

Member Development Survey

**Analysis prepared by the Policy and Research Section
April 2005**

Member Development Survey

Background

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) are undertaking a review into Member development and support.

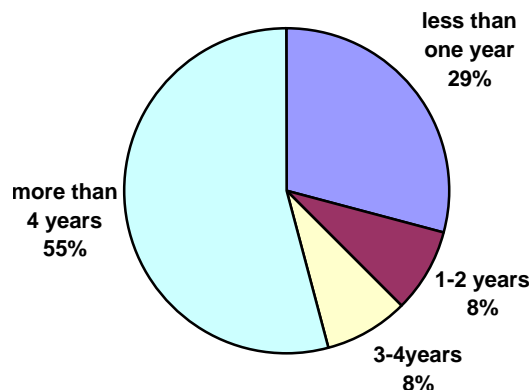
During March 2005 a survey of all Members was carried out to find out their views on current levels of support provided by the Council and potential developments in Member support and skills development.

The survey was designed by officers in democratic services and a working group comprising Councillors Baker, Dew, Finnie and Stenner.

This report sets out the results of the survey. In addition to the quantitative responses a series of qualitative responses were recorded. A list of the qualitative responses are detailed in appendix B of this report

Section 1 Response Rate and About You

27 Members returned their surveys representing a 52% response rate. The breakdown of how long each respondent had been a District Councillor is shown in the pie Chart below



11 respondents were also a County Councillor and/or a Town Councillor and 5 respondents were Cabinet Members.

The breakdown of membership of Council Panels and Committee is shown in the table below

	count
Employment Panel	2
Licensing & Protection Panel	6
Licensing Committee	5
Development Control Panel	8
Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources)	5
Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance)	5
Standards Committee	3
Leisure Centre Management Committee	14

Corporate Governance Panel	7
Elections Panel	4

Section 2 - Current Support Provided by the Council

Services provided by the Council to Members

Frequency

Respondents indicated that they most frequently use the Members intranet home page, Modern Gov., the Council year book and filofax and minutes. The services that a high number of Members indicated they used rarely were; equipment hire for meetings, room hire for political meetings, secretarial services and travel arrangements and accommodation. Appendix A shows the detailed breakdown of responses.

Satisfaction

Of those services (listed in the survey) where Members expressed an opinion, a high level of satisfaction was recorded. Only one Member recorded a dissatisfaction response (for the Members library). 89% of those who responded to the question were very satisfied/satisfied overall with the services provided to Members. Appendix A shows the detailed breakdown of responses.

Publications provided by Democratic Services

The majority of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that the publications provided by democratic services were helpful. Appendix A shows the detailed breakdown of responses

IT and related facilities

34.5% of respondents described themselves as having an advanced level of IT literacy, 31% described themselves as intermediate and 34.5% described themselves as having basic IT literacy.

The table below shows the counts of how often respondents used the listed services. The most frequently used services were the HDC intranet and the internet.

	HDC Intranet	Internet	Pickwick	GIS	Modern.gov	Public Access for Planning
Frequently	14	11	2	2	9	9
Occasionally	10	10	6	6	8	7
Rarely	3	5	12	7	7	7
Never		1	6	9	1	3

Appendix B details why respondents rarely or never used the service

Of the respondents who expressed an opinion, the majority of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the different aspects of the HDC website and associated publicly available parts of the HDC website. However, the 'speed of access' caused the most dissatisfaction (46% dissatisfied/very dissatisfied). Appendix A shows the detailed breakdown of responses.

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with listed IT services at home and at pathfinder house. The tables below show the results. Computers at home were the only service where more than one respondent recorded dissatisfaction.

	Pathfinder House - Computers	Pathfinder House - Printers	Pathfinder House - Telephones
Very Satisfied	3	3	5
Satisfied	6	4	7
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	3	2	2
N/A	11	14	10

	At Home - Computers	At Home - Printers	At Home - Telephone	At Home- Voicemail
Very Satisfied	7	7	8	4
Satisfied	8	9	12	2
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	3	4	3	4
Dissatisfied	5	1		
Very Dissatisfied	2	1	1	1
N/A	1	4	2	12

Training Courses

The majority of respondents who expressed an opinion on their satisfaction with training courses were very satisfied/satisfied. Appendix A shows the detailed responses. The most preferred times for attending training courses were 'Daytime Monday-Friday' and 'Outside office hours Monday-Friday'. Appendix A shows the detailed responses.

7 respondents indicated that there had been courses that they wanted to attend but could not do so because they were held at times that were unsuitable. There was a lack of support for holding more courses at weekends. 12 respondents indicated that they would be interested in web-based training courses. The majority of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the overall provision of training courses

Section 3 - Contact with Officers

Contacting officers by e-mail was the most preferred method of communication followed by telephone and in person.

56% respondents said that they sometimes had difficulties in contacting officers whilst 44% respondents said that rarely or never had any problems.

37% of respondents said that they sometimes had difficulties in identifying the most suitable officer to deal with questions whilst 59% respondents said that they rarely or never had any problems

The table below shows how often respondents had face to face meetings with officers (other than Committee meetings)

more than ten times	more than twice, but less than 10 times	once or twice	never	Total
14	5	7	1	27

96% of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the speed of response to queries submitted to Officers and 93% were very satisfied/satisfied with the quality of response. (see appendix B for specific comments)

96% of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the support provided by officers at meetings

Section 4 - Availability of information/information management

93% of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the availability of/access to reports submitted to meetings.

74% of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the clarity of reports submitted to meetings.

63% of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the availability of/access to Council documents on the intranet.

93% of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied that meeting agendas are provided sufficiently in advance of meetings.

57% of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the level of information currently contained in the forward plan, 39% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

56% of respondents said that they used hyperlinks in the forward plan to background documents and 44% said that they did not use hyperlinks.

61.5% of respondents said that they were happy with the way ward specific matters are currently conveyed to Ward Members, 38.5% said that they were not happy with the way ward specific matters are currently conveyed to Ward Members.

79% of respondents said that they knew how to call in a cabinet decision, 21% (5) said that they did not know how to call in cabinet decision.

Section 5 - Contact with other Members

All of the respondents said that they found other Members helpful in providing them with advice and information.

80% of respondents said that they found other Members helpful in providing them with guidance on their role as a Councillor. 20% said that they did not find other Members helpful in providing them with guidance on their role as a Councillor.

84% of respondents said that they had found other Members helpful in providing them with guidance as to their role on panels or other committees of which they were a member.

Of the newly elected Members who responded (7), 5 were very satisfied/satisfied with the level of support provided by other Members in their first year as a councillor.

71% of respondents who expressed an opinion were very satisfied/satisfied with the speed of response to queries for information submitted to other members. 62% of respondents who expressed an opinion were very satisfied/satisfied with the quality of response to queries for information submitted to other members.

92% of respondents would like to see an organised mentoring scheme introduced for new Members. 76% were prepared to act as a mentor.

Section 6 - Democratic Services – Potential improvements to support services offered to Members

Respondents were asked to indicate from a list of different services/equipment if they thought it would assist them in their role within the community. Respondents indicated that the following services/equipment would be the most useful:-

	strongly agreed/ agreed
Briefings on specific topics	89%
Notification of Ward related committee reports	79%
Research support	72%
Broadband	69%
Ward surgeries – development of packs for distribution to new residents	67%
Answering machines	63%
Ward surgeries – support for surgeries	63%
Ward surgeries – development of information packs on ward surgeries	58%
Ward surgeries – publicity for surgeries	58%
Monitoring complaints	57%

Cash sum to use at discretion of the Member on constituency matters or equipment	52%
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A detailed breakdown of all the responses is shown in appendix A

Section 7 - suggestions

See Appendix B for detailed comments and suggestions

Recommendations for future surveys

Some of the answer boxes on the survey were miss-aligned and it was impossible to decide which question a respondent had answered. To avoid this in future surveys, questionnaire templates are available from the Policy Team.

The questions throughout the survey were not numbered. Numbering of questions speeds up the analysis process and enables easier referencing back when looking at the final report.

Qualitative responses cannot be quantified and are therefore appended to the report in Appendix B as supplementary information.

Appendix A

Section 2 Current Support Provided by the Council

I make use of the following Services

	frequently	occasionally	rarely	never
Allowances and expenses		10	9	8
Members Code of Conduct	4	15	4	3
Minutes	10	6	5	4
Drafting motions to Council	2	5	7	11
Drafting of Members' questions for Council		5	10	11
Parish/ward matters	8	15	3	
Constitution	2	10	8	6
Chairman's briefings	6	4	3	13
Equipment hire for meetings			8	18
Room hire for political meetings		4	6	16
Photocopying		6	10	10
Printing		6	9	11
Secretarial services	3	4	3	15
Travel arrangements and accommodation		6	6	14
Members' room facilities	1	7	9	5
Members library	1	5	8	10
Council Year Book and filofax	13	6	4	3
Modern.gov (Committee Minutes Software)	10	8	5	2
Members intranet Home Page	15	5	5	

Satisfaction with services provided by the Council to the members

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Niether Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	N/A
Allowances and expenses	6	11	4		5
Members Code of Conduct	10	13	2		2
Minutes	10	9	4		4
Drafting of motions to Council	4	5	4		12
Drafting of Members' questions for Council	4	4	5		12
Parish/ward matters					
Constitution	7	9	5		4
Chairman's briefings	6	4	5		11
Equipment hire for meetings	1	3	4		16
Room hire for political meetings	2	5	6		12
Photocopying	5	8	4		10
Printing	6	7	3		11
Secretarial services	5	2	3		13
Travel arrangements and accommodation	5	5	3		12
Members' Room facilities	2	12	5		6

Members' library	1	5	7	1	11
Council Yearbook and Filofax	8	11	2		4
Modern.Gov (Committee Minutes Software)	4	15	4		2
Members Intranet Home page	5	14	5		
Overall level of satisfaction with the services provided	8	15	3		

Publications provided by Democratic Services

I have found the following publications provided by democratic Services helpful

	strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	Total
Signpost - a guide to support services for Members	3	19	5	0	27
I&DeA - a councillor's guide	3	13	10	0	26
Council Year Book & Filofax	14	7	3	2	26
Contacts Book	13	9	3	0	25
Training and Development Programme	7	15	5	0	27
Telephone Directory	15	9	3	0	27
Budget and MTP Book	4	11	10	1	26

IT and related facilities

Please indicate level of satisfaction with the following aspects of the HDC intranet and associated publicly available parts of the HDC website

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	N/A
Speed of Access	3	7	4	7	5	
Navigation	1	14	9		1	
Search Engine	1	12	11		1	
Member-specific content	2	16	7		1	
Other Content		14	9	1	1	1
Overall level of satisfaction with the HDC intranet	1	14	10		1	

Training Courses

Are you able in general to attend courses held at the following times?

	Daytime Monday-	Morning only Monday-Friday	Afternoon only Monday-	Outside office hours	Saturdays

	Friday		Friday	Monday-Friday	
yes	20	11	11	21	7
no	3	3	4	1	15
Total	23	14	15	22	22

Section 6 - Democratic Services – Potential improvements to support services offered to Members

	strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	Total	Total Strongly Agree/ agree
Briefings on specific topics	5	18	3			26	
	19.2%	69.2%	11.5%			100.0%	89%
Interview room	1	5	15	2		23	
	4.3%	21.7%	65.2%	8.7%		100.0%	26%
Dedicated Member meeting rooms at Pathfinder House	2	5	15		1	23	
	8.7%	21.7%	65.2%		4.3%	100.0%	30%
Diary Management	2	4	12	3		21	
	9.5%	19.0%	57.1%	14.3%		100.0%	29%
Enhanced secretarial support for individual members	2	4	12	2	3	23	
	8.7%	17.4%	52.2%	8.7%	13.0%	100.0%	26%
Political assistants		5	7	5	5	22	
		22.7%	31.8%	22.7%	22.7%	100.0%	23%
Research support	3	15	4	3		25	
	12.0%	60.0%	16.0%	12.0%		100.0%	72%
Assistance with surveys, consultation etc	1	12	8	4		25	
	4.0%	48.0%	32.0%	16.0%		100.0%	52%
logging and chasing of member enquiries	2	9	9	4		24	
	8.3%	37.5%	37.5%	16.7%		100.0%	46%
monitoring complaints	2	10	9			21	
	9.5%	47.6%	42.9%			100.0%	57%
Notification of Ward related Committee reports	8	11	4	1		24	
	33.3%	45.8%	16.7%	4.2%		100.0%	79%
Co-ordination of public meetings		6	13	1	2	22	
		27.3%	59.1%	4.5%	9.1%	100.0%	27%
Ward surgeries - arrangement of (including room hire)	2	8	6	5	3	24	
	8.3%	33.3%	25.0%	20.8%	12.5%	100.0%	42%
Ward surgeries -	4	10	3	4	3	24	

development of information packs on ward surgeries							
	16.7%	41.7%	12.5%	16.7%	12.5%	100.0%	58%
Ward surgeries - development of packs for distribution to new residents	5	11	3	2	3	24	
	20.8%	45.8%	12.5%	8.3%	12.5%	100.0%	67%
Ward surgeries - Publicity for surgeries	2	12	3	4	3	24	
	8.3%	50.0%	12.5%	16.7%	12.5%	100.0%	58%
Ward surgeries - Support for surgeries	2	13	2	4	3	24	
	8.3%	54.2%	8.3%	16.7%	12.5%	100.0%	63%
Cash sum to use at discretion of the Member on constituency matters or equipment	4	9	3	5	4	25	
	16.0%	36.0%	12.0%	20.0%	16.0%	100.0%	52%
answering machines	6	9	3	4	2	24	
	25.0%	37.5%	12.5%	16.7%	8.3%	100.0%	63%
facsimile machines	1	6	8	5	3	23	
	4.3%	26.1%	34.8%	21.7%	13.0%	100.0%	30%
mobile telephones	2	7	5	6	5	25	
	8.0%	28.0%	20.0%	24.0%	20.0%	100.0%	36%
paggers		3	6	7	6	22	
		13.6%	27.3%	31.8%	27.3%	100.0%	14%
digital cameras	1	8	2	9	5	25	
	4.0%	32.0%	8.0%	36.0%	20.0%	100.0%	36%
scanners	5	7	4	6	3	25	
	20.0%	28.0%	16.0%	24.0%	12.0%	100.0%	48%
office furniture		4	6	6	7	23	
		17.4%	26.1%	26.1%	30.4%	100.0%	17%
office stationery other than headed paper	1	9	6	4	5	25	
	4.0%	36.0%	24.0%	16.0%	20.0%	100.0%	40%
postage	2	6	6	5	6	25	
	8.0%	24.0%	24.0%	20.0%	24.0%	100.0%	32%
broadband	13	5	5	1	2	26	
	50.0%	19.2%	19.2%	3.8%	7.7%	100.0%	69%

Qualitative Responses

Section 2

If dissatisfied with any of the services listed above, please indicate why in the space below

I would like to know more about who to go to for secretarial services.
Sometimes help for the ward matters could have been better
Library (if it is in the Members room) is not that extensive. What about mere reference books plus other studies that officers may use for policy development?

If you have answered Never/Rarely to any of the above, please indicate why not in the space below

Do not use Pickwick– prefer hard copy of e-reg.
Cannot Access.
Finding the relevant password/user id seems impossible.
The inconvenience of opening the laptop and logging in. It would be better to have citrix or similar so I can use my main pc.
GIS was not really aware that it facility was available on line!
Haven't quite got to grips with these areas yet.
Restricted time and IT experience means I only use services when I have to – not out of interest.
HDC IT system too slow.
I get blocked out by a firewall!
Rubbish computer system.
No requirement.
Terrible quality of IT equipment (ie Broadband – how are we supposed to access GIS on a 48 kb connection?) Election system is rather dated.
I use my personal computer for internet. I have never found out how to use PICKWICK . I am not clear what GIS represents
Prefer dealing with officers personally.
I get minutes through the post and attend planning dept in person.

If dissatisfied with any of the IT services listed above, please indicate why in the space below

Main disadvantage is the time it takes to switch on (can be 10-15 minutes if lines are busy).
Speed of access very slow on computer at home.
One computer for C.C.C and H.D.C
Dissatisfied is too strong. Control is a bit slow – probably due to BT network and location
Would like broadband access!
Not on broadband – everything too slow. Style sided printer is wasteful of paper.
Everything is very slow and it does not work when really needed. Printer takes up more than 1 sheet of paper.
I use my own computer and telephone at home.

Flat screens. These exist throughout Pathfinder House – why have members, with less personal space not got them?
Fine not sufficient for service – should be changed soon.
Computer is very slow compared to my personal pc.
56k modern connection too slow.

Please give details of any areas in which you would like further training and/or you consider that training would be useful to other Members

Computer training for idiots.

- ❖ Overview & scrutiny – alternative practices to our own.
- ❖ Presentations on work of each committee for other members benefits.
- ❖ For many members, finance is not a strong point – help with understanding budgets, M.T.P, performance indicators etc.

I think some members would find training on the budget helpful.

More training required in scrutiny.

Section 3

Please add any specific comments in the space below

At times I feel as if I am ignored as possibly my query is seen as petty to officers. I persists and get a reply. Not Dem Services I may add!

I always find our officers helpful and impartial with one possible exception in the planning (Dev Control) office.

I feel that some officers are not being fair with answers and are not 'listening' of wanting to understand requests.

Depends on the officer. Some good, some poor. Response to members needs to be ASAP.

Timely response to member could save 20 enquires from public.

The officers are excellent, some of the best officials I have worked with.

Again there is the odd occasion when you do not get the service you expect.

This is very variable. Some Executive Councillors are very slow to respond.

Seems to defeat the object of the post! Other are excellent though.

Section 5

Please add any specific comments in the space below

Repeatedly dissatisfied and have to chase for an answer.

Most members are great. One or two are unhealthy unhelpful.

If executive councillors give a small report and group meetings, it will be easier for others to question them without the presence of the opposition.

Section 7

In the space below, please add any further comments that you would like to make, for example what you would like Democratic Services to do to make your work more effective and responsive

I have no complaint whatsoever with the DC department. They are all more helpful and if they can't help you, they find someone who can. If only other offices and indeed members were the same.

I find the service provided at the moment is excellent. I would imagine that committee Chairmen/ Vice Chairmen and cabinet members would rely far more on Democratic services than 'back benchers'!

I would simply like a secretary I could go to who could help with compiling a letter and typing it.

Publicise how they can provide assistance. This was done when I was elected but I was new and not able to take it all in.

Make it clear which officers expect to be contacted by members and on which subject areas. As a new member, it is not until I have a problem that I have to find out who is best placed to help me. I feel I should know that already.

Intranet entry for members details could include more background information to encourage more interaction and exchange of ideas (voluntary of course).

Eg. Married? Children? Profession? Interests? A.C.V of sorts.

Having been a councillor for a number of years, I'm now very familiar with the workings of the local government. However, in my first 2 years as a councillor I found great difficulty in obtaining advice and help. I would strongly support a mentor scheme and more effort being put into training of new councillors.

Democratic services are a good team giving a very good service to both members and the public.

I find the DSS staff helpful and accessible. The main frustration I experience is the lack of broadband, which defers me from using the IT facilities as much as I could. As Leader of the Opposition, some dedicated research officers time would be helpful or a dedicated secretary / researcher.

The democratic services do their best with the officers they have got. We need a dedicated scrutiny officer for our own work.

Current approach and attitude of DS is excellent. I believe improvement to way council operates could be achieved by providing at home printing/scanning, answer machines etc. I do not see a need for the DC to become involved in Ward matters. Each individual councillor should be responsible for his own area.

As a member of the scrutiny panel, whilst Roy Reeves and Claire Harris do an excellent job in assisting us, I think that we would be able to use a political researcher/resource. With many members unable to contribute as much time as they would like, additional help in turning thoughts/ 'gut feelings' into proper analysis of the council's decisions/policies. This would enable the expertise of members to be enhanced.

I think that most people would have to be pampered with more services but at what cost? If the information is kept up to date on the intranet, I'll find it. The accommodation for committees and panels is unsatisfactory as is the council chamber itself. Opulence is not wanted, comfort is. I have one request – please revert to simple English – Jargon is abhorrent as a form of Egoism.

I have nothing functional to add thank you. Keep up the good work DSS!

As an independent councillor, I have been most grateful for the assistance I have received from the officers and staff of H.D.C. when I have been dealing with ward matters or the District concerns. If this standard continues, I shall be quite happy. I would like to mention that at all times I have received the utmost courtesy. I have a high regard for the professional way, in which the staff work. Thank you.