

Citizens' Panel newsletter



Issue 36 - June 2011

Informing citizens of our services...

Welcome!

Hello and welcome to the June edition of the Citizens' Panel newsletter.

I want to start by saying another huge thank you to the 674 of you who took the time to complete the last survey of 2010.

The survey was mailed out to a total of 1121 of you and between 13 September and 22 October 2010 and 674 of you completed and returned your surveys. This gave us a 60%

response rate which is really good again and we hope this will continue as we go through some changes with the panel over the next few months.

As I'm sure most of you already know, the council is currently going through some tough times when it comes to cutting costs and making savings and as a result of this there have already been some changes to the way we run our Citizens' Panel, which I have explained in a bit more

detail below.

As always we will use the feedback you have continuously provided us with, along with the results from this survey, to feed back to departments in order to help focus services and make improvements and/or changes wherever necessary and possible.

Your opinions really do matter and can make a real difference and we really appreciate you giving us your time as a panel member.

Inside this issue..

Welcome!

Looking forward to 2011/12

Help us be better connected

Wigan WISDOM

Sure Start Children's Centres

Looking back at 2010

FAQ's

Contact Details

Special points of interest...

- Thanks to the 33% of you who expressed an interest in joining a future e-Panel, you can find more information about this on page 2
- Those of you who have visited a Wigan park in the last 12 months 83% are satisfied overall with the parks and open spaces in the Borough.

Looking forward to 2011/12.....

As this is the first survey and Citizens' Panel newsletter of 2011, I thought it would be a good idea to let you know why and what our plans are for the rest of 2011.

We are currently considering changes to lots of services as the council tries to squeeze down its spending to fit in with budget cuts.

As part of this we are looking into a variety of ways where we can save money and start

to make changes quickly.

As I'm sure you're aware, in recent years we have run surveys for the Citizens' Panel 4 times a year. However over the last year we have changed this and this year this has meant we will now only be asking you to complete 2 surveys for us.

This has given us some time to look at different options and ways of moving on with our Citizens' Panel.

For example we are currently looking into the possibility of being able to complete surveys online as well as having paper-based surveys.

This is the reason for asking you a set of questions in this survey relating specifically to being a panel member.

We will use this feedback as well as research into what other authorities are doing, to hopefully change and improve the way we run our panel from 2012.

Help us be better connected

In the future we will be making some major changes to our website and as part of this work we want to find out what people think of the current website, what we could improve or do better.

Our Website

www.wigan.gov.uk is the main source of information about Wigan Council and the hundreds of services we provide.

More and more people are now doing things for themselves digitally and for people to carry on doing this on Wigan Council's website, improvements need to be made.

We are looking to get opinions on the current website from

people who use it regularly but we're also hoping to get feedback from people who may have never looked at or used the website before.

We recently advertised this chance to "have your say" in an article in Borough Life, but as valued panel members we also wanted to ensure you heard about this and had the opportunity to give us your opinions and feedback.

So if you have a few spare minutes please take part in the survey at www.wigan.gov.uk/betterconnected. The closing date is 11th July. For more information on this or to find out how you can get involved please email or ring Garry Miller – g.miller@wigan.gov.uk 01942 827369

Wigan's E-panel

In the previous survey we asked if any of you would be interested in joining an e-panel that we're thinking about setting up in Wigan. Many thanks to those of you who said they would like to be included in this.

We plan on using this e-panel soon to look at services such as:

- Advertising and promotions
- Planning changes to our website
- Proof reading leaflets etc.

If you would like any further information on how you can get involved with the e-panel please get in touch using the contact details at the back of this newsletter.

Wigan WISDOM

www.wiganlife.com/wisdom

WISDOM (Wigan's Information System of Dynamic Online Maps) is a Local Information System, looking to promote the sharing and best use of data across the Wigan Borough.

WISDOM provides easy access to statistics at a variety of levels and is being developed by core partners operating under the Wigan Borough Partnership 'Wigan Life' umbrella.

As public sector organisations, we have a duty to share information and to make information available to our citizens.

WISDOM was created on the back of the 2006 Local Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities', which described local information systems as:



'a powerful tool for targeting activity and improving decision-making'.

Since then, the growth of the open data agenda, the launch of data.gov.uk and the coalition government's 'Big Society' agenda have all highlighted the need for good, local intelligence and the important role local information systems play can play in aiding local people's understanding of their local area.

The aim of **WISDOM** is to make local data available in an open and user-friendly format for use by citizens of the borough to enable them to better

understand the area in which they live so that they can better hold local services to account and play their part in creating a better Wigan.

WISDOM, Wigan's Local Information System, contains almost 200 different datasets about Wigan borough at a variety of geographic levels, including: ward and township etc. You can find out about the new Township Profiles by visiting www.WiganLife.com or visit the **WISDOM** site itself www.wiganlife.com/wisdom for access to interactive maps and charts, as well as key reports on themes relating to health and social care, the economy, crime, deprivation, children and young people and many more...so if you have time please take a look and see what you think!

Sure Start Children's Centres – Have Your Say

Wigan Council is a four star Authority committed to ensuring that every child in the borough gets the best start in life.

The twenty Children's Centres located across the Wigan Borough play an integral part in contributing to our vision of providing better opportunities for 0-5 year olds and their families.

Currently the Children's Centres provide and signpost to a varied menu of services, for example:

- Nursery provision
- Parenting Support
- Child and Family Health Services
- Links to Jobcentre Plus.

The services are delivered by a number of agencies and

Sure Start Children's Centres Wigan

organisations who have been commissioned by the People's Directorate and the Centres to work in partnership to deliver innovative programmes that are responsive to need and improve outcomes for children and their families.

Over the next few months we will be working with colleagues in Wigan Council's People Directorate, our Community Engagement team and Children's Centre staff.

The work we will undertake aims to look at what services families use most in the children's centres and how they

feel it has made a difference to their life. In addition to talking to users of the services we are also planning to undertake consultation work with all communities across the borough to obtain their feedback. This is to enable us to understand what we could be doing better, what services families need or might be of most use.

We will also be running focus groups to discuss this service so if you're interested in being involved please get in touch with us.

You can contact us using the details on the back page of this newsletter or watch out for more information in the next edition of Borough Life or out and about in your community.

Wigan Transport Plan

Over the next few weeks and months the Environmental Planning section of Wigan Council will be carrying out some consultation around our transport strategy.

The aim of this work is to find out about people's experiences whilst travelling around the Borough, how people would prefer to get around and what people think transportation around the borough will be like in the future.

The feedback we get from this work will help us to build an overall picture of what local communities need and want. It will also enable us to influence planning and decisions in this area.

For more information on this please visit:
www.wigan.gov.uk/onthemove

Looking back at 2010

Throughout 2010 we sent out 3 surveys, asking about 12 services altogether, including:

- Council communications
- The children and young people's plan
- Council budgets etc...

Some interesting facts from the results we got were:

- In February last year, 82% of you stated that you rely on Borough Life residents' magazine as an accurate source of information on Wigan Council and its services.
- In June last year we asked you what you thought we should focus on in our children and young people's plan, to improve what is

provided for young people. Over half of you (54%) thought that the biggest priority should be more places where they can go to spend time with their friends.

- When considering key priorities for the council, 50% of you said you felt that there is a need to improve local facilities, the infrastructure and the environment in the borough, even if this meant an increase in council tax.

The feedback we got from you, as panel members, is being used to look at these areas of work and services, it will be used as a valuable evidence base and will feed into the current plans and possible changes in these areas.

Your questions answered...

We try to fill this newsletter with useful information but sometimes there are questions which we can't always address. We therefore 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: 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.

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: As stated earlier on in the newsletter, the Citizens' Panel is currently going through some changes and as a result this year has been different to previous years. For example last years surveys were sent out 3 times but in 2011 there will only be this and one other survey. The next survey will be done towards the end of Autumn, at the start of October. 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 be happy to send this information on to you.

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 in in October and I look forward to hearing from you again then.

**Many thanks
Liz Roberts**

Analyst
Wigan Council, Town Hall, Library Street, Wigan, WN1 1YN
Phone: 01942 487366
Email: lizA.roberts@wigan.gov.uk
Web: www.wigan.gov.uk

MCT-11-364

