

ASHBURTON DISTRICT COUNCIL NATIONAL RESEARCH BUREAU SURVEY 2005/ 06

1. Background

Ashburton District Council has commissioned an annual residents survey since 1993. The purpose of the survey is to provide objective data for audit purposes relating to the achievement of targets set in the Annual Plan and to provide Council with feedback on how the community views the conduct and performance of Council activities. In the 2006 survey additional questions were asked covering some quality of life issues of those living in the district.

2. Methodology

The annual survey of residents was held from 9 June to 18 June 2006. 403 residents over the age of 18 were sampled using a randomised selection method. Statistics New Zealand Census figures were used to determine the proportion of interviewees to draw from each ward – Ashburton 233, Methven-Hinds 100, Rakaia 70. 202 men and 201 women were interviewed. The margin of error is 6.9%, which means that if the same study was repeated using an entirely different randomly selected sample, the answers would most likely fall close to those obtained in this survey, but with decreasing likelihood, and may vary by up to 6.9%.

A copy of the report accompanies this agenda. A summary comparing previous years and highlighting significant results follows.

2006 NRB Communitrak Survey - Summary

3. Peer Group Comparison (32 like councils)

The 2005/ 06 survey has provided the Council with its best ever results overall from the annual NRB Communitrak survey. Significantly, it has also provided the best ever results for both the performance of the Mayor and Councillors and the performance of staff.

Ashburton District Council achieved as well as or better than its peers in all but one of the categories in which comparisons have been made, Library Service, although this figure is still well within the survey margin of error. The community rated the Council as significantly higher (15% higher or better) than the peer group average in roads, footpaths, water supply, landfill and recycling, rubbish collection, and animal control.

Ashburton District achieved better than the average of all councils surveyed in 11 of the 15 activities compared, with roads and cemeteries both rating 16% higher resident satisfaction in Ashburton District than the national average.

SERVICE/FACILITY	ASHBURTON 2006 % Very/Fairly Satisfied	PEER GROUP AVERAGE 2005 % Very/Fairly Satisfied	NATIONAL AVERAGE 2005 % Very/Fairly Satisfied
Roads	87	69	71
Footpaths	76	61	71
Stormwater Services	67	56	70
Water Supply	79	58	80
Tourism Promotion	84	72	74
Landfill & Recycling	79	62	78
Rubbish Collection	89	67	83
Library Service	82	87	90
Sportsfields & Playgrounds	94	89	89
Parks & Reserves	98	88	94
Cemeteries	83	76	67
Employment/Business	70	58	58
Rates Spending	78	69	74
Public Toilets	64	64	64
Dog / Animal Control	81	66	71

Note: Peer Group and National averages were last collated in 2005.

Figure 1. Ashburton V Peer Group/National Averages - Service/Facility Satisfaction Questions ("All residents" figures. "Don't Knows" included)

4. Mayor, Councillors and Staff

4.1 Mayor and Councillors: The rating of the performance of the Mayor and Councillors maintains its upward trend with best ever figures of 81% in the Very / Fairly Good assessment range surpassing the previous best of 78% set in 2005 and well above the 59% average of similar councils. Excluding "Don't Knows" lifts the satisfaction level to 83%. Approval rating in the rural wards rose 6% on last year but remained highest in the urban area (82%) against 78% in the rural area.

Year	Very/ Fairly Good %	Just Acceptable %	Not Very Good/Poor %	Don't Know %	Rating - D/K excluded %	Goal Achieved
1995	76	20	4	2	-	-
1996	77	16	2	5	-	-
1997	72	21	4	3	-	-
1998	73	21	3	3	75	70% ✓
1999	71	21	3	5	75	70% ✓
2000	66	27	4	3	68	70% x
2001	66	21	6	8	71	80% x
2002	54	31	9	6	58	80% x
2003	53	34	8	5	56	80% x
2004	71	22	4	3	73	80% x
2005	78	13	3	6	84	80% ✓
2006	81	12	4	3	83	80% ✓
Peer Average	59	23	10	8		
National Average	54	26	13	7		

Figure 2. Satisfaction with the Performance of Mayor and Councillors.

4.2 Staff: Staff performance ratings for 2006 are the highest ever recorded with 81 percent of respondents rating the performance of council staff as very/ fairly good. With “Don’t Knows” excluded the staff performance rating again was the highest recorded with 87% giving a very/ fairly good rating. This rating has Ashburton District Council staff 19 points above the peer group average and 20 points above the national average.

Year	Very/ Fairly Good %	Just Acceptable %	Not Very Good/Poor %	Don't Know %	Rating - D/K excluded %
1995	84	10	3	3	-
1996	73	14	3	10	-
1997	79	15	2	4	-
1998	73	15	4	9	-
1999	71	21	3	5	75
2000	69	21	4	7	74
2001	71	17	4	8	77
2002	59	22	5	14	69
2003	56	22	7	15	66
2004	78	9	6	7	83
2005	74	13	4	9	81
2006	81	10	2	7	87
Peer Average	62	17	9	12	
National Average	61	21	8	10	

Figure 4. Satisfaction with the Performance of Council Staff.

4.3 Approval/ Disapproval of Actions, Decisions and Management

Respondents were asked if there is one thing that comes to mind with regard to the Council’s actions, decisions or management in the last few months that they dislike or disapprove of. 43% of respondents answered yes and 57% answered no. Most common responses when asked which one issue this was were: water supply issues, wasting money/ overspending/ poor allocation of money, poor performance/ service, roading/ traffic issues, parking issues, rubbish collection/ recycling issues, and rates issues/ increases/ too high for services received.

Respondents were also asked if there is one thing that comes to mind with regard to the Council’s actions, decisions or management in the last few months that they like or approve of. 38% of respondents answered yes and 62% answered no. Most common responses when asked which one issue this was were: do a good job/ pleased with performance, new toilets, cleaning/ tidying up the town/ general appearance, entertainment/ community/ art/ cultural events, library services, good communication/ keep us informed/ they listen, handling of recent snowfall, and domain/ parks/ reserves.

5. Essential Services

5.1 Essential Services (All Residents): Council’s essential services, rated on an all residents basis, all met or exceeded resident satisfaction targets. All essential services satisfaction ratings fluctuated up or down 1 – 4% compared to last year, within the margin for error, except for roading, which has been probably the stand-out performer in this years survey.

Roading is at its highest level of approval ever, rising 11% from last year to 87% satisfaction and comfortably achieving its target of 80% resident satisfaction. Rural resident satisfaction with roads rose 12% to 86% and urban satisfaction rose 10% to 88%. Satisfaction with the District’s roads was highest among those who have lived in the District 10 years or less, those in household of 3 or more

people and by residents in the 18 – 39 year age group. Satisfaction with the District’s roads was strongest from those aged 18 – 39 and from residents who lived in the District less than 10 years.

<u>All Residents</u> <u>(Don't Knows excluded)</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>2003/04</u>	<u>2004/05</u>	<u>2005/06</u>	<u>+/-</u>
Roading	80	75x	76x	87✓	+11
Footpaths	75	79✓	75✓	79✓	+4
Stormwater/Drainage	75	75✓	73 x	75✓	+2
Cemeteries	80	99✓	98✓	97✓	-1
Landfill/Recycling	80	91✓	93✓	89✓	-4

Figure 6. Resident Satisfaction with Essential Services.

5.2 Essential Services – Users Only

Essential services measured by users only exceeded target satisfaction in three activities, urban water supply, sewerage, and rubbish collection. Satisfaction targets in the rural water and stockwater activities were not met, despite satisfaction with rural water supply rising 10% for this latest year.

<u>Users only</u> <u>(Don't Knows excluded)</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>2003/04</u>	<u>2004/05</u>	<u>2005/06</u>	<u>+/-</u>
Water Supply (Urban)	80	69 x	81✓	82✓	+1
Water Supply (Rural)	80	64 x	54 x	64 x	+10
Sewerage	80	96✓	94✓	94✓	-
Stockwater	70	62 x	69 x	63 x	-6
Rubbish collection	90	92✓	92✓	91✓	-1

Figure 9. Resident Satisfaction with Essential Services – Users Only.

6. Environmental Services

Environmental monitoring and planning activities both recorded steady results, despite not achieving the target of 100% resident satisfaction. Parking enforcement has eased back 6% in resident approval, but is still comfortably over its 80% satisfaction target. Animal / dog control has risen 6% this year to an all time high of 87%. Building regulation has maintained an 87% resident satisfaction rating despite another very demanding year driven by high building activity and a more stringent building regulation regime.

<u>All Residents</u> <u>(Don't Knows excluded)</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>2003/04</u>	<u>2004/05</u>	<u>2005/06</u>	<u>+/-</u>
Environmental Monitoring	100	83 x	85 x	85 x	-
Planning Activities	100	82 x	84 x	88 x	+4
Building Regulation	80	91✓	87✓	87✓	-
Parking Enforcement	80	93✓	93✓	87✓	- 6
Animal Control	80	84✓	81✓	87✓	+6

Figure 11. Resident Satisfaction with Environmental Services (Don't Knows Excluded).

7. Parks and Recreation

Parks and Recreation activities all recorded high levels with variations from last year being well within the margin for error and all are comfortably above target satisfaction levels.

<u>All Residents</u> <u>(Don't Knows excluded)</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>2003/04</u>	<u>2004/05</u>	<u>2005/06</u>	<u>+/-</u>
Parks & Reserves	90	99✓	98 ✓	99✓	+1
Ashburton Domain	90	99✓	100✓	99✓	-1
Rural Reserves	90	97✓	97 ✓	97✓	-
Reserves & Camping Areas	80	98✓	96 ✓	99✓	+3
Users Only					
<u>(Don't Knows excluded)</u>					
Sportsgrounds / Playgrounds	90	97✓	96 ✓	96✓	-

Figure 12. Resident Satisfaction with Parks and Recreation (Don't Knows Excluded).

8. Community Services

All activities in the community services area have maintained resident satisfaction levels above 90% and comfortably above their respective targets. Resident's satisfaction with Council's performance in communication and advocacy has recorded small rises and both functions are steady in the mid-eighties. Satisfaction with the way rates are spent has remained remarkably constant at around 80%.

<u>All Residents</u> <u>(Don't Knows excluded)</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>2003/04</u>	<u>2004/05</u>	<u>2005/06</u>	<u>+/-</u>
Arts & Culture	80	94✓	93✓	94✓	+1
Social Services	85	81 x	93✓	93✓	-
Community Events	90	97✓	96✓	93✓	- 3
District Library	85	98✓	96✓	94✓	- 2
Communication	No Goal		86	88	+2
Advocacy	No Goal		83	86	+3
Rates Spending	80	80✓	80✓	81✓	+1

Figure 13. Resident Satisfaction with Community Services (Don't Knows Excluded).

8.1 Community Participation: A significant portion of our community has used or participated in Council facilities, events and services. Interestingly, for most activities there is little difference in participation patterns between urban and rural residents, despite many of the District facilities being located in the urban townships. Around one in three residents attended the New Years Street Party and/ or the Concert in the Park. The library is used by close to three quarters of the residents in the district with urban and rural usage rates being almost identical.

Activity	Used / contacted / taken part	Urban	Rural
Contact Mayor or Councillor	23%	21%	25%
New Years Eve Street Party	29%	33%	24%
Concert in the Park	35%	46%	22%
Museum / Art Gallery	44%	48%	38%
Camping Grounds and Reserves	28%	29%	27%
Ashburton Domain	87%	91%	81%
Rural Reserves	51%	47%	56%
Sportsfields / Playground	77%	75%	80%
District Library	71%	71%	70%

Figure 14. Resident Participation/ Usage Rates – Community Facilities and Events.

9. Economic Development

Resident satisfaction with the Council's performance in Employment and Business Development and in Tourism Promotion remains high, with little change from the previous year.

Council's Water Resources activity has not met with the same level of community satisfaction, however, with just 61% of residents being satisfied with the current performance, a 6% drop from last year.

<u>All Residents (Don't Knows excluded)</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>2003/04</u>	<u>2004/05</u>	<u>2005/06</u>	<u>+/-</u>
Employment/Business Development	80	95✓	89✓	88✓	-1
Tourism Promotion	80	94✓	92✓	93✓	+1
Water Resources (Community Water Trust)	80	60 x	67 x	61 x	-6

Figure 17. Resident Satisfaction with Economic Development.

10. Summary of Target Achievements

Council has achieved 21 of the 24 applicable targets set in the 2005/06 Ashburton District Council Annual Plan, the best results ever.

Of the three activities not to achieve community satisfaction targets two, Environmental Monitoring and Planning Activities, have set targets of 100% satisfaction, difficult to achieve in a resident's perception survey. The third activity not to achieve target levels of resident satisfaction is District Water Management, which has consistently recorded modest levels of resident satisfaction in Council's annual resident's survey.

Previous Years

1994 - 95	7 of 10
1995 - 96	11 of 19
1996 - 97	11 of 20
1997 - 98	13 of 21
1998 - 99	17 of 23
1999 - 00	17 of 26
2000 - 01	18 of 28
2002 - 03	15 of 28
2003 - 04	22 of 31
2004 - 05	19 of 26
2005 - 06	21 of 24

Figure 18. Target Achievement – 2006/ Previous Years.

11. Other Issues Surveyed

11.1 Heritage: Residents were asked about their satisfaction with the way the District's heritage is being protected and preserved. 79% of survey participants were satisfied with the current performance, 8% were not satisfied and 13% didn't know.

11.2 Graffiti: Residents were asked about their satisfaction with the control of graffiti in Ashburton District. 65% of survey participants were satisfied with the current performance, 31% were not satisfied and 4% didn't know.

When asked about what things they thought could be done to control graffiti in the District survey participants were overwhelmingly in favour taking a law and order approach. The most popular responses were: prosecute offenders/ fine them/ community service sentences, make the offenders clean up/ repair the damage, improved police presence/ better policing/ more patrolling, difficult problem/ a lot of graffiti/ too hard to catch, catch the offenders, surveillance cameras/ better security measures.

11.3 Alcohol Use and Control: Residents were asked whether, compared to two years ago, they would say the control and use of alcohol in the District is better, about the same, or worse. 26% thought it was better, 45% thought it was about the same, 22% thought it was worse and 6 percent didn't know. Survey participants over 60 years of age were most likely to have responded that they thought things were worse now than two years ago.

When asked whether they would like to see any other changes made to the control, use and sale of alcohol in the District 42% answered yes and 58% answered no. Again the over 60 age group was more likely to say they would like to see changes.

When asked what changes they would like to see made to the control, use and sale of alcohol, those who had said they would like to see changes had provided the following preferences: raise the drinking age again, return to trust control, more control/ better policing of under-age drinkers, stop selling from supermarkets/ only from hotels, ban alcohol in public places/ whole CBD and enforce ban.

11.4 Pandemic Preparedness: Residents were asked whether they have made any plans for their household, in the event of a pandemic. 43% of respondents said they had made plans and 57% said they had not. Females were more likely to have made plans for a pandemic than males and those aged over 60 were more likely to have made plans than other age groups.

11.5 Neighbourhood Support: Residents were asked whether they belong to a Neighbourhood Support Group in their street or road. 61% said they did belong to a Neighbourhood Support Group and 39% did not. Understandably, those in urban wards were more likely to belong to such groups, as were those aged over 60. Non-ratepayers had a very low rate of belonging to a neighbourhood support group.

11.6 Internet Access: 73% of respondents have access to the internet and 27% do not. Respondents aged over 60 are least likely to have access to the internet along with those with a household income under \$30,000.

11.7 Council Website: Residents were asked whether they had visited the Ashburton District Council website in the last 12 months. 21% of respondents said they had visited the Council website and 79% had not. Urban respondents were more likely to have visited the website than rural respondents and ratepayers more likely than non-ratepayers. When asked about their satisfaction with the information and services provided by the Council website, 87% were satisfied, 5% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 8% dissatisfied. Females and those aged 18 – 39 years were most likely to be satisfied, while males and those aged 40 – 59 years were most likely to be dissatisfied.