



SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION 29 JULY 2009

Report of the Director of Corporate and Adult Services

Member Satisfaction Survey 2009

RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 To consider and comment on the findings from the member satisfaction survey 2009

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Member satisfaction survey has been conducted annually by the scrutiny team since 2004, providing members with an opportunity to reflect on their experience of the scrutiny process and give comments on how well the process has worked during the previous year. The survey covers two broad areas of scrutiny - the quality of administrative support provided by the scrutiny team; and the concept and mechanics of the scrutiny function. The survey provides useful information and enables us to make appropriate adjustments to the process and help improve the scrutiny function.
- 2.2 Member response to this year's survey was the highest ever recorded with 31 elected members completing and returning their forms. This high response is primarily associated with the inclusion of questionnaires with the agenda and papers for the March round of Commission meetings.
- 2.3 Results from the survey show that members are satisfied with the quality of support received from the O&S team. This is shown by 93% of the respondents fairly or very satisfied with the quality of research and support material and 94% with the quality of reports produced by Overview and Scrutiny Team.
- 2.4 However, it is the areas of dissatisfaction that are of more important as they need to identified and responded to to improve the scrutiny function. The questions giving top five dissatisfaction responses are:
 1. Response of the Council Cabinet to recommendations - 32% (10 members) very or fairly dissatisfied
 2. Process for conducting the annual budget scrutiny - 24% (8 members) very or fairly dissatisfied

3. Using Performance Eye as a tool to support scrutiny- 19% (6 members) very or fairly dissatisfied
 4. Concept of overview and scrutiny 16% (5 members) very or fairly dissatisfied
 5. Profile of overview and scrutiny 13% (4 Members) very or fairly dissatisfied
- 2.5 Looking at the main areas of dissatisfaction, the response of the Council Cabinet to Commission reports is top of the list. This is a reoccurring issue and has been raised in previous surveys regardless of which group is in the Cabinet. The main difference this time on this occasion is that a higher proportion of members have raised it and there is also recognition by a Cabinet Member that there should be better dialogue between scrutiny and the Cabinet. It is therefore suggest that O&S chairs and vice chairs meet at least twice a year with the Cabinet Members to discuss how views from O&S members could be better incorporated within the Council's decision making process.
- 2.6 The second main issue raised by the survey relates to the budget scrutiny process. However, this is a separate item on the agenda of this meeting. The third issues raised in the survey include use of Performance Eye as a tool to support scrutiny. This is also being looked at by the Performance Management Team and a new contract is being developed with an external provider. The other issue include the concept of scrutiny and the profile of the scrutiny process. There is little that can be done about the fundamental opposition to the concept of scrutiny however measures may be developed to improve the profile of O&S function. It is suggested that Cabinet meets with the chair and vice chairs of O&S Commissions at least twice a year to consider how O&S views could be better incorporate din the scrutiny process.
- 2.7 Although the survey was included within the Scrutiny Annual Report presented to the Council in May (Appendix 2), it was felt that the some issues raised by members in the survey require the attention of the SMC. This report provides another opportunity for members to look at survey responses in detail and consider what changes if any that could be made to improve the process.

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Background papers: Appendix 1 - Implications

List of appendices: Appendix 2 - Analysis of the Survey included in the Annual Scrutiny Report

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. A successful outcome of the review will help to improve the Council's budget setting process

Legal

2. None arising from this report

Personnel

3. None arising from this report.

Equalities impact

4. Effective and responsive scrutiny benefits all Derby people.

Corporate Objectives

5. This report links with the Council's priority of giving value for money.

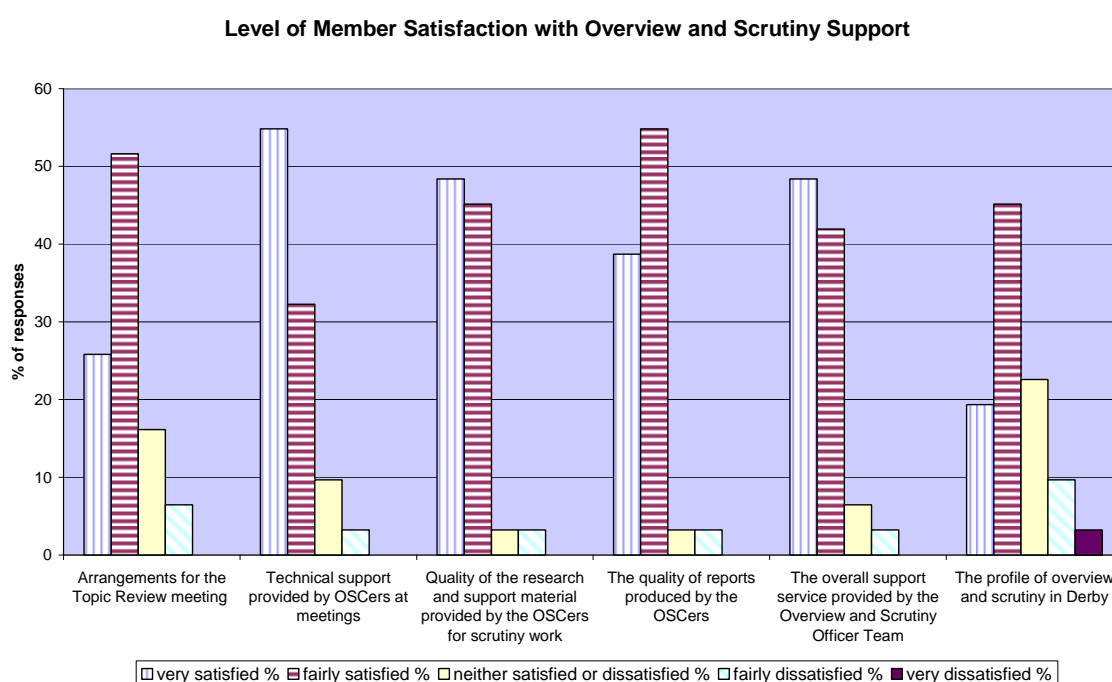
Analysis of Member Satisfaction Survey 2009

The member satisfaction survey is an important tool for the overview and scrutiny team to identify which elements of the scrutiny process work well and which could be improved. The survey is sent to all elected and co-opted members asking them for their views on the scrutiny process and the quality of support provided to them by the Overview and Scrutiny Team. Any responses to the survey enable the team to identify areas of scrutiny that are working well as well as those that need adjusting.

There was a very good level of response rate to this year's survey, not only with the quantity of forms returned compared with previous years but also with the quality of the commentary that is included within the survey. This has helped us to identify areas that continue to work well but more importantly parts of the scrutiny process that could be improved. The main reason for the high rate this year was due to the survey being included as an agenda item for each Commissions meeting during their March round of meetings. This process offered members the greater opportunity to consider and complete the forms.

Analysing of this years responses

Of the 59 forms sent out electronically to the elected and co-opted members 32 were returned, giving a response rate of just over 54%. This is significantly higher than last year when a response rate of 37% was received.

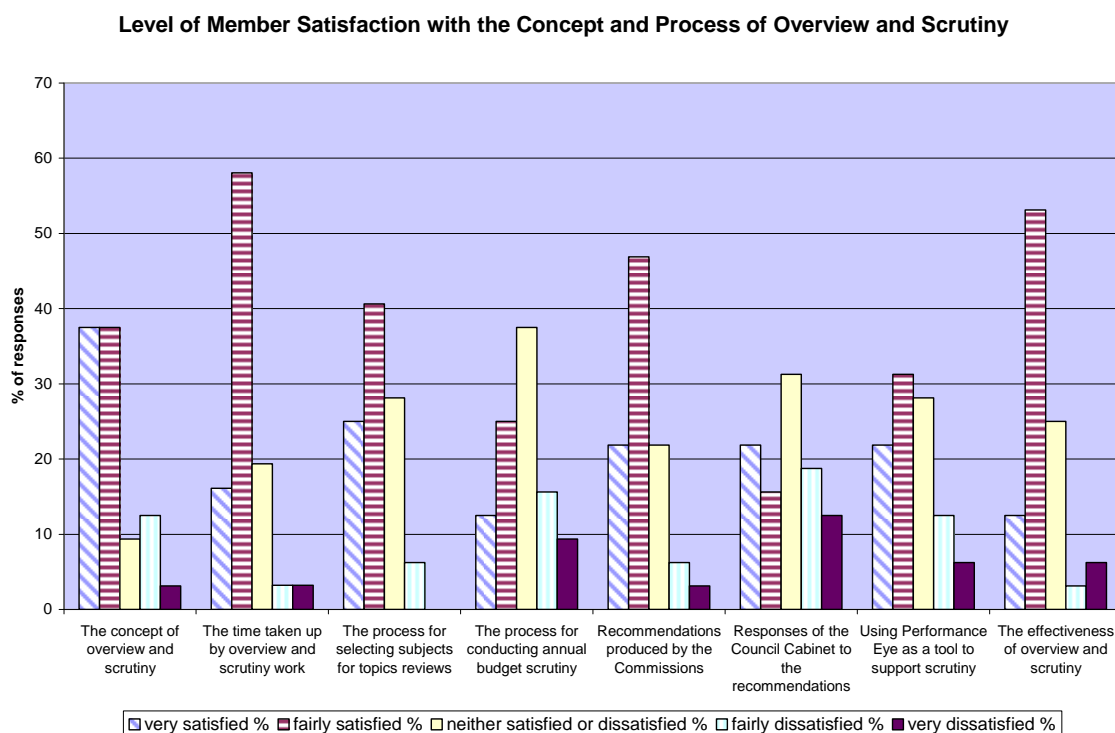


The analysis shows that Members are generally satisfied with the quality of officer support for overview and scrutiny. 93% of the respondents stated that they were very or fairly satisfied with the quality of research and support material and 94% with the quality of reports produced by the OSCers. 87% were very or fairly satisfied with technical support provided at meetings and only 77% with the arrangements for Topic Review meetings this year. The vast majority of the respondents, 90% were very or fairly satisfied the overall support service provided by OSCers.

A majority of the members 64% stated that they were very or fairly satisfied with the profile of overview and scrutiny in Derby. This is a similar proportion of the respondents to last year when the response was 62%. However the percentage of members who are fairly or very dissatisfied has gone up to 13% from 5% last year.

Responses to the concept and process of O&S again had greater of variances with significantly more fairly or very dissatisfied this year. The highest level of member dissatisfaction again relates to the response of the Council Cabinet to the recommendations with 32% fairly or very dissatisfied followed closely by 25% for process for conducting annual budget scrutiny. 19% of the respondents are very or fairly satisfied with using Performance Eye as tool to support scrutiny.

One commission member was fairly dissatisfied with all elements of the scrutiny process.



Member Commentary

A section of the survey is set aside for member commentary as this provides important background to what members think about the service and how it could be improved. A number of members suggested better communication between scrutiny and cabinet to improve the process. Couple of member also commented on the annual budget scrutiny process and felt this could be done better. A full list of member commentaries is given below verbatim:

1. To consider the creation of a budget scrutiny commission to ease each commission's budget scrutiny & also to start the process off as early as possible - **O&S Member**
2. The budget process is very difficult to understand. More information/ support would be good for members to understand the contents of the budget and changes from previous year. **O&S Member**
3. More dialogue with Cabinet Members is essential. The remit of O&S is becoming wider with more public services open to scrutiny which dilutes the effectiveness of the process. Time constraints of members are also a serious issue - **O&S Member**
4. I do think we should have more dialogue with the Cabinet - **O&S Member**
5. Better involvement by the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Members - **O&S Member**
6. The Cabinet need to open themselves up for scrutiny something they have failed to do or in my judgement understand. Also Performance surgeries they were important before but seemly not so now. Why? I think this is a very serious weakness and omission. - **O&S Member**
7. More dialogue with Cabinet members and senior officers prior to key decisions being made in a consultative capacity – O&S Member
8. I think more interaction between the Commissions and the Cabinet would improve the process. - **Cabinet Member**
9. Many reports are in "Council Speak" which is difficult for new boys like me to understand. Plainer English please - **O&S Member**
10. The council cabinet seem to ignore any recommendations/ Call- In so you wonder what is the point? **O&S Member**
11. I am dissatisfied with nos 6, 7, 8, 11 and 12 as it seems the process of topic and call-in reviews is a waste of time, as recommendations can just be ignored by the Cabinet. So, all the good work can be to no avail. These commissions need to have more teeth where the cabinet can be outvoted to implement any recommendations. - **O&S Member**

12. More resources and a huge amount more respect from the Cabinet-
O&S Member
13. I'm not sure O/S is used effectively by all members or they fully understand the impact it could have on the provision of services in the city. Training, practice & training!! - **O&S Member**
14. Finding ways to make the public more aware of the role of Overview and Scrutiny and involving them more in our work- **O&S Member**
15. We don't seem to have got to grips with performance eye this year-
O&S Member
16. Greater powers - **O&S Member**
17. Do all the meeting documents have to be in paper version? Would prefer email to save on paper – **Co-opted member**
18. Overall plenty of information provided with the meetings + relatively good from the Co-ordination team at all times – **Co-opted member**
19. The Commission I sit on (Climate Change Commission) does not seem to have made much progress towards achieving Climate Change Goals in the last two years, so that either the structure is incorrect to enable change to take place or there is insufficient "teeth" to the committee to influence council policy/staffing etc. to affect the overall goal. – **Co-opted member**

Conclusion

Responses to this year's survey show that members are still satisfied with the quality of officer the support for the overview and scrutiny process. The survey also reveals two main areas of concern to members, mirroring last year's responses. Firstly a significant number of scrutiny members 32% of the total respondents are very or fairly dissatisfied with the response of the Council Cabinet to Commissions recommendations. Members have suggested that there needs to be better dialogue between Commissions and the Cabinet.

A slightly smaller but still a significant proportion 25% are also dissatisfied with the process for conducting annual budget scrutiny. This is not wholly surprising since Commissions were given budget papers shortly before their scheduled meetings and therefore had relatively little time to look at them and formulate any meaningful responses.

Recommendations

There are two main issues concerning members. Firstly members are critical of the responses by the Cabinet to their recommendations. Some members, including one Cabinet member have suggested better dialogue between scrutiny and the Cabinet. It is therefore recommended that scrutiny members,

particularly the chairs and vice chairs meet with the Cabinet at least twice a year outside of formal scheduled meetings to discuss relevant issues. It is also recommended that the Cabinet members regularly hold performance surgeries. These also provide opportunity for Commission Chairs to discuss relevant issues with the Cabinet.

The second major issue concerning members is the process for conducting annual budget scrutiny. The Scrutiny Management Commission has already agreed to look at this in the new municipal year. More detailed recommendations are provided in the section on Budget Scrutiny.