

## **WIRRAL COUNCIL**

CABINET – 14<sup>th</sup> January 2010

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE / DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

### **Place Survey 2008-09 – Analysis and Action Plan**

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#### **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides Cabinet with detailed analysis of the outcomes of Wirral's statutory Place Survey, undertaken between September and December, 2008 and explores the perceptions of Wirral residents compared with other areas.
- 1.2 The latest Place Survey data published by DCLG is available at [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/placesurvey2008update](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/placesurvey2008update)
- 1.3 The report also refers to national analysis that has been undertaken on the Place Survey, which highlights that people do not always associate improvements in services with the organisations that provide them. Included in the report is information about what additional consultation and communication activities the Council and partners are undertaking in advance of the next statutory Place Survey to be undertaken in October 2010.
- 1.4 Cabinet is requested to note the contents of this report and endorse the activities being undertaken to better communicate with local communities.

#### **2. Place Survey Background**

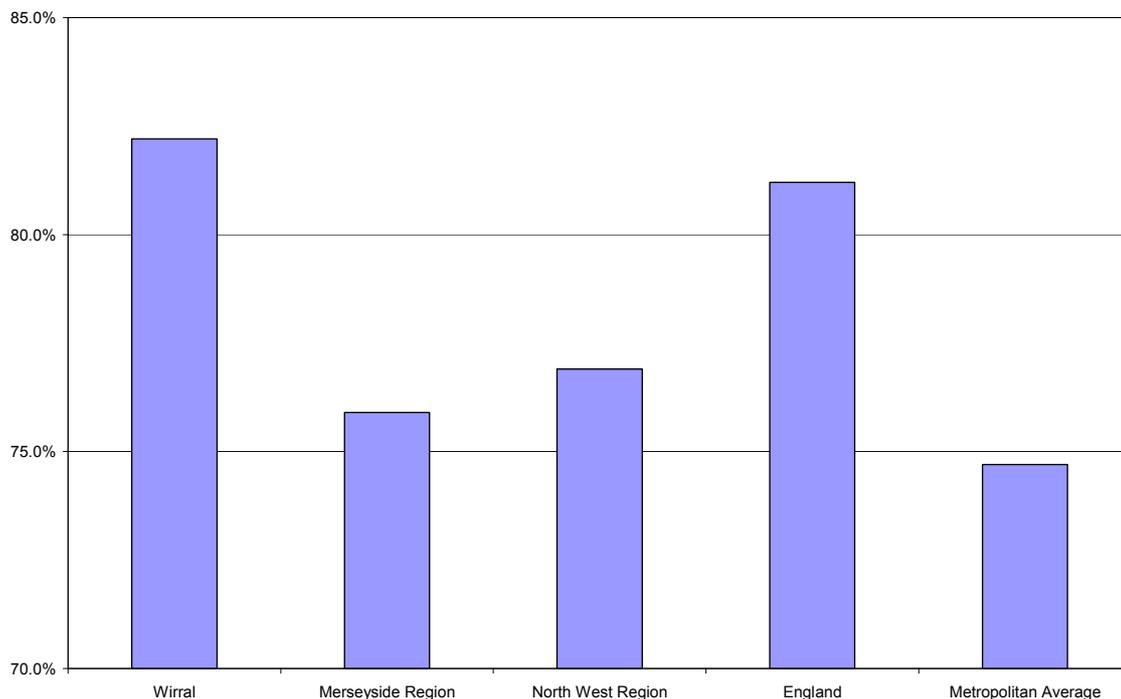
- 2.1 Every local authority area (i.e. the Council and the LSP) was required by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Audit Commission to undertake the Place Survey in 2008 according to common standards and in order to collect data for perception indicators which form part of the national performance indicator set. The questions contained in the survey were determined by DCLG. The intended focus on the survey was on outcomes for local people and places and was not as concerned with council services as previous similar surveys (i.e. Best Value Surveys) have been.
- 2.2 The survey was carried out according to the guidance issued by DCLG and Audit Commission by drawing a random sample and sending a postal self completion questionnaire to around 5,000 households, of which 1623 (approximately 32%) were returned in total. Wirral commissioned Mott MacDonald MIS to manage the survey process.
- 2.3 Additional questionnaires were sent to residents in the 5% most deprived areas in Wirral (known as a 'boosted' sample) to provide data that will help the Council and partners understand the impact of strategies for narrowing the gap in Wirral. Comparisons between overall results and results from respondents in the 5% most deprived areas are highlighted as appropriate in section 3 of this report.

- 2.4 Mott MacDonald MIS has also undertaken analysis of the results linked to national indicators to explore the difference in responses between the participants who are satisfied with Wirral Council and those who are dissatisfied. Most significantly, this analysis shows that many of those not satisfied with the Council also felt that they could not influence local decision making.
- 2.5 Analysis has also been undertaken to compare the results of the 2008 Place Survey with the outcomes of the last Best Value Survey undertaken in 2006 (**Appendix 1**). Whilst recognising that differences in the methodologies used for these surveys means that results are not absolutely comparable for all questions, this exercise provides a useful insight into where perception may have improved or deteriorated within this timeframe.

### 3. Place Survey Analysis

- 3.1 The Place Survey highlights many positive results for Wirral. Most of our residents (82%) are very or fairly satisfied overall with Wirral as a place to live, which is top quartile performance, i.e. amongst the best 25% compared with other Metropolitan authorities and above Liverpool City Region, North West and England averages. This compares to 72.9 % satisfaction of people living in our 5% most deprived areas.

Figure 1: Overall satisfaction with Wirral as a place to live



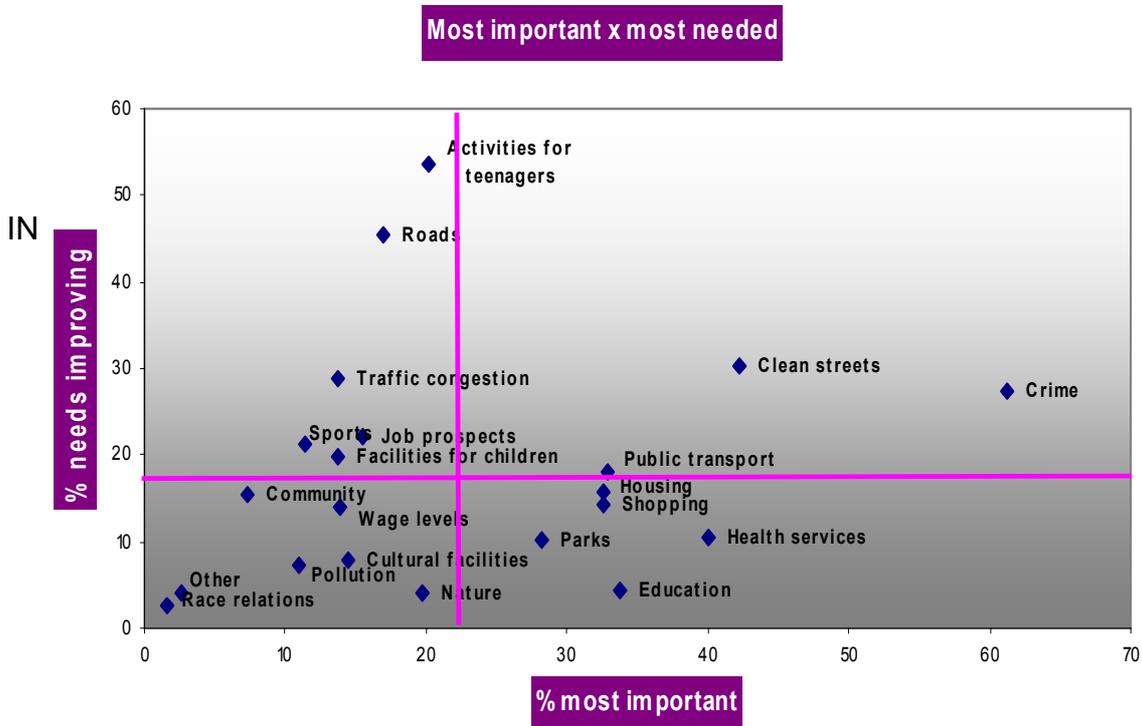
- 3.2 People in Wirral generally feel that they belong to their immediate neighbourhood (61.6%) which is above Metropolitan and England averages. 79.6% of residents believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together, a significant improvement on the previous survey; this improvement in Wirral is against the national trend. In our most deprived areas, slightly less believed that people from different backgrounds get on well together (74.5%).

- 3.3 Wirral residents feel that people treat each other with respect and consideration; the percentage of people who feel that people do *not* treat each other with respect is significantly lower at 28.7% compared to the Metropolitan average (37.1%). The percentage of residents who feel that they are treated with respect and consideration by local public services is higher than the Metropolitan and North West averages, 74% compared to 68% and 70%.
- 3.4 Satisfaction with keeping public land clean, doorstep recycling, local tips, sport and leisure facilities, libraries, museums and galleries and with parks and open spaces was all higher than the All England average. Satisfaction with parks and open spaces was significantly higher than average (76% compared to 68%). Out of 36 Metropolitan districts in the country, Wirral ranks 5<sup>th</sup> for satisfaction with local tips. Wirral ranks 1<sup>st</sup> for satisfaction with parks and open spaces and 2<sup>nd</sup> for satisfaction with libraries in the Metropolitan district group. It also ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> for satisfaction with local transport information. Satisfaction with keeping public land clean, door step recycling, local tips, libraries, and with parks and open spaces, all improved against the national trend Only satisfaction levels with refuse collection and theatres and concert halls was below the all England average.
- 3.5 As part of the survey, residents were asked which things were most important and need improving in making somewhere a good place to live (see **Figure 2** overleaf). Residents overall believe that the level of crime is the most important issue in making Wirral a good place to live, whilst clean streets are also an essential element. These are also the most important issues for residents in the most deprived areas. Residents also believe that activities for teenagers are the key priority for improvement. Whilst roads were perceived as a high priority for improvement, they were perceived as being below average importance; this could imply that the improvement needed is less than the data suggests.
- 3.6 41.6% residents are very or fairly satisfied about how the Council runs things compared to 82% very or fairly satisfied with Wirral as a place to live. The gap between people's positive views about the area in which they live and the perceived contribution made by public sector organisations is a national issue, as supported by analysis undertaken by MORI relating to these questions. This suggests that local authorities are "getting none of the credit" for improvements in the local area<sup>1</sup>. Compared to the statutory Best Value Survey undertaken in 2006 (see **Appendix 1**), satisfaction with the local area has improved whilst satisfaction with the way the Council runs things is lower. Again, this is in line with the national trend.
- 3.7 On balance, more residents feel that Wirral Council does not provide value for money (33.3%) than those who feel that it does (27.9%). There is a large group (38.9%) who do not agree or disagree that Wirral Council provides good value for money which also suggests that many residents are unsure of what we do.

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<sup>1</sup> Ipsos MORI Local: People, Perceptions and Place presentation

**Figure 2: Responses to Place Survey Questions 1 and 2 - thinking generally, which of the things below would you say are most important and need improving in making somewhere a good place to live?**



- 3.6 In relation to local public services in general, Wirral residents feel that all types of people are treated fairly, but their interests are not always promoted or acted upon. Residents responding to the survey are most satisfied with the service provided by Merseyside Fire and Rescue and least satisfied with the Police.
- 3.7 Findings of the Place Survey show that, in terms of information provision, residents feel well informed on voting registration, but are less well informed on a variety of other topics. 12% said they were very well or fairly well informed about what to do in a large scale emergency. This is below Metropolitan (14%), Merseyside (13%) and national (15%) averages and places Wirral in the lowest quartile of areas in England for this indicator.
- 3.8 25.5% of respondents feel they can influence decisions affecting the local area. This is slightly less than Metropolitan (27%), North West (27%), Liverpool City Region (28%) and national (29%) averages and is in line with the national trend. However, more people in the most deprived areas, 27.9% feel that they can influence decisions. On the basis of the Place Survey results, few Wirral residents partake in local decision making procedures. 25% want to be more involved in decision making. With regard to helping out and getting involved, the majority of Wirral residents responding to the survey had not undertaken any unpaid work in the previous year.
- 3.9 Findings of the Place Survey show that Parents not taking responsibility for their children in the local area is perceived as a problem but more residents in Wirral than in Merseyside overall agree that parents do take responsibility for their children. The

perception that anti social behaviour is a problem is very low (19%) and indeed lower than Metropolitan (25%), Merseyside (25%), NW (23%) and national (20%) averages. Perceptions that drug dealing (30%) and drunk or rowdy behaviour (30%) are a problem are also low. Despite these positive perception results in relation to aspects of anti social behaviour, just under a quarter of Wirral residents feel that local public services seek people's view about anti-social behaviour and crime issues by the Council and police and just over a quarter think that the police and other local public services are successfully dealing with these issues.

#### 4. Action Plan

- 4.1 Whilst recognising that Wirral has performed well in relation to many of the national indicators measured through the Place Survey, the Council and partners are committed to continued and concerted effort to improve understanding about the services available in Wirral and the outcomes that local people are experiencing and can expect. There are some areas where the Council and partners need to do much more in this respect. The action plan at **Appendix 2** includes broad communications activity as well as targeted actions in relation to indicators where Wirral has not performed well.
- 4.2 A range of factors will be influential in delivering improvements in public perception as measured by the Place Survey. These include:
- Ensuring that residents are aware of the outcomes being delivered through Partnership and Council activity;
  - Making sure residents and communities are aware of opportunities to influence the development and delivery of services as well as ensuring that feedback is provided on the impact of such engagement;
  - Ensuring that Partnership and Council strategic plans take into account public perception to develop and deliver targeted improvement activity.
- 4.3 There are a number of strands of activity already in place in this respect. These include the Comprehensive Engagement Strategy and implementation of a Marketing Strategy linked to the Council's objectives and priorities for improvement as set out in the Corporate Plan. Marketing campaigns are planned around the themes of Wirral works, Wirral protects, Wirral supports and Wirral inspires.
- 4.4 On several questions relating to local services, a large number of respondents did "not agree or disagree" with the questions. This could suggest a lack of information to help them inform their view and is a driver for the Council and partners to continue to work together to ensure that strong messages are communicated regarding the outcomes being delivered for local people. Such activity will potentially reduce the perception gap discussed elsewhere in this report, i.e. high satisfaction with the local area and many local services and relatively low satisfaction with local service providers.
- 4.5 All national indicators, including those in the Place Survey, are included as appropriate in departmental plans and/or the Council's Corporate Plan. The consideration of 2010-11 targets for the Place Survey indicators to be included in the Corporate Plan will take place as part of the process detailed in the separate agenda item relating to corporate and departmental business planning. It is anticipated that

such targets will be based on maintaining or improving comparative performance in relation to other areas (e.g. moving from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> All England quartile position).

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with the report. The activity outlined in the action plan at **Appendix 2** is being resourced as appropriate via departmental budgets.

## **6. Staffing Implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct staffing implications associated with the report.

## **7. Equal Opportunities Implications**

- 7.1 There are no direct equal opportunities implications associated with the report.

## **8. Community Safety Implications**

- 8.1 There are no direct community safety implications beyond those relating to selected Place Survey results on related activity as outlined in the report.

## **9. Local Agenda 21 Implications**

- 9.1 There are no direct Local Agenda 21 implications.

## **10. Planning Implications**

- 10.1 There are no direct planning implications.

## **11. Anti-poverty Implications**

- 11.1 There are no direct anti-poverty implications associated with the report; however, analysis of the data will help inform approaches to tackling inequalities in Wirral. The boosted sample is improving the Council's intelligence about perceptions and levels of satisfaction in our more deprived communities to inform future service development and delivery.

## **12. Social Inclusion Implications**

- 12.1 There are no direct social inclusion implications associated with the report; however, analysis of the data will help inform approaches to tackling inequalities in Wirral. The boosted sample is improving the Council's intelligence about perceptions and levels of satisfaction in our more deprived communities to inform future service development and delivery.

## **13. Local Member Support Implications**

- 13.1 There are no direct local member support implications.

## **14. Background Papers**

- Wirral Place Survey Findings 2009, Mott MacDonald
- People, Perceptions and Place, Ipsos MORI Local
- Place Survey 2008, England: Further Results, Department for Communities and Local Government

## **15. Recommendations**

- 15.1 Cabinet is recommended to note the contents of this report and agree the activities being undertaken to address perception issues as outlined in **Appendix 2**.

**J. WILKIE**

**Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Services**

This report was prepared by Jane Morgan who can be contacted on 8140.