

Best Value General satisfaction survey results 2006

1. Purpose of Report

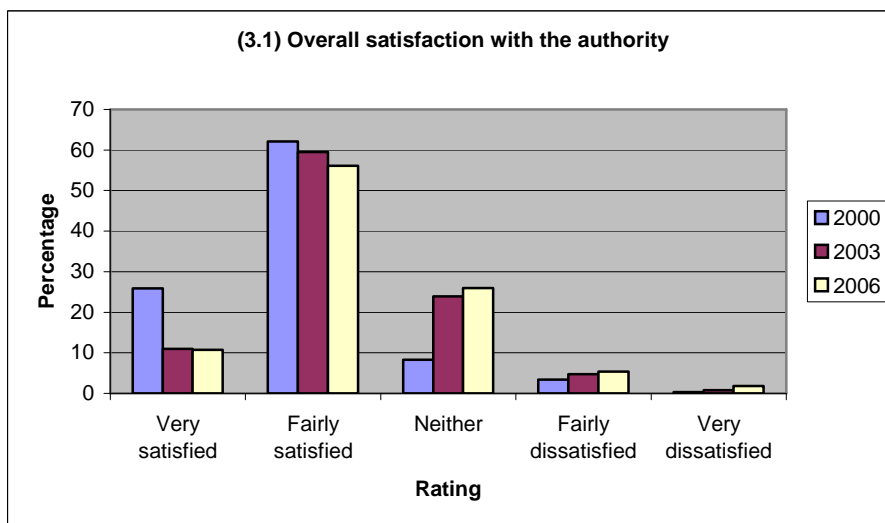
1.1 This survey sets out the key findings of the statutory general satisfaction survey undertaken in the Autumn of 2006. These findings show how residents perceive the local authority, the services provided by the authority and its overall performance. The report will also show a comparison of the results with surveys taken in 2003 and 2001. There is also a brief summary of the: Planning, Tenants and Benefits surveys also undertaken in 2006.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The general satisfaction survey was undertaken in the Autumn of 2006. This was sent out to a list of 3000 randomly selected residents of the borough.
- 2.2 The Audit Commission set a requirement of sending out two reminder letters, to achieve the minimum response rate of 1,100. The response rate was 42% (1269 responses)
- 2.3 The Audit Commission prescribed the questions asked in the survey. There was an opportunity to add questions, a question bank was provided in which you could choose from. It was also possible to write additional questions. One question was taken from the question bank on how safe residents felt outside in their local area, and an additional question was also added on specific criminal experiences of residents.

3. Best performing areas and overall satisfaction with the Authority's services

3.1 The following results are a cumulative figure of those who were very satisfied and fairly satisfied. As can be seen in the graph below, the overall satisfaction with the authority has dipped from 70% in 2003 to 66.8% in 2006. However, it should be stressed that this is likely to be a national trend due to factors identified in MORI research.



3.2 Satisfaction rates with the local area as a place to live were 82.4% and 88.1% of residents felt safe outside during the day in the borough. The area of

communications which performed well were information about how to pay bills which scored 88.7% and 92.5% were satisfied with information about how to vote.

- 3.3 Residents were asked to comment on whether services has either improved, stayed the same or worsened in the past 3 years. Collection of household waste and local recycling facilities had either improved or stayed the same according to 87.2% and 86.7% of participants respectively. Also, doorstep collections for recycling and parks and open spaces had either improved or stayed the same according to 78.2% and 79.3%. respectively.

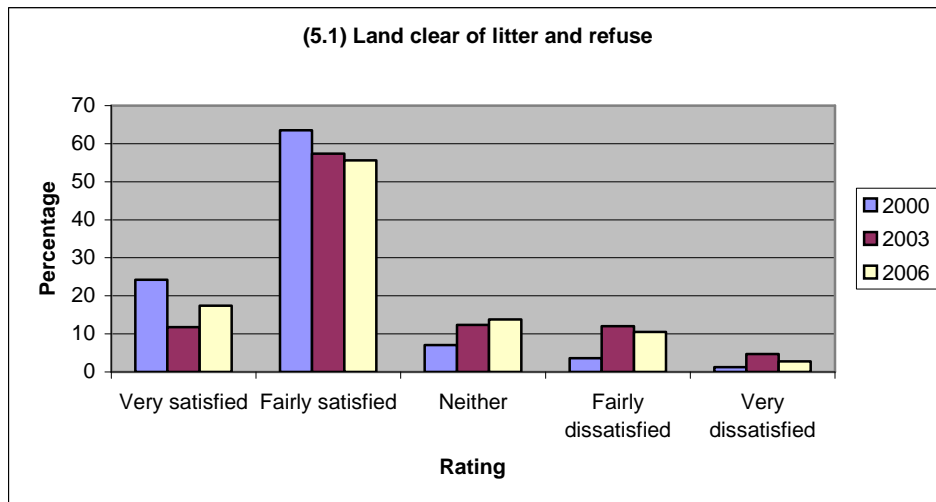
4. About your local area

4.1 The three issues most important for people when considering that somewhere is a good place to live are: clean streets, health services and levels of crime. Also, these were the most important issues for 2003.

4.2 The issues that residents felt most needed improving were: activities for teenagers, the level of crime and the level of traffic congestion. The latter of the two issues were also of most concern in 2003. Furthermore, crime levels are perceived to be high, even though Surrey has one of the lowest crime rates in England and Wales. This is a clear indication that perceptions may not reflect the reality of the situation, so more work needs to be carried out to ensure that results are not being skewed by poor communication by the various agencies involved.

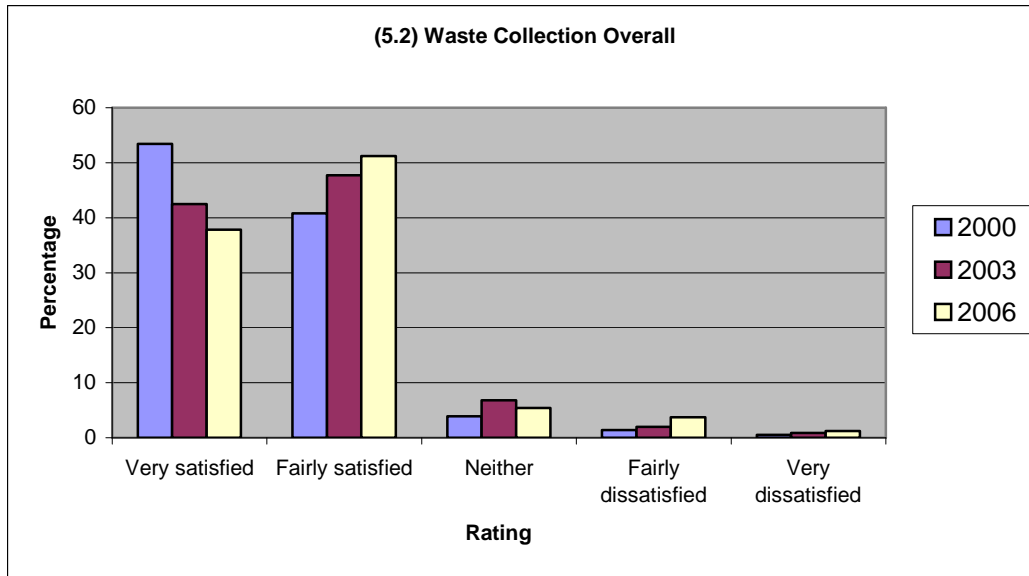
4.3 Residents felt that the biggest issues to be tackled with anti-social behaviour were: parents not being made to take responsibility for the behaviour of their children and teenagers hanging around on the streets.

5. Your local authority



5.1 Satisfaction with Runnymede keeping land clear of litter and refuse has improved since 2003, with a satisfaction rate of 73%, an improvement of 3.8% since 2003 where satisfaction was 69.2%.

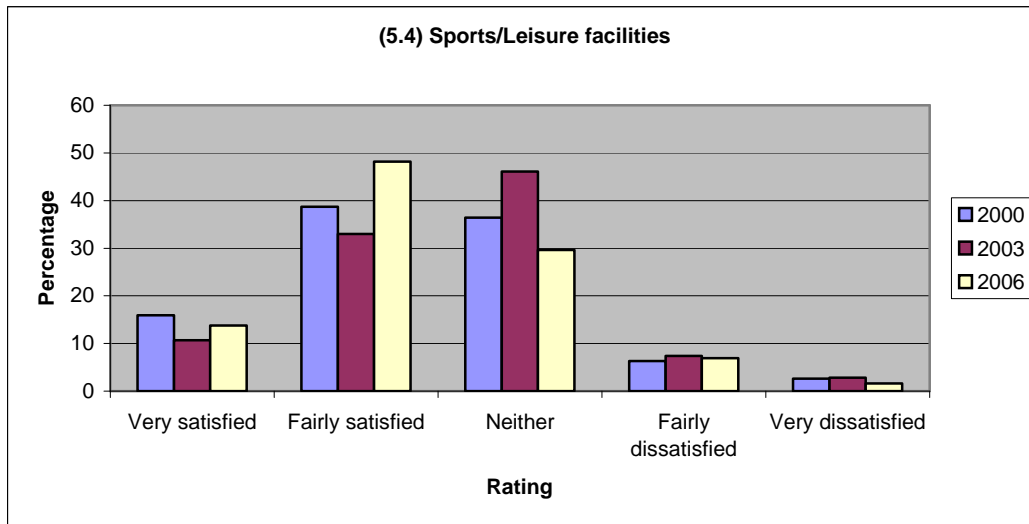
5.2 Satisfaction with the waste collection service overall has remained high, with a rate of 89% satisfied compared to 90.2% in 2003 and 94.2% in 2000.



5.3 Also, satisfaction with the provision of local recycling facilities overall has remained high this year, with a rate of 73.7%, compared to 74.8% in 2003 and 75.1% in 2000.

5.4 Cultural and recreational activities

The council had high satisfaction rates for cultural and recreational activities, with significant improvement on previous years. The table below demonstrates an 18.3% increase in satisfaction levels since 2003. Satisfaction was 54.6% in 2000, it fell to 43.7% in 2003 and rose to 62% in 2006.



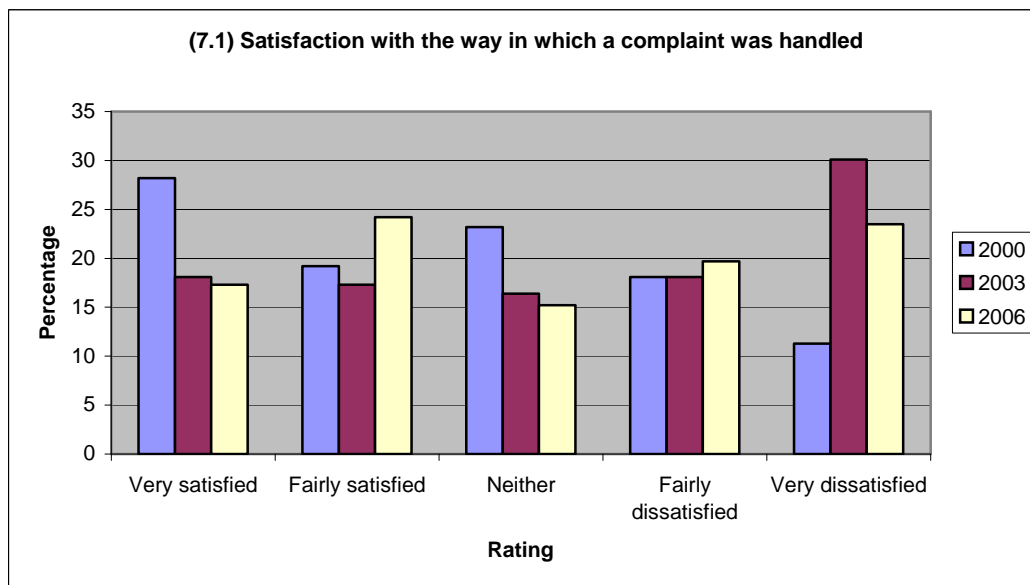
The council scored high satisfaction with parks and open spaces, 82.1%. This is a significant increase since 2003 and 2000 where the rates were 76% and 77.5% respectively. Libraries gained a high satisfaction rate of 73.9%. Satisfaction rates for museums has increased in 2006 to 48.8%, after a dip from 47.4% in 2000 to 35.6% in 2003.

6. Information about your Council and its services

- 6.1 Residents felt well informed on how to pay bills (88.7%), registering to vote (92.5%) and what the council spends its money on (66.4%). There were low levels of satisfaction on information about local decision-making (36.2%), information on whether the Council is delivering its promises (38.2%) and information about what the Council is doing to tackle anti-social behaviour (23%).
- 6.2 Overall, 51% of residents felt they were well informed about the services and benefits the Council provides. This has fallen since 2003, when there was a satisfaction rate of 60.6%.
- 6.3 A communications survey was carried out in 2005 and from this a Communication Strategy was developed and agreed by Corporate Management Committee in March 2006. This included plans for a new Council magazine, which will be sent out to all residents from February 2007. This should improve satisfaction levels by informing residents more clearly on the Council's services and the benefits it provides.
- 6.4 There will also be an A-Z of Council services and more uniform branding. These actions are in line with the LGA Reputation Campaign, which showed a clear link between communications and the reputation of an authority.

7. Contacting your Council

- 7.1 The satisfaction with the way in which a complaint was handled has improved since 2003 by 6.1%. Although, the rate is still relatively low, it is important to note that this is taken from a percentage of 21.7% of those who have complained and so this is a significantly small proportion of residents.



8. Local decision making

8.1 Only 23.4% of residents were satisfied with the opportunities for participation in local decision-making provided by the Council. However, only 17.9% stated they would definitely like to be more involved in the decisions the Council makes that affect their local area. 61.7% would be interested depending on the issue.

9. How your Council performs overall

9.1 The Council has either improved or stayed the same in the last three years according to 75.2% of participants. 74.7% felt the Council is making the local area a better place to live and 73% felt the Council is working to make the area cleaner and greener.

10. Other council surveys from 2006

10.1 A Planning survey was sent out to all residents who had been given a planning decision from 1 April to 30 September 2006. 431 surveys were sent out and 214 were returned, this is a response rate of 49.6%.

10.2 Satisfaction rates from the survey were high, with the satisfaction of the service provided by the Council in processing applications at 74% and 79.1% of applicants felt they understood the reasons for the decision made on their application.

10.3 70.1% of applicants felt that over the last 3 years the fairness with which their application was dealt with and viewpoint listened has either improved or stayed the same and 68.8% felt that the promptness with which queries about their application were dealt with had improved or stayed the same.

10.4 A Benefits survey was sent out once in 2006 and again at the start of 2007. The first were issued in August to a sample of claimants from June and July and the second were issued in January from claimants in November and December.

10.5 Satisfaction with the overall service received from the benefits office was 85.1%. Overall 51% of claimants were satisfied with the experience of visiting the local authority benefits office. 61% of claimants who made their claim over the phone were satisfied with the service provided by the benefit office.

10.6 A Tenant survey was sent out during September of 2006. It was sent out to all 3200 tenants, and 2132 were returned. This is a response rate of 66.6%.

10.7 85.8% of tenants were satisfied with their landlord and 87.4% were satisfied with their accommodation. Tenants were asked how helpful they found members of staff, 87.6% found them helpful and 82.1% felt they were able to deal with a problem. Tenants were satisfied with the repair service, with 85.6% satisfied with the repair service overall and 88.9% pleased with the speed with which the work was completed.

11. Conclusion

In most cases satisfaction levels remain high, although there have been some dips in percentages since 2003. There is a great deal of important information that has been gathered with regards to the views of residents. Over the coming months, more detailed analysis will be undertaken to establish underlying trends on a service specific basis and will specifically inform changes in service levels and standards required from contracted services.