

# Planning Committee

29 May 2020

Agenda item number 14

## Customer Satisfaction Survey

Report by Planning Technical Support Officer

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### Summary

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

### Recommendation

That the report be noted.

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## 1. 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 occurs annually, although most National Parks undertake this on a two yearly cycle.
- 1.2. This report sets out the results of the engagement in 2020.

## 2. 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 2020. A total of 43 survey forms or emails were sent out. This is the standard methodology used by all of the National Parks over a given period of time. The contact details used were those submitted on the relevant application form.
- 2.2. As in previous years, 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

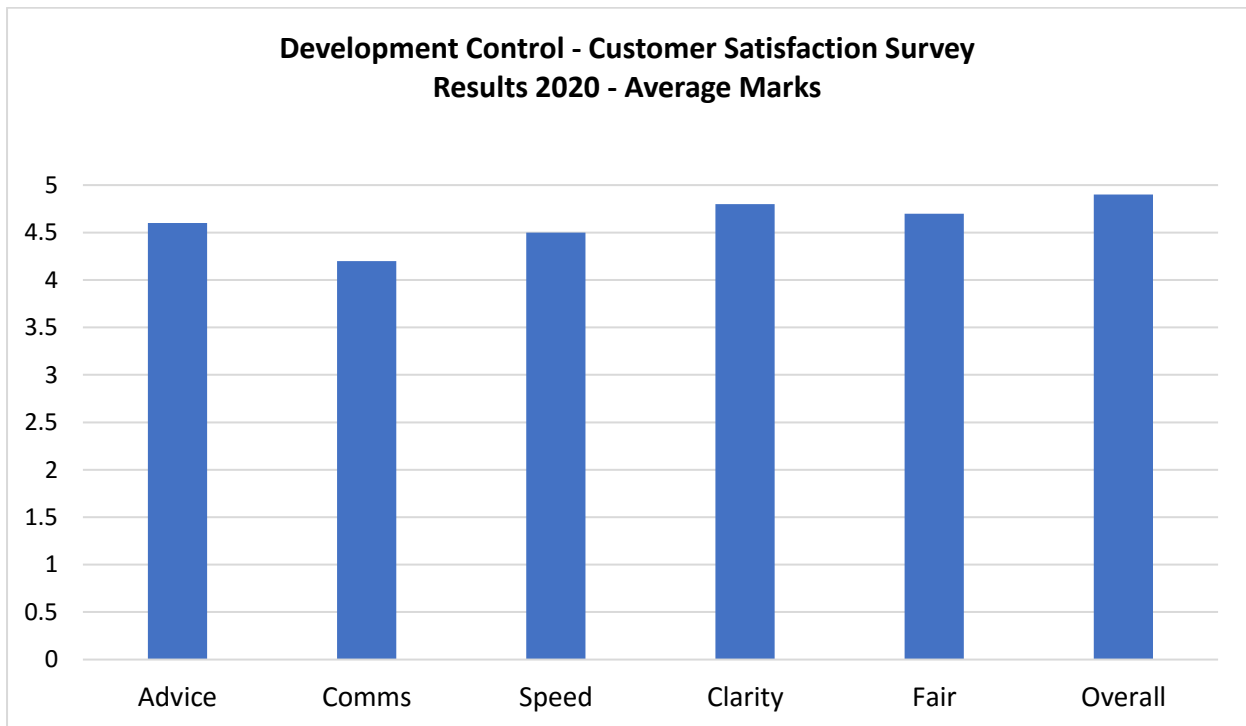
- 5. Being treated fairly and being listened to
  - 6. The overall processing of the application
- 2.3. The survey also gave the opportunity for users to rate the service on elements it did well and those which could be improved, as well as giving a general comments section. A copy of the questionnaire is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.4. Ten responses were received, representing a response rate of 23.3%. This is a slight reduction of 1.3% compared to 2019 (24.6%). This can perhaps be explained by the current Covid-19 lockdown situation as responses were allowed to be submitted up to 24th April. However, the response rate is still considered encouraging and evidence that the online survey has been successful in improving the number of responses received.
- 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. 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:

<b>% Satisfaction</b>	<b>Qualitative assessment</b>	<b>Comment</b>
75% +	Exceptional	Little need or room for improvement
60% - 75%	Very Good	You are doing a lot of things right
45% - 60%	Good	The level of most successful companies
30% - 45%	Average	Bottom line impact is readily available
15% - 30%	Problem	Remedial actions required
0% - 15%	Serious Problem	Urgent remedial actions required

2.6. The questionnaire asked customers to rate the service on a scale of 1 – 5, where 5 was the highest score. The answers from respondents are shown below:

Area	5	4	3	2	1	No answer
Advice	7	2	1	0	0	0
Communications	3	6	1	0	0	0
Speed of response	6	3	1	0	0	0
Clarity of decision	8	2	0	0	0	0
Treated fairly	7	3	0	0	0	0
Overall	9	1	0	0	0	0

2.7. Average scores for the questions are shown in the following graph:



2.8. It is noted that 90% of respondents scored the service at either 4 or 5 out of 5 on all aspects, which is a 19% increase on 2019. The overall results are represented under the satisfaction parameters detailed at 2.5 as follows:



2.9. 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.

2.10. The things that were done well were identified as:

- Good quality, clear and consistent advice
- Helpful pre-application service
- Going above and beyond to achieve a positive outcome
- Swift communication
- Useful feedback on application document requirements

2.11. The areas for improvement were identified as:

- Planning Portal application form is overly-complicated
- More availability of officers for pre-application discussions
- Updates on consultee responses and/or online progress tracker requested
- To avoid requesting reports etc. that incur a financial charge to the applicant if the application is to be refused anyway

2.12. Six of the ten respondents had no suggestions for improvements.

- 2.13. The areas for improvement have been noted for consideration, although it should be noted that the Planning Portal and its forms are beyond the control of the planning team.
- 2.14. 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.
- 2.15. Unlike last year, the majority of the comments were specific individual comments that were likely to be in response to a particular experience or application type. Although this makes the feedback less easy to interpret, it is considered that these comments were mainly ideas of how to further improve the service offered, rather than criticisms of the department's performance.
- 2.16. The results are positive, though some caution should be exercised in interpreting them given the low numbers on which they are based. However, customers who have a bad experience are two to three times more likely to give feedback compared to those who are happy with their experience. Therefore, the low response rate may demonstrate that on the whole customers are broadly satisfied with the service received.

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Appendix 1 – Questionnaire for Customers

# Appendix 1 – Questionnaire for customers

## **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.