

# **SOUTH THAMES GATEWAY BUILDING CONTROL JOINT COMMITTEE**

**20 September 2012**

## **SOUTH THAMES GATEWAY BUILDING CONTROL CUSTOMER SERVICE SURVEY**

Report from: Janine Boughton, Head of Administration, South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership

### **Summary**

This report seeks to inform Members of customer opinion on the level of service provided by the partnership.

### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1 The Joint Committee needs to be advised of customer perception of service delivery and expectations.

### **2 Background**

- 2.1 Obtaining feedback from customers on performance has always proved difficult with a variety of approaches tried. The survey conducted sought feedback from customers who had made use of the service during 2011/12 and whether they felt they had received an acceptable service.

### **3 Summary**

- 3.1 A postal survey was carried out during May and June 2012 on applications received during 2011/12 where plan checking had taken place or where works had commenced on site. The main aim of this survey was to reach owners who had been highlighted in the previous years' survey as feeling excluded from the building control process. All owners were written to as well as agents if this applied and where information held the builders were also contacted.
- 3.2 A total of 573 survey forms were sent out of which 115 responded (20% response rate). Though this is a much lower response than the previous year's 45%, this is an improvement for postal surveys where we generally receive a low response (between 2%-6%). The respondents covered the three authority areas to which we provide the building control service (Gravesham, Medway and Swale).

- 3.3 Of the processes involved with delivering the service, communication and speed of delivery were seen as important by all customers in last years survey (81% to 100% rated this as important), it is therefore encouraging to see that 93% to 95% of customers feel they have received a Good to Excellent service in this.
- 3.4 The level of contact with customers is important in ensuring that customers feel included in the building control process and are receiving value for money service. 90% of customers were pleased with the ease of contacting staff with 93% rating the advice provided as Good to Excellent.
- 3.5 Whilst it is important to know the partnership is providing a good service, it is also important to be aware as to whether this has changed over the year and, if so, why. This is so the service can move forward and understand/manage customer expectations. 81% of customers responded to this with 27% seeing an improvement in service delivery and 71% feeling the service remained the same. One respondent felt the service had declined but gave no reason for this and rated the individual services deliveries between Good to Excellent.
- 3.6 Staff received excellent feedback with 84% of customers finding them helpful and 54% to 60% finding them practical, knowledgeable and efficient. 4% of customers found staff officious and 3% unapproachable. Unfortunately no reasons were given for this response. With all types of applications contacted, including regularisations under enforcement powers, it may be a reflection on this category of work.
- 3.7 In order to evaluate whether we are providing fair access to our service customers were asked to complete an equality and diversity form. This was shortened from the previous years' following feedback from Joint Committee and review of what information collected has been used for over the last year.
- 3.8 The response to this part of the survey was better than expected for a postal survey, with 88% who responded completing or partly completing the Equality and Diversity Monitoring survey.
- 3.9 Our customer profile has remained the same with males forming the largest group at 83%, however, the majority of this group are aged between 55 and 64 (the middle three age bands 35-44, 45-54 and 55-64 all scored between 14% and 36%). 82% of this group mainly consists of White British men with 3% being Asian or Asian British forming the next highest group.
- 3.10 The majority of females that contacted the service were aged between 45 and 54 which is the same as in 2011/12 survey, however, 94% considered themselves White British with 6% being Asian or Asian British.

#### **4 Financial and Legal Implications**

- 4.1 Though there are no direct financial or legal implications in this report, in order to advance the service to meet customer expectations, investment

would be required in IT. A separate IT Strategy report will be presented to Joint Committee during 2012/13.

## **5 Risk Management**

5.1 There are no risks within this report.

## **6 Recommendations**

6.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

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### **Background papers**

Customer Service Survey May/June 2012