returns related to householder applications - 52%
- Most respondents were repeat applicants – 80%
- 76% of respondents agreed they were given advice and help to submit their application
- 72% agreed we kept applicants informed of progress

- 82% agreed they were dealt with fairly
- **90% of applicants were satisfied regardless of the outcome of the application**
- **94% of applicants received an approval**
- 30% of respondents considered the service had improved over the last 3 years with only 5% saying it had got worse
- 78% of respondents say they use the online planning service
- 45% stated they had submitted their application electronically
- 49% and 70% of applicants viewed the officers report or decision on line
- 95% of respondents stated they would use the on line services again

Question 11 sets out that generally customers considered that the service had either stayed the same or improved in some areas. Only a small percentage of customers felt that the service had worsened over the last three years.

Question 12 - The online planning service continues to be well used albeit there is some work to do in this area to ensure that the website remains up to date and is easy to use.

3 Conclusions

- 3.1 The overall customer satisfaction rate remains above the 80% target albeit there is a slight dip in the headline rate from 90% to 89%. There appears to be some work to do to ensure the web site remains an easy to use tool. In addition the importance of communication both at pre application stage and during the processing of applications is a key factor. The reluctance to pay for pre application advice is also interesting although not unsurprising. There are some minor procedural matters that can be considered as well as how we can better inform our customers on the route a decision takes and why.

4 Financial implications for the Authority

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising out of this report. Any procedural changes that need to be put in place can be carried out in house. A further report on pre application charges will be presented to a future Audit and Governance Committee taking into account the comments received as part of this survey.

5 Equality and Sustainability Impact Assessment

- 5.1 No equality or sustainability issues have been highlighted as part of this survey. All planning staff are aware of the Authority's duty and responsibilities when dealing with those with differing needs whether they are applicants or neighbours. Ad hoc arrangements can be made to accommodate those needs as and when they arise.

STEPHEN BELLI

Background Papers: User satisfaction survey results 2013/14

Attachments: Appendix 1 - Survey summary
Appendix 2 - Summary of main points and quotes