

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 4th August 2009
 title: The Place Survey – National Comparison and Drivers of Satisfaction
 submitted by: Chief Executive
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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report aims to provide further comparison information for the Place Survey results and investigate further the key drivers of satisfaction.

2 RELEVANCE TO THE COUNCIL'S AMBITIONS AND PRIORITIES:

- Council Ambitions: Local services really matter to a sense of place and one of the key findings of the 'People, Perceptions and Place' report is how strongly related satisfaction with local services seems to be with overall views of the area and other key outcomes.
- Community Objectives:
- Corporate Priorities:
- Other Considerations: The more people feel that their priorities drive local improvement, the better perceptions are of local public service providers.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In December 2008 the Place Survey was carried out by Ipsos Mori on behalf of the Lancashire consortium. All of the national data was released on 23rd June 2009 and since then Ipsos Mori have been carrying out substantial analysis of the information collected. As one of their clients we were invited to an event held in Manchester on 15th July where the findings of their analysis 'People, Perceptions and Place'¹ was presented by Ben Page, Chief Executive of Ipsos Mori.
- 3.2 Analysis and comparison of the data at a national level has also been carried out by the Corporate Policy Officer.

4 THE KEY NATIONAL TRENDS

Increased satisfaction with local areas...

- 4.1 One of the most positive findings from Ipsos Mori's analysis is an increase in ratings of local quality of life, with 80% now saying they are satisfied with their area compared with 75% in 2006. This still tends to be lower in urban and more deprived areas.

...and improvements in ASB

- 4.2 Ratings on key facets of anti-social behaviour (ASB) are improving quickly. There have been real drops in concern about drug dealing/users (down 12 percentage points to 31%) and problems with teenagers (still a problem for 45% of people, but down 12 percentage points). Even litter and rubbish are slightly less of a concern. Other problems like drunken and rowdy behaviour have changed less. But overall, the 7-strand index of different ASB measures is down by three percentage points. Ipsos Mori's analysis shows how incredibly closely related overall ratings of quality of life are to this concern about ASB. This suggests that councils, police forces and other local partners are making progress in dealing with what most concerns the public.

But satisfaction with the council is down...

- 4.3 This improvement makes it particularly disappointing that satisfaction with local government is going *down* – and by a significant amount. Data suggests that the key overall measure of satisfaction with the way the

¹ Full copy available on the intranet - http://intranet.rvbc.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=63&pageNumber=3

council runs things is down from 53% to around 45%. Now, fewer than half of residents are satisfied with the performance of their authority, the lowest national score recorded in a decade or more.

... because communications in decline?

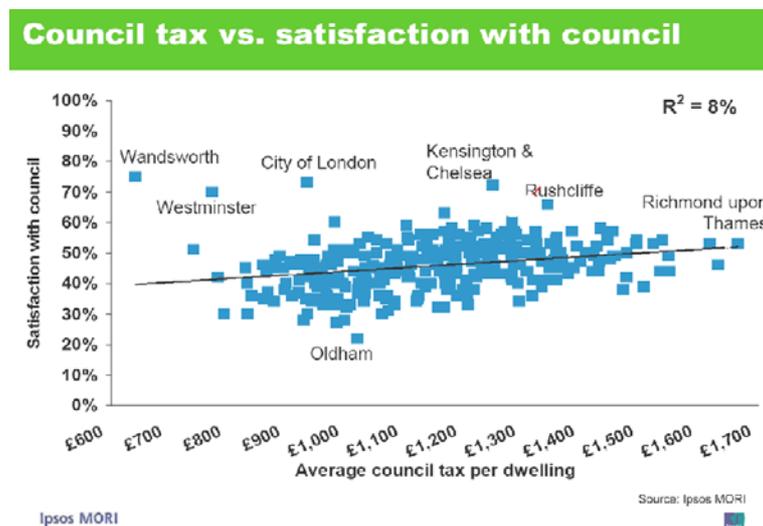
- 4.4 Part of the reason for decline may be the apparent fall in how well informed people feel: while question changes preclude a direct comparison, it is notable that only 38% feel they are kept informed about local services. This lack of connection between observed improvements and credit for making them can be seen very clearly on litter/rubbish. While fewer people say this is a problem locally, satisfaction with council services on dealing with litter has gone *down*. Again, there is no credit gained from tangible improvements.
- 4.5 Cohesion is also under pressure – particularly in urban areas outside London. When looking at the key cohesion measure included in the Place Survey – whether people from different backgrounds get on well together in the area - the data suggests this has declined from 79% to 76% overall, with Metropolitan/Unitary authorities outside London least likely to feel cohesion is strong, with only 73% agreeing.

And how are local partners faring?

- 4.6 The greater focus on areas as whole in the Place Survey is seen in the inclusion of questions on other key services, in particular the police and health services – although there are no consistent questions to compare trends on here. It appears that satisfaction levels with the police are similar to those seen for councils (47% are satisfied with the police), but satisfaction with hospitals is higher (65%). GPs are the best rated of all (77%). Even dentists are nine percentage points better rated than councils (54% satisfied).

What is driving these perceptions?

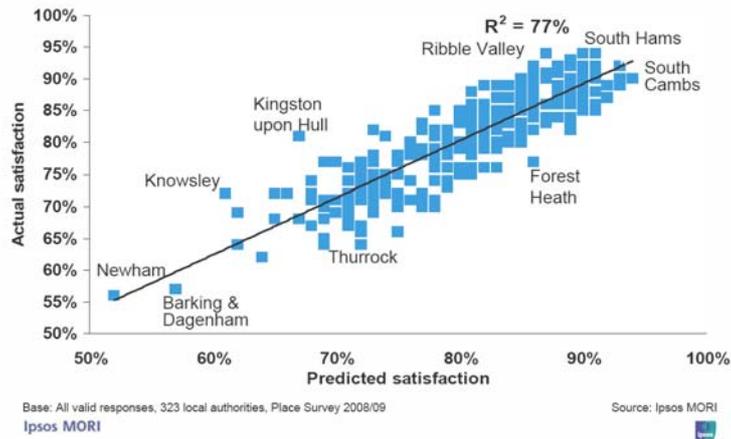
- 4.7 The bulk of the analysis in the ‘People, Perceptions and Place’ report goes beyond these simple trends and uses statistical techniques to pick out which factors seem most important in driving perceptions of these key outcomes. Of course, as with any survey data, proving cause and effect is impossible, but there are still some very clear messages and its not all about low council tax.



It's not all in our control...

- 4.8 Ipsos Mori's approach firstly tries to separate out those factors that are **within** the control of local public services and those that are **not**. This helps to provide a better understanding of what is determined by area characteristics and what services can actually do. The key point of the analysis remains that perceptions are not as easy to influence as we might expect. As an example, we can explain 82% of all variation in satisfaction with local areas knowing only five characteristics of the local population:
 - the proportion of the population with degrees;
 - the proportion of people who are under-occupying their homes;
 - the deprivation level;
 - the proportion of the population aged under 21;
 - and which region the area is in.

We can accurately predict quality of life knowing only these factors



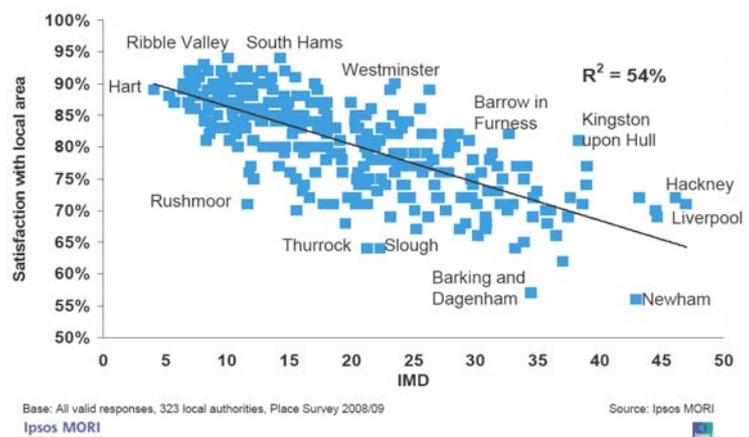
4.9 Clearly, most of these factors are not in the direct or immediate control of local services. It is, therefore, vital to not simply take perception scores at face value, but take account of how easy or difficult it is to achieve satisfaction in a specific area, particularly when these types of measures are used to judge the performance of services or partnerships.

What poses the biggest challenges?

4.10 In the spirit of CAA, Ipsos Mori has tried to look across the key outcome measures in the Place Survey to see what background characteristics are consistently associated with making “satisfaction” hard to achieve – and created the Ipsos MORI “Area Challenge Index”. There are seven clear domains:

- **The Indices of Multiple Deprivation:** this itself is a composite index. It is strongly related to perceptions – the more deprived the area, the harder it will be to achieve satisfaction across a range of issues.

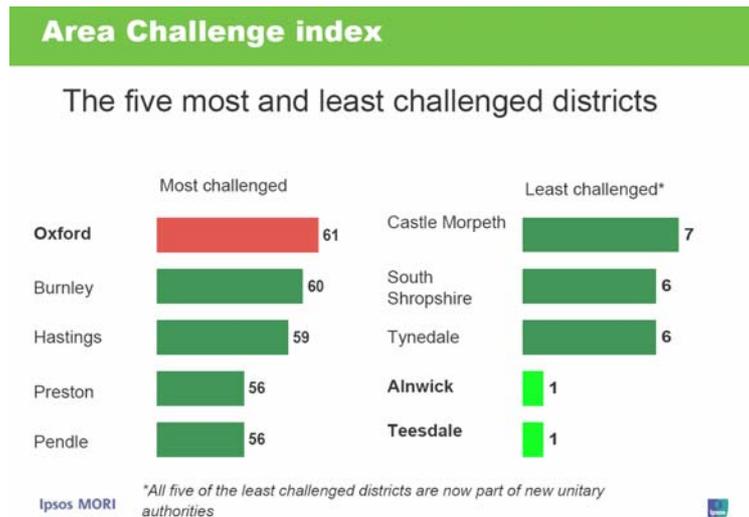
Very strong relationship with deprivation...



- **Ethnic diversity:** the more diverse an area, the harder it is to achieve satisfaction. Interestingly, one key factor that is *positively* related to diversity is feelings of influence in local areas (white residents tend to have lower feelings of local influence than Asian communities, for example).
- **Young people:** the more people aged 19 or under in an area, the harder it is to achieve high levels of satisfaction. The point needs to be made that the analysis does not prove that this *causes* dissatisfaction, but it does not have to, as the aim is only to assess which areas will have the hardest job in achieving high satisfaction levels.
- **Population churn:** the greater the turnover of local populations, the harder it is to achieve satisfaction.

- **Physical living conditions:** a number of these measures correlate with perceptions, but over-occupancy comes out most consistently. The more households with over-crowding in your area, the harder it is to achieve satisfaction.
- **Urbanity:** the more urban, the harder it is to achieve positive perceptions.
- **Region:** in particular, being in the North East is associated with higher satisfaction (even after accounting for other characteristics included in the models), while being in London is associated with lower satisfaction scores.

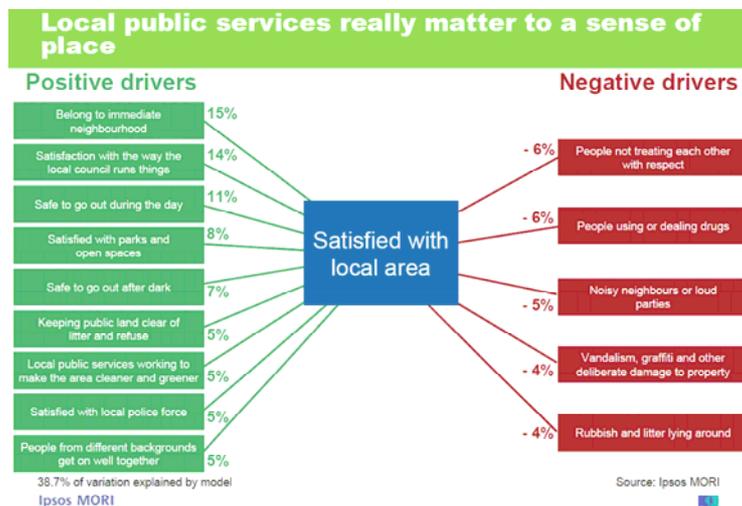
4.11 From this Ipsos Mori have created “challenge” scores for each local authority area, measuring how difficult it is for them to achieve high ratings of satisfaction – effectively how challenging it will be to do well on these perception measures. This work is only preliminary, and needs further refinement as the full Place Survey data becomes available. Early analysis suggests:

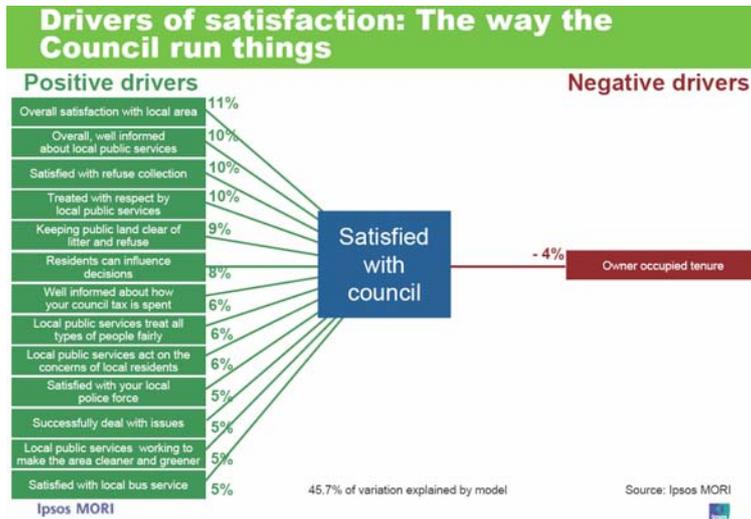


But there are things we can do...

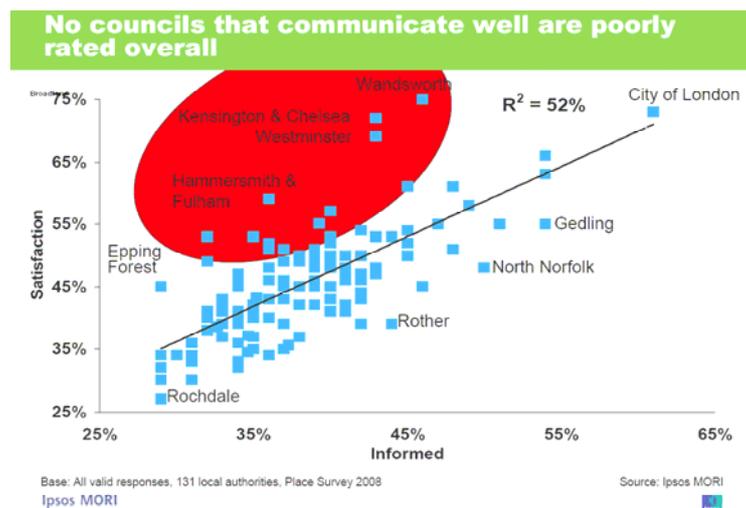
4.12 While the models show that variations in local perceptions can be explained by background characteristics, Ipsos Mori have taken the analysis further this year to pick out themes in what can be done. There are five key messages from looking across areas as a whole:

- Local services really matter to a sense of place: one of the key findings is how strongly related satisfaction with local services seems to be with overall views of the area and other key outcomes. The data backs up the intuitive sense that services (and councils in particular) have a key place-shaping role.





- Understanding and targeting local priorities: the data confirms that taking visible action on key concerns is vital. The more people feel that their priorities drive local improvement, the better perceptions are of local public service providers. This should not be news, but the key is how we act on it. As a leading systems theorist says *“Find out what matters to your customers and turn the same into operational measures - the measures against which you will work and improve. The result is always better service and lower costs.”* This embedding of what is most important in performance management is of course at the heart of the Place Survey and CAA, and underlies the analysis here.
- Communicating what we’re doing – and proactively seeking views: as we have seen, local services still do not get the credit for local improvements – and this is largely due to a communications gap. Analysis has shown time and again that those who are rated highly on their communications do better in overall perceptions. **No** authorities that are rated well on communications are rated poorly overall. Similarly, there are clear signs that the biggest impact on perceptions of influence (another key NI) would not be actions that involve a small number of people very deeply, but rather better communications that reach a much wider group. But, it is not just about information provision – there is a clear theme around seeking out views and acting as a result of seeking those views. This is particularly pertinent to crime and ASB. The areas that are seen as doing best are also seen to be proactively looking for feedback. What this means, in light of CAA, is that partnerships need to examine their respective communications and engagement programmes and look to agree on, and co-ordinate key messages about how effectively they are addressing local priorities and how they want to listen more.



- Parenting and respect: the feeling that local people treat each other with respect, and, related to this, that parents have good disciplinary control over their children, come out as important to a number of key outcomes. We know these are *the* issues that virtually everyone in Britain agrees on. Coupled with the large increase in the number of outcomes that seem to be related to the proportion of young people in an area, a focus on young people and family/parental support seems likely to yield particular dividends in resident satisfaction.

- Targeting individual neighbourhoods: finally, the report outlines some initial findings from Ipsos Mori's new mapping tool – the National Indicators Mapping Application (NIMA). This is a new approach to mapping perceptions that does not rely on official geographies, but rather groups residents to give “contour maps” that show real patterns of opinion. This allows us to see pockets of concern that might be lost when analysing results by collections of wards. Of course, we need to be cautious with the statistical reliability of looking at very small areas; given the sample size for each local authority is only around 1,100. But, equally, it is a waste of the potential power of the Place Survey not to look for local variation within local authority areas. The maps do show some very clear differences across areas that chime with local knowledge. We can use this to identify and deal with real local priorities that would otherwise be missed.

5 FURTHER INFORMATION

5.1 The analysis of the national Place Survey data set, carried out by Corporate Services, shows some very pleasing results. See Appendix A for the full comparison. Some of the good results include:

- NI 5 – Overall/general satisfaction with the local area – 1st Nationally
- NI 22 – Perceptions of parents taking responsibility for the behaviour of their children in the area – 1st Nationally
- NI 21 – Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime issues by the local council and police – 2nd Nationally and 1st amongst District Councils
- NI 2 - % of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood – 4th Nationally
- Overall satisfaction with the way that the Council runs things – 7th Nationally and 3rd amongst District Councils
- People who agree that the local council provides value for money - 7th Nationally and 3rd amongst District Councils

6 RISK ASSESSMENT

- Resources: None
- Technical, Environmental and Legal: None
- Political: None
- Reputation: None.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 Committee are asked to consider the information presented and are encouraged to discuss the suggestions made at paragraph 4.12 of things that the Council could do to increase perceptions and satisfaction levels.



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For further information please ask for Michelle Haworth, extension 4421