

**REPORT TO:** Environment and Urban Renewal Policy  
and Performance Board

**DATE:** 21 November 2012

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director Policy and Resources

**PORTFOLIO:** Transportation

**SUBJECT:** Results of the National Highway and  
Transportation Survey 2012

**WARDS:** All wards

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To report the results of the National Highway and Transportation Survey 2012 and in particular Halton's performance in relation to other local highway authorities and in comparison with the 2009 survey, when Halton last took part. A more detailed presentation of the results will be provided at the meeting.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 1. the report of the NHT Survey Results be noted; and**
- 2. a further 'Proposals' report be prepared and presented to the Board in March 2013**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### Background

3.1 The National Highway and Transportation (NHT) survey is a Public Satisfaction Survey, which collects public perspectives on, and satisfaction with, highways and transportation services in local authority areas. The Survey asks questions in respect of the following themes:

- Accessibility
- Public Transport
- Walking and Cycling
- Tackling Congestion
- Road Safety
- Highways Maintenance & Enforcement.

3.2 The survey has been run for five consecutive years, commencing in 2008 when just 33 authorities participated. This year 75 took part. Halton participated in the survey in 2009 and again this year. A summary of the survey statistics over the period is shown in Appendix 1.

- 3.3 The survey is a postal survey, administered by Ipsos Mori on behalf of the NHT Network. 5000 survey questionnaires were issued to households across the Borough in June 2012, selected by postcode cluster sampling, to ensure that the survey is spread evenly across the Borough.
- 3.4 The Survey should help individual authorities to identify:
- What service areas need improving the most;
  - Which service areas have most potential to improve;
  - Who improvements should be targeted at;
  - Where improvements should be made;
  - How improvements can be delivered.
- 3.5 A total of 545 responses were received. This represents a return rate of 10.9% which is unfortunately, below the average response rate for Unitary Authorities. The number of responses received provides a reasonable degree of certainty – a plus or minus 4% degree of accuracy on the responses received. However, care will need to be exercised when drawing conclusions from the survey and applying them to guide strategies, plans and the direction of future funding, particularly in view of the profile of respondents to the survey.
- 3.6 Halton's participation in the 2012 survey follows a period of significant highway and transport funding reductions for the Borough. Following in-year budget cuts in 2010, arising from the comprehensive spending review, the transport block settlement for 2011/12 resulted in a significant reduction in transport funding from previous years. The Integrated Transport budget was cut by 61% (from £1.76m down to £680k) and Highway Capital Maintenance cut by 9% in relation to the 2010/11 allocations. In 2010, the Road Safety Capital grant from Government was cut entirely (£75,114) whilst the Revenue grant was reduced by £90k only to be followed the next year by the removal of the remainder. This meant a total revenue loss for Road Safety of approximately £396k (of which approximately £238k went to the Cheshire Safer Roads Partnership for camera enforcement) which very quickly led to a 50% reduction in dedicated Road Safety officers.
- 3.7 Because of the government's austerity measures, revenue budgets for highway maintenance, supported bus services, community transport and street lighting have also been reduced to find further Council savings. It is difficult to say whether this significant reduction in funding accounts for the deterioration in respondents' views on some aspects of service provision, especially as such a small survey sample is involved. However, it is possible that the reductions are now impacting on the public's perception of certain services and that in some cases these impacts are likely to be real and felt on a daily basis e.g. by the removal of local bus services (see table in 3.10 below).

## Survey Results

3.8 A summary profile of the responses received to the survey is as follows:

- Approximately half of the respondents to the survey were over the age of 60 and a further one third between the ages of 45 and 59;
- 43% of respondents were in employment, 49% either retired or unemployed, and the remaining 8% in training / education (or did not state);
- There was a roughly equal balance of responses from men & women;
- 80% had access to a car in the household;
- 29% declared a disability or infirmity;
- 46% of the responses came from Widnes postcodes and 54% from Runcorn;
- there was a reasonable range of responses across all the Borough's wards ranging between a maximum of 41 from Farnworth Ward to 8 from Windmill Hill.

3.9 The survey results are publicly available on the NHT website at: [www.nhtsurvey.org](http://www.nhtsurvey.org). and the results for each authority can be viewed in a wide variety of pre-prepared reports.

3.10 A PowerPoint presentation summarising Halton's key results and trends will be delivered to members at the meeting. However, overall satisfaction and 'headline' results across the six 'themes' listed in 3.1 above can be summarised as follows:

- Overall satisfaction with Halton's Highway and Transport services averaged 58.3%. The average Unitary Authority score is 53.8%
- Halton is ranked 9<sup>th</sup> of 40 Unitary Authorities and 14<sup>th</sup> of all 75 participating authorities;
- Although the overall level of satisfaction is down from 2009, and the Council dropped from 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>, Halton is still in the top 25% of Unitary Authority rankings.
- In line with all other authorities, the condition of roads in Halton is considered to be the most important aspect of the H&T service – and also the aspect most in need of improvement.
- Pavements & footpaths and Safety on Roads are next in importance to the public.
- In general, levels of satisfaction have deteriorated in approximately 54% of the individual categories although in most cases these changes are small.

The following table provides a summary of some of the key results:

Headlines from 2012 survey.	<b>Good</b>	<b>Not so Good</b>
	<u>Disabled ease of access</u> Satisfaction score 75% Ranked 7th	<u>Accessibility generally</u> Average ranking 25 <sup>th</sup>
	<u>Community Transport (CT)</u> Satisfaction score 63% Ranked 2nd	<u>Public transport</u> as an overall theme (except taxis & community transport) has the largest scope to improve (i.e. the gap from the BEST national score is the largest in any category)
		<u>Local bus services</u> Ranked 26 <sup>th</sup> Scope to improve 21% (The gap from the BEST national score is, the largest in any category)
	<u>Road Safety</u> Satisfaction score 64% Ranked 6th	<u>Road safety education</u> Particularly young drivers Satisfaction score 46% Ranked 28th
	<u>Condition of Highways (comparatively)</u> Satisfaction score 47% Ranked 4th	<u>Cold weather gritting</u> Below average score. Ranked 31st
	<u>Overall Performance</u> Satisfaction score 58% Ranked 10th	<u>Cycle routes and facilities (aspects)</u> Ranked 29 <sup>th</sup> ; <u>Rights of Way (aspects)</u> Ranked 25 <sup>th</sup> <u>Street Lighting</u> Ranked 23 <sup>rd</sup>
Comparison against historic 2009 results	<b>Improved</b>	<b>Deteriorated</b>
	<u>Walking &amp; Cycling</u> Improved across all indicators – average of 1.75% improvement	<u>Overall Performance</u> Satisfaction down by around 2%. Drop from 1 <sup>st</sup> overall
	<u>Road safety generally</u> Improved across all indicators – average of 3.4% increase	<u>Accessibility</u> Satisfaction down, especially ‘access without a car’ – down 5%
		<u>Public Transport theme (except community transport)</u> Satisfaction down by average 7% (but CT up 3%)
	<u>Response Rate</u> Down from 15% (820 responses) to 10.9%	

3.11 A number of factors may be said to be influencing the survey results. Some of these factors apply nationally, across all authorities and some, apply only to Halton compared to the other 39 unitary authorities:

- Successive severe winters between 2008 and 2011 resulted in public satisfaction (nationally) with gritting services deteriorating - initially by 20% but recovering last year to an average satisfaction score of 51%. Across this period satisfaction with Halton's gritting dropped by 5%, but we are still behind both national and unitary averages and 14 percentage points off the best performer.
- Similarly the harsh winters, and the toll taken on the condition of the highway infrastructure has affected satisfaction with the condition of roads. Perception of the speed of repairs also dropped. Again Halton results reflect the national trend, although Halton's satisfaction level fell by just 5% over the period compared with 9% nationally.
- Satisfaction with the condition of pavements (footways) in Halton has improved by over 2% since 2009, which may demonstrate the additional investments made in footway maintenance over this period. By comparison, nationally, satisfaction dropped marginally. Halton is ranked 10<sup>th</sup> of Unitary Authorities in this respect.
- Satisfaction with Public transport is generally on an even keel, although peoples' perception of personal safety on buses has improved, possibly due to modern bus fleets with CCTV monitoring.
- Halton's results indicate that satisfaction with the frequency of bus services has deteriorated (minus 4%) but satisfaction with the state of bus stops has improved by 5%. These results probably reflect the budget cuts for supported bus services and conversely, the investments made in bring stops up to DDA compliant standard.
- National results indicate that the Road Safety and Tackling Congestion themes are on an upward trend – again this is reflected locally. However, whilst public satisfaction with road safety is improved across the board, including road safety & education (by 4%) we are still ranked below average against other Unitaries and nationally. This may be due to the significant cuts in Halton's Road Safety budgets across the period.

3.12 The survey has provided a wealth of useful statistical information about Halton residents' perceptions and satisfaction with highway and transportation service. There are clearly some areas of the service which warrant further, closer investigation.

3.13 It is proposed that, following further analysis of the results and a more detailed investigation into the issues arising from the survey, a 'proposals report' is prepared and presented to the Board in the new year, to enable any interventions to be planned and budget allocations targeted to address the findings.

3.14 As stated earlier, the NHT survey is undertaken annually. Some authorities participate every year, and some, like Halton choose to stagger their participation. Your officers' view is that the year-on-year changes across the themes are typically small, which makes it difficult

to identify trends and also the impact of any influences or interventions on public perception.

- 3.15 The cost of the survey this year to Halton was £8000, which although representing good value in terms of coverage and quality of survey output, is quite costly on a 'per response' basis. This was the primary reasons for non-participation in 2009, 2010 and 2011. At this stage, it is not planned to participate in 2013, instead, specific themes or topics that we want to address could be surveyed locally through the Halton 2000 panel or by other local means.

## **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct policy implications at this stage, however further more detailed analysis of the results will be undertaken, which may be used to guide future policy and budget provision for highway and transportation services.

## **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Resource Implications**

There are no financial resource implications at the present time. The cost of the survey was wholly funded from Highway and Transportation revenue budget for LTP Development. There are no on-going costs in relation to this year's survey. Reporting and analysis of the survey responses and results is being undertaken in-house by the Council's Research and Intelligence Unit.

### **5.2 Sustainability Checklist**

The survey results will assist in the development of sustainable travel strategies and policies.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

There are no direct implications arising from the recommendation. The survey results will assist in targeting road safety training and education and in developing schemes to improve walking and cycling to school.

### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

There are no direct implications arising from the recommendation. The survey results will assist in improving accessibility, sustainable travel and tackling congestion that could potentially contribute towards local economic growth.

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

There are no direct implications arising from the recommendation. The survey results will assist in the development of sustainable travel modes and the health benefits that accrue from such improvements.

### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

There are no direct implications arising from the recommendation. The survey results will assist will assist in targeting road safety training and education, and in the development of highway and traffic schemes that promote safe use of the network.

#### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

There are no direct implications arising from the recommendation. The survey results will assist will assist in the development of highway schemes that contribute to the improvement of the urban fabric and infrastructure.

#### **7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

There are no equality and diversity implications arising as a result of the proposed action. The survey results will assist in targeting accessibility and infrastructure improvements that would have a positive impact on the older and disabled sections of Halton's community.

#### **8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

There are no background papers in connection with this report. Results and details of responses to the NHT Survey 2012 are available publicly at [www.nhtsurvey.org](http://www.nhtsurvey.org)

## Appendix 1 Summary Survey Statistics

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total number of Authorities taking part in survey	33	76	95	70	75
<b>By Authority Type</b>					
County Councils	15	23	24	22	22
London Boroughs	1	8	10	4	2
Metropolitan Boroughs	2	13	16	9	11
Unitary Authorities	15	32	45	35	40
<b>By Region</b>					
East Midlands	4	6	7	6	7
East of England	2	4	10	7	6
London	1	8	10	4	2
North East	1	12	12	3	10
North West	0	7	6	7	7
South East	6	10	12	14	12
South West	14	15	14	14	15
Wales	0	0	6	0	0
West Midlands	2	8	10	7	7
Yorkshire & Humber	3	6	8	8	9
<b>Summary Response</b>					
Total Surveys Issued	148,500	371,026	479,300	325,200	377,500
Total responses Received	27,682	69,310	81,614	60,626	60,624
Average Sample Size	4,500	4,882	5,045	5,028	5,026
Average No. of Responses	839	912	859	886	808
Average Response Rate	19.0%	18.7%	17.0%	17.6%	16%