

Customer Satisfaction Survey 2018
Report by Planning Technical Support Officer

Summary: The Broads Authority's Planning Department has recently undertaken a second Customer Satisfaction Survey which shows a high level of satisfaction with the planning service. This report provides details.

Recommendation: That the report be noted.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 As part of its commitment to best practice in delivery of the planning service, the Broads Authority as Local Planning Authority (LPA) engages regularly with its service users to seek their views on the quality of the service. This usually occurs annually(although most National Parks undertake this on a two yearly cycle) over a specific period of time.
- 1.2 A customer satisfaction survey was carried out from January to March 2018, and this report sets out the results of this 2018 engagement.

2.0 Customer satisfaction survey

- 2.1 The customer satisfaction survey was undertaken by sending a questionnaire to all applicants and agents who had received a decision on a planning application during the period 1st January and 31st March 2018. A total of 81 survey forms were sent out, in line with the standard methodology used by all of the National Parks. The contact details used were those submitted on the relevant application form.
- 2.2 The questionnaire asked the recipients to respond and rate the service in respect of the following areas:
- 1) Advice prior to, and during, the application process
 - 2) Communication on the progress of the application
 - 3) Speed of response to queries
 - 4) Clarity of the reasons for the decision
 - 5) Being treated fairly and being listened to
 - 6) The overall processing of the application
- 2.3 The survey also gave the opportunity for users to rate the service on things it did well and things which could be improved, as well as giving a general comments section. A copy of the questionnaire is attached at Appendix 1.

2.4 Thirteen completed questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 16%. This is a significant reduction in response rate compared to 2017 (35.1%) which is disappointing. For future surveys, it will be investigated what more could be done to encourage a higher response rate which would give a better understanding of the level of satisfaction.

2.5 In considering the results from the questionnaire and assessing the level of satisfaction, the scoring parameters used are based on information published by Info Quest, a company that specialises in customer satisfaction surveys and analysis. These note that a goal of 100% satisfaction is commendable, but probably unattainable as people tend to be inherently critical and it is practically impossible to keep everyone satisfied at all times. Scores being rated from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent), they therefore consider that a customer awarding a score of 4 or above (out of 5) is a satisfied customer. They also note that, on average, any measurement that shows a satisfaction level equal to or greater than 75% is considered exceptional. It should be noted that applicants for all decisions – approvals and refusals were asked to take part in the survey. The scoring parameters are:

% Satisfaction	Qualitative assessment	
75% +	Exceptional	There is little need or room for improvement
60% - 75%	Very Good	You are doing a lot of things right
45% - 60%	Good.	Most successful companies are at this level.
30% - 45%	Average.	Bottom line impact is readily attainable.
15% - 30%	Problem.	Remedial actions are needed
0% - 15%	Serious Problem	Urgent Remedial actions are needed

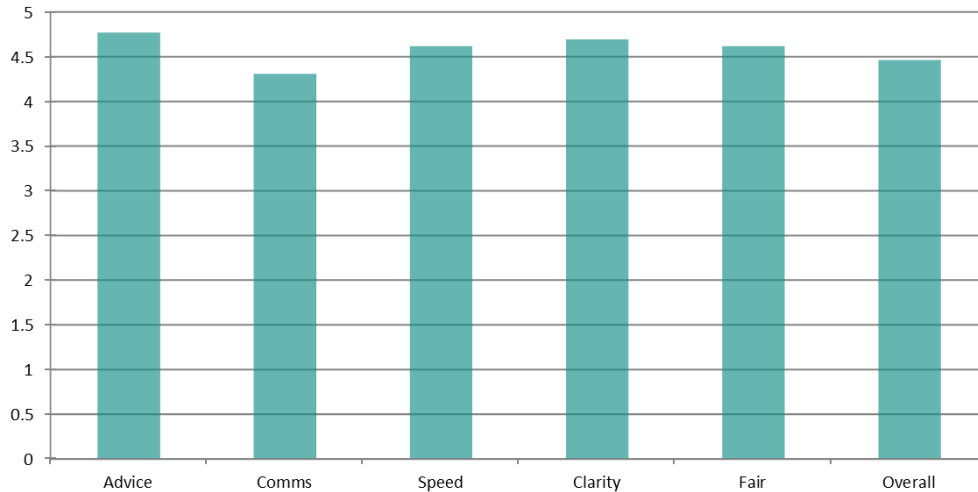
Results of the customer satisfaction survey

2.6 The questionnaire asked customers to rate the service on a scale of 1 – 5, where 5 was the highest score, for the 6 areas identified in 2.2. The results are as follows:

Question	Score 1 – 5 and number of respondents					
	5	4	3	2	1	No answer
1 Advice	10	3	0	0	0	0
2 Communications	6	5	2	0	0	0
3 Speed of response	9	3	1	0	0	0
4 Clarity of decision	10	2	1	0	0	0
5 Treated fairly	9	3	1	0	0	0
6 Overall	7	5	1	0	0	0

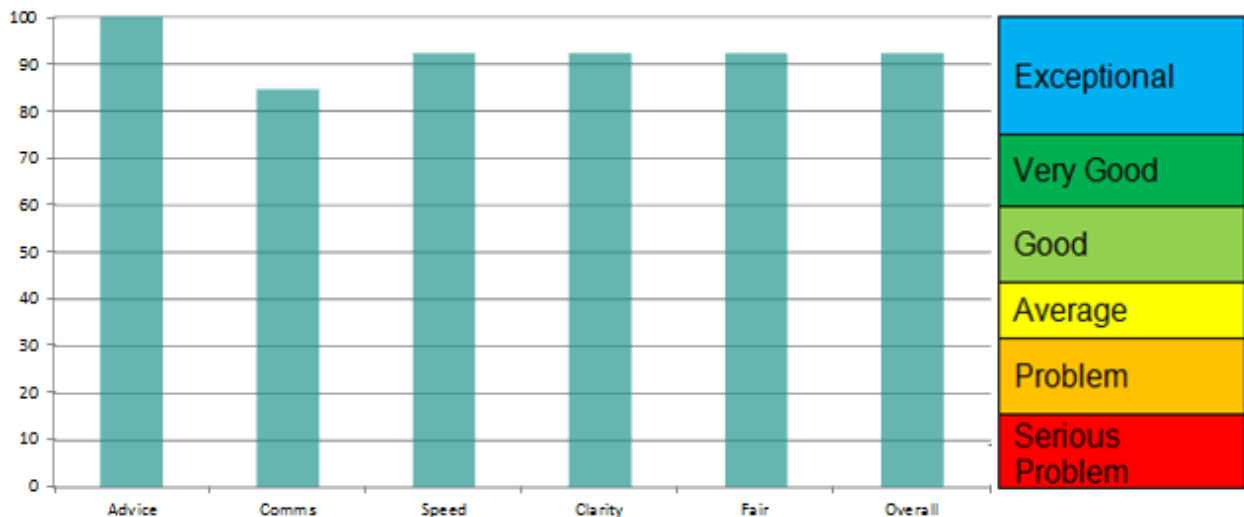
Average scores for the questions are shown in the following graph;

**Development Control - Customer Satisfaction Survey
Results 2018 - Average Marks**



2.7 It is noted that over 69% of respondents scored the service at least 4 out of 5 on all six of the aspects. With Info Quest assumption that a customer awarding a score of 4 or 5 (out of 5) is a satisfied customer, the overall results are represented in the diagram below. The level of satisfied customers is above 80% for all 6 areas where service has been assessed.

% Satisfied Customers



2.8 The survey also provided an opportunity for customers to comment on what the planning team did well, and where improvements could be made. These comments are summarised, respectively, below.

2.9 The things that were done well were identified as:

- Clear communication
- Quick response times with calls and emails
- Good pre-application service
- Beneficial site meetings and discussions
- Helpful and knowledgeable Case Officers
- Application well presented at Committee by Case Office

2.10 The areas for improvement noted by the respondents are:

- Application form too complicated
- Should accept applications by email
- We requested too much information
- Response to email enquiries
- Time taken to process application

Seven of the thirteen respondents had no suggestions for improvements.

2.11 The areas for improvement have been noted for consideration, although several, such as the over-complicated application form, are beyond the control of the planning team.

2.12 The final question on the form sought suggestions on what other improvements could be made more generally, with the question designed to pick up examples of best practice from elsewhere. The majority of responses to this question echoed the previous comments made in the areas for improvement section.

2.13 Overall, the comments received were useful in highlighting particular areas for improvement. However, it was clear that in some cases the comments were the result of a single, specific application type, or were affected by past experiences. Whether positive or negative, these may not be representative of an 'average' application. This suggests the more extreme results, for both good ("A breath of fresh air from dealing with other LPAs...") and bad ("Officers should be able to make more decisions without the need for consultation") should not necessarily be taken at face value.

3. **Conclusion**

3.1 The results of the 2018 customer satisfaction survey are positive, and evidence a very high level of customer satisfaction. Whilst some caution should be exercised in interpreting the results given the relatively low numbers of responses, reassurance can be given that the survey has not evidenced any significant dissatisfaction. This is all the more reassuring since it is generally the case that it is more expected from customers to complain than to give praise.

Background papers:None

Appendices: Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Customers

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Customer Satisfaction Survey

Your comments on the Broads Authority's Planning Service.

The Broads Authority is doing a brief survey of people who have submitted planning applications to us and is asking them for their feedback on the quality of service they received. The comments that we receive are really important to help us understand what we do well and what we need to improve. We know these sorts of questionnaires can be time consuming to complete so we have kept it really simple, but if you want to add further details (or even email or telephone with further comments) these would be very welcome.

Thanking you in anticipation of your feedback.

Yours sincerely

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Please tell us about your overall satisfaction level around:

5 = very good 4 = good 3 = okay 2 = poor.... 1 = very poor

- 1 The advice and help you were given in submitting your application _____
- 2 How well you were kept informed of progress on your application _____
- 3 How promptly we dealt with your queries _____
- 4 How clearly you understood the reasons for the decision _____
- 5 Whether you felt you were treated fairly and your views were listened to _____
- 6 The overall processing of your planning application _____

Please tell us about:

7 Things we did well

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8 Things we could improve

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9 Any other things we could do to improve the service

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Thank you for your time in completing this.