

# Citizens' Panel newsletter



Issue 34 - February 2010

Informing citizens of our services....

## Welcome!

Hello and welcome to the first edition of the Citizens' Panel newsletter for 2010.

I want to start by saying a huge thank you to all 802 of you who took the time to complete the previous survey in November last year.

This gave us an excellent response rate of 71%.

We really appreciate you spending the time it

takes to fill in the surveys and as always we value your opinions and the feedback we gain from this.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say thank you to my colleague Steven Sinclair who has been putting together the newsletters in my absence, I will now be taking over writing again as I have now returned from my 12 month maternity leave.

In the last survey of 2009 we asked questions which reflected the government set Place Based Survey.

The main theme for the newsletter this time is based on these questions and we'll be looking at how your answers compare with the Borough figures from the 2008 National Place Based Survey and what we're doing with this information.

## Inside this issue..

Welcome!

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## Special points of interest...

90% of you are satisfied with your home as a place to live

93% of you feel well informed about how and where to register to vote

Almost a quarter of you think people not treating each other with respect and consideration is a problem in your local area

## Coming up in this survey...

In the survey this time we are asking a great variety of questions.

The topics for this survey include:

- **Customer Service** - helping the Council to "put the customer at the heart of everything we do"
- **Organisational development** - looking at the way we deliver services
- **Communication** - ensuring that we communicate effectively about a wide range of issues

and...

- **The Greenheart Project** - the partnership programme aiming to make the countryside more accessible to people living in Wigan Borough.

Some of these topics have been asked on previous surveys, so you may recognise some of the information and questions.

The reason we sometimes repeat questions

is so that we can do some comparisons, we sometimes do this once a year and sometimes it will be every few years.

This is so we can see if and how opinions have changed and whether the work we are doing as a council is making a difference to these opinions.

I really hope you enjoy reading this issue and find it informative, interesting and helpful.

## Place Survey Update

The last survey of 2009 was devoted to asking questions based around the Place Survey.

The Place Survey is a national statutory survey required by government and is carried out once every two years. However, we saw an opportunity to use the Citizens' Panel to gain a little more detailed insight into the results and it also provided us with a way of monitoring how we are performing in the interim year before the next national survey.

Although the two surveys both use the same postal questionnaire method, they are also very different: The Place Survey is a random sample of people across the Borough



and it is also sent to a much bigger group.

Although we have found some interesting information, facts and opinions. We will use the information to develop our services and ensure we are concentrating on areas that are important to residents.

Some of the interesting points raised were:

- 53% of residents on the Citizens' Panel expressed satisfaction with Wigan Council, this figure was 41% on the National Place Survey.

It is important again for us to note that this shift may be influenced by the two very different samples. This may be partly due to how engaged you are as Citizens' Panel members.

We did also note another interesting point here - that even among the satisfied panel members there were still only 5% of you who stated you were "very satisfied" as a response.

This shows that even though over half of you are satisfied, we still have a job to do in improving how we run things, to ensure we raise satisfaction for our residents.

We also looked a little further into what factors were most important to residents in making somewhere a good place to live.

In both the 2008 Place Survey and the 2009 Citizens' Panel, the same three factors were given as the most important, these were:

- Level of crime
- Clean streets and
- Health services

Looking a little further into this we found that both the 2008 and 2009 surveys provide a consistent message regarding what factors Wigan Borough residents believe to be important. However, when looking in further detail, the issues chosen vary significantly by resident

groups:

- For 18-64 year olds, level of crime was again most important (66%)
- Although those over 65 years old chose Health Services as most important to them.
- Those who have children in the household are significantly more likely than those who don't to state their top three most important as :
  - Levels of crime
  - Facilities for young people and
  - Parks and open spaces

In both surveys residents were asked about their satisfaction with Council Services. This is



a really important question for us, as it helps us feedback to departments on how they are doing and in turn helps them plan how they may need to improve on this.

The highest proportion of you were most satisfied with the following four services, from the list you were provided with:

- Refuse collection
- Local tips/household waste recycling centres
- Libraries and
- Doorstep recycling

We also looked a little further into satisfaction levels and found that those of you aged 65 or over are significantly more likely to be satisfied with the way Wigan Council runs things than those aged 18-64.

## Place Survey (continued)

An area of concern which is regularly highlighted as an issue in Wigan Borough is:

- Traffic Congestion.

On the Citizens' Panel survey this was the local issue that the highest proportion of residents feel needs to be improved. In the 2008 Place survey - this was still also a key priority for half of the residents we asked.

Looking further into this we found that males are significantly more likely than females to agree that traffic congestion is a problem. We also found that people are using a car as the main mode of transportation to reach amenities that they use.



The surveys also asked a section of questions relating to health. These were not statutory questions set by government but were included to provide us with an indication of levels of public health in Wigan.

Some interesting facts we found included:

- 82% or over four out of five of you classed yourself as a non-smoker
- 38% of you stated that you drank alcohol between one and three days a week
- 60% of you have been able

to enjoy your day to day activities and have been feeling reasonably happy all things considered.

Overall the results between the 2008 Place Survey and the 2009 Citizens' Panel are very similar. Although this shows that the two surveys can back each other up. It also shows us that we haven't done enough work yet as an authority to have any significant impact on areas we want to change and indeed improve.

This information will be fed back to departments to ensure that they are aware of this, to help them understand where and what needs to be done to raise these levels of satisfaction across the Borough.

## Readers' and Discussion Panel Update

Wigan Council have a variety of ways residents can get involved. Being part of the Citizens' Panel is one way. However we also have another 2 panels - the Readers' Panel and the Discussion Panel.

These panels were formed a number of years ago but have been growing in number partly by asking Citizens' Panel members to get involved if they wish to and also by adding names of any resident of the Borough who shows an interest in this or asks to get involved.

The panels are used to get local residents feedback and views on any topic that the Council may be dealing with. The panels are managed by us in Chief Executives Services but are available for all departments across the Council to use.

In the early stages of planning and making changes, public opinion can be invaluable and a great help to getting it right first time.

The input of our Readers' and Discussion Panel members help to ensure that the Council gets things right first time.

I also want to say another big thank you to those of you who stated in the March 2009 survey that you wanted to get involved with our Readers and Discussion Panels.

Over the last 12 months Readers' and Discussion Panel members have been involved in lots of interesting consultation including several focus groups. The focus groups have been hugely successful and we have had great

feedback from those who have attended and the services who have run them .

Some of the topics we have consulted on over the last year included:

- Giving opinions on the Councils corporate complaints procedure and the documents they use
- Focus group looking at the Wigan Council Website
- A focus group and short questionnaire getting feedback on the Wigan Councils summary of accounts documents.

If any of you would like further information on how you can get involved in any of the additional panels or consultation going on across Wigan Council please get in touch using the contact details, found at the end of the newsletter.

## Your questions answered...

In each issue of the Citizens' Panel news we print a section of frequently asked questions. We hope this section is useful for you to read in case you had thought of asking something but never had time to get in touch. If you do have any questions about the panel please get in touch with me using the contact details at the bottom of this page.

**Q: I am interested in getting involved in the community and particularly the kind of voluntary work I can get involved in. Is there anything I can do in the borough without having to commit myself to regular daily or weekly work?**

**A:** There are a range of volunteering opportunities available within the council such as delivering meals on wheels, helping in day

centres or by volunteering your opinion by joining the Readers' or Discussion Panels. For further information on getting involved with any of these opportunities please contact me using the details at the bottom of this page.

**Q: When I'm filling in the survey, should I answer the questions for me or someone who lives with me?**

**A:** Unless we ask you for someone else you should only answer for yourself. If we want you to answer for someone else we will make it clear in each question. For example, "Have you or anyone in your household..."

**Q: I am a new member to the Citizens' Panel and wanted to know what topics to expect on the surveys throughout the year.**

**A:** Citizens' Panel surveys are sent out 3 times a year and this is the first survey of 2010. The next survey will be done in the summer. Each survey is put together the month prior to it being sent out so as yet we aren't 100% sure what topics will be included. If you want any further information you can write to me or ring me and I will send this information to you.

**Q: Who are BMG?**

**A:** BMG stands for Boston Marketing Group. You will see their logo on the front cover of the surveys you receive. This is a market research company that we work with to manage the citizens panel surveys. BMG help us to develop the surveys and they send them out to you. They then report the results back to us.

**Thanks to you all once again for taking the time to read this newsletter and also for completing another successful Citizens' Panel survey. The sections being covered in the survey this time are once again very interesting and your responses will make a difference to the way Wigan Council moves on with the services we provide.**

**As always I appreciate hearing your opinions on both the questionnaires and the newsletters in general. If you have any feedback, questions or comments, please get in touch with me using the contact details below.**

**I hope you have enjoyed reading the newsletter and completing the survey this time. We will be back again after Easter and look forward to hearing from you again then.**

**Many thanks  
Liz Roberts**

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