



Rural Area Working Party 15 April 2010

Place Survey: Overview of Rural Responses

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to outline the findings of the Place Survey with a focus on the rural areas of the Borough.

1. Background: About the Survey

- 1.1 All local authorities are required to carry out the Place Survey which replaces the former Best Value User Satisfaction Survey. The purpose of the survey is to measure what local people feel about the quality of life in their community. It asks residents about their views of St Edmundsbury as a place to live and how satisfied they are with local public services. This helps the Council to measure how effective it is at making a difference to individuals and to the community as a whole and the Borough we live in. The Survey also enables Councils to collate 18 National Indicators (NIs).
- 1.2 Questionnaires were distributed across the Borough on 29 September 2008. The deadline for returned questionnaires was 5 January 2009. All Councils were required to achieve a minimum of 1,100 responses. To achieve the required response, 4,000 questionnaires were distributed to a random selection of households across the Borough (addresses provided by the Audit Commission). By the end of the survey period, 1,625 were returned completed, with 30 returned as failed mail, yielding a response rate of 41%.
- 1.3 Whilst data was submitted to the Government by the required deadline at the end of January 2009, final statistics and guidance were not released by the Government until October 2009. Analysis of the results, was therefore, delayed.
- 1.4 Whilst the Place Survey is anonymous, responses are referenced so that they can be allocated to individual wards. It is therefore possible to analyse responses by dividing the Borough into three areas: Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Rural. Before looking at the results in rural areas, it is useful to provide a summary of the overall St Edmundsbury findings (section 2 below).

2. Summary of Place Survey findings across St Edmundsbury

- 2.1 The majority of St Edmundsbury residents are very or fairly satisfied with their area as a place to live (88%). Only 5% of residents are dissatisfied. Those residents who are not working (and not retired) are more likely to be dissatisfied. Residents aged over 65 are more likely to be satisfied.
- 2.2 There has been an increase in satisfaction with the area and people from different backgrounds getting on with each other. Residents who are retired or aged 74 or over are more likely to have a positive view of community cohesion in their area.
- 2.3 There have been real improvements in tackling elements of anti-social behaviour. For instance, there has been a decrease in concern about drug dealing/users (a drop of 36% since 2006).
- 2.4 Mirroring the national trend, satisfaction with the Council has fallen to 43% in 2008. The conclusion nationally is that, overall local government is doing a good job on place-shaping – on quality of life and key measures of anti-social behaviour – but as an institution it is worse rated than ever. A large proportion of residents selected 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' when asked about satisfaction with the Council and value for money.
- 2.5 Residents generally reported satisfaction with the services in their area. St Edmundsbury is in the top 25% of English local authorities for satisfaction with:-
- (i) keeping public land clear of litter and refuse;
 - (ii) local tips/household waste centres;
 - (iii) theatres/concert halls; and
 - (iv) parks and open spaces.
- It is in the bottom 10% for local transport information and the bottom 25% for local bus services.
- 2.6 Performance of nine of the eighteen National Indicators (NIs) is amongst the top 25% of local authorities. None were amongst the bottom.
- 2.7 Again, mirroring the national trend, NI scores are low for:-
- (i) civic participation;
 - (ii) volunteering;
 - (iii) seeking views on and dealing with anti-social behaviour;
 - (iv) parents taking responsibility for their childrens' behaviour;
 - (v) awareness of civil protection arrangements; and
 - (vi) support for older people.

3. Place survey findings across St Edmundsbury's rural area

- 3.1 The information outlined in this section of the report compares the results in rural areas, with those across the Borough as a whole, Suffolk and nationally. This information is intended as a guide only as weighted data is used to calculate performance at 'Borough level' and above, and unweighted data is used when analysing the area performance. Weighting is a statistical tool which is used to

compensate for any under or over-sampling of a particular group. It is not possible to weight such data for each individual ward or area.

3.2 *What makes somewhere a good place to live and what needs improving?*

The table below shows, for each ward, which factor is most important in making somewhere a good place to live and what is most in need of improving. Respondents were asked to choose up to five from a list of 20 issues to answer these two questions.

Rural Ward	Most important	Most needs improving
Bardwell	Level of crime	Road and pavement repairs
Barningham	Level of crime	Activities for teenagers
Barrow	Level of crime	Activities for teenagers
Cavendish	Level of crime	Activities for teenagers
Chedburgh	Level of crime	Activities for teenagers
Clare	Level of crime	Public transport
Great Barton	Level of crime	Level of traffic congestion
Fornham	Level of crime	Road and pavement repairs
Horringer and Whelnetham	Level of crime	Activities for teenagers
Hundon	Level of crime	Road and pavement repairs
Ixworth	Level of crime	Activities for teenagers
Kedington	Health services	Road and pavement repairs
Pakenham	Level of crime	Public transport
Risby	Health services	Activities for teenagers
Rougham	Level of crime	Public transport
Stanton	Level of crime	Road and pavement repairs
Wickhambrook	Health services	Public transport
Withersfield	Level of crime	Public transport

The level of crime is clearly the issue that most residents feel is most important to making somewhere a good place to live. This is also the case with residents in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill. Similarly, the issues which residents most feel need improving remain the same in urban and rural areas of the Borough.

3.3 *Feelings of satisfaction with the area*

Residents living in rural areas are more satisfied in general than those living Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill and there is a much stronger feeling of belonging to their neighbourhood. Levels of satisfaction, and how it compares with St Edmundsbury, Suffolk and national averages, are shown in the tables below:-

NI 5 – Overall satisfaction with the local area as a place to live

Rural St Edmundsbury average	St Edmundsbury average	Suffolk average	National average
91.8%	87.5%	86%	79.7%

NI 2 – Percentage of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood

Rural St Edmundsbury average	St Edmundsbury average	Suffolk average	National average
75.8%	63.1%	61.5%	58.7%

NI 1 – Proportion of residents who agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area

Rural St Edmundsbury average	St Edmundsbury average	Suffolk average	National average
88.5%	82%	80%	76%

Satisfaction with St Edmundsbury Borough Council

Rural St Edmundsbury average	St Edmundsbury average	Suffolk average	National average
47.6%	43%	N/A	45%

3.4 Satisfaction with services

In terms of satisfaction with services run by the Borough Council such as refuse collection, rural residents are very satisfied (higher than the national average). However, there are a number of areas where satisfaction in the rural wards remain below national average. These areas are detailed in the tables below:-

Satisfaction with leisure facilities

Rural St Edmundsbury average	St Edmundsbury average	Suffolk average	National average
37.7%	44%	45%	46%

Satisfaction with buses

Rural St Edmundsbury average	St Edmundsbury average	Suffolk average	National average
39.1%	40%	47%	55%

Satisfaction with local transport information

Rural St Edmundsbury average	St Edmundsbury average	Suffolk average	National average
37.6%	36%	42%	48%

3.5 Community safety

As highlighted above, in the vast majority of rural wards, people consider that 'level of crime' is most important in terms of making somewhere a good place to live. With this in mind, it is reassuring to note that people's views about feeling safe remain high, as shown in the series of tables below:-

How safe people feel in their local area during the day?

Rural St Edmundsbury average	St Edmundsbury average	Suffolk average	National average
96.4%	93%	92%	88%

How safe people feel in their local area after dark?

Rural St Edmundsbury average	St Edmundsbury average	Suffolk average	National average
75.7%	63%	58%	51%

NI 27 - Agreement that the Council and Police understand anti-social behaviour concerns

Rural St Edmundsbury average	St Edmundsbury average	Suffolk average	National average
39.9%	26%	25%	24%

NI 21 – Agreement that the Council and Police deal with anti-social behaviour

Rural St Edmundsbury average	St Edmundsbury average	Suffolk average	National average
43.3%	29.3%	29.6%	26%

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The Place Survey results contain a great deal of information but this report provides an overview. However, it is hoped that the Working Party finds this information useful, particularly in shaping its priorities.
- 4.2 Subject to the results of the General Election, the next Place Survey is scheduled to be in the field from September 2010.

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