

Welcome!

Hello and welcome to the last edition of Citizens' Panel news for 2009.

I would like to start by saying a big thank you to the 848 of you who took the time to answer the September survey and the really useful comments and feedback you have provided in all the surveys this year.

The information we have been able to gather throughout the year has helped influence many

services and we hope that this will continue throughout the coming year.

Altogether in 2009 you have answered questions relating to 9 services/ departments and have provided answers to over 100 questions.

The last survey in September this year focused on four sections. These included:

- Regeneration and communities

- Council Budget
- Parks and open spaces
- Public service assessment.

This newsletter will give you a bit more information around these sections, as well as some interesting facts from the surveys in 2009.

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

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Thank you

Special points of interest...

73% of you said that you live in a safe neighbourhood

80% of you have visited a park or country park in Wigan Borough in the past 12 months

As leader of the council your top priority would be living in a place where you feel safe (53%)

Interesting facts from 2009.....

For this section I have picked out some interesting statistics and figures from the previous surveys in 2009:

- 47% of you agree that Wigan Council provides value for money
- 67% of you are satisfied with the overall quality of service provided by Wigan Council



- 31% of you agree that the council has a good reputation amongst residents in the borough
- In the last year 60% of you have contacted the council. When you did, 65% of you thought the staff knowledge was good
- 57% of you do not feel well informed on how well local public services are performing
- 67% of you would prefer to continue receiving a paper copy of Borough Life Magazine
- From a communication perspective, before reading the questionnaire 82% of you had heard about the offer of free swimming in Wigan.



Regeneration and Communities

The Regeneration & Communities Division of the Environmental Services Department asked a range of questions to find out what you think about the way that the borough's businesses operate, the goods and foods they sell and about the area where you live.

They ask these questions each year to identify any problems and to prioritise their future work.

73% of you said that you live in a safe neighbourhood, slightly less of you feel that you live in a well kept neighbourhood (59%).

You were then asked how much you agree / disagree

with a number of statements made about Wigan, you said:

- 36% of you disagree that dog fouling in your neighbourhood has decreased in the last year
- 80% agree that on the whole shops and businesses in the borough treat their customers fairly.

60% of you said you feel safe in the pubs and clubs in Wigan borough during the day, however this figure drops to 29% at night time.

In the past four weeks only a small proportion of you said that you have been bothered by air pollution from the following:

- Traffic - 16%

- Other commercial sites - 4%
- Construction and demolition - 4%
- Industrial sites (e.g. factories) - 3%.

Again, during the past four weeks, only a small proportion of you have been bothered by noise from a range of sources, the biggest issue was with gangs of youths hanging around (14%).

The regeneration and communities division use a number of elements from this set of questions as key performance indicators for their services.

Council Budget

In the September survey we asked you a section of questions relating to Wigan Councils budget.

This is the fifth year that the Citizen's Panel has been canvassed on their opinions about how the Council should spend its money in the following year.

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 (53%)
- creating a strong and modern economy (45%)
- creating a good start in life (39%).

When looking at all the priorities for the council we asked you to consider were possible budget cuts could be made (if they were ever required) and where improvements are needed by choosing improve, maintain or reduce for each.

The top answers for each option were:

- Improve - 'living in a place where you feel safe' (56%)
- Maintain - 'a good start in life for every child and young person' (63%)
- Reduce - 'a place where people respect and value their different backgrounds and get on well together' (26%).

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 and Open Spaces

In the previous survey we asked you 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 2008 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 in the past 12 months this time with 80% saying you had, compared to 76% in 2008. which still shows that a huge majority



of you are using the parks across the Borough.

45% of you who have visited a park/ country park chose to visit Haigh Hall, which is a decrease from 2008 (63%). The second most popular country park is 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 a quarter of you

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

A large majority (62%) of you agree that the park / country park you have visited most often in the last 12 months is tidy and free from litter.

Although when considering that same park 59% of you disagree 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.

Public Service Assessment

In the last survey we asked you a number of questions about the CAA and how this information should be passed on to the public.

Comprehensive Area Assessment, or CAA, is a new way of assessing local public services.



As part of these assessment arrangements, we have recently undertaken a survey of around 6000 people who live in Wigan Borough to find out their feelings on public services and life in their local area.

Once the inspectors have carried out these assessments

they will be available for the public to view to provide a picture of life in Wigan.

We asked you which sources you feel would provide you with easy to understand information about how public services perform, the top responses were:

- Borough Life - 81%
- Local Paper - 64%
- Local council website - 38%
- Council Tax Bills - 30%

From the survey of 6000 residents we found that in general, people feel that they belong to the area and that people get on well together. We asked you what it is about living in Wigan that makes people feel

this way, you said:

- knowing your neighbour - 67%
- pride in where they live - 57%
- friendship - 53%
- feeling part of the community - 50%

Also from the survey, residents felt that public service organisations don't listen or act on what local people tell them. We asked you why you think this is, you said:

- we appear to spend our money in the wrong places - 48%
- lack of feedback about what we have done - 38%
- not enough opportunities to have your say - 34%.

Your questions answered...

Throughout the year we send out lots of information and questionnaires to you. You often get back to us with questions about these. We thought that this would be an ideal opportunity to give you the answers to some of the most frequently asked questions.

Q: I filled in the last survey as soon as I received it and mailed it back straight away, however I then received a reminder letter and 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, we 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 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 last survey of 2009. 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: My friend is interested in becoming a member of the Citizens' Panel. How do they get involved?

A: We are always looking to recruit new panel members. If someone you know, wants to join the Citizens' Panel please ring, email or write to me using the contact details below.

Q: I have been away on holiday and missed the deadline for sending back my completed questionnaire—am I still able to send it in?

A: Yes—definitely! Your input is vital and we would encourage you to always send back your questionnaires even if they are after the deadline, we will update our results accordingly.

Dear all,

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.

The Citizens' Panel will be back in 2010 and we look forward to hearing from you again then.

Many thanks

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