

**MEMORANDUM TO ACTIVITIES PERFORMANCE**  
**AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**Meeting Date:** 20 JULY 2011

**Subject:** RESIDENTS' OPINION AND SATISFACTION SURVEY DISTRICT RESULTS REPORT 2011

**File No.:** 140/15/6/1

Memorandum by Mrs Y Paterson dated 30 June 2011.

**RECOMMENDATION**

THAT THE MEMORANDUM ON THE RESIDENTS' OPINION AND SATISFACTION SURVEY DISTRICT RESULTS REPORT (MARCH 2011) BE RECEIVED AS INFORMATION.

Signature

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Author

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Executive Staff

## **MEMORANDUM**

### **Introduction**

The annual residents' satisfaction and opinion survey provides useful feedback to Council and managers on residents' perception of Council services. Reasons for the survey are to:

- Identify the communities' perception of Council services and activities.
- Provide a cost-effective means of performance measurement for some activities where other performance measures would be expensive or impractical.
- Identify areas where improvements in service delivery may be required.

An independent firm undertakes the survey as it is viewed as important that the survey is executed in an objective and credible manner.

Note that the residents' survey is now undertaken once every three year period (every Long Term Plan cycle) with the next one expected to be done in 2014.

### **Methodology and Response**

Key Research Ltd undertook the survey again this year. The cost of the survey was \$19,500, excluding GST.

Their methodology did not differ significantly to that of the surveys undertaken in previous years to allow for comparison of results. A survey form was mailed to 2,978 electors selected randomly from within the District.

To ensure that a sufficiently large sub-sample at ward level is obtained, a stratified, non-proportional sample is used, with the sample constructed in such a way that each ward would have a target final sample of 75. Weighting is then applied when calculating results for the total sample in the District Results Report to ensure that each ward is represented in the total response according to its share of the population.

As in previous years, a prize was offered to increase the response rate. This year's winner was Anne Johansen of Edendale.

A return of 842 forms (28%) was achieved which is similar to the last survey in 2009 (27%). This is an average response rate for a survey of this type and is above the desired response to obtain a margin of error of  $\pm 3.38\%$ .

### **Key Results**

The full District Results Report presents the findings from the survey, including comparisons with findings obtained in the 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 surveys where applicable. This report is attached.

Looking at the results overall, satisfaction and agreement ratings were above the LTCCP targets in 22 instances and below in 15 instances. In addition, 14 ratings are trending upwards over time, 8 are stable and 20 are decreasing (refer to pages 8 and 9 of the District Results Report attached).

## **Organisational Performance**

### **Results**

High satisfaction was recorded with all aspects of organisational performance. This includes the overall performance of the Southland District Council (88%), Council planning, decision making and leadership (81%), staff effectiveness and advice (90%) and Community Board/CDA local decision making and planning (85%). There was also a high level of agreement that the Southland District Council represents the interests of Southland District residents (84%). These results have decreased by 3-5% from the 2009 survey, with the exception of staff effectiveness and advice which has remained the same.

A new question was asked in the 2011 survey which gauged whether respondents think Council allows decisions to be made locally by local people and the result for this was 70%.

The ward with the highest level of satisfaction for all aspects of organisational performance was generally Waihopai and the lowest level of satisfaction was in Wallace and Te Anau. Very few comments were made by Te Anau and Wallace Ward residents and there was no theme in these comments to explain their dissatisfaction.

### **Respondents' Comments**

Overall organisational performance: Some respondents commented that it is great to have Southland District Council as their Council and they don't want a unitary authority. A number of respondents also commented on the level rates and want to see value for money.

Council planning, decision making and leadership: A range of comments were made about resource management and building control (positive and negative), Council not listening to people's concerns and high rates.

Staff effectiveness and advice: A number of respondents said that the staff were helpful and friendly, with some positive comments made in particular about the Area Office staff. There were also some comments about the Council being over staffed and some being difficult to deal with.

Community Board/CDA local decision making and planning: Some respondents commented that they did not know enough about their Community Board or who they are. Respondents also said they would like information communicated on what is discussed at meetings. In addition, some said that some poor decisions have been made in the past or that the Council overrides their decisions.

## **Customer Service**

### **Results**

97% of respondents indicated that they are satisfied with the hours of operation of Council offices, which is similar to 2009. Invercargill is the most commonly visited office (53%) and the percentage using this office has increased from 48% in 2009. The next most visited offices were Winton and Te Anau.

65% of residents had contacted the Council over the past 12 months, with telephone calls the most frequently used method of contact.

Residents were very satisfied with the customer service provided by Council. Of those that visited a Council office, 96% indicated that they were satisfied (92% in 2009) and of those who telephoned the Council, 91% were satisfied (88% in 2009). Satisfaction with postal mail, email, fax and internet were 94%, 90%, 100% and 86% respectively.

All wards were highly satisfied with the contact they had had with Council via the methods above.

### Respondents' Comments

Contact: Only a small number of people commented on their contact with Council, possibly due to the high satisfaction with the contact methods available. Of those that did comment a mixture of responses was received. These ranged from comments about prompt service and staff with good attitudes to requests not being responded to and rude staff members.

### Information and Consultation

#### Results

87% of residents were satisfied with how well they had been kept informed by the Council which has decreased slightly from 90% in 2009. The highest level of satisfaction was in the Waihopai Ward (92%) and the lowest was in the Stewart Island Ward (78%).

74% of residents were satisfied with the level of consultation that Council has undertaken with the community over important issues. This has decreased from 80% in 2009. The highest level of satisfaction was in the Tuatapere (88%) Ward and the lowest was in the Stewart Island (56%) and Toetoes Wards (63%). Note however that Stewart Island had a very low response rate to the survey.

SDC newsletters and newspapers were still the most common sources of information about Council, with 72% and 52% of residents obtaining information from each of these sources respectively (compared to 70% and 50% in 2009). There has also been an increase in the number of residents obtaining information via the Council's internet site (15% in 2011 compared to 8% in 2009).

Just over three quarters of respondents have read at least one copy of the *First Edition newsletter* (77%). This has decreased significantly from 88% in 2009.

Lastly, 78% of residents agreed that views and preferences presented to Council have been received with an open mind and given due consideration. This is similar to 79% in 2009. The highest level of satisfaction was in the Waihopai and Winton Wards (86%) and the lowest level of satisfaction was in the Te Anau and Wallace Wards (69%).

### Respondents' Comments

Kept informed: A large number of respondents said that there is a lot of information in newspapers and in newsletters (in particular the *First Edition*) which keep them informed and if you ask for information you get it. Some said again that they would like more information about what the local Community Board is discussing.

Level of consultation: Respondents commented that there is very little consultation or that Council undertakes consultation but already has its mind made up on what it is going to do. There were a number of comments about not enough consultation on the new wheelie bin service.

Views and preferences received with open mind: As for above, some respondents commented that the Council has its mind made up before an issue is put out for consultation and is not interested in people's concerns. Some suggested having more public meetings. Respondents in the Te Anau Ward (who had the lowest satisfaction) said their views were ignored about the new user-pays toilet and were unhappy about locals having to pay to use it.

### Staff Response

The two bin kerbside service was introduced after several years of investigation from Council and was consulted on each year through the Annual Plan and Long Term Plan. Articles have also been included in the First Edition and a trail was undertaken in Winton in 2008. In addition, prior to implementation letters were sent out to all households in the District.

### Internet

The percentage of respondents with access to the internet has increased from 74% in 2009 to 79% in 2011.

### Awareness

#### Results

94% of residents are aware of the need to be prepared for a major emergency event, however only 61% said that they were actually prepared. The level of those prepared has remained relatively stable over the last few years.

Slightly more than two thirds of respondents are aware that Council provides grants and donations (68%) which has decreased from the 2009 survey results (76%) although the trend has been stable over time.

### Staff Response

The recent tragic events in Christchurch have helped raise awareness of not only earthquakes but natural hazards and emergencies in general. Emergency Management staff have a very strong education focus on preparedness/readiness and the Emergency Management Southland team are focusing on ensuring that heightened awareness translates into better individual readiness/preparedness.

### Satisfaction with Council Services

#### Overall Results

Council services where the most satisfaction was recorded include Location of libraries and/or the ability to access the bookbus (98%), availability of community centres (96%) and choice of parks and reserves (95%).

Council services where the lowest satisfaction amongst respondents was recorded include maintenance of unsealed roads (48%), maintenance of sealed roads (68%) and opening hours of refuse transfer stations (71%).

Location of libraries and/or the ability to access the bookbus, appearance of cemeteries and location of recycling centres each recorded a small increase in satisfaction since the 2009 results. All other aspects of Council services recorded declines in satisfaction up to 4%. Stock control recorded the largest decrease (from 91% in 2009 to 87% in 2011) although satisfaction for this activity is still very high.

Some of the above results with the lowest or a decrease in satisfaction are explained in more detail below.

## **Gravel Road Maintenance**

### **Results**

Satisfaction with the maintenance of gravel roads has been gradually decreasing over time with only 48% satisfied compared to 57% five years ago. The lowest levels of satisfaction were recorded in Toetoes (32%) and Wallace (36%). The highest levels of satisfaction were recorded in Riverton (63%) and Te Anau (59%).

### **Respondents' Comments**

A large number of respondents said that the roads were not graded frequently enough with a few commenting that they have to ring to get it done all the time. Respondents also commented that their road was full of potholes and corrugations and that they often weren't removed by grading. Other comments requested roads to be sealed because of increased use due to new residential development, heavy traffic and tourists.

In the Toetoes Ward respondents mainly commented on minor accidents occurring on gravel roads in the Catlins, large potholes and corrugations and the roads not being graded often enough.

Wallace Ward comments related to milk tankers damaging the roads and the roads needing to be graded and maintained more frequently.

### **Staff Response**

Residents were again asked this year specifics on the location of the problems. This information has been passed on to roading and engineering staff who can address particular issues.

Council has faced a number of challenges over the last few years in terms of managing its roading network. Heavy traffic from the growth in dairying and from forestry continues to have an impact on road condition which is evident from the respondents' comments. There have also been set backs with the NZTA not funding the full roading programme as set out in the LTCCP 2009-2019, and Council has recently changed its programme to match where funding can be obtained resulting in a reduction of capital works such as renewals and rehabilitations. In addition, with the recent recession Council has been trying to balance residents' expectations while keeping rates at an affordable level.

The level of NZTA financial assistance in the future is uncertain therefore Council is trying to work smarter in its programme and its contracts. Council is also reviewing the levels of service it can provide to the community in its Roding Asset Management Plan for the upcoming Long Term Plan 2012-2022.

In terms of the results for the Toetoes Ward, many of the gravel roads in this area have high traffic numbers from tourists travelling in the Catlins. In spite of this, and increased activity across the whole network, Council may not receive any funding for seal extensions in the immediate future from NZTA.

For the Wallace Ward, the central area contract managers are reviewing the feedback from residents, request for services (RFS) and the grader operators regarding which roads require more attention. Also information from Fonterra has recently become available about the roads it has high use on and this will be used to better manage them. Generally the number of RFS and other complaints regarding gravel roads in the Wallace Ward has decreased in the last two years.

## **Sealed Roads Maintenance**

### **Results**

68% of all respondents agreed that sealed roads were adequately maintained, which has decreased from 71% in 2009 and 76% in 2008. The lowest levels of satisfaction were recorded in the Wallace Ward (49%) and the highest was in the Five Rivers and Te Anau Wards (81%).

### **Respondents' Comments**

The majority of respondents commented that the roads were uneven to drive on and that there was inadequate maintenance with repairs not lasting. Some commented on roads being too narrow.

### **Staff Response**

There have been several complaints about the State Highway network in the Wallace Ward however these are not managed by the Southland District Council. The Wallace Ward has been heavily affected by dairying after the last five years and efforts are being made to improve roads as budget allows.

## **Transfer Stations - Opening Hours**

### **Results**

71% of respondents were satisfied with the opening hours of transfer stations compared to 73% in 2009. This result has slowly decreased over the last five years. The lowest satisfaction was in the Wallacetown Ward (53%) and the highest was in the Te Tipua (86%) and Riverton Ward (84%).

### **Respondents' Comments**

Residents said that the opening hours were not long enough or convenient or that stations should be open more days of the week.

### **Staff Response**

The opening hours were originally set by the Community Boards and it now may be appropriate for Council to review the length of the opening hours or the timing of them as part of the Activity Management Plan review. It is important to note that if transfer station opening hours increase this will have an additional cost. Council will also be looking at the effect of the two bin service on the demand for transfer stations and it may be the case that the introduction of the kerbside recycling bins will resolve this issue for some, particularly those that were previously taking recycling to the transfer stations.

## **Satisfaction with Township Services**

### **Overall Results**

Aspects of township services where the most satisfaction amongst respondents was recorded include Sewerage system (94%), Wheelie bin collection (93%), Level of street lighting (92%) and Reliability of water supply (91%). Respondents also had a high level of agreement that garden plots, street plantings and street trees enhance their local townships.

Council township services where the lowest satisfaction amongst respondents was recorded include Safety of footpaths (65%) and Quality of town water supply (68%). Respondents had a low level of agreement that Southlanders are minimising the amount of waste going to the landfill (63%) and the quality of the environment is being maintained or getting better (63%).

The previous results are explained in more detail below.

## **Footpath Safety**

### **Results**

Footpath safety continues to follow a downward trend with 65% of respondents satisfied with the safety of footpaths, down from 66% in 2009, 73% in 2008 and 78% in 2007. Lowest levels of satisfaction were recorded in the Five Rivers (46%) and Winton (53%) Wards. The highest level of satisfaction was in the Tuatapere Ward (89%).

### **Respondents' Comments**

The main reasons for dissatisfaction was uneven and broken surfaces, no footpaths available in areas of the township and wanting the footpaths to be sealed. Most Five Rivers respondents commented that there was a lack of footpaths in Lumsden. Winton respondents commented that they were dissatisfied with the gravel footpaths and would like the paths to be sealed.

### **Staff Response**

The Lumsden Community Board in the past has decided not to put in any new footpaths due to the costs to the community. However, a couple of footpath upgrade projects are planned for Maria Street (outside the school) and Flora Street which will improve safety.

Winton Community Board adopted in early 2000 a policy that provides for one good paved footpath per residential street. There is provision for dual footpath in the central business district and adjacent to Winton schools. The Community Board has approved and completed large capital projects in both 2008 and 2010 that has increased the delivery of the adopted policy, those capital programmes will continue throughout the next 10 years. The gravel footpaths will be phased out over time with the placement of topsoil and sowing of amenity grasses to be prioritised once capital renewals are completed.

The Winton Community Board also programmes \$5,000 per annum for 3-4 reconstructed pram crossing at residential street intersections.

Council will be soon reviewing footpaths district wide and making some safety and value assessments for the future as part of the Roading Asset Management Plan.

## **Town Water Supply - Quality of Water**

### **Results**

68% of respondents were satisfied with the quality of town water supplies, which has also been decreasing over the past five years, down from 78% five years ago. Residents from the Wallace (49%) and Riverton (50%) Wards were the least satisfied and residents from the Five Rivers Ward (88%) were most satisfied. It is notable that Five Rivers had one of the lowest satisfaction levels (65%) in the 2009 survey and satisfaction has increased by 23%.

### **Respondents' Comments**

The majority of respondents from the Riverton Ward said the water tasted and smelt dirty and chlorinated. Only one Wallace Ward respondent commented saying that it was their understanding that the quality of water will improve with new water treatment plant that is under way.

### Staff Response

Council is currently undertaking work to improve the quality of drinking water in Riverton. A new source of water has recently been found and now Council is in the process of considering options for upgrading the treatment plant to improve water hardness and the taste over the current system. A number of other community schemes are requiring upgrades to meet drinking water standards, however funding options are still being considered in light of the review of the Ministry of Health subsidy criteria and the likelihood that some may not qualify for funding anymore.

### **Waste going to Landfill**

#### Results

63% agreed that Southlanders are minimising the amount of waste going to landfill. This has remained the same as in 2009. The lowest level of agreement was recorded in the Waihopai Ward (46%) and the highest level of agreement was recorded in the Stewart Island (75%) and Te Anau Wards (70%).

#### Respondents' Comments

Respondents commented that a lot of people do not recycle and just throw everything in the wheelie bin. Some commented that it will help when kerbside recycling is introduced. Some said that they think the message to reduce waste is slowly getting through and that Council should continue with education.

#### Staff Response

The new two bin kerbside service was introduced in May 2011 (this survey was conducted in February) and this is expected to make it easier for people to recycle and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. It's too early to say how the new service will impact on the drop off centres but this is something that will be monitored.

### **The Quality of the Environment**

#### Results

This was a new question in the 2011 survey. 63% of respondents agreed with the statement that the quality of the environment is being maintained or getting better. The lowest level of agreement was in the Wallacetown Ward (49%) and the highest was in the Winton Ward (72%).

#### Respondents' Comments

The main reasons for not agreeing with this statement were that dairying is affecting the environment and that rivers are becoming more polluted.

#### Staff Response

While dairying has been a media focus of environmental concern, it is important that dairying is not singled out for undue or unfair treatment when considering the environmental effects of land use; as other land uses can also generate adverse environmental effects if not suitably managed.

The Council will be considering the effects of all land use as part of the current review of the District Plan and the public consultation process will provide for input for anyone with an interest in the environment. The Council will also be considering the full range of approaches available to address the adverse effects of land use, with non-regulatory as well as regulatory options being considered.

**Priorities**

Respondents were asked to list what they think are the three most important services/facilities. Those most frequently listed were:

- Roothing maintenance (general) - 356 comments.
- Waste management/recycling - 271 comments.
- Water - 165 comments.
- Sewerage - 121 comments.

Respondents were also asked to list what they think are the least important Council services/facilities. Those most frequently listed were:

- Libraries - 44 comments.
- Beautification/Weed Control - 33 comments.
- Community Buildings and Facilities - 28 comments.
- Dog Control - 25 comments.

Lastly, respondents were asked if there was one thing that you would like to change what would it be. The most frequently listed item was:

- Waste management/recycling - 44 comments.
- Roothing maintenance (general) - 42 comments.
- Reduction in rates - 39 comments.
- Building compliance/resource consent process - 21 comments.

Yvette Paterson  
**ASSISTANT CORPORATE PLANNER**