

# Planning Applicants Customer Satisfaction Survey

*Survey Period*  
April to September 2004

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**APPENDIX I - THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

## **1.0 WHAT IS THE RESEARCH TELLING US?**

- Respondents disagreed most with the statements 'The Council kept me informed about the progress of my application', and 'The Council dealt promptly with my queries'.
- Respondents agreed most with the statement 'I understand the reasons for the decision made on my application'.
- Overall satisfaction with the service provided by the Council in processing planning applications (BVPI 111) is 66.7%, down marginally from 67.2% in 2003.
- Improvements appear to have been made with elements of service delivery, albeit slowly when comparing 2003 with 2004 data. This is apparent throughout the report where agreement/satisfaction ratings have increased, but disagreement/dissatisfaction ratings are also higher.
- When asked to compare the service with three years ago, things have got 'Better' for the following elements of service delivery:
  - Clarity of reasons for the decision given on their application.
  - The fairness with which their application was dealt with and their viewpoint listened to.
- Conversely, when asked to compare the service with three years ago, things have got 'Worse' for the following elements of delivery:
  - The promptness with which queries on their application were dealt with.
  - Information provided about the progress of their application.
  - The fairness with which their application was dealt with and their viewpoint listened to.
  - Advice and help provided with their application.
- Respondents appeared to be able to speak to Planning Officers, with few leaving a telephone voicemail message.
- The quicker a return call is made after leaving a voicemail message, the more likely applicants are to be satisfied.
- Few applicants have used the Public Access facility available through the Internet, especially those acting as private individuals.
- Applicants that use the Public Access facility are doing so to monitor progress on their application.
- Few applicants are making use of the newly revised Householder Enquiry form.
- There is significant increase in the number of private individuals and householder type applicants/applications comparing 2003 figures with those of 2004.
- A typical customer is a private individual, submitting a householder application, with agents acting on behalf of another party tending to submit a residential development application(s).
- There appears to be more new applicants submitting applications for planning consent compared to the number of repeat applicants.
- More new customers agree with all statements on service delivery compared to those who have made a previous application.
- Equal proportions of new and repeat customers agree that the Council kept them informed. However, 30.6% of repeat customers disagree with this.
- There are mixed messages about the efficiency, quality and friendliness of staff.

## **2.0 WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT?**

- Continue to ensure that the improvements made above (clarity of reasons and fairness of application) are maintained, whilst placing more emphasis on improving the other areas of service delivery that applicants perceived to have got 'Worse'. These being:
  - The promptness with which queries on their application are dealt with.
  - Information provided about the progress on their application.
  - The fairness with which their application was dealt with and their viewpoint listened to.
  - Advice and help provided with their application.
  
- Improve publicity and advertising of the Public Access facility to planning applicants, as this is an important communications mechanism, where progress, and updates on planning applications are made. This may subsequently improve their degree of satisfaction with the facility and efficiency with which their enquiries are dealt..
  
- Take note of the comments provided by users of the Public Facility Website made on page 30 of this report. These all seem to be fairly superficial tasks and quick to remedy.
  
- In response to the mixed messages being received about the efficiency, quality and friendliness of staff, further consideration should be given to team re-structuring, customer care training and everybody working to a consistent set of criteria.

### 3.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR 'THE HANDLING OF YOUR PLANNING APPLICATION'

| <b>I was given the advice and help needed to submit my application correctly</b> |                   |                |               |                           |
|--|-------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------------|
|  | <b>2000/2001*</b> | <b>2003 **</b> | <b>2004**</b> | <b>03/04 % difference</b> |
| % Agree / Strongly Agree   | 68%               | 64.5%          | 63.4%         | -2%                       |
| % Disagree / Strongly Disagree   | 12%               | 10.9%          | 19.0%         | +74%                      |

| <b>The Council kept me informed about the progress of my application</b> |                   |                |               |                           |
|--|-------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------------|
|  | <b>2000/2001*</b> | <b>2003 **</b> | <b>2004**</b> | <b>03/04 % difference</b> |
| % Agree / Strongly Agree   | 47%               | 48.4%          | 58.0%         | +20%                      |
| % Disagree / Strongly Disagree   | 33%               | 29.0%          | 31.6%         | +9%                       |

| <b>The Council dealt promptly with my queries (within 5 days***)</b> |                   |                |               |                           |
|--|-------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------------|
|  | <b>2000/2001*</b> | <b>2003 **</b> | <b>2004**</b> | <b>03/04 % difference</b> |
| % Agree / Strongly Agree   | 60%               | 56.2%          | 58.6%         | +4%                       |
| % Disagree / Strongly Disagree                                       | 22%               | 24.5%          | 28.3%         | +16%                      |

| <b>I understand the reasons for the decision made on my application(s)</b> |                   |                |               |                           |
|--|-------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------------|
|  | <b>2000/2001*</b> | <b>2003 **</b> | <b>2004**</b> | <b>03/04 % difference</b> |
| % Agree / Strongly Agree   | 77%               | 78.7%          | 77.2%         | -2%                       |
| % Disagree / Strongly Disagree   | 13%               | 9.8%           | 19.5%         | +99%                      |

| <b>I felt that I was treated fairly and that my viewpoint was listened to</b> |                   |                |               |                           |
|---|-------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------------|
|   | <b>2000/2001*</b> | <b>2003 **</b> | <b>2004**</b> | <b>03/04 % difference</b> |
| % Agree / Strongly Agree  | 71%               | 64.9%          | 62.2%         | -4%                       |
| % Disagree / Strongly Disagree  | 17%               | 14.2%          | 25.9%         | +82%                      |

| <b>Overall satisfaction of the service provided by the Council in processing your application</b> |                   |                |               |                           |
|---|-------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------------|
|   | <b>2000/2001*</b> | <b>2003 **</b> | <b>2004**</b> | <b>03/04 % difference</b> |
| % Fairly/Very Satisfied   | 70%               | 67.2%          | 66.7%         | -1%                       |
| % Fairly/Very Dissatisfied  | 21%               | 17.9%          | 25.8%         | +44%                      |

\* Results are based on survey period April 2000 to March 2001, conducted over four periods covering 12 months.

\*\* Results are based on survey period April to September 2003/2004, conducted in one period, covering six months.

\*\*\* 'Within 5 days' was stated only on the 2004 survey as a Customer Service Standard.

- All results in the above table and following charts are respondents providing a valid rating of one to five in terms of satisfaction. Respondents that 'don't know' or didn't reply to a question were excluded. Therefore the base sample varies in places.

## **ABOUT THE PLANNING APPLICATION**

- Over four fifths, 82.1%, were acting as a private individual when submitting their application.
- Almost three fifths, 55.8%, submitted a householder application, whilst almost a fifth, 18.8%, submitted a residential development application.

## **SATISFACTION WITH PLANNING SERVICES**

- Almost two-thirds, 63.4%, appear to be satisfied with the advice and help given to submit their application.
- Almost three fifths, 58%, agree that the Council kept them informed about the progress of their planning application.
- Almost three-fifths, 58.6%, agree that the Council dealt promptly with their queries.
- Almost four in five, 77.2%, understand the reasons for the decision made on their application.
- Almost two-thirds, 62.2%, agree they were treated fairly and that their viewpoint was listened to.
- 66.7% were fairly/very satisfied with the overall service provided by the Council in processing their application.
- Over four-fifths, 87.1%, of planning applications were granted permission/consent.

## **PERCEIVED CHANGES IN SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE LAST THREE YEARS**

- Almost half of respondents, 46.9%, applied to the Planning Department for planning consent prior to their current application (on which this survey is based). Of this proportion:
  - The majority made between 1-5 applications.
- Just over a quarter, 28.1% made more than one application in the last three years. In all cases the majority indicated things have stayed the same, however:
  - Over a quarter, 26.2%, indicated the advice and help had got worse.
  - Over a quarter, 30%, indicated the information provided had got worse.
  - Over a quarter, 30.5%, indicated the promptness with which queries about their application were dealt with had got worse.
  - One in six (16.7%) indicated the clarity of reason given had got worse.
  - Over a quarter, 29%, indicated the fairness with which their application was dealt with and their viewpoint listened to had got worse.

## **VOICEMAIL SERVICES**

- Less than a quarter, 24.2%, have left a voicemail message.
- The majority, 96.3%, found the recorded message clear.
- Almost half, 49.1%, indicated we take 2-5 days (on average) to return the call.
- Over a fifth, 21.8%, are dissatisfied with the voicemail service, and 21.8% undecided. However, the majority, 56.4% are satisfied.

## **PUBLIC ACCESS**

- Just over a quarter, 27.6%, have used the Public Access facility available through the Internet.
- For applicants, the main purpose for using this facility was to observe progress on an application. Just over a quarter, 27%, sought planning guidance.
- Just over four fifths, 81.7%, found what they were looking for.
- 20.6% are dissatisfied with the Public Access facility, 15.9% undecided, whilst 63.5% are satisfied.

## **HOUSEHOLDER ENQUIRY FORM**

- 87.2% did not complete a revised householder enquiry form prior to submitting their application.
- Almost three fifths, 58.8%, rated our service 'Prompt' in terms of time taken to respond to their enquiry. 17.6% thought it was slow.

## **4.0 INTRODUCTION**

In April 2005, the third survey of Planning Applicants was undertaken to monitor customer satisfaction with service provision and to evaluate the improvements made as a result of previous work carried out. This survey continues to use the survey design used for the formal Best Value Planning Applicants' Survey (BVPI 111) and also includes some additional questions related to areas of service improvements carried out by Planning Services. Surveys of this kind form part of Planning Services' commitment to ongoing monitoring and evaluating of all customer services and facilities.

This survey was carried out during the same time period as the 2003 survey, being conducted in a single period between April and September 2004. The survey was targeted at residents and businesses that had made planning applications and received a decision letter during the period.

The objectives of the survey were to identify:

- in what capacity applicants were submitting applications
- type of application being submitted
- perceptions of the advice and help given to applicants submitting an application
- perceptions of whether applicants were kept informed of progress with their application
- perceptions of whether queries were dealt with promptly
- perceptions of whether applicants understood the reasons for decisions made on their application
- perceptions of whether applicants felt they were treated fairly and listened to
- perceptions of the overall service delivery
- information and frequency of previous applications
- perceptions of service delivery improvements over the last three years
- the levels of use and satisfaction with various service improvements implemented:
  - voicemail services
  - 'Public Access' facility
  - householder enquiry form

## **5.0        METHODOLOGY**

The survey form was much the same as that used in previous years, but redesigned to incorporate three new sets of questions to investigate the new improvements as listed in the objectives.

Planning Services and Corporate Marketing and Communications designed the survey to allow returned surveys to be scanned into the computer. The survey was posted week commencing 23 May 2005, with a response deadline date of three weeks.

A reminder mailing was not required following a satisfactory response rate of 26.2% from the initial mailing.

A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix I.

## **6.0        RESPONSES**

880 questionnaires were mailed; 231 usable completed questionnaires were returned representing a response rate of 26.2%. A sample size of 231 is subject to a maximum standard error of +/- 6.4% at the 95% level of confidence.

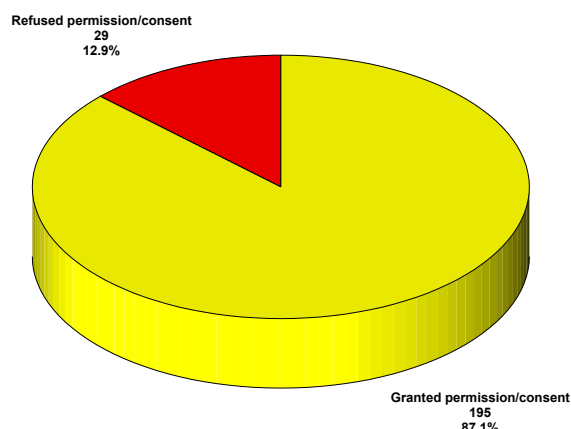
Analysis by respondents' postcode (where known) reveals that over four fifths (86.2%) live in the Borough of Tunbridge Wells, of which 50.9% are from rural areas, and 35.3% are from urban areas. 13.8% live outside the borough, which could indicate that these respondents are from a head office location.

- Compared with 2003 the proportions vary slightly: respondents not living in Tunbridge Wells Borough represented 51.6%, Urban, 23.5%, and Rural, 24.9%.

## 7.0 ABOUT YOUR APPLICATION

- Over four-fifths of respondents' applications were granted permission / consent (87.1%), Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1: SUCCESS OF YOUR APPLICATION**



- Providing comparisons with the previous Best Value Survey conducted in 2000/01, 4.9% fewer applications were successful, Table 2.

**TABLE 2: SUCCESS OF YOUR APPLICATION**

|                            | 2000/01* | 2003**  | 2004**  |
|----------------------------|----------|---------|---------|
| <b>% Successful</b>        | 92%      | 87.8%   | 87.1%   |
| <b>Sample Base</b>         | 579      | 369     | 224     |
| <b>Confidence Interval</b> | +/-2.3%  | +/-3.4% | +/-4.4% |
| <b>% Unsuccessful</b>      | 8%       | 12.2%   | 12.9%   |

\* Results are based on survey period April 2000 to March 2001, conducted over four periods covering 12 months.

\*\* Results are based on survey period April to September 2003/2004, conducted in one period, covering six months

- Respondents whose applications were granted permission tend to be most satisfied with elements of service delivery; in particular, 87.3% were satisfied with the reasons given for the decision made on their application. However, fewer respondents from this group were satisfied that the Council kept them informed about the progress of their application (66.3%). This is an improvement, however, on the 52.1% reported in the 2003 survey.
- Respondents whose applications were not granted permission were least satisfied that the Council dealt promptly with their queries (7.7% satisfied, 84.6% dissatisfied), and felt strongly that the Council did not keep them informed about the progress on their application (14.8% satisfied, 74% dissatisfied).

## 8.0 ABOUT THE APPLICANT AND APPLICATION

- Over four fifths, 82.1%, were acting as a private individual when making their most recent application to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's Planning Department, (Figure 2). A further 6.6% were acting on behalf of their employer.

**FIGURE 2: WHEN YOU MADE YOUR MOST RECENT APPLICATION, IN WHAT CAPACITY WERE YOU ACTING?**



- 6.1% were acting as part of their own business, whilst a minority were an agent acting on behalf of another party (4.4%).

**TABLE 3: IN WHAT CAPACITY WERE YOU ACTING**

|  | 2000/01 | 2003** | 2004** |
|--|---------|--------|--------|
| <b>As a private individual</b>                       | -       | 33.4%  | 82.1%  |
| <b>As an agent acting on behalf of another party</b> | -       | 52.3%  | 4.4%   |
| <b>As part of your own business</b>                  | -       | 7.7%   | 6.1%   |
| <b>On behalf of your employer</b>                    | -       | 6.1%   | 6.6%   |
| <b>Other</b>   | -       | 0.5%   | 0.9%   |
| <b>Sample base</b>                                   | -       | 377    | 229    |

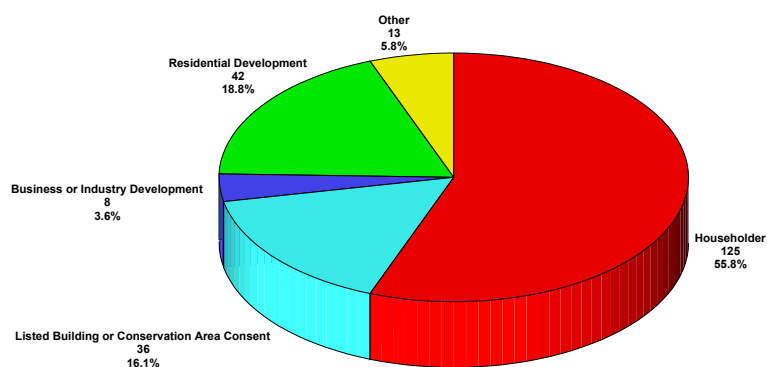
\*\* Results are based on survey period April to September 2003/2004, conducted in one period, covering six months

- On looking at the data presented in Table 3 above, there has been a significant increase in the number of planning applications from private individuals, up 146% on the 2003 figure. The biggest fall in applications are those from an agent acting on behalf of another party, down 92%.

### 8.1 TYPE OF APPLICATION

- Over half (55.8%) of applications submitted were householder applications, followed by Residential Developments (18.8%). 16.1% submitted a Listed Building or Conservation Area Consent (Figure 3).

**FIGURE 3: WHAT TYPE OF APPLICATION WERE YOU SUBMITTING?**



- 5.8% submitted other type of applications.

**TABLE 4: WHAT TYPE OF APPLICATION WERE YOU SUBMITTING?**

|  | 2000/01 | 2003** | 2004** |
|--|---------|--------|--------|
| Householder                                  | -       | 37.5%  | 55.8%  |
| Listed Building or Conservation Area Consent | -       | 27.1%  | 16.1%  |
| Business or Industry Development             | -       | 28.2%  | 3.6%   |
| Residential Development                      | -       | 9.3%   | 18.8%  |
| Other  | -       | 11.2%  | 5.8%   |
| Sample base                                  | -       | 378    | 224    |

\*\* Results are based on survey period April to September 2003/2004, conducted in one period, covering six months

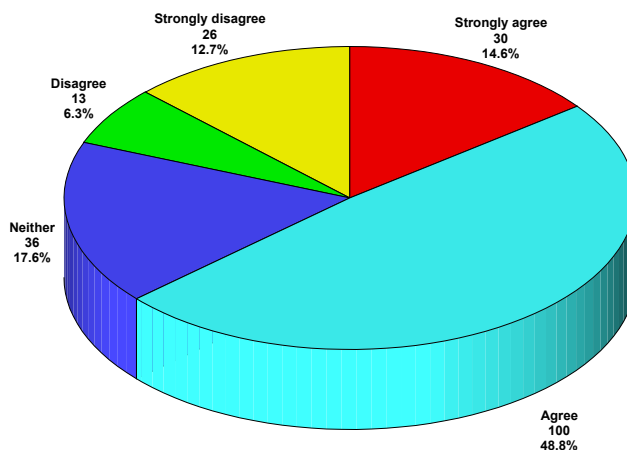
- On looking at the data presented in Table 4 above, there has been a significant increase for Residential Development applications, up 102% on the 2003 figure. The biggest fall, however, was for Business or Industry Development applications and Householder applications, down 87% and 49% respectively on 2003.

- Throughout the next sections of the report results use a ratings score of 1-5, where 1 is 'Strongly agree' and 5 is 'Strongly disagree' with a particular statement, providing a scale of satisfaction and a mean rating for service delivery.
- All results in the following charts and tables are respondents providing a valid rating of agree/strongly agree and those that disagree/strongly disagree. The base sample and the confidence interval at the 95% level has also been provided. Those providing 'don't know' answers or not replying to a question were excluded. Therefore base samples will vary. All statements have been compared with the survey conducted in 2003.

## 9.0 ADVICE AND HELP

- Almost two thirds (63.4%) agree they were given the advice and help needed to submit their application correctly, of which 14.6% strongly agree resulting in a mean rating of 2.84 out of 5.00 (Figure 4).

**FIGURE 4: I WAS GIVEN THE ADVICE AND HELP NEEDED TO SUBMIT MY APPLICATION CORRECTLY**



**TABLE 5: ADVICE AND HELP COMPARISONS (2000/01 - 2004)**

|                                | 2000/2001* | 2003 ** | 2004**  | 03/04 % difference |
|--------------------------------|------------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| % Agree / Strongly Agree       | 68%        | 64.5%   | 63.4%   | -2%                |
| Sample Base                    | 445        | 358     | 205     |                    |
| Confidence Interval            | +/-4.4%    | +/-5.0% | +/-6.6% |                    |
| % Disagree / Strongly Disagree | 12%        | 10.9%   | 19.0%   | +74%               |

\* Results are based on survey period April 2000 to March 2001, conducted over four periods covering 12 months.

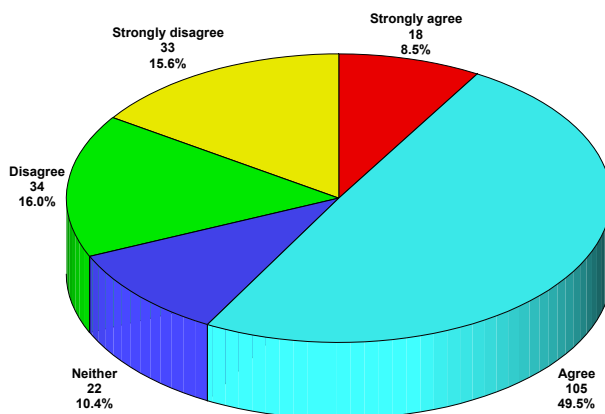
\*\* Results are based on survey period April to September 2003/2004, conducted in one period, covering six months.

- The percentage difference between respondents in agreement with the statement is -2% and there still appears to be an increase of those disagreeing: up from 10.9% to 19.0% indicating that people are not always getting the help and advice they need, or inconsistent information is given.
- Almost three fifths, 59.5% of repeat customers agree with this statement, rising to 68.8% for new applicants.

## 10.0 PROGRESS OF MY APPLICATION

- Almost three fifths, 58%, agree that the Council kept them informed about the progress of their application, of which 8.5% strongly agree resulting in a mean rating of 2.96 out of 5.00 (Figure 5).

**FIGURE 5: THE COUNCIL KEPT ME INFORMED ABOUT THE PROGRESS OF MY APPLICATION**



**TABLE 6: KEPT INFORMED COMPARISONS (2000/01 - 2004)**

|                                | 2000/2001* | 2003 ** | 2004**  | 03/04 % difference |
|--------------------------------|------------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| % Agree / Strongly Agree       | 47%        | 48.4%   | 58%     | +20%               |
| Sample Base                    | 502        | 366     | 212     |                    |
| Confidence Interval            | +/-4.4%    | +/-5.2% | +/-6.6% |                    |
| % Disagree / Strongly Disagree | 33%        | 29%     | 31.6%   | +9%                |

\* Results are based on survey period April 2000 to March 2001, conducted over four periods covering 12 months.

\*\* Results are based on survey period April to September 2003/2004, conducted in one period, covering six months.

- The percentage difference between respondents in agreement with the statement is +20% which appears to be the biggest change over the last 12 months. Respondents with no opinion in 2003, now appear to be satisfied.
- A small increase was also seen for those in disagreement.
- According to respondent type, those acting as a private individual were more likely to agree (61.2%, up from 57% in 2003) that the Council kept them informed about the progress of their application. This is compared to those acting on behalf of their employer (60%). Agents acting on behalf of another party and those acting as part of their own business were least likely to agree they were kept informed.
- Just over half, 54%, of repeat customers agree with this statement, rising to 62.4% for new applicants.

### 11.0 PROMPTNESS WITH MY QUERIES

- Almost three-fifths (58.6%) agree that the Council dealt promptly with their queries, of which just over one-in-ten (11.5%) strongly agree resulting in a mean rating of 2.97 out of 5.00 (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6: THE COUNCIL DEALT PROMPTLY WITH MY QUERIES

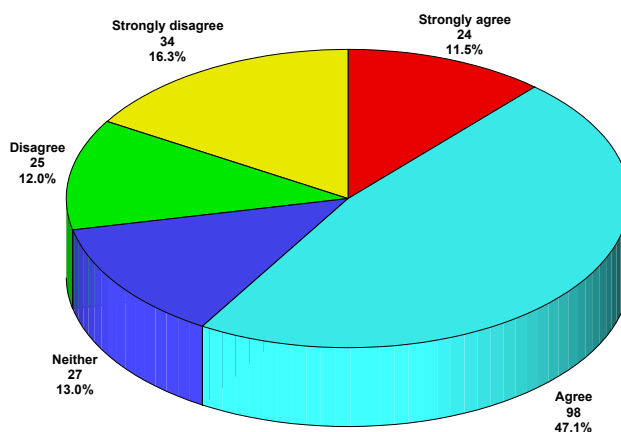


TABLE 7: PROMPTNESS OF QUERY COMPARISONS (2000/01 - 2004)

|                                | 2000/2001* | 2003 ** | 2004**  | 03/04 % difference |
|--------------------------------|------------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| % Agree / Strongly Agree       | 60%        | 56.2%   | 58.6%   | +4%                |
| Sample Base                    | 482        | 354     | 208     |                    |
| Confidence Interval            | +/-4.4%    | +/-5.2  | +/-6.7% |                    |
| % Disagree / Strongly Disagree | 22%        | 24.5%   | 28.3%   | +16%               |

\* Results are based on survey period April 2000 to March 2001, conducted over four periods covering 12 months.

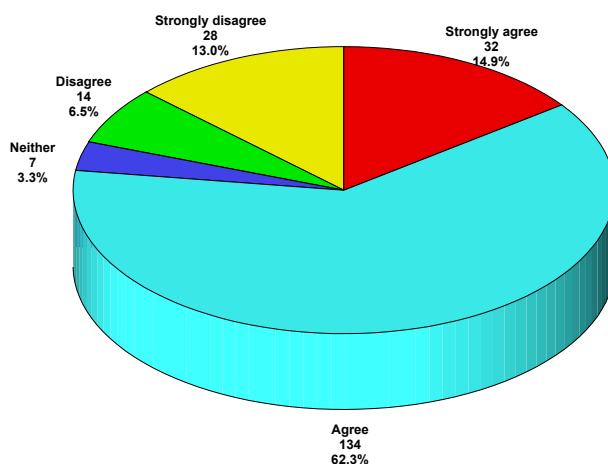
\*\* Results are based on survey period April to September 2003/2004, conducted in one period, covering six months.

- The percentage difference between respondents in agreement with the statement is +4%. However, the proportion disagreeing also increased from 24.5% to 28.3%, indicating more people are dissatisfied with this part of the service.
- Almost three fifths, 58.1%, of repeat customers agree with this statement, rising marginally to 58.8% for new applicants. 30.6% of repeat customer disagree.

## 12.0 UNDERSTANDING REASONS

- Over three-quarters (77.2%) agree that they understood the reasons for the decision made on their application, of which 14.9% strongly agree resulting in a mean rating of 2.56 out of 5.00 (Figure 7).

**FIGURE 7: I UNDERSTAND THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION MADE ON MY APPLICATION**



**TABLE 8: UNDERSTANDING REASONS COMPARISONS (2000/01 - 2003)**

|                                | 2000/2001* | 2003 ** | 2004**  | 03/04 % difference |
|--------------------------------|------------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| % Agree / Strongly Agree       | 77%        | 78.7%   | 77.2%   | -2%                |
| Sample Base                    | 501        | 367     | 215     |                    |
| Confidence Interval            | +/-3.8%    | +/-4.2% | +/-5.6% |                    |
| % Disagree / Strongly Disagree | 13%        | 9.8%    | 19.5%   | +99%               |

\* Results are based on survey period April 2000 to March 2001, conducted over four periods covering 12 months.

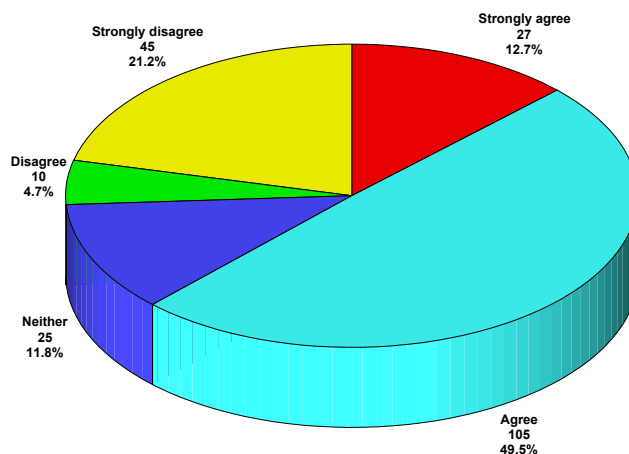
\*\* Results are based on survey period April to September 2003/2004, conducted in one period, covering six months.

- The percentage difference between respondents in agreement with the statement is -2%, and again more are in disagreement, up from 9.8% to 19.5%, suggesting that there are issues surrounding the clarity and consistency of reasons given to the decisions made.
- Evidence shows that there is some correlation with those respondents dissatisfied with the advice and help given, and dissatisfaction with understanding the reasons given.
- Almost three quarters, 74.2%, of repeat customers agree with this statement, rising to 80.2% for new applicants.

### 13.0 TREATED FAIRLY AND LISTENED TO

- Just over three fifths, 62.2%, agree that they felt they were treated fairly and that their viewpoint was listened to, of which one-in-eight (12.7%) strongly agree resulting in a mean rating of 2.91 out of 5.00 (Figure 8).

**FIGURE 8: I FEEL I WAS TREATED FAIRLY AND THAT MY VIEWPOINT WAS LISTENED TO**



**TABLE 9: TREATED FAIRLY AND LISTENED TO COMPARISONS (2000/01 - 2004)**

|                                | 2000/2001* | 2003 ** | 2004**  | 03/04 % difference |
|--------------------------------|------------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| % Agree / Strongly Agree       | 71%        | 64.9%   | 62.2%   | -4%                |
| Sample Base                    | 488        | 359     | 212     |                    |
| Confidence Interval            | +/-4.1%    | +/-5.0  | +/-6.5% |                    |
| % Disagree / Strongly Disagree | 17%        | 14.2%   | 25.9%   | +82%               |

\* Results are based on survey period April 2000 to March 2001, conducted over four periods covering 12 months.

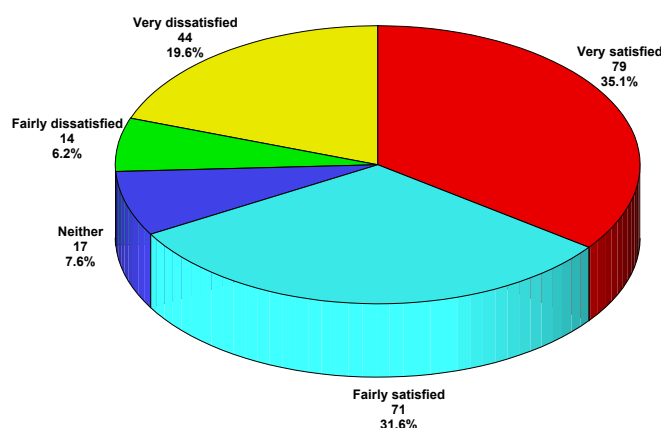
\*\* Results are based on survey period April to September 2003/2004, conducted in one period, covering six months.

- The percentage difference between respondents in agreement with the statement is -4%, with more in disagreement, an increase of 82% on the 2003 figure. Those with no opinion in 2003, appear now to have become dissatisfied in 2004.
- Almost three fifths, 59.6%, of repeat customers agree with this statement, rising to 66% for new applicants.

## 14.0 OVERALL SATISFACTION

- Regardless of the outcome of their planning application, respondents were asked to indicate their degree of satisfaction with the overall service provided.
- Over two-thirds (66.7%) were satisfied with the overall service provided by the Council in processing their application, of which over a third, 35.1% were very satisfied resulting in a mean rating of 2.43 out of 5.00 (Figure 9).

**FIGURE 9: OVERALL SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE COUNCIL IN PROCESSING YOUR APPLICATION**



**TABLE 10: OVERALL SATISFACTION COMPARISONS (2000/01 - 2004)**

|                                  | 2000/2001* | 2003 ** | 2004**  | 03/04 % difference |
|----------------------------------|------------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| % Satisfied/Very satisfied       | 70%        | 67.2%   | 66.7%   | -1%                |
| Sample Base                      | 552        | 378     | 225     |                    |
| Confidence Interval              | +/-3.8%    | +/-4.73 | +/-6.2% |                    |
| % Dissatisfied/Very dissatisfied | 21%        | 17.9%   | 25.8%   | +44%               |

\* Results are based on survey period April 2000 to March 2001, conducted over four periods covering 12 months.

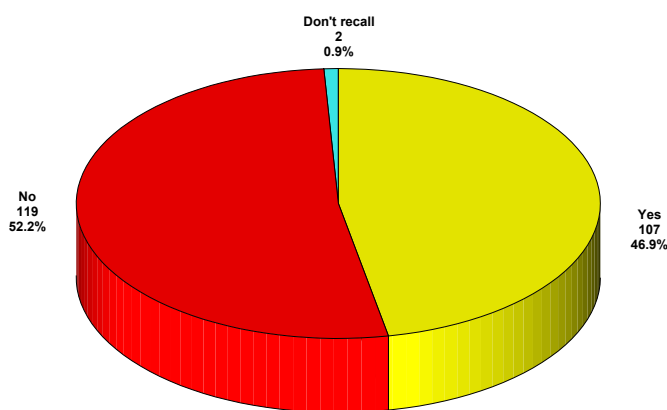
\*\* Results are based on survey period April to September 2003/2004, conducted in one period, covering six months.

- The percentage difference between respondents satisfied with the statement is -1%, compared to a difference of -4% between 2000/01 and 2003.
- However, the proportion dissatisfied increased from 17.9% to 25.8%, a percentage difference of +44%, placing further dissatisfaction on the services provided by Planning Services.
- Almost a fifth, 17.2%, of respondents whose application was granted permission/consent were dissatisfied with the overall service, rising to 75% of those whose application was refused.
- Almost two thirds, 65.7%, of repeat customers are satisfied with the overall service provided, rising to 68.9% for new applicants.

### 15.0 PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

- The next two questions were asked in order to determine how many times respondents had applied for a planning consent prior to their most recent application.
- Less than half, 46.9%, had applied to the Planning Department for planning permission prior to their most recent application (Figure 10).

**FIGURE 10: HAVE YOU APPLIED TO THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT FOR PLANNING CONSENT PREVIOUS TO YOUR MOST RECENT APPLICATION?**



**TABLE 11: WHETHER PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE (2000/01 - 2004)**

|              | 2000/2001* | 2003 ** | 2004** | 03/04 % difference |
|--------------|------------|---------|--------|--------------------|
| Yes          | -          | 65%     | 46.9%  | -28%               |
| No           | -          | 32.1%   | 52.2%  | +63%               |
| Don't recall | -          | 2.9%    | 0.9%   | -69%               |

\*\* Results are based on survey period April to September 2003/2004, conducted in one period, covering six months

- Fewer applications for planning consent were made prior to their most recent application, a percentage difference, down 28% down from 65% to 46.9%.
- Respondents that had not previously applied for planning consent prior to their most recent application were not eligible to answer the next question. Therefore the sample is based on 107 respondents (46.9%) only.

### **15.1 NUMBER OF TIMES APPLIED FOR PLANNING CONSENT**

- Respondents that had applied previously were asked to identify how many times they applied to the Planning Department for planning consent and in what time frame these took place.
- The majority had applied up to five times in each of the following time periods stated.
  - In the last six months 73.3%
  - In the last six to 12 months 88.4%
  - Between one to two years 86%
  - Over two years ago 87.7%

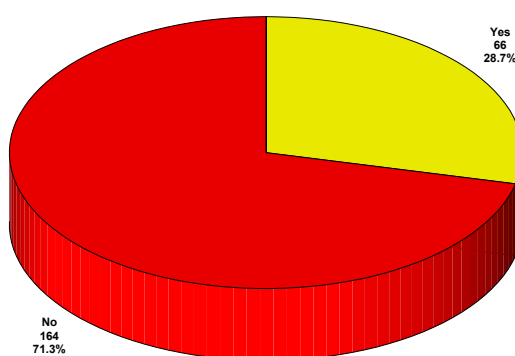
*It should be noted that this question asked in 2004, was changed slightly to reflect the time periods stated above, compared to those asked in 2003 which did not flow in a chronological sequence.*

- The next series of questions were introduced into the Planning Applicants' Best Value Survey for 2003. Comparisons with the previous survey conducted in 2003 will be shown, along with the percentage difference over the 12-month period.

## 15.2 PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

- Respondents were asked if they had made more than one application in the past three years. Over a quarter, 28.7%, had (Figure 11).

**FIGURE 11: HAVE YOU MADE MORE THAN ONE APPLICATION IN THE LAST THREE YEARS?**



**TABLE 12: APPLICATIONS MADE IN THE LAST THREE YEARS (2000/01 - 2004)**

|     | 2000/2001* | 2003 ** | 2004** | 03/04 % difference |
|-----|------------|---------|--------|--------------------|
| Yes | -          | 60.1%   | 28.7%  | -52%               |
| No  | -          | 39.9%   | 71.9%  | +80%               |

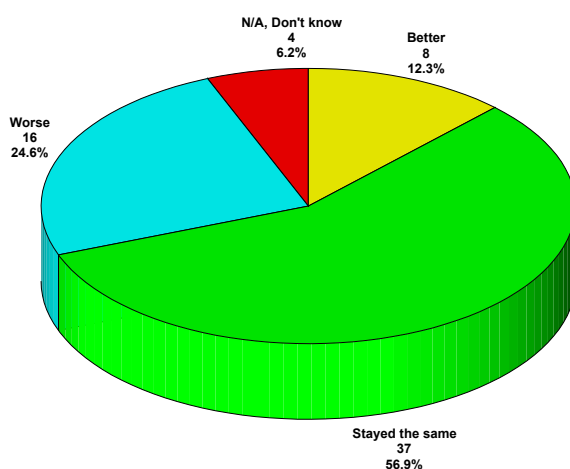
\*\* Results are based on survey period April to September 2003/2004, conducted in one period, covering six months

- The proportion of applicants making applications in the last three years is down 52%, indicating fewer repeat applicants.
- Respondents that had not made more than one application in the last three years were not eligible to answer the next questions. Therefore the sample is based on 66 respondents (28.7%) only.
- Data presented in sections 16.0 to 20.0 asks respondents that made more than one application in the last three years whether things had got 'Better', 'Stayed the same' or got 'Worse'.

## 16.0 ADVICE AND HELP (PART II)

- Almost a quarter, 24.6%, indicated that the advice and help given had got worse.
- 12.3% indicated things had got better, whilst for 56.9% things had stayed the same over the last three years.
- 6.2% did not know whether things had improved or got worse (Figure 12).

**FIGURE 12: HAS THE ADVICE AND HELP PROVIDED GOT BETTER OR WORSE OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS?**



**TABLE 13: ADVICE AND HELP (PART II) (2000/01 - 2004)**

|                 | 2000/2001* | 2003 ** | 2004** | 03/04 % difference |
|-----------------|------------|---------|--------|--------------------|
| Better          | -          | 15.5%   | 12.3%  | -21%               |
| Stayed the same | -          | 68%     | 56.9%  | -16%               |
| Worse           | -          | 16.5%   | 24.6%  | +49%               |
| Don't know      | -          | -       | 6.2%   | -                  |

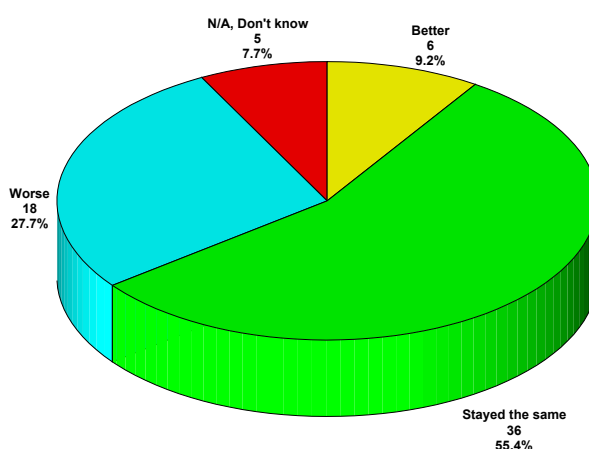
\*\* Results are based on survey period April to September 2003/2004, conducted in one period, covering six months

- Fewer applicants think the advice and help has got better, a percentage difference of -21% from 15.5% in 2003 to 12.3% in 2004.
- Applicants' perception of the service was that the service delivery had got worse, a difference of +49% from 16.5% to 24.6%.

### 17.0 PROGRESS OF APPLICATION (PART II)

- Over a quarter, 27.7%, indicated that the information provided about the progress of their application had got worse.
- 9.2% indicated things had got better, whilst for 55.4% things had stayed the same over the last three years.
- 7.7% did not know whether things had improved or not (Figure 13).

**FIGURE 13: HAS THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOUT THE PROGRESS OF YOUR APPLICATION GOT BETTER OR WORSE OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS?**



**TABLE 14: PROGRESS ON APPLICATION (PART II) (2000/01 - 2004)**

|                 | 2000/2001* | 2003 ** | 2004** | 03/04 % difference |
|-----------------|------------|---------|--------|--------------------|
| Better          | -          | 13%     | 9.2%   | -29%               |
| Stayed the same | -          | 66.7%   | 55.4%  | -17%               |
| Worse           | -          | 20.3%   | 27.7%  | +36%               |
| Don't know      | -          | -       | 7.7%   | -                  |

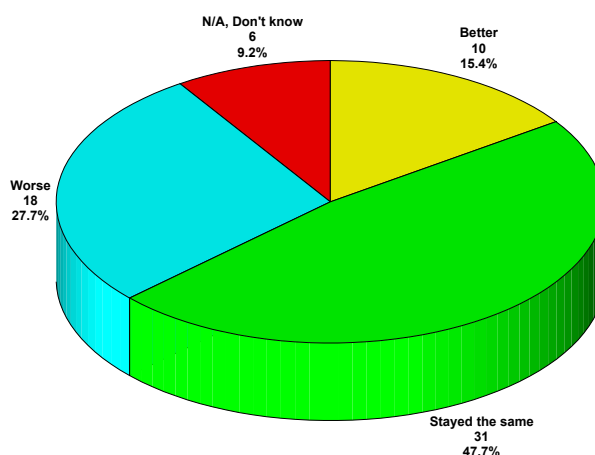
\*\* Results are based on survey period April to September 2003/2004, conducted in one period, covering six months

- Fewer applicants think the information provided about the progress of their application has got better, a percentage difference of -29% from 13% in 2003 to 9.2% in 2004.
- Applicants' perception of the service was that the service delivery had got worse, a difference of +36% from 20.3% to 27.7%.

### 18.0 PROMPTNESS WITH MY QUERIES (PART II)

- Over a quarter, 27.7%, indicated that the promptness with which their queries about their application were dealt had got worse.
- 15.4% indicated things had got better, whilst for 47.7% things had stayed the same over the last three years.
- 9.2% did not know whether things had improved or got worse (Figure 14).

**FIGURE 14: HAS THE PROMPTNESS WITH WHICH QUERIES ABOUT YOUR APPLICATION WERE DEALT WITH GOT BETTER OR WORSE OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS?**



**TABLE 15: PROMPTNESS WITH MY QUERIES (PART II) (2000/01 - 2004)**

|                 | 2000/2001* | 2003 ** | 2004** | 03/04 % difference |
|-----------------|------------|---------|--------|--------------------|
| Better          | -          | 18.6%   | 15.4%  | -17%               |
| Stayed the same | -          | 57.1%   | 47.7%  | -16%               |
| Worse           | -          | 24.3%   | 27.7%  | +14%               |
| Don't know      | -          | -       | 9.2%   | -                  |

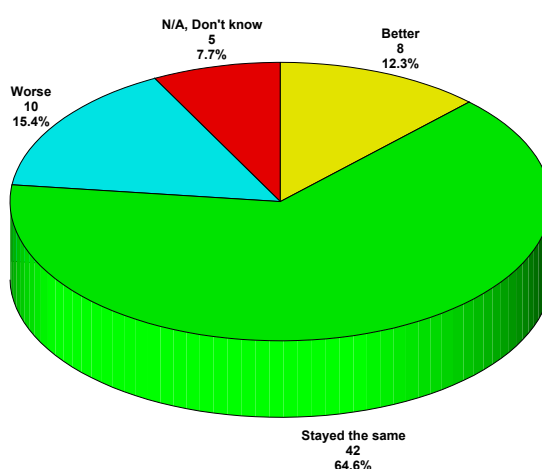
\*\* Results are based on survey period April to September 2003/2004, conducted in one period, covering six months

- Fewer applicants think that the promptness with which their queries were dealt with has got better, a percentage difference of -17% from 18.6% in 2003 to 15.4% in 2004.
- Applicants' perception of the service was that the service delivery had got worse, a difference of +14% from 24.3% to 27.7%.

### 19.0 CLARITY OF REASONS (PART II)

- Less than a fifth, 15.4%, indicated that the clarity of reasons for the decision given had got worse.
- 12.3% indicated things had got better, whilst for 64.6% (the highest proportion) things had stayed the same over the last three years.
- 7.7% did not know whether things had improved or not (Figure 15).

**FIGURE 15: IS THE CLARITY OF REASONS FOR THE DECISION GIVEN BETTER OR WORSE THAN THREE YEARS AGO?**



**TABLE 16: CLARITY OF REASONS (PART II) (2000/01 - 2004)**

|                 | 2000/2001* | 2003 ** | 2004** | 03/04 % difference |
|-----------------|------------|---------|--------|--------------------|
| Better          | -          | 8.7%    | 12.3%  | +41%               |
| Stayed the same | -          | 80.6%   | 64.6%  | -20%               |
| Worse           | -          | 10.7%   | 15.4%  | +44%               |
| Don't know      | -          | -       | 7.7%   | -                  |

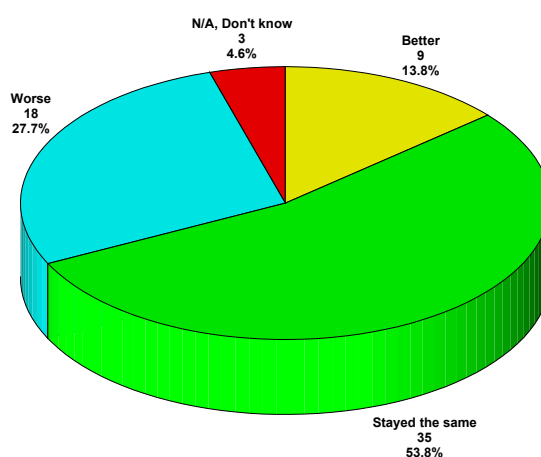
\*\* Results are based on survey period April to September 2003/2004, conducted in one period, covering six months

- More applicants think the clarity of reasons for the decision given on their application has got better, a percentage difference of +41% from 8.7% in 2003 to 12.3% in 2004.
- However, there still appears to be more saying things have got worse, +44% from 10.7% to 15.4%.

## 20.0 TREATED FAIRLY AND LISTENED TO (PART II)

- Over a quarter, 27.7%, indicated that the fairness with which their application was dealt with and their viewpoint listened to has got worse.
- 13.8% indicated things had got better, whilst for 53.8% things had stayed the same over the last three years.
- 4.6% did not know whether things had improved or not (Figure 16).

**FIGURE 16: HAS THE FAIRNESS WITH WHICH MY APPLICATION WAS DEALT WITH AND MY VIEWPOINT LISTENED TO GOT BETTER OR WORSE THAN THREE YEARS AGO?**



**TABLE 17: TREATED FAIRLY AND LISTENED TO (PART II) (2000/01 - 2004)**

|                 | 2000/2001* | 2003 ** | 2004** | 03/04 % difference |
|-----------------|------------|---------|--------|--------------------|
| Better          | -          | 12.1%   | 13.8%  | +14%               |
| Stayed the same | -          | 75.8%   | 53.8%  | -29%               |
| Worse           | -          | 12.1%   | 27.7%  | +129%              |
| Don't know      | -          | -       | 4.6%   |                    |

\*\* Results are based on survey period April to September 2003/2004, conducted in one period, covering six months

- More applicants think the fairness with which their application was dealt with and their viewpoint listened to has got better, a percentage difference of +14% from 12.1% in 2003 to 13.8% in 2004.
- However, there still appears to be more saying things have got worse, a difference of +129% from 12.1% to 27.7%.

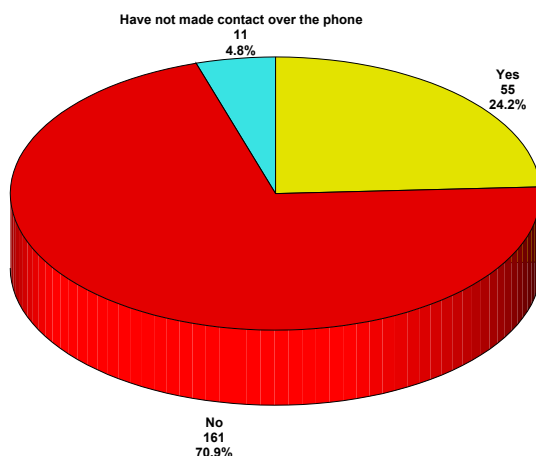
## 21.0 NEW SERVICES INTRODUCED

- The next three sections look at the following three services in more detail to establish the degree of use, satisfaction and usefulness that these have made to the planning process:
  - Voicemail services
  - 'Public Access' facility
  - Householder Enquiry Form

### 21.1 VOICEMAIL

- Over two thirds, 70.9% of respondents have not left a telephone message on a Planning Officer's voicemail system. 24.2% have left messages with 4.8% having not made contact by telephone (Figure 17).

**FIGURE 17: HAVE YOU LEFT A VOICEMAIL MESSAGE ON A PLANNING OFFICER'S TELEPHONE? (APPLICANTS)**



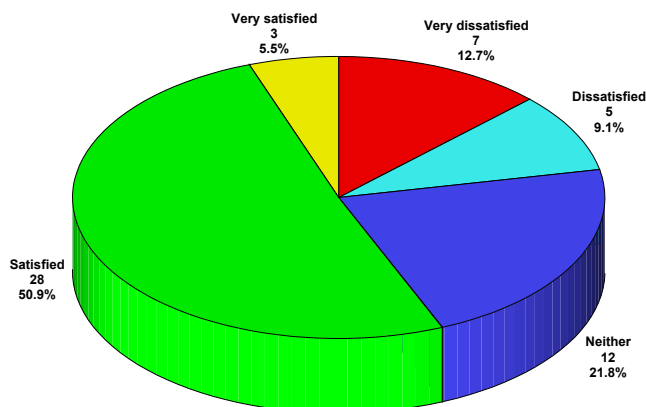
**TABLE 18: COMPARISONS BETWEEN APPLICANT AND AGENT USE OF VOICEMAIL FACILITIES**

|               | Applicants | Agents |
|---------------|------------|--------|
| Yes           | 24.2%      | 46.6%  |
| No            | 70.9%      | 53.6%  |
| Did not phone | 4.8%       | -      |

- Fewer applicants compared to agents are using the voicemail facility.
- Respondents who did not leave a voicemail message were not eligible to answer the next three questions, and were asked to go to the next section 'Public Access' on page 28. Therefore the next series of questions are based on a reduced sample of 55.
- Of the 24.2% or 55 Planning Applicants leaving a voicemail message, the vast majority (96.3%) stated the recorded message was clear. A minority, 3.7%, found the message unclear.

- Almost half, 49.1%, of those leaving a message were responded to within the 'Average' time period (2-5 days). Less than a third (30.2%) were 'Prompt' (within 24 hours), and 20.8% were 'Slow' (over 5 days).
- Almost three fifths (56.4%) are satisfied with the voicemail service introduced by the Planning Service, providing a mean rating of 3.27 out of 5 (Figure 18).

**FIGURE 18: OVERALL, HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE VOICEMAIL FACILITY INTRODUCED BY THE PLANNING SERVICE?**



- Just over a fifth, 21.8%, were undecided 'Neither' about their satisfaction with the voicemail service.
- It is clear that satisfaction is higher for the more prompt return call, compared to those that are slow (Table 19):
  - Prompt return call = 100% satisfaction
  - Average return call = 57.6% satisfaction
  - Slow return call = 0% satisfaction

**TABLE 19: SATISFACTION WITH VOICEMAIL FACILITY ACCORDING TO RESPONSE TIME**

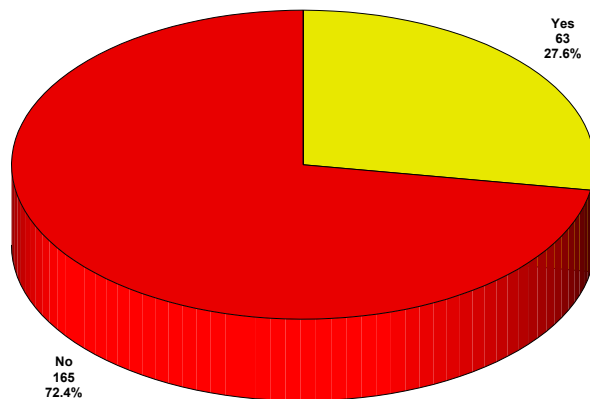
| TABLE SAMPLE             | Very dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Neither | Satisfied | Very satisfied |
|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------|---------|-----------|----------------|
| Slow (over 5 days)       | 54.5%             | 18.2%        | 27.3%   | -         | -              |
| Average (2-5 days)       | 3.8%              | 7.7%         | 30.8%   | 53.8%     | 3.8%           |
| Prompt (within 24 hours) | -                 | -            | -       | 87.5%     | 12.5%          |

- All respondents were eligible to answer the next question, based on the sample of 226 respondents.

## 21.2 PUBLIC ACCESS

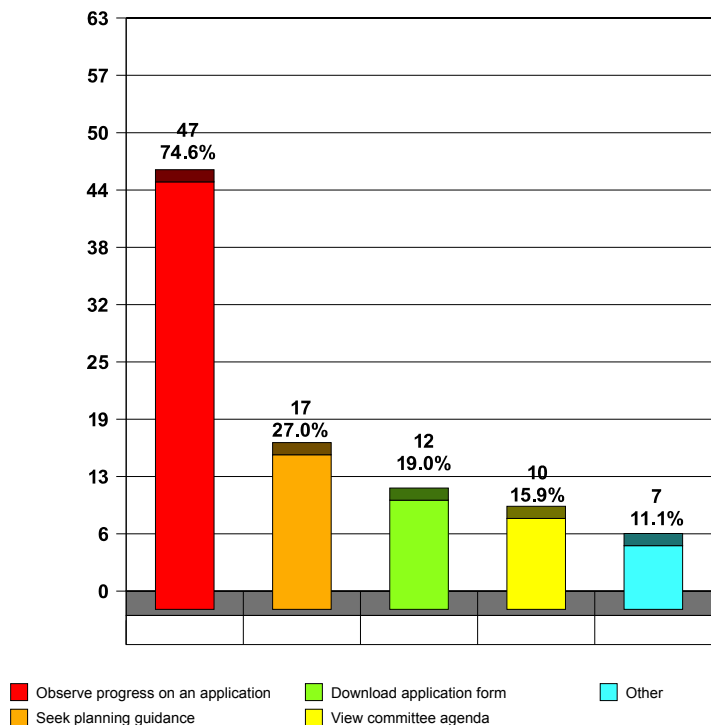
- Almost three quarters, 72.4% have not used the Public Access facility, available through the Internet (Figure 19). Just over a quarter, 27.6%, have used this.

**FIGURE 19: HAVE YOU USED THE PUBLIC ACCESS FACILITY AVAILABLE THROUGH THE INTERNET? (APPLICANTS)**



- Agents acting on behalf of another party are the mostly to use the Public Access online facility, 60%, followed by 30.8% of those acting as part of their own business.
- The research shows that those acting as private individuals are least likely users; 26.3%.
- Respondents who had not used the Public Access facility were not eligible to answer the next four questions, and were asked to go to the next section, 'Householder Enquiry Form', on page 31. Therefore the next series of questions are based on a reduced sample of 63.
- Of the 27.6% or 63 Planning Agents using this facility, almost three quarters, 74.6%, were observing progress on an application, followed by those seeking planning guidance, 27% (Figure 20 page 29). Respondents to this question were able to tick more than one option, therefore totals will be greater than 100%.

**FIGURE 20: WHAT DID YOU USE THE PUBLIC ACCESS FACILITY FOR?**

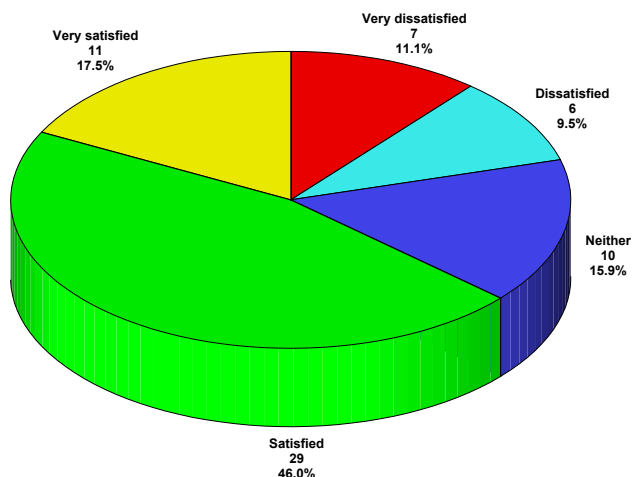


**TABLE 20: COMPARISONS BETWEEN APPLICANT AND AGENT USE OF THE PUBLIC ACCESS FACILITY**

|                                    | Applicants | Agents |
|------------------------------------|------------|--------|
| Download an application form       | 19%        | 66%    |
| Seek planning guidance             | 27%        | 19.1%  |
| Observe progress on an application | 74.6%      | 55.3%  |
| View committee agenda              | 15.9%      | 10.6%  |
| Other                              | 11.1%      | 12.8%  |
| Sample base                        | 63         | 47     |

- It appears from the above table that applicants and agents are using the Public Access facility for different purposes; the most popular being to download an application form (agents) and to observe progress on an application (applicants).
- The vast majority (81.7%) of applicants found what they were looking for, compared to 93.6% of agents.
- Almost two thirds (63.5%) are satisfied with the 'Public Access' facility (Figure 21, page 30), rising to 81.6% satisfaction for those that found what they were looking for.

**FIGURE 21: OVERALL, HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE PUBLIC ACCESS WEBSITE? (APPLICANTS)**



**TABLE 21: COMPARISONS BETWEEN APPLICANT AND AGENT SATISFACTION WITH THE PUBLIC ACCESS FACILITY**

|                   | Applicants | Agents |
|-------------------|------------|--------|
| Very dissatisfied | 11.1%      | 4.3%   |
| Dissatisfied      | 9.5%       | 8.7%   |
| Neither           | 15.9%      | 15.2%  |
| Satisfied         | 46.0%      | 67.4%  |
| Very satisfied    | 17.5%      | 4.3%   |
| Sample base       | 63         | 47     |

- Planning agents appear to be more satisfied with the Public Access facility compared to applicants.
- Users were asked what other information, if any, they would like to see made available on this facility. Comments provided according to whether the user was dissatisfied or satisfied are listed below.

**DISSATISFIED USERS OF THE PUBLIC ACCESS FACILITY**

- Useful / user-friendly information.
- Difficulty finding information.
- See Wandsworth Council site; this is how it should be done.

**SATISFIED USERS OF THE PUBLIC ACCESS FACILITY**

- Excellent all round.
- Planning committee meeting dates.
- Already a good facility.
- Detailed planning lists.
- Application forms in Word template format.
- Up-to-date information.
- No record of progress and when we would hear.
- Downloadable site plans, downloadable details of applications.
- All respondents were eligible to answer the next question, based on the sample of 219 respondents.

### **21.3 HOUSEHOLDER ENQUIRY FORM**

- In May 2004 a revised Householder Enquiry Form was introduced to assist people seeking advice on whether planning permission was required for works proposed.
- Over four fifths, 87.2% of applicants (74.2% agents), did not complete one of these revised forms prior to submitting their application. Only 5.9% (6.9% agents) did, with a further 6.8% (20.7% agents) stating the form was not applicable for the type of application.
- Of those using the form, (5.9% or 13 people), just over two thirds, 69.2% said the form was easy to complete.
- In terms of how they consider the form could be improved all comments received have been provided below:
  - Get a competent person to deal with the form; a Planning Officer not a Clerk.
  - Don't worry about improving the form, improve the Planning Department.
  - Tick boxes do not provide answers to all the options.
  - So everyone can understand, even the layman.
- Our response time to submitted Householder Enquiry Forms was seen by 58.8% of Planning Applicants to be 'Prompt'. A further 23.5% thought we were 'Average', with less than a fifth (17.6%) indicating 'Slow'.

## 22.0 ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

- The final part of the survey gave all respondents the opportunity to write freely, any other comments they may wish to express. All comments provided have been coded for ease of analysis. 72 respondents (31%) provided further comments. However, some people gave more than one comments, hence totals greater than 100% (Table 22).

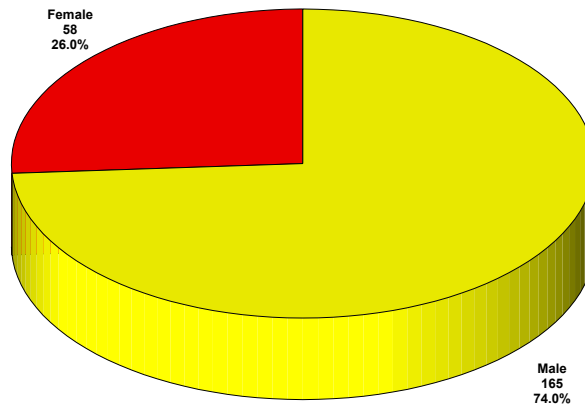
**TABLE 22: DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS?**

| Base   |               |
|--|---------------|
|  | 231<br>100.0% |
| Missing  |               |
| <i>No reply</i>  | 159<br>68.8%  |
| Q29 - Any other comments? (coded)  |               |
| <i>mixed opinions, views, inconsistent, confusion, misleading, not following Gov't guidelines, biased</i>  | 21<br>9.1%    |
| <i>v.dissatisfied, unhelpful, unfriendly, inefficient, appalling, obstructive, negative, poor quality staff, unfair, stressful, disorganised</i> | 19<br>8.2%    |
| <i>v.satisfied, v.helpful, friendly, efficient, good communication, positive comments to named staff</i>   | 18<br>7.8%    |
| <i>lack of thought, consideration into planning applications, no advice, no consultation</i>   | 15<br>6.5%    |
| <i>negative comments about named staff</i>   | 8<br>3.5%     |
| <i>process too long, time wasting</i>  | 8<br>3.5%     |
| <i>unreasonable fees</i>   | 7<br>3.0%     |
| <i>constantly chasing for progress/update, lacking feedback, impossible to discuss</i>   | 6<br>2.6%     |
| <i>applications refused to meet deadlines/targets, lacking explanations, no site visit</i>   | 6<br>2.6%     |
| <i>not enough officer time assigned, constantly changing case officer</i>  | 5<br>2.2%     |
| <i>recruit more planning officers, spread the work load</i>  | 5<br>2.2%     |
| <i>become more accessible</i>  | 2<br>0.9%     |
| <i>re-introduce pre application discussion on 'other' applications</i>   | 2<br>0.9%     |
| <i>mandatory copy of Council responses to applications submitted</i>   | 1<br>0.4%     |
| <i>more improvements required</i>  | 1<br>0.4%     |
| <i>out-of-date information submitted</i>   | 1<br>0.4%     |
| <i>poor website, worst used</i>  | 1<br>0.4%     |
| <i>other</i>   | 1<br>0.4%     |

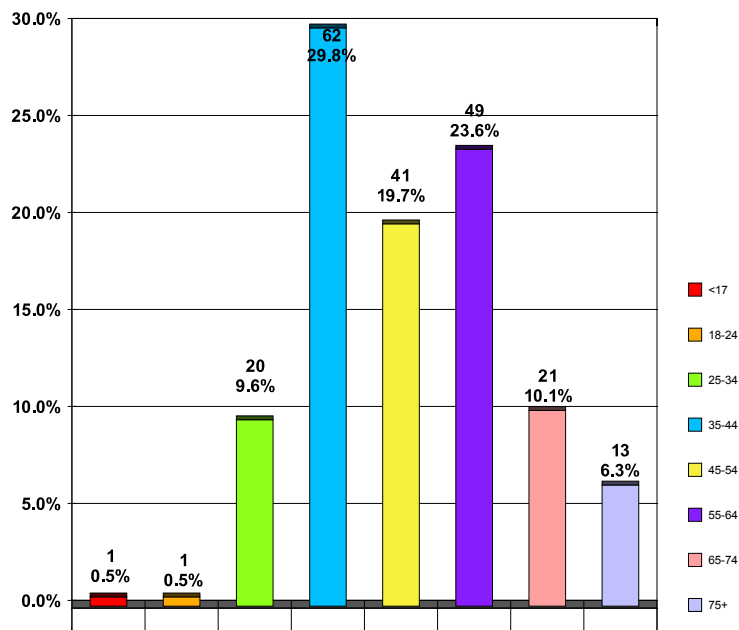
**PROFILE INFORMATION**

- The sample is made up of 74% male and 26% female (Figure 22). Compared with 2003, the split was 82.1% male, 17.9% female.

**FIGURE 22: RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**



**FIGURE 23: RESPONDENTS' AGE PROFILE**



- Respondents tend to be of a middle age profile: 29.8% aged 35-44, 19.7% aged 45-54 and 23.6% aged 55-64. Those aged over 65 represented 16.4%, with those aged under 25 years representing 1%. (Figure 23, above).

- The vast majority of respondents describe themselves as White-British (94.1%), 2.7% White-Irish and 1.8% other White Background. Non-white European respondents represented 1.4%.
- The majority of respondents, 90.3% (94.2% in 2003) do not consider themselves to have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity. Of the 9.7% (21) respondents who have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity, 16 (72.7%) consider that this limits their activities in some way.
- Respondents were asked to describe their current situation from a list of definitions. The results show that three quarters, 74.7%, are employed, full-time, part-time or self-employed. A further 16.4% are wholly retired from work and 6.2% are looking after the home.