

## Planning Services – 2013 Customer Satisfaction Survey Supplementary Report No.5 Customer versus staff feedback comparison

This report compares consolidated customer group results of the Planning Services 2013 Customer Satisfaction Survey with the results for the same questions answered by staff. This will gauge staff awareness and harmony with customer perceptions of the service that is delivered:

The statistics in this report are based on the following survey response rates:

All customer groups: 212 responses from 1042 = 20%  
Staff: 40 responses from 46 = 87%

### SECTION 1 – RANKING & RATING (Seven questions)

#### 1. Respondents were asked to rate planning web pages:

Customers ranked and rated as follows:

Customer ranking	Staff ranking	ELEMENT	FULL OR PARTLY AGREE	FULL OR PARTLY DISAGREE
TOP	2	The quality of content is good	69%	10%
	1	The information is useful	67%	8%
MIDDLE	3	The level of detail is just right	62%	14%
	4	The layout and design is clear	58%	17%
BOTTOM	5	The website is easy to use	53%	24%
	6	It is easy to find information	51%	25%

Staff ranked and rated as follows:

RANKING	ELEMENT	FULL OR PARTLY AGREE	Variance to Cust.	FULL OR PARTLY DISAGREE	Variance to Cust.
TOP	The information is useful	98%	<b>+29%</b>	0%	-10%
	The quality of content is good	98%	<b>+31%</b>	0%	-8%
MIDDLE	The level of detail is just right	86%	<b>+24%</b>	13%	-1%
	The layout and design is clear	81%	<b>+23%</b>	18%	+1%
BOTTOM	The website is easy to use	78%	<b>+25%</b>	20%	-4%
	It is easy to find information	68%	<b>+17%</b>	30%	+5%

Whilst staff have a tendency to overestimate the positive elements of the website (by up to 31%) they agreed almost identically the ranking of the elements.

**CONCLUSION: Staff agree with customers on the strengths and weaknesses of the planning web pages**

## 2. Respondents were asked to rank the following elements of their contact with Planning Services:

Customers ranked and rated as follows:

Customer ranking	Staff ranking	ELEMENT	FULL OR PARTLY AGREE	FULL OR PARTLY DISAGREE
TOP	5	I find it easy to contact Planning Services	87%	6%
	3	Staff are friendly and polite	84%	6%
	4	Staff are helpful	81%	9%
	1	Staff have the right level of knowledge to help me	76%	12%
	7	Everything is explained in a way which I can understand	74%	12%
MIDDLE	2	I feel that the staff work in a professional manner	74%	14%
	8	I am treated fairly by the Planning Services team who listen to my point of view	69%	15%
	6	The quality of advice that I receive from Planning Services is good	69%	15%
	14	Staff do what they say they will do	64%	16%
	15	My calls are returned or enquiry dealt with when promised	64%	19%
BOTTOM	12	I am happy with the time it takes Planning Services to respond to me	66%	20%
	11	When a decision is made I understand the reasons or it is explained to me	59%	23%
	9	If staff cannot resolve my matter on first contact they always advise me on the next step and timescales	54%	19%
	10	I am kept informed	55%	27%
	13	Staff rarely make mistakes and if they do they tell me	52%	19%

Staff ranked and rated as follows:

RANKING	ELEMENT	FULL OR PART AGREE	Variance to Cust.	FULL OR PART DISAGREE	Variance to Cust.
TOP	Staff have the right level of knowledge to help me	98%	+22%	0%	-12%
	I feel that the staff work in a professional manner	98%	+24%	0%	-14%
	Staff are friendly and polite	98%	+14%	0%	-6%
	Staff are helpful	98%	+17%	0%	-9%
	I find it easy to contact Planning Services	98%	+11%	0%	-6%
MIDDLE	The quality of advice that I receive from Planning Services is good	98%	+29%	0%	-15%
	Everything is explained in a way which I can understand	93%	+19%	5%	-7%
	I am treated fairly by the team who listen to my point of view	90%	+21%	5%	-10%
	If staff cannot resolve my matter on first contact they always advise me on the next step and timescales	85%	+31%	13%	-6%
	I am kept informed	85%	+30%	13%	-14%
BOTTOM	When a decision is made I understand the reasons or it is explained to me	83%	+24%	16%	-7%
	I am happy with the time it takes Planning Services to respond to me	83%	+17%	15%	-5%
	Staff rarely make mistakes and if they do they tell me	80%	+28%	15%	-4%
	Staff do what they say they will do	73%	+9%	20%	+4%
	My calls are returned or enquiry dealt with when promised	68%	+4%	30%	+11%

Staff have a tendency to overestimate the positive elements of the service (by up to 31%). Whilst staff do not agree on the rankings made by customers, the top and bottom elements are correctly grouped.

**CONCLUSION: Although the rankings are different, Staff agree with customers on the strengths (top 8) and weakness (bottom 7) elements of the service contact with customer**

### 3. Respondents were asked to consider how easy they considered the planning process was:

Customers and staff ranked and rated as follows:

Customer ranking	Staff ranking	Rating	Customer rating	Staff rating	Variance to Cust.
		% of respondents	45%	65%	+20%
1	2	Easy	49%	27%	-22%
2	1	Average	24%	62%	+38%
3	4	Very easy	13%	4%	-9%
4	3	Difficult	9%	8%	-1%
5	5	Very difficult	3%	0%	-3%

Staff had a tendency to be harder on their evaluation of the planning service than customers, with the majority of customers rating the service as easy or very easy whilst staff rated it average.

**Conclusion: Despite staff rating this element harder than customers their rankings were within one position of customers therefore staff on the whole agree with customers perceptions about how easy the planning process is**

### 4. Respondents were asked to rate the overall planning service:

Customers and staff ranked and rated as follows:

Customer ranking	Staff ranking	Rating	Customer rating	Staff rating	Variance to Cust.
		% of respondents	100%	100%	-
1	1	Good	43%	85%	+42%
2	2	Very good	23%	13%	-10%
3	3	Fair	20%	3%	-17%
4	4	Very poor	8%	0%	-8%
5	5	Poor	7%	0%	-7%

Whilst staff agreed the ranking that customers gave this element they overestimated the positive elements of the service by up to 42%. This is an understandable and expected evaluation by staff members who would otherwise struggle to rate the service poorly without considerable reason and concern for major issues.

**Conclusion: Opportunity exists to focus on the 32% of customers (who rated service fair to very poor) who do not agree with the staff evaluation of the service and understand how to turn more of their negative experiences into more positive ratings.**

**5. Respondents were asked to evaluate how satisfied overall they have been with the Planning Service over the last 18 months:**

Customers and staff ranked and rated as follows:

Customer ranking	Staff ranking	Rating	Customer rating	Staff rating	Variance to Cust.
		% of respondents	99%	95%	-4%
1	1	Fairly satisfied	42%	73%	<b>+31%</b>
2	2	Very satisfied	38%	20%	<b>-18%</b>
3	4	Very dissatisfied	11%	0%	-11%
4	3	Fairly dissatisfied	8%	3%	-5%

Whilst staff rankings were within one group of the ranking that customers gave this element they overestimated the positive elements of the service by 13% in total (fairly plus very satisfied). This is a reasonable evaluation and fairly expected .

**Conclusion: Opportunity exists to focus on the 16% of customers (who rated satisfaction very or fairly dissatisfied) who do not agree with the staff evaluation of satisfaction and understand how to turn more of their negative experiences into more positive ratings.**

**6. Respondents were asked to consider if the service has improved or got worse in the last 18 months:**

Customers and staff ranked and rated as follows:

Customer ranking	Staff ranking	Rating	Customer rating	Staff rating	Variance to Cust.
		% of respondents	80%	90%	+10%
1	1	Don't know / No previous contact	36%	44%	+8%
2	3	Service has got better	30%	19%	-11%
3	2	Service has not got better or worse	26%	33%	+7%
4	4	Service has got worse	8%	3%	-5%

Staff underestimated the positive elements of this service rating with 11% more customers considering that the service has improved in the last 18 months compared with staff.

**Conclusion: Overall staff are within one group and 11% of the customer ratings. Therefore on the whole staff are in agreement with customers on the levels of improvement in the service in the last 18 months.**

**7. Respondents were asked how they thought Swale Planning Services compared with other authorities:**

Customers and staff ranked and rated as follows:

Customer ranking	Staff ranking	Rating	Customer rating	Staff rating	Variance to Cust.
		% of respondents	75%	90%	<b>+15%</b>
1	1	I have not dealt with other authorities	50%	53%	+3%
2	2	Swale are no better or worse	18%	22%	+4%
3	3	Swale are better than other authorities	16%	22%	+6%
4	4	Swale are worse than other authorities	16%	3%	-13%

Staff slightly over estimated the positive elements of this service rating although this is to be expected

**Conclusion: Overall staff ranked and rated their perceptions of the comparison with other authorities in line with customer perceptions.**

## **SECTION 2 – COMMENTS (Three questions)**

### **8. Respondents were asked to comment on the most useful and most unhelpful pages on the website:**

Both staff and customers made considerably more comments (4-5 times more) about useful web pages than they did about web pages that were unhelpful. Staff made 3 times as many comments about useful web pages than customers.

Staff identified issues related mainly to web pages being hard to find or confusing or information that was out of date or missing. Customers were more vocal and specific covering a wider scope of issues

Examples of comments from staff regarding unhelpful pages on the web site and suggested improvements:

1-4	POLICY - Convoluted/difficult/out of date/confusing links
5	finding committee agenda's / minutes difficult
6	I like the interactive house. It's easy to understand. It is informative but complicated
7	information on uk planning - missing/not all there
8	none - but content could be more up to date
9	still waiting for comms team to load info.
10	Pre-app advice fees too difficult to find
11	Doesn't answer if I will get pp or not or if I need it without applying
12	Pre-app, confusing info
13	planning advice / guidance - difficult to follow
14	A-Z of Councillors / Parish Clerks hard to find
15	a few tweaks/changes to wording on website - sub titles
16	[need a ]better website: easier to use
17	difficult to find some information on the web pages
18	improve website by using more resources to keep pages up to date
19	Improve website information
20	keep website up to date
21	website could be clearer, less wording - more specific
22	website is not always clear

**9. Respondents were asked to comment ‘Is there anything we do particularly well’ and ‘what improvements we should make and prioritise’:**

Whilst staff made slightly more comments (+15%) about what they do well versus potential improvements, the opposite case exists for customers. Customers made more comments (+15%) about potential improvements versus highlighting what Swale does well.

Examples of Staff comments on potential improvements:

1	customer services training
2	develop a vision for how planning can improve swale
3	greater focus on ensuring that planning conditions are complied with
4	have automated response to emails
5	advertise our services more
6	clearly explain things (sometimes staff are too technical)
7	manage customer expectations more
8	more advice
9	more professional looking reception and staff - maybe a uniform like Canterbury CC
10	Improve environment
11	Review Duty System
12	prioritise ALL services and ALL customers
13	Realistic Pre-app advice time scales
14	keep customer informed on progress/amended applications and enforcement cases
15	Streamline processes to provide quicker responses
16	Pre-app enquiries dealt with in 10 working days
17	promptness with correspondence
18	quicker decisions
19	speed of responses
20	ensure more enquiries are answered quicker
21	more consistency
22	Consistency of advice from planning officers
23	need to keep our customers more informed when they take part in consultation
24	keeping customers informed
25	[We] Don't tell respondees when items are going to (LDF Panel) committee, or advise what response to their comment is
26	feedback to respondents to planning policy docs on next steps
27	Better liaison with developers as sites progress through Local Plan stages
28	Communication - Between various teams and from management downwards
29	IT improvements - more efficient service
30	IT systems
31	need to focus on tech process at least as much as 'window dressing' in face of cuts/mergers
32	use the money from this assessment and customer excellence to keep admin/tech at Swale
33	scanning of older files - limit the number of missing files when they are needed - speed up the process if these are found quickly
34	Allowing for faster viewing of documents by scanning them onto computer (However I know this is currently taking place)

## 10. Respondents were asked if they wished to make any further comments:

Customers made significantly more comments about the service than staff. Only 20% of staff members made an additional comment whilst 47% of customers made an average 4 comments each.

Whilst some staff members decided to make comments the majority did not choose to make any comment

Examples of additional comments made by Staff:

1	staff are knowledgeable and friendly
2	Re Q9: DECISIONS - Decision Notice sent out. Customer may not be able to understand the language used, therefore customers would need to ring up and speak to Case Officer
3	Re Q9: Currently staff have been advised to prioritise planning apps over other tasks e.g. responding to PAA's
4	Re Q7: WEBSITE - Needs to be clearer - links more obvious to the public. Simple explanations needed. Not everyone understands planning terms
5	Re Q6: WEBSITE - Currently restricted by corporate decisions
6	Re Q17: COMPARISON - Swale are worse due to old technology (microfiche/plotting system)
7	Re Q17: COMPARISON - Swale are better than Ashford - No direct contact
8	Re Q17: COMPARISON - Swale are better because it is easier to contact Officers than other LPA's
9	Re Q15: Service probably has got worse due to extra constraints on what we are able to provide e.g. no free pre-app and LDC's to advise if PP is required.
10	Re Q11: LEAFLETS - SPG [Standard Planning Guides] very outdated
11	Re Q10: The Planning system is difficult to understand. It is often difficult to explain the complexities to one off customers in the time frame we have.
12	I don't think we realise how little the public understand about what we do and don't do. We should manage their expectations and provide a leaflet summary.
13	Improvements need to be made to the Council Chambers to improve facilities for all, particularly public - seats, air quality, visuals etc.
14	Some information given by officers and on the website not always consistent and confusing - website could be better.
15	Process of Members making decisions at Planning Committee could be clearer, as easily misunderstood by public and members.
16	Ability to gain access to Officers face to face is particularly much better than other councils.