

**Committee:** PERFORMANCE SELECT COMMITTEE

**Agenda Item**

**Date:** 12 June 2007

**9**

**Title:** **Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys 2006/07**

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Item for decision

## Summary

1. This report sets out the results of the Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys undertaken during 2006/07. These include the General and Planning surveys undertaken by BMG Research, and the Benefits and Tenants surveys undertaken by QA Research. This report compares results with the previous surveys in 2000/01 and 2003/04, along with Essex and all district councils.

## Recommendation

2. That the Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys results be noted and performance targets for 2009/10 agreed.

## Background Papers

- Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys Guidelines, Audit Commission
- Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys 2006/07: General Survey National Report, DCLG
- General Survey Report, BMG Research
- Planning Survey Report, BMG Research
- Benefits Survey Report, QA Research
- Tenants Survey Report, QA Research

## Impact

Communication/Consultation	The Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys were mailed to residents and users between April 2006 and January 2007. The results will be made available on the website and in Uttlesford Life.
Community Safety	No direct impact.
Equalities	No direct impact.

Finance	The Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys were contracted out to BMG Research and QA Research.
Human Rights	No direct impact.
Legal Implications	The Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys were conducted in accordance with strict Government guidelines.
Sustainability	No direct impact.
Ward specific impact	No direct impact.
Workforce/workplace	No direct impact.

### Situation

3. The Government requires that the Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys are carried out every three years to provide a national picture of residents and users' satisfaction with the services provided by local authorities.
4. In 2006/07, the Council was required to undertake four surveys – General, Benefits, Planning and Tenants to collect the following Best Value Performance Indicators:

Survey	Indicator	Responsible Division
<b>General</b>		
BV3	Overall satisfaction	Partnerships & Performance
BV4	Satisfaction with complaints handling	Partnerships & Performance
BV89	Satisfaction with cleanliness	Street Services
BV90a	Satisfaction with waste collection	Street Services
BV90b	Satisfaction with waste recycling	Street Services
BV119a	Satisfaction with sports/leisure facilities	Partnerships & Performance
BV119c	Satisfaction with museums/galleries	Community Engagement
BV119d	Satisfaction with theatres/concert halls	Partnerships & Performance
BV119e	Satisfaction with parks and open spaces	Partnerships & Performance
<b>Benefits</b>		

BV80a	Satisfaction with the Benefits office	Corporate Support & Revenue
BV80b	Satisfaction with the service in the Benefits office	Corporate Support & Revenue
BV80c	Satisfaction with the telephone service	Corporate Support & Revenue
BV80d	Satisfaction with the staff in the Benefits office	Corporate Support & Revenue
BV80e	Satisfaction with the Benefits forms	Corporate Support & Revenue
BV80f	Satisfaction with the speed of service	Corporate Support & Revenue
BV80g	Overall satisfaction with the Benefits service	Corporate Support & Revenue

<b>Planning</b>		
BV111	Satisfaction with the Planning service by those making a planning application	Planning Control

<b>Tenants</b>		
BV74a	Satisfaction with the overall service provided by the landlord	Housing Management
BV74b	Satisfaction with the overall service provided by the landlord for BME groups	Housing Management
BV74c	Satisfaction with the overall service provided by the landlord for non-BME groups	Housing Management
BV75a	Satisfaction with opportunities for participation	Housing Management
BV75b	Satisfaction with opportunities for participation for BME groups	Housing Management
BV75c	Satisfaction with opportunities for participation for non-BME groups	Housing Management

## Report

### Methodology

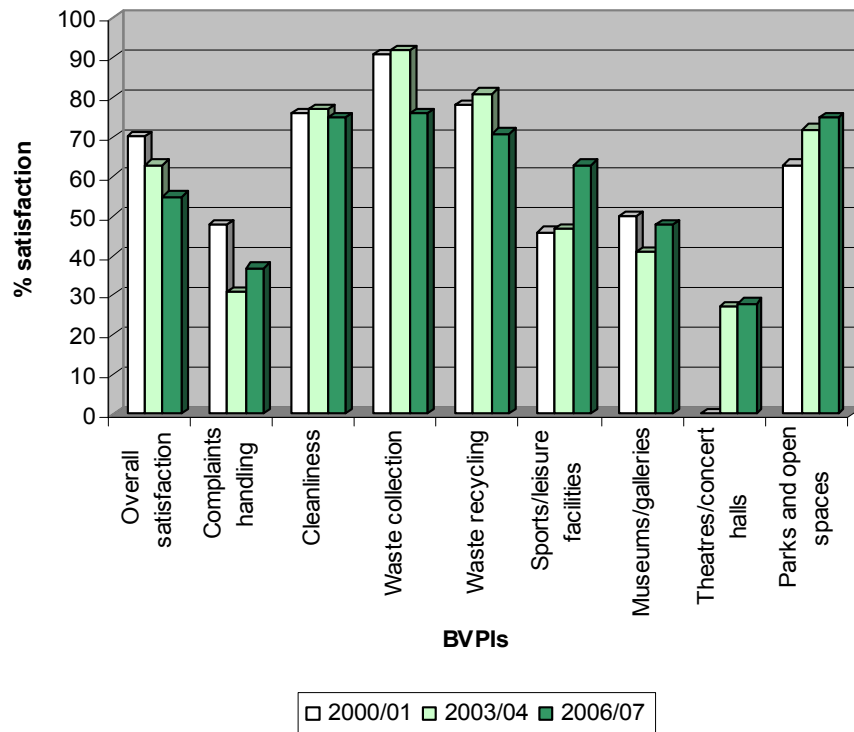
- The methodology for the surveys was prescribed by Government and strict guidelines were issued by the Audit Commission on how they were to be carried out. This was to ensure comparability of data across the country and with the previous surveys conducted in 2000/01 and 2003/04.

### General Survey

- The General Survey was mailed to 2,500 randomly selected addresses using the Postcode Address File (PAF) supplied by the Audit Commission. 1,139 usable completed questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 46%.

### Direction of Travel

7. The direction of travel in Uttlesford for overall satisfaction, cleanliness, waste collection, waste recycling and theatres/concert halls is down, and for complaints handling, sports/leisure, museums/galleries and parks and open spaces is up.



### BV3 Overall satisfaction

	2000/01 %	2003/04 %	2006/07 %	% change from 2003/04
<b>Uttlesford</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>-8</b>
<i>Essex</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	54	<i>n/a</i>
<i>East</i>	67	55	54	-1
<i>Districts</i>	68	56	55	-1
<b>Top Quartile</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>-2</b>

8. Overall satisfaction has declined by 8% since 2003/04. This decline is in line with the national trend where overall satisfaction amongst districts has declined by 1%. Our performance is on par with the district average of 55% and above the Essex district average of 54%. Our performance is in neither top nor bottom quartile for all councils. The decline in overall satisfaction

in Uttlesford is likely attributed to the change in waste collection during 2006/07 where satisfaction has significantly declined.

### BV4 Satisfaction with complaints handling

9. Satisfaction with complaints handling has improved by 6% since 2003/04. This improvement is in line with the national trend where satisfaction amongst districts has improved by 2%. Our performance is above the district average of 35% and the Essex district average of 36%. Our performance is in top quartile for all councils. Satisfaction with complaints handling is set to further improve once the new corporate complaints management system is fully implemented in 2007.

	2000/01 %	2003/04 %	2006/07 %	% change from 2003/04
<b>Uttlesford</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>+6</b>
<i>Essex</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	36	<i>n/a</i>
<i>East</i>	41	32	36	+4
<i>Districts</i>	40	33	35	+2
<b>Top Quartile</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>+1</b>

**BV89 Satisfaction with cleanliness**

	2000/01 %	2003/04 %	2006/07 %	% change from 2003/04
<b>Uttlesford</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>-2</b>
<i>Essex</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	71	<i>n/a</i>
<i>East</i>	67	62	71	+9
<i>Districts</i>	67	63	69	+6
<b>Top Quartile</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>+6</b>

10. Satisfaction with cleanliness has declined by 2% since 2003/04. This is against the national trend where satisfaction amongst districts has improved by 6%. However, our performance is still higher than the district average of 69% and the Essex district average of 71%. Our performance is in top quartile for all councils. There is no particular explanation for this

decline in performance. But to help raise our performance in forthcoming years the Council has appointed consultants to undertake a review of street cleaning during the summer, and hopes to bring about some positive changes as a result of this.

**BV90a Satisfaction with waste collection**

11. Satisfaction with waste collection has declined by 16% since 2003/04. This is in line with the national trend where satisfaction amongst districts has declined by 7%. Our performance is below the district average of 79% and the Essex district average of 82%. Our performance is in neither top nor bottom quartile for all councils. This significant decline in satisfaction is likely attributed to the introduction of the three bin waste and recycling scheme introduced during June-November 2006.

	2000/01 %	2003/04 %	2006/07 %	% change from 2003/04
Uttlesford	91	92	76	-16
Essex	n/a	n/a	82	n/a
East	88	84	81	-3
Districts	88	86	79	-7
<b>Top Quartile</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>-4</b>

### BV90b Satisfaction with waste recycling

	2000/01 %	2003/04 %	2006/07 %	% change from 2003/04
Uttlesford	78	81	71	-10
Essex	n/a	n/a	76	n/a
East	70	69	71	+2
Districts	69	71	72	+1
<b>Top Quartile</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>+1</b>

12. Satisfaction with waste recycling has declined by 10% since 2003/04. This is against the national trend where satisfaction amongst districts has improved by 1%. Our performance is below the district average of 72% and the Essex district average of 76%. Our performance is in neither top nor bottom quartile for all councils. Again, this significant decline in satisfaction

is likely attributed to the introduction of the three bin waste and recycling scheme introduced during June-November 2006. However, in the same survey 35% of residents indicated that the waste collection and recycling service has improved in the last three years.

13. An in-house survey carried out during March-April 2007 indicated that 90% of residents are recycling waste and 60% are recycling more since implementation of the scheme. Satisfaction with the new system is high at 69%, with only 13% expressing dissatisfaction. Overall our recycling rate for household waste and composting in 2006/07 was 43%, up from 26% in 2005/06.

### BV119a Satisfaction with sports/leisure facilities

14. Satisfaction with sports/leisure facilities has improved by 16% since 2003/04. This is in line with the national trend where satisfaction amongst districts has improved by 5%. Our performance is above the district average of 60% and the Essex district average of 61%. Our performance is in top quartile for all councils. This significant improvement in performance is likely attributed to the new build and refurbishment of three leisure centres in Stansted Mountfitchet, Great Dunmow and Saffron Walden in August 2003 under a Private Finance Initiative.

	2000/01 %	2003/04 %	2006/07 %	% change from 2003/04
Uttlesford	46	47	63	+16
Essex	n/a	n/a	61	n/a
East	53	53	59	+6
Districts	52	55	60	+5
<b>Top Quartile</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>+3</b>

### BV119c Satisfaction with museums/galleries

	2000/01 %	2003/04 %	2006/07 %	% change from 2003/04
Uttlesford	50	41	48	+7
Essex	n/a	n/a	34	n/a
East	48	40	41	+1
Districts	48	41	39	-2
<b>Top Quartile</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>+1</b>

15. Satisfaction with museums/galleries has improved by 7% since 2003/04. This is against the national trend where satisfaction amongst districts has declined by 2%. Our performance is significantly above the district average of 39% and the Essex district average of 34%. However, our performance is in neither top nor bottom quartile for all councils. This

improvement in performance is attributed to efforts made to raise the profile of the museum i.e. fundraising events for the Heritage Quest Centre, and outreach work.

16. Museum visits continue to rise with numbers achieving 316 per 1,000 population (BV170b), and pupil visits as part of organised school groups achieving 5,468 (BV170c) in 2006/07, placing our performance in top quartile.

### BV119d Satisfaction with theatres/concert halls

17. Satisfaction with theatres/concert halls has declined by 1% since 2003/04. This is in line with the national trend where satisfaction amongst districts has declined by 8%. Our performance is below the district average of 39% and the Essex district average of 35%. Our performance is in bottom quartile for all councils. However, it should be noted that the Council does not own nor manage any theatres or concert halls in the district.

	2000/01 %	2003/04 %	2006/07 %	% change from 2003/04
Uttlesford	n/a	27	28	-1
Essex	n/a	n/a	35	n/a
East	52	44	40	-4
Districts	51	47	39	-8
Top Quartile	61	56	52	-4









### BV119e Satisfaction with parks and open spaces

	2000/01 %	2003/04 %	2006/07 %	% change from 2003/04
Uttlesford	63	72	75	+3
Essex	n/a	n/a	77	n/a
East	66	72	75	+3
Districts	62	72	73	+1
Top Quartile	70	77	77	0

18. Satisfaction with parks and open spaces has improved by 3% since 2003/04. This is in line with the national trend where satisfaction amongst districts has improved by 1%. Our performance is above the district average of 73% but below the Essex district average of 77%. Our performance is in neither top nor bottom quartile for all councils.

\* East and Top Quartile include non-district data.



		2003/04 Result %	2006/07 Target %	2006/07 Result %	2006/07 Status	2009/10 Target %
BV3	Overall satisfaction	63	80	55		60
BV4	Satisfaction with complaints handling	31	62	37		42
BV89	Satisfaction with cleanliness	77	80	75		80
BV90a	Satisfaction with waste collection	92	92	76		86
BV90b	Satisfaction with waste recycling	81	82	71		76
BV119a	Satisfaction with sports / leisure facilities	47	75	63		68
BV119c	Satisfaction with museums / galleries	41	70	48		53
BV119d	Satisfaction with theatres / concert halls	27	n/a	28	n/a	33
BV119e	Satisfaction with parks and open spaces	72	75	75		80

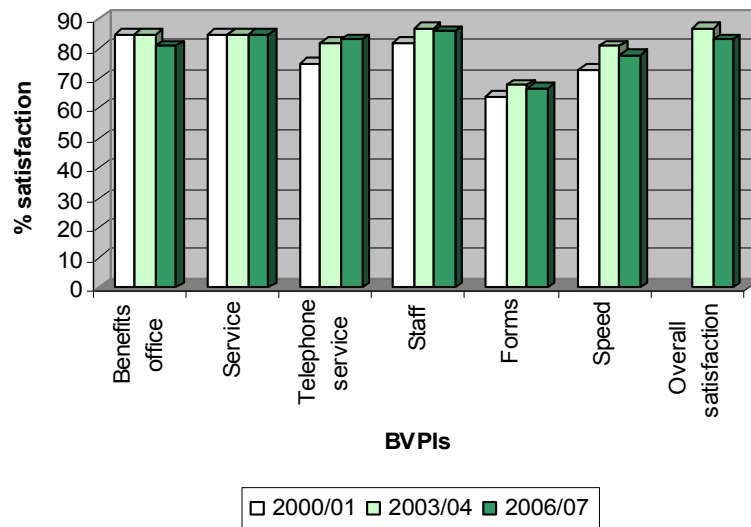
19. Our performance on these BVPIs has been much lower than anticipated, with all but one significantly failing to achieve target. In hindsight these targets were set too high on the basis of 2003/04 performance and were unrealistic. Therefore, targets for 2009/10 have been based on 2006/07 performance and aim to achieve a minimum of 5% improvement and top quartile in accordance with criteria set for all BVPIs.

### Benefits Survey

20. The Benefits Survey was mailed to 591 applicants who matched the criteria prescribed by the Audit Commission. 239 usable completed questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 40%.

### Direction of Travel

21. The direction of travel in Uttlesford for satisfaction with the benefits service is down, with only the telephone service seeing an improvement.










		2000/01 %	2003/04 %	2006/07 %	% change from 2003/04
BV80a	Satisfaction with the Benefits office	85	85	81	-4
BV80b	Satisfaction with the service in the Benefits office	85	85	86	+1
BV80c	Satisfaction with the telephone service	75	82	83	+1
BV80d	Satisfaction with the staff in the Benefits office	82	87	86	-1
BV80e	Satisfaction with the Benefits forms	64	68	67	-1
BV80f	Satisfaction with the speed of service	73	81	78	-3
BV80g	Overall satisfaction with the Benefits service	n/a	87	83	-4

22. Overall satisfaction with the benefits service has declined by 4% since 2003/04, including satisfaction with the office (-4%), staff (-1%), forms (-1%) and speed of service (-3%). The benefits claim form is common to all councils and the content is prescribed. However, there may be an opportunity to redesign these later in the year and respond to customer satisfaction issues at a national level. Speed of service recorded via BV78a (average processing time for new Housing and Council Tax benefit) and BV78b (average processing time for written notifications of changes of circumstance) remains top quartile at 19 days and 6 days.

23. Satisfaction with the service and satisfaction with the telephone service have improved by 1%. This improvement is likely attributed to frontline staff being moved into the Customer Service Centre during 2006/07 which has enabled many calls to be resolved at the first point of contact and back office staff to concentrate on processing issues.

24. At present the district dataset has not been released by the Audit Commission to enable local, regional and national comparisons.

## Performance

		2003/04 Results %	2006/07 Target %	2006/07 Results %	2006/07 Status	2009/10 Target %
BV80a	Satisfaction with the Benefits office	85	82	81		86
BV80b	Satisfaction with the service in the Benefits office	85	87	86		91
BV80c	Satisfaction with the telephone service	82	71	83		88
BV80d	Satisfaction with the staff in the Benefits office	87	82	86		91
BV80e	Satisfaction with the Benefits forms	68	63	67		72
BV80f	Satisfaction with the speed of service	81	71	78		83
BV80g	Overall satisfaction with the Benefits service	87	77	83		88

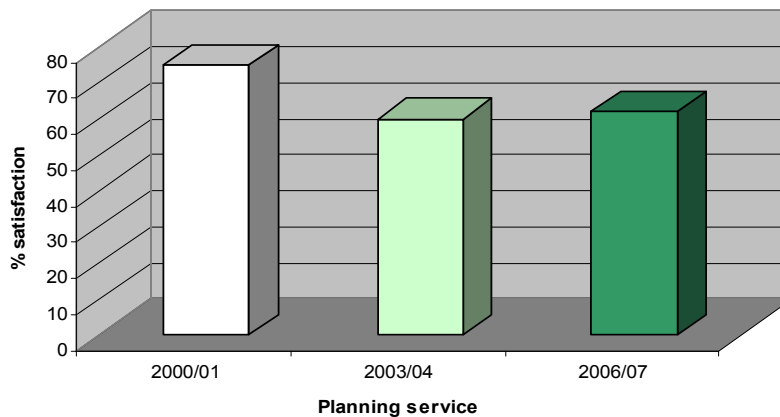
25. Despite an overall decline in satisfaction our performance on the Benefits BVPIs has been high, with five out of seven achieving target. This is primarily due to an anticipation of a decline in satisfaction and lower targets having been set. Targets for 2009/10 have been based on 2006/07 performance and aim to achieve a minimum of 5% improvement in accordance with criteria set for all user satisfaction BVPIs.

## Planning Survey

26. The Planning Survey was mailed to 647 applicants or agents of applicants who had received a decision letter on their application between 3 April and 29 September 2006. 302 usable completed questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 47%.

## Direction of Travel

27. The direction of travel in Uttlesford for satisfaction with the planning service is up.




		2000/01 %	2003/04 %	2006/07 %	% change from 2003/04
BV111	Satisfaction with the planning service by those making a planning application	75	60	62	+2

28. Satisfaction with the planning service has improved by 2% since 2003/04. This is in line with an improvement in our performance on determining minor and other planning applications in 8 weeks at 76% and 89%. Performance on determining major planning applications in 13 weeks remains in top quartile at 76%.

29. At present the district dataset has not been released by the Audit Commission to enable local, regional and national comparisons.

### Performance

		2003/04 Result %	2006/07 Target %	2006/07 Result %	2006/07 Status	2009/10 Target %
BV111	Satisfaction with the planning service by those making a planning application	60	80	62		67

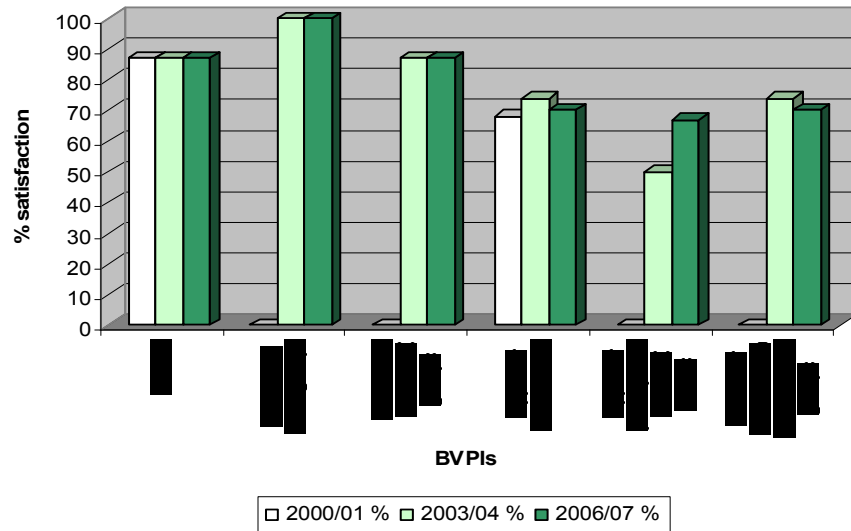
30. Despite an improvement in satisfaction our performance for this Planning BVPI has been much lower than anticipated. In hindsight the target was set too high on the basis of 2003/04 performance and was unrealistic. Therefore, the target for 2009/10 has been based on 2006/07 performance and aims to achieve a minimum of 5% improvement in accordance with criteria set for all user satisfaction BVPIs.

### Tenants Survey

31. The Tenants Survey was mailed to 1,600 tenants. 831 usable completed questionnaires were returned representing a response rate of 52%.

**Direction of Travel**

32.The direction of travel in Uttlesford for satisfaction with the housing service remains unchanged. Satisfaction with opportunities for participation is down, with the exception of opportunities for BME groups which is up.









		2000/01 %	2003/04 %	2006/07 %	% change from 2003/04
BV74a	Satisfaction with the overall service provided by the landlord	87	87	87	0
BV74b	Satisfaction with the overall service provided by the landlord for BME groups	n/a	100	100	0
BV74c	Satisfaction with the overall service provided by the landlord for non-BME groups	n/a	87	87	0
BV75a	Satisfaction with opportunities for participation	68	74	70	-4
BV75b	Satisfaction with opportunities for participation for BME groups	n/a	50	67	+17
BV75c	Satisfaction with opportunities for participation for non-BME groups	n/a	74	70	-4

33.Satisfaction with the overall service provided for BME and non-BME groups remains unchanged at 100% and 87% since 2003/04. Satisfaction with opportunities for participation has declined by 4%, except for BME groups where satisfaction has improved by 17% since 2003/04. This is likely attributed to efforts to raise the profile and improve participation of hard-to-reach groups through the tenants’ newsletter and forum. To further develop opportunities for participation for BME groups the Council is represented on the new BME Citizens Panel set up by Essex Race Equality Council and the Essex Housing Officer Group.

34. At present the district dataset has not been released by the Audit Commission to enable local, regional and national comparisons.

## Performance

		2003/04 Results %	2006/07 Target %	2006/07 Results %	2006/07 Status	2009/10 Target %
BV74a	Satisfaction with the overall service provided by the landlord	87	90	87		90
BV74b	Satisfaction with the overall service provide by the landlord for BME groups	100	100	100		95
BV74c	Satisfaction with the overall service provided by the landlord for non-BME groups	87	90	87		90
BV75a	Satisfaction with opportunities for participation	74	75	70		75
BV75b	Satisfaction with opportunities for participation for BME groups	50	79	67		75
BV75c	Satisfaction with opportunities for participation for non-BME groups	74	75	70		75

35. Despite high levels of satisfaction our performance on the Housing BVPIs has been lower than anticipated. Performance is below target on all but one BVPI. Targets for 2009/10 have been based on 2006/07 performance and aim to achieve a minimum of 5% improvement in accordance with criteria set for all user satisfaction BVPIs, with the exception of BV74b where a realistic target has been set.

## Research Reports

36. Further details on the Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys, including satisfaction for non-BVPIs will be available in the research reports being finalised by BMG Research and QA Research. These will be available on the website in due course, along with comparison data for districts when released by the Audit Commission.

## Future Surveys

37. In the future the Council is looking to conduct targeted surveys on an annual basis. These may be completed in conjunction with Essex County Council and/or other local districts. Initial investigations into the feasibility of such partnership working is currently being undertaken.

## Risk Analysis

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigating actions</b>
<b>Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys are non-compliant</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Statutory guidance is followed closely to ensure audit compliance.</b>