

By: Nick Chard Cabinet Member for Environment Highways and Waste
Mike Austerberry, Executive Director – Environment, Highways and Waste

To: Environment Highways and Waste Policy Overview Committee – 15
September 2009

Subject: **Consultations, surveys and public involvement activity 2008-2009**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: To provide Members with a summary of the results of consultation, public involvement and survey activity in Environment and Regeneration directorate during 2008/09. The report also looks forward to the current year 09/10, to show how information obtained has been, or will be utilised by service teams in the new Environment, Highways and Waste directorate.
Further information is available in the pack of appendices which is tabled at this meeting.

1. INTRODUCTION

- i. This report provides a historical review of the consultation and survey activity outlined in the Environment & Regeneration Directorate business plan for the year ending 31st March 2009. It particularly focuses on the work undertaken by the Environment Highways and Waste divisions, as with the formation of the new EHW directorate, insight gained on behalf of the new directorate divisions, through the various types of public involvement activity in 08/09, is being utilised to help shape the new directorate services to be more responsive to service users' needs.
- ii. All consultations, involvement and survey activities outlined in this report are also subject to individual review under each service area's scrutiny procedure. This report, therefore, provides a summary and overview of these activities, together with references for further information.
- iii. The new statutory 'Duty to Involve', detailed in section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, places a responsibility on local authorities to have greater regard to public involvement if we plan to make changes to our services. It requires us to 'inform, consult and involve' members of the public and service users appropriately in this process. From 1st April 2009, service teams have been required to implement the 'duty' appropriately, in the planning, shaping and delivery of services. Support has been provided to service teams to raise awareness of the new 'duty to involve', and corporate guidance is currently in preparation to clarify how and when this is carried out.
- iv. One of the recommendations in the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) report dated June 2008, was that KCC should adopt a '*more inclusive and listening approach in order to make progress in delivering excellent, integrated, well-targeted services*'. In future, the Corporate Area Assessment (CAA) will be assessing how well an authority and its partners know and understand the

needs and aspirations of communities, and will be seeking evidence of the effective implementation of the duty to involve.

- v. Environment, Highways and Waste directorate demonstrates some excellent practice, by working closely with colleagues in other directorates and external partners including other local authorities and the NHS to ensure a joined up approach, effective use of resource and the achievement of shared priorities. An example of best practice in this regard is the Explore Kent partnership with the NHS to improve health outcomes in the East Kent area. The Integrated Strategy and Planning Team work in partnership with local and regional bodies to develop guidance and input to the South East Plan on the issue of Gypsy and Traveller sites in the south east.
- vi. An excellent example of using customer insight to inform project planning and target resources, includes the use of 'MOSAIC' by the 'Changing Behaviours' Team in the Waste division. The objective of this project was to ensure Value for Money from the recycling activity in each of the 12 districts in Kent. One ward was selected from each district and was profiled using 'MOSAIC'. This was followed by a baseline survey in each area to ascertain recycling patterns and levels. After local campaigns, the wards were re-surveyed to measure improvements achieved. The results will be reported to the Kent Waste Partnership in September, with a possible recommendation to run a similar project in 2010.
- vii. Customer feedback gathered in surveys at the Household Waste Recycling Centres has also led directly to the raising of the height of access barriers to 2 metres, to allow taller vehicles to access the centres. Some centres will also introduce 'open-barrier' days on Wednesdays and Saturdays to allow over-height vehicles to dispose of items. This was reported in local press during August 2009. At the new Pepperhill Household Waste Recycling Centre, public feedback has led directly to a change in parking arrangements. Where change has taken place as a consequence of public involvement, the public is informed about what has happened. (**'We asked – you said – we did'**)
- viii. Consultation and involvement in EHW also takes place at a very local level, in addition to the more strategic initiatives. A good example of this is the established groups at KCC's Country Parks, where regular users are closely involved in the development of their local park.
- ix. A broad range of consultation and involvement takes place in Kent Highway Services and this is helping to shape and improve service delivery and ensure a focus on getting jobs done quickly, to the right quality and providing real value for money.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the EHW POC are asked to:

- i) note the information contained in this report,
- ii) decide what further information the Committee would like to see as part of the evolving process of improved public involvement

3. CONSULTATION, INVOLVEMENT AND SURVEY ACTIVITY IN 2008/09

The range of consultation, survey and involvement activity outlined in the service areas' business plans for the year 2008/09 is reported in more detail below.

3.1. Kent Highway Services

3.1.1 KHS Annual Tracker Survey

- i. Satisfaction surveys, to gauge perception of the highway service have been carried out since 1987. The 2008 survey was carried out in November and December and included seeking views from residents, County Members, Parish/Town Councils and for the first time, District Members.
- ii. The 2008 survey was conducted by an independent market research company called BMG, selected from the County Council's Consumer Monitoring Contract. KHS uses this information to track progress of satisfaction with the wide range of services delivered and help shape delivery.
- iii. A total of 1,237 face to face interviews were carried out on a representative sample of Kent residents, reflecting the age, gender and economic status in each of the twelve Districts. This sample size gives a +/- 2.78% accuracy for results at a County level and +/- 10% accuracy at a District level.
- iv. In addition to residents' views, the same survey questions were asked of all County and District Members and Parish/Town Councils. A total of 63 County Members responded (a response rate of 75%), 193 District Members replied (a response rate of 33%) whilst for Parish/Town Councils, a total of 154 completed the survey (a response rate of 50%)
- v. The questionnaire comprised over 40 questions, ranging from satisfaction with the condition of roads, pavements, streetlights and local bus and train service, the most important and most in need of improvement of the services KHS provides, through to views on congestion, accessibility to local services and vulnerability when using the highway
- vi. Results are reported by 'Net-Satisfaction'. This is a figure calculated by taking the % of people who are dissatisfied with the service from the % who are satisfied. This gives a true reflection of the service and a balance between those happy, those un-happy and those who are not sure.
- vii. The key headline from the survey is the continuing improvement in the public's perception of roads, pavements and streetlights. For the third successive year there are more residents satisfied than dissatisfied and the last two years results are shown in Table 1 below.

	% of residents who are . . .							
	Satisfied		Neither satisfied or dissatisfied		Dissatisfied		Net satisfaction	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
Condition of roads	51%	54%	16%	21%	32%	25%	+19%	+29%
Condition of pavements	48%	51%	17%	21%	32%	28%	+16%	+23%
Streetlights	64%	63%	15%	19%	20%	18%	+44%	+45%

How is the information used, and feedback provided?

The market research company, BMG made a set of recommendations based on the customer insight obtained as follows:

- Explore reasons for difference in resident and Member/Parish/District satisfaction. Certainly, results amongst these three cohorts may be expected to be lower as Members often have to deal with resident complaints on specific issues.
- However, the gulf in perception between Members and residents remains large. Explore difference in street-lighting service perception
- Review business case/cost of Kent on Sunday, as low public awareness of KHS services seems to be being generated through this publication.'
- Explore the reasons for perceived difference in satisfaction within the four Community Liaison teams with the view to achieving a consistency of service to County Members and Parish Councils.
- Examine publicity and other methods to increase awareness of the single contact number.
- Consider if the priority and most need improving services identified through the survey are reflected in the current budget and delivery priorities.
- Review the increasing vulnerability results and is this what KHS expect/desire? Review the purpose, content and promotion of the traffic and travel website which has a very low awareness rate but good content rating with those who know about it.

The Executive Summary of the survey is provided as **Appendix 3.1.1** The full survey report is available on the Kent County Council website at:

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/publications/transport-and-streets/tracker-survey-2008.htm? Page=7>

What will happen in future?

- Whilst there have been positive signs of improvement in public satisfaction levels, there remains a quarter of residents dissatisfied with the delivery of some core highway services. This clearly has a significant impact on elected members and parish councils, and KHS is working hard to improve response times and the quality of repairs whilst maintaining a value-for-money service.
- Budget has been allocated to commission the 2009 Tracker Survey to take place in November / December of this year as a significant part of the value of this piece of work is to observe the trends over time, and to see how interventions undertaken as a consequence of lessons learned lead to improvements in satisfaction levels.
- **Note:** In Qs 2&3 of 2009, Kent County Council will participate for the first time in the National Highways and Transport (NHT) Public Satisfaction survey, a new survey aimed at providing a standardised and benchmarked survey of public satisfaction with their local Highways and Transport Service.

3.1.2 Placemaking Surveys

- i. The purpose of the Placemaking surveys is to help partners (KCC, KHS, district councils, developers etc.) in the Kent Design Initiative (KDI) to understand whether national, regional and local design policies and guidance are helping to deliver design excellence and good places to live, with reference to the 'consumer' rather than the 'professional' understanding of these objectives. In particular, they are looking at the Vision for Kent (Kent Partnership, April 2006) aim:
 - i. *"Kent will be a county ... where housing needs are met and decent, high-quality homes help create attractive, safe and friendly communities."* (Page 4 - "The Vision")
- ii. The Kent Design Guide ((KDG) Kent Design Initiative, December 2005) and Manual for Streets ((MfS) Communities and Local Government, Department for Transport and Welsh Assembly Government, March 2007) are both intended to raise standards in residential placemaking. The surveys are helping partners to understand what residents do and don't like, thereby complementing assessments made by professionals.
- iii. The surveys are also being used to develop an evidence base to help district councils to prepare residential parking policies in response to Planning Policy Statement PPS3: Housing (Communities and Local Government, November 2006).
- iv. The Kent Planning Officers' Group (KPOG), as client for the Kent Design Initiative, has welcomed the surveys and asked KHS to use the results to prepare guidance in respect of residential parking and any necessary review of the KDG in response to MfS.
- v. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) has carried out some work on residents' views, but the prevailing opinion seems to be that

no local authority in England has undertaken a customer satisfaction campaign on this subject on this scale.

- vi. Initially, surveys took place on an ad-hoc basis, but the potential to use this insight as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) of customer satisfaction was identified. Therefore, in addition to relevant ad-hoc surveys, all sites with an adoption agreement are now being surveyed after the 'second certificate' (or equivalent) has been issued when the streets are substantially complete and most dwellings occupied. KPI surveys are expected to amount to only a handful of sites every quarter.
- vii. For the next two or three years, the KPI will primarily measure satisfaction at sites which were designed before the surveys were commenced. However, KDI partners are being urged to use the results to inform designs that are 'on the table' now, in order that future surveys will demonstrate that residents' views have been understood and acted upon.

How is the information used, and feedback provided?

- Survey returns are converted into headline data-sets (of which there are currently seven) and additional comments. Those residents who wish to receive feedback receive a summary of the questionnaire results and an additional comments sheet.
- District councils are advised of relevant results, with the current "**Kent Design on the Road**" tour being a particularly good vehicle for sharing and discussing the implications.
- Reports are made to relevant meetings of development partners, including KPOG and its sub groups. Some information has been shared at national conferences.

What will happen in future?

- Now that over 100 sites have been surveyed, consideration is being given to holding one or more 'development summits' under the Kent Design Initiative to make best use of what residents are saying.
- A Project Brief is being prepared in order to formalise the approach to support wider involvement.

See **Appendix 3.1.2**

3.1.3 Contact Centre Customer Satisfaction Survey

- i. Each month, KHS Customer Liaison Officers undertake a telephone call-back survey to 100 service-users whose calls to the Contact Centre have been completed and closed. The purpose of this call-back survey is to ascertain levels of satisfaction with the service provided, and to understand where improvements can be made.
- ii. The sample is weighted according to the number of calls for each service provided, (pot-holes, street-lighting, drainage, foliage & trees etc.) and the area

of the county in which they have occurred (east, west or mid-Kent). Insight obtained includes qualitative data concerning the quality of the service and customers' satisfaction.

- iii. The summary data sheet from the 12 surveys that took place in 2008 is available as **Appendix 3.1.3**

How is the information used, and feedback provided?

- Monthly satisfaction levels can be tracked and reviewed to identify where improvements need to be made. Individual call-backs which require additional work are routed to the relevant Customer Liaison Officer and service team for further action.

What will happen in future?

- This is planned to continue as part of business as usual. It is a valuable 'temperature check' of up-to-date intelligence on how KHS is doing on a month-by-month basis.

3.1.4 KHS Contact Centre Agent Survey

- i. Once a month, a sample of 20 Contact Centre Agents is asked to rate the performance of KHS on a score of 1 – 10. A secondary question seeks qualitative feedback on the reason for the score, and where the service can improve.

How is the information used, and feedback provided?

- The information is provided in a spreadsheet, to the KHS Heads of Service, and discussed at the regular KHS Senior Managers' meeting where actions are taken forward and issues followed up.

What will happen in future?

- This is planned to continue as part of business as usual. It is a valuable source of up to date intelligence on how KHS is doing on a month-by-month basis. The performance graph for 2008 is available as **Appendix 3.1.4**

3.1.5 KHS Media monitoring

- ii. Monthly press cuttings, provided by the Corporate Media Centre, are reviewed and given a net positive or negative score. The content of this report becomes a Key Performance Indicator, (KPI) and is reported to the Cabinet Member and the KHS Heads of Service with additional explanatory information where required.

How is the information used, and feedback provided?

- The information is reviewed by KHS, with negative feedback given particular attention, and any issues addressed directly.

What will happen in future?

- This is planned to continue as part of business as usual. It is a valuable source of up to date intelligence on how KHS is doing on a month-by-month basis. The performance graph for 2008 is available as **Appendix 3.1.5**

3.2 Environment and Waste

3.2.1 Countryside Access Improvement Plan

- iii. The plan sets out the county's aspirations for the countryside access network to 2017. The Plan is founded and builds upon the feedback of both members of the general public and interested stakeholders, who have contributed and will continue to contribute through a series of consultations and public involvement activities.
- iv. Kent's vast network of public rights of way and areas of open green space have played an important role in the county's past. However, the needs and demands upon this resource have changed. Making Kent a healthy and enjoyable place to work, live and visit are prime objectives of the County Council.
- v. The network has a new and important role in addressing current issues, such as increasing concerns over traffic congestion and public health, whilst at the same time providing great opportunities for outdoor leisure and recreation.

3.2.2 Country Parks

- i. In 2008, the Country Parks team undertook research with users and non-users to understand their needs better and also any barriers to use.
- ii. The Customer Catering Survey and a Non-User survey took place in April – June 2008. The catering survey was carried out by face-to-face interviews at two Country Parks. The non-user survey was carried out through two focus groups in east and west Kent, set up to promote a dialogue with potential users to find out why they did not currently make use of KCC Country Parks.
- iii. Copies of the reports for these interactions are available as **Appendix 3.2.2 (a) and 3.2.2 (b)**
- iv. A further focus group of young non-users of the Country Parks took place in April 09 attendees drawn from a youth club in Canterbury. The main findings were that the majority of attendees had not heard about KCC country parks, but of these, the majority would now visit now they knew about them. Discussions also took place about the preferred methods of communication of this user-group.

How is the information used, and feedback provided?

- The results and recommendations of these surveys have been used to inform the Country Parks Strategy for the next 5 years, and have been fed into the marketing plan.

- A copy of the youth focus group report is available as **Appendix 3.2.2 (c)**

What will happen in future?

- The Country Parks Strategy will take account of the insight obtained, and will use it to inform future planning;
- Country Park users and non-users will continue to be involved in developing the Country Parks Strategy, via surveys, and the Parks' own user groups
- Events targeted at young people are being incorporated into the Events and volunteering programmes
- The Customer Catering Surveys have informed decisions that have taken place in the cafés and gift shops.
- Engagement activities are currently under way with some groups of elderly and disabled Asian people at Shorne Woods Country Park. Insight obtained will be used to improve facilities for particular groups of users. This information will also shape the marketing plan to ensure hard to reach groups are accessed
- Summer 2009: A visitor survey is being carried out at three Country Parks to understand our visitors and gauge their level of satisfaction. This is the beginning of a rolling programme across the Parks that will continue in future years.

3. 2.3 Kent Countryside Access Forum (formerly Local Access Forum)

The Kent Countryside Access Forum is a statutory body co-ordinated by KCC; it was set up as a result of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Its role is to:

- i. Advise the appointing authority (Kent County Council) and other organisations on ways to improve public access to the countryside for enjoyment and open air recreation
- ii. Take into consideration the land management and conservation needs of the area
- iii. The Forum (formerly the Kent Local Access Forum) meets to discuss and advise on strategic countryside access and recreation issues in Kent. Current activities include:
 - Responding to government consultations
 - Contributing to the drafting of the Countryside Access Improvement Plan
 - Steering and monitoring access and recreation policy in Kent
 - Addressing any other issues which may arise from the above

3.2.4 Explore Kent

- i. Evidence and insight are used extensively by the *Explore Kent* team, either by regular analysis of web statistics, by direct contact from the public via the website or phone, or by interaction with members of a focus group set up to

help the team to improve the website for accessibility and usability. More recently, Explore Kent has made use of KCC's 'Twitter' account to increase interactivity with its users.

- ii. In partnership with East Kent NHS Trust, a project is under way working with a group of East Kent General Practitioners (GPs) to support and promote healthy living to targeted groups of patients in East Kent. Data from the Mosaic programme has been used to inform this project, and will be used to analyse outcomes.

How is feedback provided?

- The *Explore Kent* website is continually developed in direct response to customer feedback, via web statistics and online feedback.
- The *Explore Kent* magazine is produced twice a year. It is sent to people who have requested it; it is also available to download from the website. Approximately 250 email requests are generated by each issue from members of the public. These are responded to on an individual basis by agents in the KCC Contact Centre, using information provided by the *Explore Kent* team, or information on the website.
- Interactivity is increasingly promoted using social media.

What will happen in future?

- The range of customer insight activities will continue to be used, and increased where feasible, to ensure continued involvement of the public.
- All users are invited to provide feedback on their experience, and this information is used to ensure routes are properly maintained. Regular users are being recruited as a volunteer force to provide information about pathways and routes, and to assist with improvements.
- As a direct consequence of a Focus Group that took place in April 09, the following changes are being implemented on the *Explore Kent* website:
 - Postcodes are being added to all walks, cycle routes, parks and rides
 - Public transport travel information is being improved
 - Countryside safety pages are being constructed
 - More information about refreshments is being provided on the 'Walk of the Month' with a special offer for pub/restaurant or tea-room being included
 - Easy Access
 - Cycling for the disabled added
 - All relevant information is being collected in one area, and navigation improved within this section
 - Links are now bullet pointed or made prominent if relevant
 - Postcode search development project
 - Development to postcode search has been costed, and this will form part of the overall KCC web replacement project.
 - 'and click go' added to instructions for use of postcode search
 - Search result improvement:

The Focus Group report is available as **Appendix 3.2.4**

3.3 Integrated Strategy and Planning

3.3.1. Planning Applications

- i. There are statutory processes associated with formal consultations for planning applications, which are fully complied with.
- ii. The Planning Applications team is in the process of procuring an online planning system, which will shortly be implemented. (Sept 09). This will enable all planning applications including the consultations process to be managed online.
- iii. A Customer Satisfaction Survey is planned for 09/10, with the insight gathered to be used to improve the service.

3.3.2. Gypsy and Traveller review

- i. This review forms part of a public consultation run at the direction of central government on the partial review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (South East Plan), in respect of policy for the accommodation of Gypsies. However, many of the events were organised and carried out by local authorities including KCC, on behalf of the South East England Regional Assembly. Nine events were held in Kent and Medway, out of the 27 events to be held in the South East.
- ii. These events comprised exhibitions in 6 towns and 3 stakeholder meetings with Gypsy and Traveller representatives, local authorities, parish councils, environmental and community/resident groups present.

What will happen in future?

- The results of the current consultation will feed into an Examination in Public (EIP) on the submitted proposals which will be conducted by Government-appointed independent planning inspectors in February 2010. The outcome will be a replacement policy in the South East Plan on the provision of pitches for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. In accordance with the policy it will then be the responsibility of each local council to identify sites in its Local Development Framework (LDF) and to apply the overall requirement on the scale of provision of pitches set out in the South East Plan.
- A summary of this activity is provided as Appendix **3.3.2**

3.3.3 Statement of Community Involvement

- i. The Integrated Strategy and Planning Team have the responsibility for developing a Statement of Community Involvement which will set out how KCC will engage with the community on development planning matters for which it has responsibility:

- the Kent-wide Minerals and Waste Development Framework (MWDF), which forms part of the Development Plan for Kent
 - development control – processing planning applications for minerals and waste development proposals and for KCC's own developments (e.g. schools, libraries, social services facilities).
- ii. Government has set out a number of principles for involving local communities in planning. Involvement should be:
- appropriate to the level of planning
 - undertaken from the outset
 - continuous with clearly stated opportunities for involvement
 - transparent and accessible
 - planned as an integral part of plan making
- iii. As part of the process for developing the MWDF, a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) must be prepared to reflect these principles and to set out how and when people can most effectively engage with planning issues that concern them. It must show when and how we propose to consult local communities and other stakeholders when preparing our Minerals and Waste planning documents and in development control.
- iv. The County Council already has a Statement of Community Involvement adopted in 2006 but this has become out of date. Changes in the planning regulations, a new programme and timetable for the Kent Waste & Minerals Development Framework and widening opportunities for engaging with people as a result of innovations in technology make 2008/09 an appropriate time to review our SCI.
- v. It is important for people and organisations to get involved in planning at as early a stage as possible and we are seeking to provide opportunities for this throughout the preparation of our plans.
- vi. The process currently under way involves local businesses, communities and all those with an interest in county planning matters in the review of our SCI. The first stage has been to invite all participants to tell us how they wish this process to be conducted, and how they wish to engage with it.

What will happen in future?

- A revised draft of the Statement of Community Involvement will be prepared for consultation later in 2009. In the light of the response to this a final version of the SCI will be drawn up for adoption by the County Council and publication. Once it is adopted by the County Council, the authority will be bound by the provisions of the SCI in carrying out our plan preparation and development control responsibilities.

4. LOOKING FORWARD

- i. Clearly the statutory 'duty to involve' requires us to focus more proactively on embedding involvement as standard practice in service delivery and decision-

making. EHW will work to implement the duty appropriately, giving regard to the five factors recommended in the guidance

- Accessibility
 - Timing
 - Proportionality
 - Co-ordination
 - Partnership working
- ii. Working closely with members, colleagues and partners both inside and outside KCC, we will implement the 'duty to involve' using the corporate guidance currently in development. We will make better use of sources of customer insight, and existing data (e.g. Mosaic, the Access Kent EU Interreg IVa programme, and studies such as 'We are the people of Kent'). We will also join up with other directorates and partners to avoid 'consultation overload' and ensure consistency.
- iii. We will use a range of methods to communicate with and involve our communities, including the infrequently-heard-from groups. We will make improved use of online means of communication. This will be assisted by the implementation of KCC's new website which will improve functionality and interactivity. We will also ensure that we provide an audit trail and feedback for involvement activities via the new consultation database, and other appropriate means of communication.
- iv. More effective business planning will ensure that future consultations, surveys and public involvement activities will be more joined up and cross-referenced throughout the authority, so that information can be shared. Services and teams will be helped to understand their responsibilities in the appropriate implementation of the duty to involve, and also the methods and resources at their disposal.
- v. We will make use of existing networks and groups to ensure effective and joined-up involvement, including Local Boards and Neighbourhood Forums, and throughout KCC and its partners.
- vi. In the short to medium term, the public involvement agenda is expected to converge increasingly with that of equalities and diversity. As EHW's Equalities and Diversity Officer left his post with the authority on 1st September 2009, we plan to combine these functions within a single role, thus saving some resource, whilst also making progress towards the convergence of these two areas.

Contact officer:

DENISE EDEN-GREEN

Public Involvement and Equalities Manager

Environment Highways and Waste

Tel: 01622 221934

Email: denise.eden-green@kent.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank