

Welcome to 2008....



Hello and a very warm welcome to 2008. This is the first edition of the Citizens' Panel News for the year so a huge welcome to you and I hope you find being a member of Wigan Borough's largest single consultation group, throughout 2008, worthwhile.

Meanwhile, another huge thank you to all

806 of you who returned their questionnaires for the last survey, especially with it being so close to the Christmas holidays. It was great to see that so many of you stayed committed to the panel and found the time to give your opinions at such a hectic time of the year, we are, as always, very grateful for this.

In this issue of the Citizens' Panel News I will update you with some overall opinions which you gave in our last survey covering the following topics:

- Budgets
- Highway maintenance and
- Parks & open spaces

I have also included a section looking into the various types of communication you have relied on from 2006 and 2007 and whether there has been any significant changes in this.

After this survey we plan to change the look of our Newsletter—so watch out for our new and improved look!

March 2008
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Your views on being a panel member

In the survey this time we have asked a section of questions to obtain your thoughts and views on being a member of the Citizens' Panel.

Wigan Council is always looking at the various methods and ways that residents are contacted and whether the best services possible are being offered.

Having a wide variety of Wigan Borough residents involved in the Citizens' Panel is really

important to the work of the Council and the views expressed by Citizens' Panel play a valuable part in influencing our services.


As always we are really grateful for your support and value all of your opinions and opinions on how we run the panel are just as important as all other services. Therefore our aim is to find out what you think about ways to contact you,

how you get involved or would like to get involved and what you think we could do to improve the ways we obtain and give out information.

We will use the results to improve the way we manage the Citizens' Panel as well as feeding back to all departments to help us find ways of getting more residents involved in consultation across the Borough.



Special points of interest:

- ◆ 81% of you drive a vehicle around the borough on a regular basis
- ◆ 67% of those of you who drive are satisfied with the road signs on the highway network 
- ◆ 76% of you have visited a park or country park in the borough in the last 12 months

Wigan Council Budget setting

In the November survey we asked you a section of questions relating to Wigan Councils budget. Within this section you were asked what you would do if you were council leader for the day.

The top three areas you gave priority to were:

- living in a place where you feel safe (59%)
- creating a strong and modern economy (45%) and
- creating a good start in life (32%).

An area highlighted as a concern in another of the

questions was:

- Living in a place where you feel safe.

When you were asked about possible funding cuts, this was the key theme, picked out by 66% of you, as being an area you want to see improved, even if this meant a rise in Council tax.

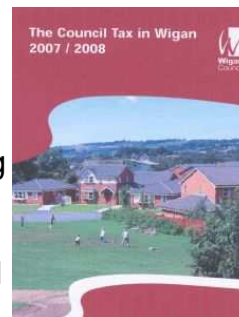
The two top areas you think Wigan Council could become more efficient were:

- better recycling facilities and
- better maintenance of roads

The Council uses the results each year to feed into

departmental service plans making sure that the views you provide here are considered when setting out priorities for the year ahead.

The results are also used when considering budget setting and the Council Tax levels for the year ahead.



For any general Council Tax enquiries please contact the helpline on 01942 828696 or email them at: revenues@wigan.gov.uk.

Parks & open spaces

In the previous survey we asked you a section of questions relating to parks and open spaces in Wigan Borough. This section was asked to find out what your views are on the green spaces across the Borough. We had previously asked the same questions through the Citizens' Panel in 2004 and we wanted to follow this up to see whether or not your views and opinions had changed.

Slightly more of you stated that you have visited a park or country park in Wigan Borough this time with 76% saying you had, compared to 75% in 2004. which still shows that a huge majority of you are using the



parks across the Borough.

The majority 63% of those of you who have visited a park/country park chose to visit Haigh Hall compared to 59% in 2004. With the second most popular country park being Pennington Flash.

The two main reasons you gave for visiting the park or country park were:

- To walk/exercise/relax and
- To take children/grandchildren to the play area

Although almost a third (31%) of

you stated that you visit a park or country park in the borough simply to "enjoy the surroundings."

A large majority (69%) of you agree in some way that the flower beds, trees and shrubs in the park/country park, you have visited most often in the last 12 months, are attractive and well maintained. Although when considering that same park 57% of you disagree in some way that the park has enough public toilets.

These results have been fed back to Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust and they are in the process of using the results to inform this years parks strategy.

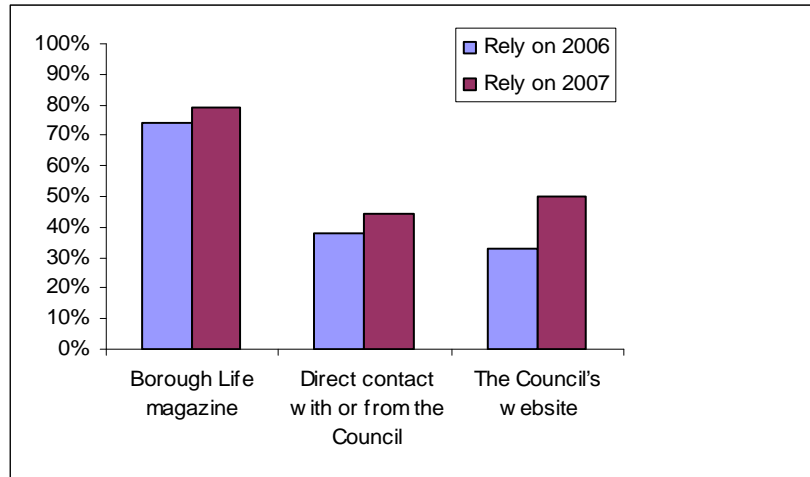
Communication - your views

In the June survey last year we asked a set of questions that we've asked a number of times, relating to communication.

The aim of the questions was to obtain your views on how Wigan Council communicates with residents across the borough.

As you can see clearly from the graph to the right, the percentages of you relying on either Borough Life, direct contact with the council or the Council's website have all increased since the questions were last asked. Less of you in 2007 are now relying on word of mouth or the local media, to obtain information about Wigan Council and its services, than in 2006.

In 2006 68% of you stated that you relied on the information you



receive from these sources, to enable you to understand "what the council does", this percentage went up in 2007 to 73%.

If you have a question about a service provided by Wigan Council, the top three methods you currently use to find an answer are:

- Local Papers

- Council Website
- Telephone a council call centre.

This information will influence how we move forward with our plans to improve the way we communicate with residents over the coming year.

Highway maintenance



In the previous survey a section of questions was asked relating to management and

and maintenance of the highways around the borough.

This section was asked in order to gauge how satisfied residents are with the way we currently carry out certain maintenance functions. The questions concentrated on three main areas and your answers were assessed dependent on what you told us.

We split results down by:

- Those who drive around the borough
- Those who cycle around the borough and
- Your opinions as a pedestrian

81% of you stated that you drive a vehicle around the borough on a regular basis. Out of those of you who drive 67% of you are satisfied with the road signs on the highway network.

Although almost a third 31% of you stated that you were dissatisfied with local roads in your area (within 2 minutes drive of your home).



Only 21% of you cycle around Wigan Borough. Out of those who cycle 52% of you are dissatisfied with the cycle lanes on the highway network.

Around half of you, as a pedestrian, are satisfied in some way either with the pavements in your nearest town centre or in your local area. 77% of you are satisfied with the brightness levels of street lighting provided on the main roads around the borough. Although 40% of you are dissatisfied with the speed of repairing roads and pavements in your local area.

Your questions answered...



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 I filled in the last survey as soon as I

received it and mailed it back straight away, however I then went on to receive a reminder letter and a further questionnaire telling me to fill this copy in and return it. Does this mean that my original questionnaire was not received and should I fill in the second questionnaire and return this too? This is quite inconvenient and time consuming and I would prefer to only do this once.

A You only ever need to fill in and return one copy of your questionnaire. Unless there has been a general problem with Royal Mail, BMG always receive returned questionnaires. Unfortunately on some occasions the reminder letter crosses your returned survey in the mailing process and so before your returned questionnaire has

been registered and your name 'ticked off' the list, you've already been sent a reminder. Therefore in future if this happens you can simply recycle the reminder questionnaire.



Q I have recently become a member of the Citizens' Panel and I am interested in finding out what has been asked on these surveys previously—is there any way I can find this out?

A All previous issues of the Citizens' Panel news are available on the internet - please go to www.wigan.gov.uk. Alternatively write to me or give me a call using the contact details below and I would be happy to answer any questions and provide you with further information regarding the Citizens' Panel.

Dear all,

Thank you to you all for taking the time to fill in the questionnaires throughout 2007 and for reading this newsletter. I hope you have found it both interesting and informative. I look forward to continuing to keep you up to date with all the Citizens' Panel results into 2008.

I always appreciate hearing your opinions both of the questionnaires and the newsletters in general. So if you have any feedback, questions or comments you would like to make please get in touch with me using the details below.

Many thanks

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**Next survey
June 2008**