

Hart District Council  
BVPI User Satisfaction:  
Planning Survey 2006/7



*connect with*  
**Marketing Means**

**tel:** 01364 654485 • **fax:** 01364 654664

**email:** [anna-marie@marketingmeans.co.uk](mailto:anna-marie@marketingmeans.co.uk) • **web:** [www.marketingmeans.co.uk](http://www.marketingmeans.co.uk)

## Summary

This report represents the findings of a survey conducted by Marketing Means on behalf of Hart District Council. The survey provides the data for Performance Indicator BV111 — Satisfaction with the Planning Service. The survey was conducted in accordance with the guidelines set out by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in February 2006.

### Background & method

Hart District Council created a sampling frame of planning applicants following the guidance supplied by the DCLG. Those to be included in the frame had to have received a decision letter between 3<sup>rd</sup> April and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2006. The list was de-duplicated so that no one applicant or agent could receive more than one survey. Marketing Means was supplied with this data file of 404 applicants. This list was below the recommended sample size of 900, so all applicants were used for the survey (a census).

Additionally, the Council were advised to let the Audit Commission know that it was unlikely to meet the required achieved sample of 400.

The initial mailing was posted on 13<sup>th</sup> October. Those who had not responded to this original mailing were sent a reminder on 6<sup>th</sup> November. If they still had not responded, a second reminder was sent on 21<sup>st</sup> November. The closing date for the survey was 1<sup>st</sup> December 2006, although surveys were continued to be accepted beyond this date.

### BVPI Results

Overall satisfaction with the Planning Department was 65% with a confidence interval of  $\pm 7\%$ .

	% Very or fairly satisfied	%Neither & Dissatisfied	Base	CI ( $\pm@95\%$ )	Net satisfaction <sup>1</sup> (+/-)
<b>Overall Satisfaction BVPI 111</b>	65%	35%	188	7%	44%

Source: Marketing Means 2007

	Very or fairly satisfied 2006/7	CI	Very or fairly satisfied 2003/4	% difference between 2003/4 and 2006/7	Very or fairly satisfied 2000/1
<b>Hart</b>	65%	7%	72%	-7%	28%

Compared with 2003/4, the overall satisfaction level has decreased slightly by 7% and the confidence interval may suggest that this is probably a significant change. However, looking at the Hampshire consortium, Hart sits fifth from the six councils (the 'average' being 72%). The trend amongst this small number of authorities is a decrease of 4% in satisfaction from 2003.

The most significant differences in levels of satisfaction are by whether the application was successful or not. Those who have successful outcomes are much more likely to be 'fairly / very satisfied' (71% of those with successful applications vs. 38% of those with unsuccessful applications), whilst those who are have unsuccessful applications are more likely to say 'very / fairly dissatisfied' (46% vs. 16%).

<sup>1</sup> Net satisfaction ignores those who say 'neither' and gives a net satisfaction based on 'very / fairly satisfied' – 'very/ fairly dissatisfied'.

### Other results

To rate the five **individual service elements**, respondents were asked to say how much they agreed or disagreed with a set of statements. The statements that were most agreed with were 'I understand the reasons for the decisions made on my application' (75%), 'I felt I was treated fairly and that my viewpoint was listened to' (61%) and 'I was given all the help and advice I needed to submit the application...' (57%). The statements that had the highest level of disagreement were 'The council kept me informed' (27%), 'I felt I was treated fairly and that my viewpoint was listened to' (24%) and 'The council dealt promptly with my queries' (22%).

Most aspects were found to have significant differences when split by whether the most recent application was successful. There is significantly more agreement with statements expressing satisfaction from those who had approvals than from those who were refused (or who did not say whether their application was approved). This was particularly noticeable for a couple of statements related to times 'The council dealt promptly with my queries' and 'The council kept me informed'. Those who had submitted a previous planning application were asked, 'For each of the following elements of the planning service provided by the local authority, please indicate whether **you think the service has got better or worse over the last three years, or has it stayed the same?**' The aspects to be rated were very similar to the ones in the earlier question: 'The help and advice provided to submit my application', 'The information provided about the progress of my application', 'The promptness with which queries about my application were dealt with', 'The clarity of the reasons for the decision given' and 'The fairness with which my application was dealt with and viewpoint listened to'.

The results for the five service areas were reasonably consistent in that around a tenth of respondents say that the service has improved, around two thirds say that it has stayed the same and a fifth say that the service has got worse.

When this is translated into net figures (and those who 'don't know' are ignored), in general respondents think that services have not improved, particularly the time related aspects 'Progress of application' and 'Promptness of dealing with queries'.

### Summary

It would appear that Hart District Council's satisfaction levels have decreased slightly since the last BVPI survey in 2003/4. This is supported by respondents who had submitted applications on previous occasions rating the service as 'worse'. However, at the time of writing this report, the national figures have not been published, so no comment can be made about where Hart is in the national picture and trends.

The areas of service that receive the lowest ratings are to do with keeping in contact / timeliness ('The council kept me informed' and 'The council dealt promptly with my queries').

There are significant differences in the satisfaction ratings overall and for individual service elements by whether the respondent had a positive outcome to their application. It is hard to establish whether this was due to applicants being unable to put aside the outcome of their applications when saying how satisfied they were with the service or to applicants genuinely not understanding why an application had been rejected, the possibility of genuine inconsistency in councillors / officers' decisions leading to perceptions of unfairness and/or a lack of understanding in the processes involved. These issues may need further consideration. Also, there were differences by whether they were an agent acting on behalf of others or an individual. Individuals were generally less satisfied than agents.