

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Satisfaction, Communication and Anti-Social Behaviour Focus Group Report on Key Messages</b>	<b>Item 4</b>
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	Safer Select Committee	
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	21 December 2009	
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	N/A	

**Purpose of Report:** To inform the Select Committee of the key messages coming from the focus groups held following the results of the Place Survey 2008. In particular to consider the results relating to National Indicator 21 - whether or not the Police and other public services are successfully dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour in the area.

**Recommended Action:** For the Committee to consider the key messages from the focus groups as detailed in the report.

**Reason for decision to be taken:** N/A

**Other options considered:** N/A

**Key background documentation:** West Berkshire Place Survey Report 2008

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Plan Priority(ies):

- CPP1 – Support our communities through the economic recession** – to alleviate the impact on different communities and individuals who find themselves out of work and/or disadvantaged
- CPP2 – Raise levels of educational achievement** – improving school performance levels
- CPP3 – Reduce West Berkshire’s carbon footprint** – to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in West Berkshire and contribute to waste management, green travel, transportation and energy efficiency

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Plan Theme(s):

- CPT1 - Better Roads and Transport**
- CPT2 - Thriving Town Centres**
- CPT3 - Affordable Housing**
- CPT4 - High Quality Planning**
- CPT5 - Cleaner and Greener**
- CPT6 - Vibrant Villages**
- CPT7 - Safer and Stronger Communities**
- CPT8 - A Healthier Life**
- CPT9 - Successful Schools and Learning**
- CPT10 - Promoting Independence**
- CPT11 - Protecting Vulnerable People**

- CPT12 - Including Everyone
- CPT13 - Value for Money
- CPT14 - Effective People
- CPT15 - Putting Customers First
- CPT16 - Excellent Performance Management

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Plan Priorities and Themes by:

There are no proposals contained in the report. The report is for information only, from which, proposals may be made by the Select Committee.

**Portfolio Member Details**

<b>Name &amp; Telephone No.:</b>	Councillor Please select
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	Please select @westberks.gov.uk
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	

**Contact Officer Details**

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**Implications**

**Policy:** N/A - for information only

**Financial:**

If there are any financial implications contained within this report this section **must** be signed off by a West Berkshire Group Accountant. Please note that the report cannot be accepted by Policy and Communication unless this action has been undertaken.

**Personnel:**

**Legal/Procurement:**

**Property:**

**Risk Management:**

**Equalities Impact**

**Assessment:** For advice please contact Principal Policy Officer (Equalities) on Ext. 2441.

<b>Is this item subject to call-in?</b>	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Executive Summary

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### Introduction

Following the results of the 2008 Place Survey, The Performance, Consultation and Research team were commissioned by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and Safer Select Committee to undertake some further qualitative research to investigate perceptions of how the council and Police are dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour and to explore satisfaction with the Council and how it communicates with residents in West Berkshire.

Four focus group sessions were held at the end of October 2009 in Thatcham, Lambourn – representing the rural west of the district, Chieveley – representing the rural east and Calcot – representing the urban eastern area of West Berkshire. The attendees of the focus groups were drawn from the Council's Community Panel.

### Key Findings

Generally, there is a level of awareness of the key services the council provides – particularly the ones that people use or that affect them directly, such as waste, roads, leisure and schools. When things go wrong with these key services it is noted and often attributed to the Council as a whole, thus affecting satisfaction levels.

Perceptions of anti-social behaviour were not particularly poor, except in Lambourn. Perceived problems were divided between those things that are more inherent in society such as a lack of respect and poor parenting and less likely to be issues that could be affected or dealt with directly by the Council, and those issues that are within the Council's remit to affect such as activities for teenagers and cleaning up vandalism and graffiti.

Information that the Council currently provides is not having a huge impact on people's perceptions, although the Council branding had been noticed. The local and national media appeared to have a bigger role in influencing what people thought about the Council and what it and the Police are doing about anti-social behaviour. However, perception was mainly based upon people's personal experiences of services they use and issues they face as well as those of friends and family.

There was a general appetite for information to be provided, although people wanted concise information but not to be inundated. They want something tangible that will stand out, giving them key information and useful phone numbers, and where to go for more information. It was universally suggested that council needs to be more creative and imaginative in its communications, as different people use different methods of communicating. Email alerts were one of the more popular suggestions, as well as fridge magnets with contact numbers.

There was a general feeling from people that issues such as anti-social behaviour should not just be left to the Council and Police to deal with and that there was a role for the community. However the community needs to be more empowered and enabled to tackle local issues, such as helping with activities for teenagers.

Participants also communicated that they want to feel more engaged and have more face-to-face contact with both officers and members, as they want to feel that they are being listened to. Feedback was also key, people want to know what is being done about their concerns, and generally having a good customer service experience from the council.

## Executive Report

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The full report is attached.

### Consultees

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**Local Stakeholders:** Members of the public who were selected by random sample to undertake the Place Survey in 2008 and members of the West Berkshire Community Panel who agreed to take part in the follow up focus group sessions.

**Officers Consulted:** Jason Teal (Performance, Research & Consultation Manager), Elaine Vincent (Principal Policy Officer)

**Trade Union:** \*

## **Satisfaction Communication and Anti-Social Behaviour Focus Group Report on Key Messages - Autumn 2009**

### **1. Introduction**

The 2008 national Place Survey, found that although people were generally more satisfied with their quality of life and area in which they live in West Berkshire, their satisfaction with the Council, although still above national average has decreased.

People perceive levels of anti-social behaviour to have become much less of a problem over the last four years and in particular in the last year and place much less emphasis on the level of crime in the area as a priority for improvement. However, people do not necessarily think that the police and other public services are either listening to their views on the subject or dealing effectively with crime and anti-social behaviour to the same extent as in other areas.

The Place Survey also found that a relatively low proportion of people in West Berkshire felt informed about public services.

The Performance, Consultation and Research team were commissioned by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and Safer Select Committee to undertake some further qualitative research to investigate these issues in more depth, looking at perceptions of how the Council and Police are dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour and to explore satisfaction with the Council and how it communicates with residents in West Berkshire.

### **2. Methodology**

Four focus group sessions were held at the end of October 2009 in Thatcham, Lambourn – representing the rural west of the district, Chieveley – representing the rural east and Calcot – representing the urban eastern area of West Berkshire.

The attendees of the focus groups were drawn from the Council's Community Panel. This is a panel of some 1,500 people who have answered one of the surveys that have been sent out by the Council (such as the Residents' Survey or Community Safety Survey) and indicated that they would be interested in being a member of the panel and attending focus group discussions if and when they arise.

Members of the panel were written to based on the different areas of district in which the focus groups were being held – around 50 people are invited for each group based on a range of ages and whether or not they have attended recently. Members of the panel were invited to come along to a discussion which would be exploring these topics. Typically, 6 -15 people respond to each group invitation and the first 10-12 are confirmed as attendees and sent some initial information about the topic and questions we would hope to discuss with them, so that they can come prepared with their ideas.

The sessions last around an hour and a half and follow a topic guide based on questions that we would like to explore. Focus groups are a useful way to 'get a feeling' of why people might think x or y and explore the issues in more depth. They are not quantitative exercises so can not be used to say definitively that people have a certain view on an issue.

The sessions in Thatcham and Lambourn focussed more specifically on anti-social behaviour as these were areas identified by the Place Survey as being particularly unsatisfied with how crime and anti-social behaviour was being dealt with, but also touched on communications issues. The sessions in Chieveley and Calcot focussed on perceptions of the Council and communications but also explored anti-social behaviour issues.

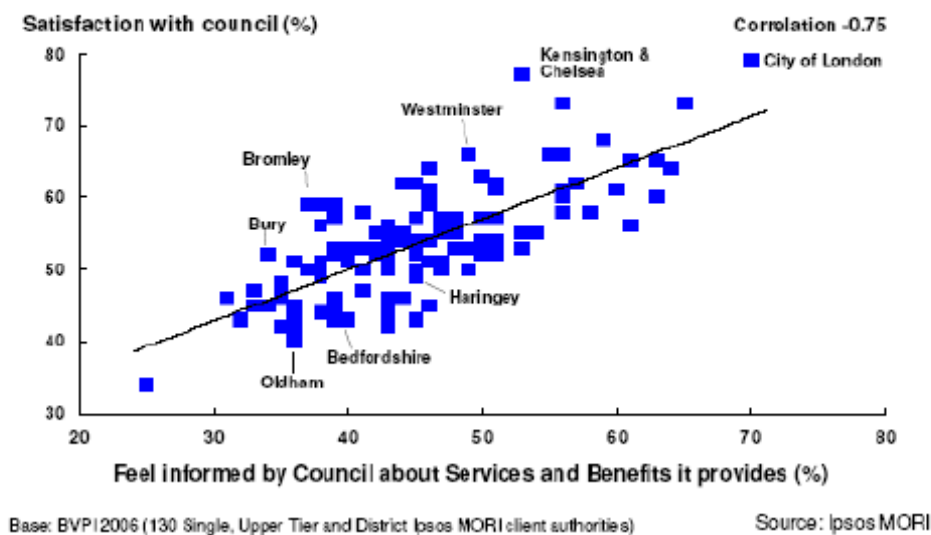
This report will firstly look at perceptions of the Council and communications before going on to people's perceptions anti-social behaviour and how this is or should be dealt with. It will then consider how people think the Council could communicate better with them generally as well as about anti-social behaviour.

### 3. Council and Communications

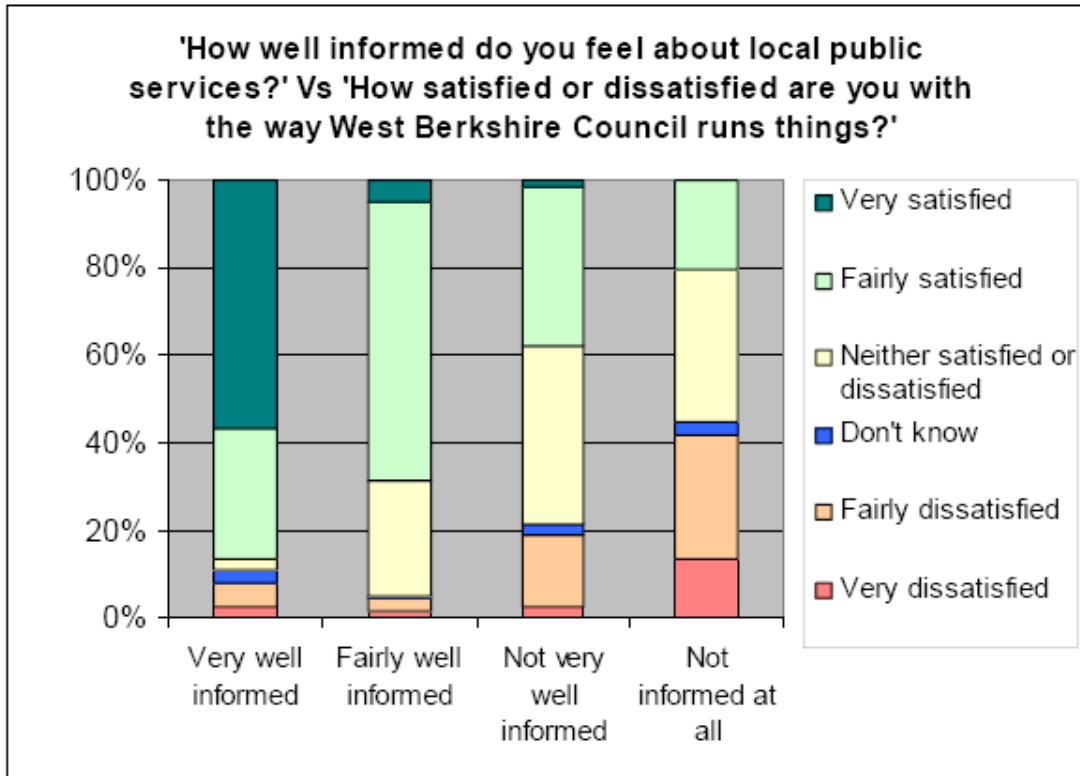
Overall, the Place Survey showed that 40% of people felt informed about local public services generally with 60% of West Berkshire residents saying they do not feel informed (excluding those who stated they do not know), which is about average nationally (39%). Under half of West Berkshire residents are satisfied with the Council (48%), which is a decrease on previous years' levels.

Ipsos MORI have shown that there is a clear correlation between levels of satisfaction and the extent to which people feel informed, as the chart below demonstrates.

#### Satisfaction and Feeling Informed



What this shows is that, from research done on the statutory 2006 survey, those councils that have a higher satisfaction rating are also those with a higher proportion of residents who feel informed by the council. This is supported by the results of the Place Survey in West Berkshire, which found that those who felt very well informed were significantly less likely to also be dissatisfied with the council compared with those who said they did not feel informed at all. The chart below illustrates these results.



This shows that of those who feel very well informed, the majority is fairly or very satisfied with the Council and of those who do not feel informed at all over 40% feel fairly or very dissatisfied with the Council.

In this context, the outcomes of the focus group discussions are given, looking at general awareness of the Council and services it provides, how well informed people felt, where they get their information from – including looking at the local media and partnership magazine ‘A Great Place to Live’ as well as perceptions of whether or not the Council provides value for money.

### 3.1 Awareness of services provided

People were aware of the services that directly affected them or that they used but were not aware of the range of services that the Council provides.

The main services they were aware of were waste services – i.e. bins, highways, leisure (centres) and schools. There was some surprise over the breadth of services offered and confusion over responsibilities of other agencies. For example, people were surprised that the Council dealt with all roads except the M4 and A4 and were generally unaware the Council was responsible for benefits, youth offending and community safety and licensing.

### 3.2 Satisfaction with the Council

There was a general level of satisfaction expressed with the Council – which became more evident after discussion and showing the groups a list of the services that the Council provides. This would indicate that the more people know about the services and benefits that the Council provides, the more satisfied they would potentially be.

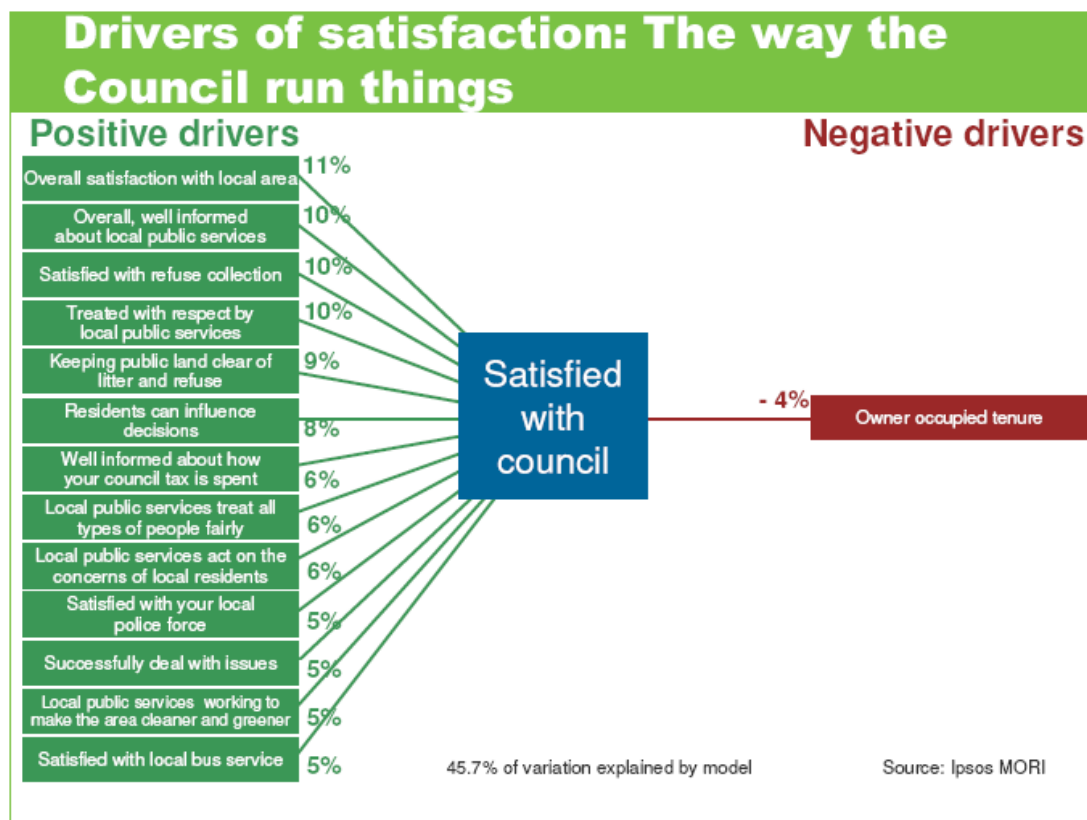
It was pointed out that satisfaction with the Council was similar to housekeeping – you only notice if something is untidy/ no working well. There was a perception that there had been deterioration in the condition of the roads in the last 3-5 years and people placed a lot of emphasis on roads as a signifier of how well the Council is doing. The waste service was also a key signifier - people noticed if the service was good or there were problems with their

experience of the service. It is not uncommon therefore for people to extrapolate this view out to the Council as a whole.

Leisure centres were also a key service and it was thought that the Council centres were not as good in West Berkshire as in other areas and there was a clear bias towards more private facilities. Community activities were also mentioned, in that the Council was not obviously supporting these in the community. Apart from a perceived deterioration in the condition of roads, people were unsure whether or not the Council had become better or worse in the last 3 years.

In discussions around anti-social behaviour people mentioned that they noticed bottles and litter left in parks which left a bad impression.

MORI has undertaken analysis of the Place Survey results for those (150) local authorities for whom they undertook the national survey and identified the main contributing factors or ‘drivers’ of satisfaction with the council. As the chart below shows, satisfaction with refuse collection and keeping land clear of litter and refuse are significant influencers of satisfaction. The top drivers were overall satisfaction with the local area and being informed about local public services.



### 3.3 Does the Council provide Value for Money?

There was some difference in opinion on whether or not people agreed that the Council provides value for money. People did appreciate the complexity of the issue although there was some consternation about paying for services that people did not use.

People also thought that value for money meant different things for different people and some would get more value than others, such as those who needed social care or had children. It was also thought that people living in rural areas got less value for their money than those in more urban areas. The focus group in Calcot – the east of the district, for example – generally thought they did not get value for money as they mainly used Reading services, but could not get the benefit of using Reading Borough Council’s ‘passport for leisure’ discount card.



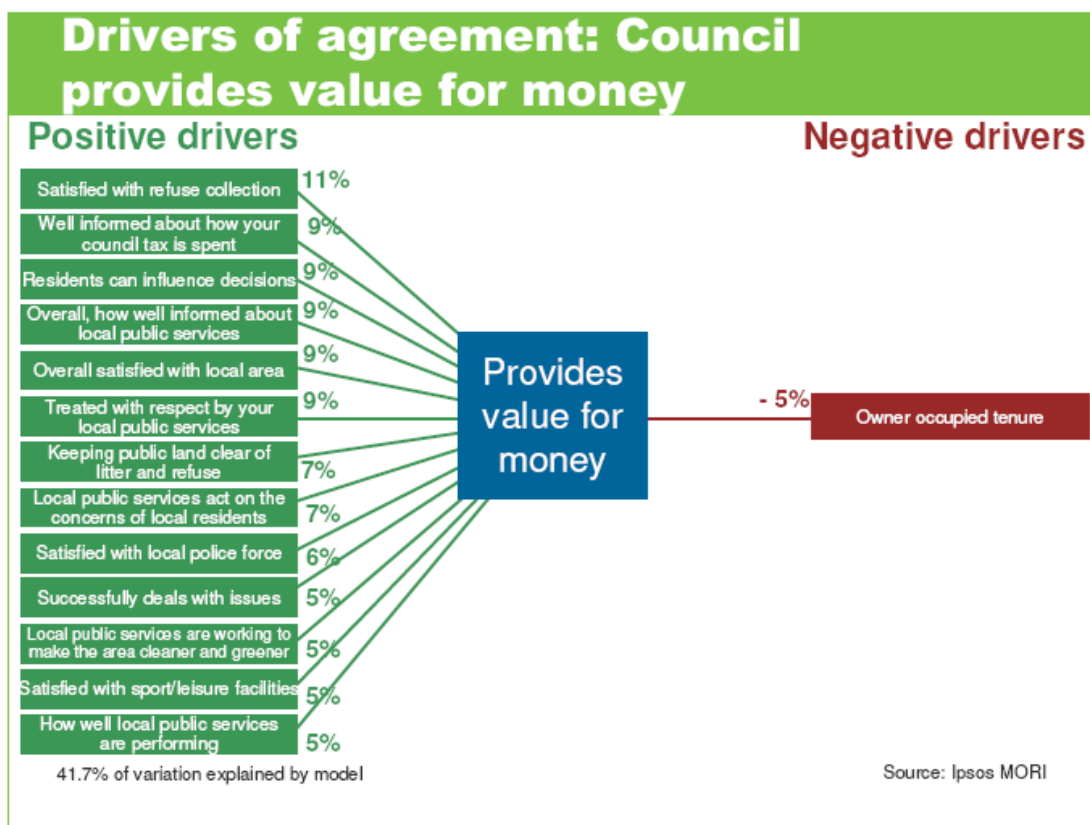
People thought that the Council should communicate better where it was making savings as this would help allay people's perceptions of public services wasting money. People generally thought that schools or waste services were the most expensive service and were surprised to hear it was actually social care.

If council's could do one thing to improve perceptions of value for money it would be to focus on dealing with anti-social behaviour and provide more activities for teenagers or, less helpfully, to 'stop providing services'.

Interestingly, MORI has found that there is no correlation between Council Tax levels and satisfaction with the council, rather there is a correlation between perceived value for money and satisfaction with the council. The focus groups did not find people disgruntled with their level of Council Tax, and some even expressed positive attitudes after comparisons with friends in other local authority areas.

Again, MORI undertook analysis of the key drivers of agreement that the council provides value for money. Refuse collection came top followed by being well informed about how Council Tax is spent, being informed and also, feeling able to influence decisions about their local area.

Satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities is also a contributory factor to perception of value for money, as the focus groups mentioned.



### 3.4. How well informed do you feel?

The Place Survey found that 60% of people did not feel informed about services. Also, that people's main source of information about the Council was the local media, with just under a third of people citing this, followed by information provided by the Council and the Council website.

The focus groups showed that people did rely on the media but also used the website and the phone book. People did not generally feel that well informed, although some - particularly in Chieveley - were confident that they would know where to go to get information. There was a

feeling that 'you don't know what you don't know'. The website had been well used in all focus groups for different reasons including for planning, tip opening times, library services, leisure timetables/opening times and school term dates. Most people found it informative and easy to use.

Council branding had been noticed – on timetables, car parks and bins which demonstrates that promotion of the Council in this way is having some impact. There was some awareness of Parish Planning in Chieveley but no real understanding of how to get involved or what this would achieve.

### **3.5 'A Great Place to Live' partnership magazine.**

Each focus group was shown a copy of the magazine and asked whether or not they had seen and read the publication. Most people recognised the publication at Chieveley but it was not generally recognised at the other three groups, in particular, in Lambourn.

Views on the magazine did vary from group to group and between individuals, from the extremely positive to the slightly more negative. People said they did read it and found it useful and interesting, some people stated that they would just flick through to see if anything caught their eye. Others would not read it as it was not aimed at younger people or it would just be put straight in the recycling. People in Lambourn were more negative as they thought it did not have anything relevant to their local area and they felt it was Newbury-centric so would not have read it. Other groups also felt that it needed to be more 'localised' and it was mentioned that there was no web address advertised.

### **3.6 Perceptions of the Council through the media**

The Chieveley focus group did not feel that they were particularly influenced by what was in the local or national media, but by their own personal experiences or those of family and friends. They did not pay particular attention to the Newbury Weekly News, and if there was a small article with a Council related heading, it was thought that generally, this would be missed as people tended to flick through or 'picture read'. However, the local paper was given more attention by people from other areas, particularly Thatcham.

The general view of local government was that 'politics' gets in the way of getting things done and that councils are 'faceless' and out of step with the commercial world. It was thought that the Newbury Weekly News was very negative and there was a lot of 'political fighting' carried out on their pages and that news articles that were to do with the Council were 'political' and negative.

## **4. Dealing with anti-social behaviour**

In the Place Survey residents were asked how much of a problem, in their local area, they thought a series of crime and anti-social behaviour issues were<sup>1</sup>. All aspects of anti-social behaviour listed have seen a significant decrease in the proportions of people thinking they are a problem in the area over the last year in particular. There has been a steady decline in perceptions since 2005/06 for people being drunk and rowdy, abandoned or burnt out cars and vandalism and graffiti. The results for West Berkshire were also significantly below those nationally.

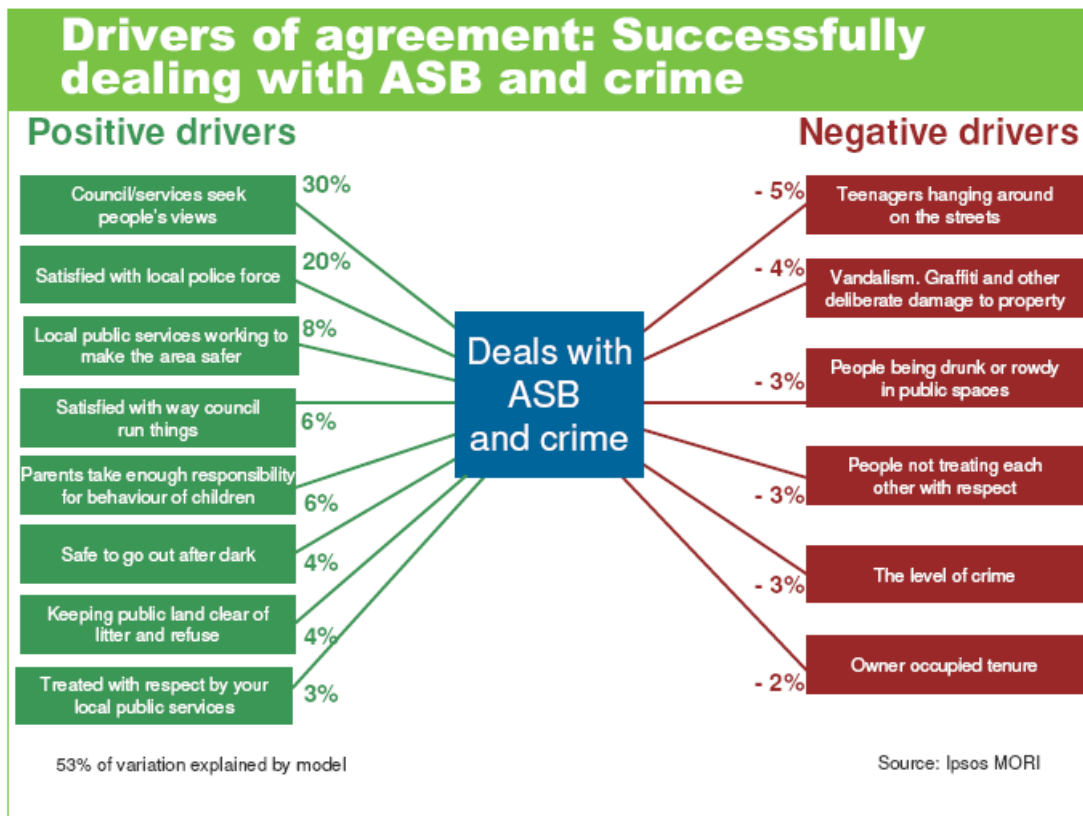
The proportion of people thinking that crime is a priority for improving in the area has also significantly decreased in the last year, from 42% to 28% in 2008 (Eng:31%).

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<sup>1</sup> The issues asked about in the Place Survey were: noisy neighbours or loud parties, teenagers hanging around on the streets, rubbish and litter lying around, vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage, people using or dealing drugs, people being drunk or rowdy in public places and abandoned or burnt out cars.

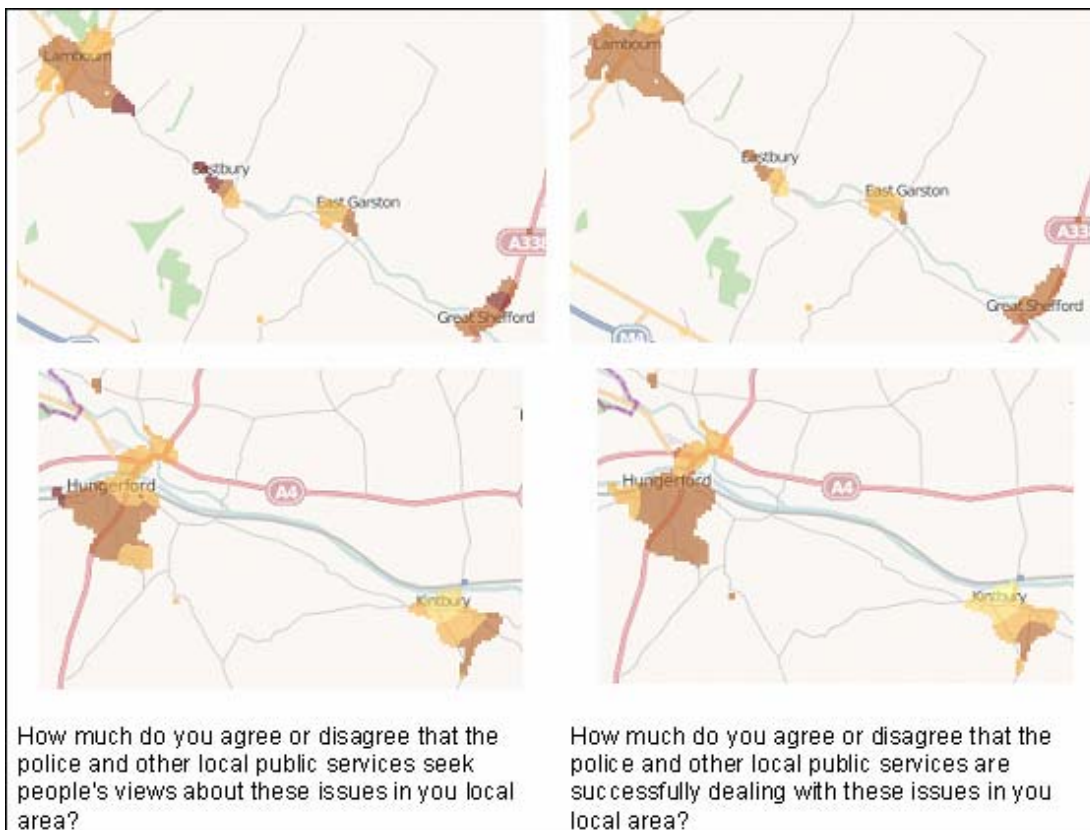
Just over 1 in 5 people (21%) in West Berkshire agreed that the police and other local public service providers seek people’s views about anti-social behaviour and crime in their local area – against an England average of 25%. Just over a third (34%) of people disagree. Residents in the rural west and Thatcham have a worse opinion than the rest of the district. Around 13% - 16% agree compared with 24% – 27% in the rest of West Berkshire.

In their analysis of the Place Survey results, MORI have found that there are a number of significant influencers, or ‘drivers’ of agreement that crime and anti-social behaviour is being dealt with, these are divided into positive and negative drivers, i.e. things that are more likely to influence people to agree and thing that are less likely to. The chart below shows their findings.



MORI have shown that satisfaction with the police and other public services is closely related to their ability to actively seek views from local people – such as policing priorities – and then being able to demonstrate they are acting on their concerns.

This is reflected in our own analysis of the Place Survey. The maps below show the distribution of perceptions of these two questions in the areas of Lambourn and Hungerford. The darker areas indicate where people were much less likely to agree and the lighter, where they were more likely to agree.



As we can see from the map there is a correlation where people do not agree that the police and other public services seek their views on crime and anti-social behavior, they generally also do not think that it is being dealt with.

#### 4.1 Perceptions of anti-social behaviour in your area

With the exception of Lambourn, people in all focus groups did not feel that crime and anti-social behaviour was a particularly big problem in their area, although anti-social behaviour was a bigger problem than crime. People in Thatcham were fairly positive about the area especially in comparison with Reading.

The first and main problem people cited was youths hanging around. It was thought that society has changed and there is now a lack of respect for people and property. Anti-social behaviour has become worse but it is now much more acceptable. Part of the problem was that young people did not have enough to do, although it was also accepted that sometimes they just want to hang out, although this can be intimidating for people. This reflects one of MORI's key negative drivers of agreement that crime and ASB is being dealt with being teenagers hanging around on the streets.

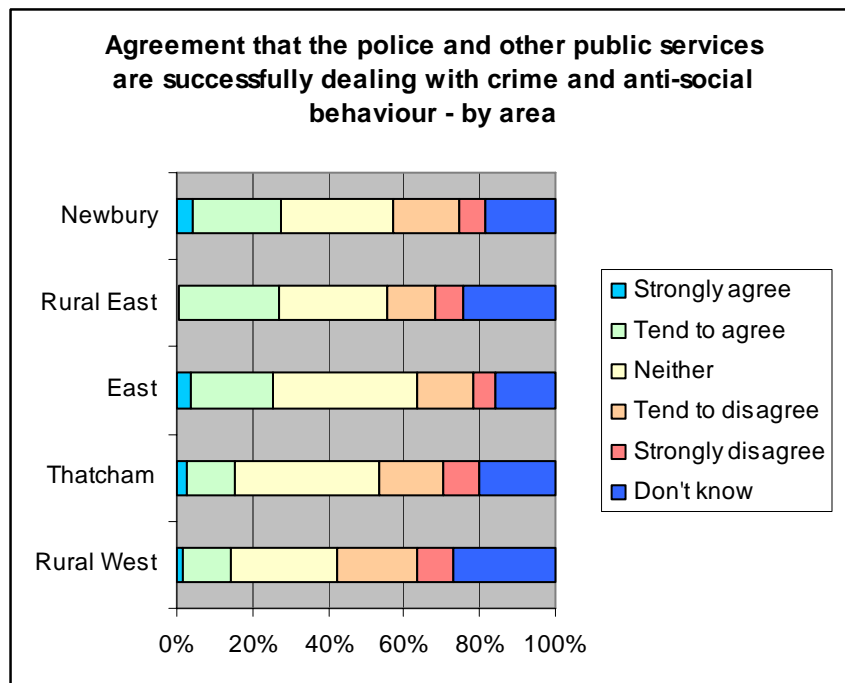
It was commonly perceived that the root of the cause was bad parenting and a lack of discipline or consequences, both at home, at school and in society more generally. Anything that constituted a lack of respect or consideration for other people was considered anti-social behaviour, which is also reflected in MORI's model. So the root of the problem is not necessarily something over which the Council has direct influence of control.

Other anti-social behaviour issues that were raised that the Council might have some impact on included speeding, riding of mopeds on pavements, dog fouling, inconsiderate parking (particularly during the school run) as well as vandalism and graffiti.

#### 4.2 What are the Police/ Council doing about ASB?

Generally people were unaware of the different things that were being done to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour and were confused by the different responsibilities of PCSOs and neighbourhood wardens.

The Place Survey results showed that people in the rural west of the district and Thatcham agreed the least that the police and public services were successfully tackling crime and anti-social behaviour – 13% and 16% compared with 24-27% in other areas.



These findings were reflected strongly in the Lambourn focus group, but less so in Thatcham. In Lambourn, when asked the question ‘what are the Police and Council doing to combat crime and anti-social behaviour?’ there was a resounding ‘nothing’ from the group.

From all the groups there was consensus of opinion that the police were no longer able to tackle anti-social behaviour issues. People now only see police driving to major incidents in their cars and when they did have contact regarding ASB they were either told to contact the Council or that the Police would have to catch the offender in the act or wait until actual harm had been caused. People would not call the police for minor incidents.

PCSOs were thought to be ineffective, apart from helping to remove graffiti. They were still not a visible presence and they are not around when the ASB actually happens at night. They would also not have the powers to deal with this if they were present.

It was thought the police and the Council were ‘putting bandages’ on the problems and not tackling the root causes. The public were keen to help but there was a fear of standing up to people.

It was thought that it takes far too long to clean up graffiti or fix road signs, which might help prevent people from vandalism in the future as there would be less kudos that could be accrued from the act. This again, also reflects what MORI have shown as a negative driver of agreement that crime and ASB is being dealt with.

### 4.3 Feeling informed about crime and ASB.

People did not feel informed about what was being done about anti-social behaviour in their area. There was confusion around what the Council does to tackle issues.

There was a lack of awareness of NAGs. One person had heard of a NAG from the focus groups, but he was thinking of something different. There was some surprise that these were happening, and people would not have thought to go looking on the Neighbourhood Policing website where the monthly updates and neighbourhood policing contacts are publicised.

No one recalled seeing the anti-social behaviour directory which had been posted out to every household. It was thought that as it looked a bit like a pizza menu it would have gone straight in the recycling bin. Another comment was that it looked official and off-putting. There was too much information / wordiness, for example there were different numbers for 'abusive people' such whether or not they lived on a housing association – not something people felt they would be able to ascertain when being subjected to abuse.

There was also a lack of feedback when people did report issues – such as reporting some graffiti to a PCSO, there was no feedback on what had been done.

It was thought that the national and local media were full of stories about people being let off with a 'slap on the wrist' or ridiculously lenient sentences, and this only served to encourage people to commit crime as there are no consequences.

Thatcham residents were shown the 'Making Thatcham Safer' booklet that had been sent out to every household a week before. Three people in the group recalled seeing it. The group looked through the leaflet and some thought it was good – telling them about issues they would want to be aware of. Suggestions for improvement included that there should be a list of contact numbers to call. It was pointed out that the accounts of crime in the local area served to reinforce that there were ineffective consequences and only added to frustration with the system as it stated that someone had 'received a reprimand' which was a slap on the wrist in their opinion.

#### **4.4 What can be done to tackle Anti-social behaviour?**

It was thought that more needs to be done to tackle the causes of anti-social behaviour in society and that the community needed to be more empowered to help do this. The Council and other agencies need to be more proactive in approaching the community to help tackle these issues. One person's experience was of trying to start a youth group in the community but coming up against too much red tape and regulations that it had not been possible.

A key area is working with young people, not just providing more activities, but working with school and families, allowing young people to experience success but also educating them about consequences and responsibilities. It was also about getting the right people involved – those who can inspire young people. It was also suggested in two groups that PCSOs should attend youth groups as support for those running them but also to engage with the kids.

There were some good facilities for young people, such as bowling, but many cost money. The skate park in Thatcham was good but can not be used after dark. There needs to be a range of activities for young people, not just organised things. Places where kids can turn up and play football after dark would be a good idea. Youths hang out and drink in the park because there is nowhere else for them to go.

In terms of vandalism, the Council should concentrate on 'quick fixes' as vandals took pride in the damage they caused but would get bored if they could not brag for long. Beer cans in the park should also be dealt with as it is demoralising.

There needs to be more made of the 'Walking Bus' as a lot of parking problems were caused by the school run.

The media were thought to create a 'self-perpetuating fear' so giving people more courage to tackle issues would help.

## **5. How can we communicate better?**

In the 2008 Place Survey, some additional questions asked residents what was the best method of communicating with them. Posting leaflets through people's doors and advertising in the local paper came top with 86% of people thinking this would be very or slightly effective. 65% of people thought advertising on the local radio would be effective well over half (58%) thought through the website was effective.

Views on effective methods also differed by area of the district and by age.

This does demonstrate what was found through the focus group discussions, that different forms of communication are needed to reach different groups of people. Interestingly in the focus groups, there was a general consensus that just posting leaflets through doors would not be a good idea as people receive so many that they all go in the recycling together.

Providing feedback / having good customer service was seen as key in all focus groups. This included having individual responses to queries and follow ups on what was happening when issues were reported.

There needed to be different levels of communications, with a high level one for most people which gave information/ contacts for where to go for further information – perhaps with the Council Tax leaflet should have key information on how the Council is performing - using key performance indicators that could be compared with other local authorities - plus where to go for services or more information.

People also wanted information on what the Council is not doing well and what it was going to do to improve the situation.

In terms of communicating what is being done about crime and anti-social behaviour, people did want to know about what is happening in their area and how it is being dealt with as well as how the community can help. Again, it should be concise, and there should be a list of useful phone numbers. Lambourn residents drew attention to an article in 'A Great Place to Live' which introduced the local Police Commander - that this was good but should be publicised more widely. People were also interested in knowing some crime statistics for their area in comparison with other areas.

An email subscription service, or email alerts was a universally popular suggestion. People could be alerted to any changes in information such as pool timetables, or events, or when the mobile library was coming around.

People thought that the Council should be providing concise, focussed and helpful information – such as contact numbers that could be stuck on a fridge, e.g. a small laminated card, which would also stand out from ordinary leaflets.

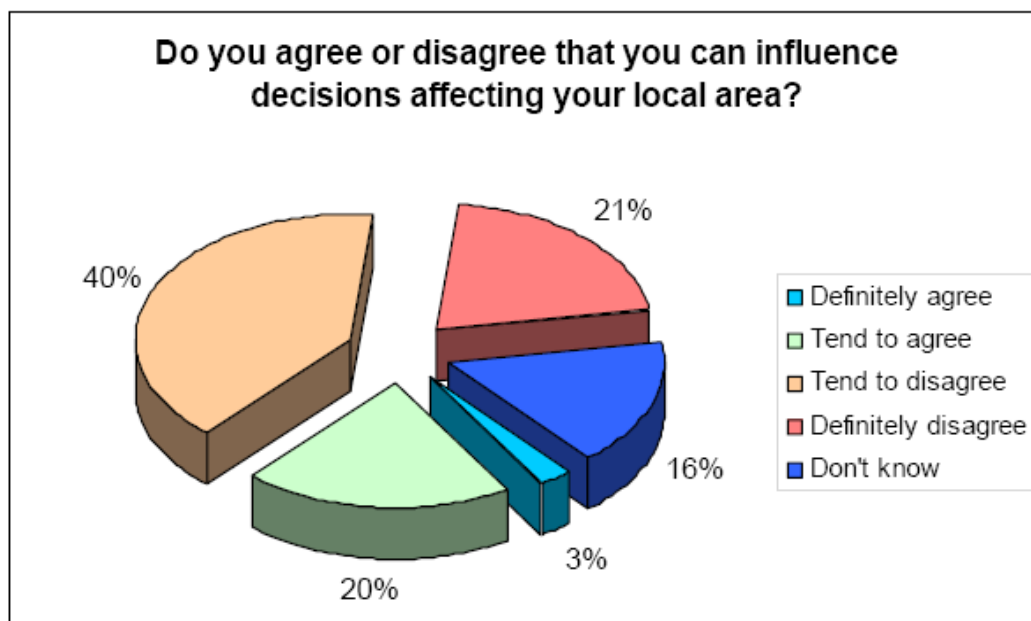
The Newbury Weekly News would be read in some areas. It was suggested that the Council works closer with the Newbury Weekly News to get more striking and positive coverage. Also Council 'adverts' might be an idea. Lambourn residents said they did read the Newbury Weekly News but that the Council should put 'area updates' including a policing section.

The Council should make use of other local publications such as community and parish magazines.

People also wanted more face-to-face contact, particularly with councillors, as, when asked, most did not know who their local councillor was. In the 2008 Place Survey 2% of residents cited their local councillor as their main source of information about the Council. It was thought that more of an effort needed to be made to engage with residents.

In each discussion group it was raised that sessions such as these focus groups were very positive and that this was a good way of communicating and listening to what local people want. It was asked why 'those in charge of making decisions' did not come to these sessions or carry out similar discussion groups. One person stated that this was far more powerful than any media story or leaflet.

In the 2008 Place Survey we found that 61% of the West Berkshire population did not think that they had any influence over the decisions that affected their local area. As MORI have shown, feeling that you can influence decisions is a key driver to satisfaction with the Council as well as thinking that the Council provides value for money.



*West Berkshire Place Survey 2008*

According to the Place Survey, 88% of people in West Berkshire would like more involvement in the decisions that affect their local area - 22% definitely and 66% depending on the issue – which is a clear message when backed up by the focus group findings that people would like to be more empowered to make a difference in their communities.

**6. Conclusions**

Generally, there is a level of awareness of the key services the Council provides – particularly the ones that people use or that affect them directly, such as waste, roads, leisure and schools. When things go wrong with these key services it is noted and often attributed to the Council as a whole, thus affecting satisfaction levels.

The complex issue of whether or not the Council provides value for money was appreciated although there was a level of consternation over having to pay for services or benefits that are not used. Opinion varied on whether or not the Council does provide value for money – it depended upon where people live and how many services they made use of.

Anti-social behaviour was not thought to be a very big problem and there was an appreciation of the area especially when compared with other areas such as Reading. The exception in opinion



came from Lambourn, with the group generally feeling the least listened to and the least informed with the most negative opinion of the Council and the Police.

Perceptions of anti-social behaviour were divided between those things that are more inherent in society and less likely to be issues that could be affected or dealt with directly by the Council, and those issues that are within the Council's remit.

Problems were seen to be linked closely with teenagers hanging around the 'hoodie culture' and teenagers not having enough to do, as well as a general lack of respect in society and bad parenting. The perception was that the Council and Police did not really tackle the root of the issue.

Seeing the Council actively doing something about anti-social behaviour as well as activities for teenagers and support for better parenting, would improve people's perception of the Council overall, but also 'quick fixes' for more cosmetic issues such as vandalism and graffiti, as well as clearing up parks and open spaces would have an effect on perceptions.

Information that the Council currently provides is not having a huge impact on people's perceptions, although the Council branding had been noticed. The local and national media appeared to have a bigger role in influencing what people thought about the Council and what it and the Police are doing about anti-social behaviour. However, perception was mainly based upon people's personal experiences of services they use and issues they face as well as those of friends and family.

There was a general appetite for information to be provided, although people wanted concise information but not to be inundated. They want something tangible that will stand out, giving them key information and useful phone numbers, and where to go for more information.

There was a feeling that there need to be more positive and relevant stories in the local papers, ones that stand out more and again, useful contact numbers. It was universally suggested that Council needs to be more creative and imaginative in its communications, as different people use different methods of communicating. Email alerts were one of the more popular suggestions, as well as fridge magnets with contact numbers.

There was an appetite for much more localised information and it was also suggested that the Council needs to make better use of other publications that are already in circulation, as different areas of the district read different media.

There was a general feeling from people that issues such as anti-social behaviour should not just be left to the Council and Police to deal with and that there was a role for the community. However the community needs to be more empowered and enabled to tackle local issues, such as helping with activities for teenagers.

Participants of the focus groups also communicated that they want to feel more engaged and have more face-to-face contact with both officers and members, as they want to feel that they are being listened to. Feedback was also key, people want to know what is being done about their concerns, and generally having a good customer service experience from the Council.

## References

*People, Perceptions and Place* Ipsos MORI (2009)

West Berkshire Place Survey (2008)

**Safer Select Committee Work Programme**

**ITEM 7**

Reference (a)	Subject/purpose (b)	Methodology (c)	Expected outcome (d)	Review Body (e)	Dates (f)	Lead Officer(s)/ Service Area (g)	Portfolio Holder(s) (h)	Comments (h)
OSMC/09/28	Improving public confidence To consider how to improve the public's confidence in how anti social behaviour and crime are dealt with, thereby influencing National Indicators NI17, NI21 and NI27	Information supplied by, and questioning of, lead officers, the public, and other expert witnesses.		SSC	Start: 07/07/2009 End:	Andy Day - 2459 Policy & Communication	Councillor Graham Pask	Public perception of how anti social behaviour is dealt with is contrary to public perception of what crime occurs. There is public interest in closing this gap and increasing public confidence.
OSMC/09/29	Road safety To review progress following the KSI task group work of 2008, including examination of the annual road safety work programme.		Monitoring item	SSC	Start: End:	Andrew Garratt - 2491 Highways & Transport	Councillor David Betts	Update to recommendations from the task group review agreed by Executive in March 2009 requested for review by SSC.
OSMC/09/30	Implementation of the recommendations arising from the Laming Report, following the 'Baby P' inquiry. To ensure that the authority is complying with the recommendations of the Laming Report.	Information supplied by, and questioning of, lead officer.		SSC	Start: End:	Karen Reeve - 2735 Children & Youth Services	Councillor Barbara Alexander	High profile public interest.
OSMC/09/31	Selling of knives and associated knife crime. To consider safe methods of disposal for knives.			SSC	Start: End:		Councillor Graham Pask	Area of public safety. Presentation and review of options requested for December 2009.
OSMC/09/32	Mixed parking arrangements To review mixed parking arrangements in place across West Berkshire and to assess the impact and effectiveness of the new enforcement regime.			SSC	Start: End:	Martyn Baker - 2211 Highways & Transport	Councillor David Betts	An appropriate subject that meets the acceptance criteria.
OSMC/09/33	Domestic abuse To review the implementation of recommendations arising from the Domestic Homicide Review report of November 2008.			SSC	Start: End:	Jo McIntyre - 264694 Policy & Communication	Councillor Graham Pask	An area of significant public interest. Progress update requested for December 2009.
OSMC/09/34	Gating orders To review protocol for gating orders adopted in October 2008.			SSC	Start: End:	Alex O'Connor - 264608 Policy & Communication	Councillor Graham Pask	Specified in original review of 2008 to be reviewed after one year.