

Welcome...



Hello and welcome to the last edition of Citizens' Panel news for 2007!

I would like to start by saying a big thank you to the 956 of you who took the time to answer the August 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 2007 you have answered questions relating to 15 services/departments and have provided answers to over 120 questions!

The last survey in August this year focused on four sections. These

included:

- Council communications,
- Community safety and the Fire Authority,
- Information provision, and
- Community involvement

This newsletter will give you a bit more information around these sections.

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

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Interesting facts from 2007...

For this section I have picked out some interesting statistics and figures from 2007:

In April:

- ♦ **78%** of you agreed that the borough needs better skilled and better paid jobs.
- ♦ **52%** of you said that if you were leader of the council for a day a top priority for you would be to make areas safe

- ♦ **78%** of you agreed that community payback schemes have the potential to make the local area cleaner and safer.

In June:

- ♦ **89%** of you said that you currently recycle paper.
- ♦ **79%** of you have either regularly or occasionally used *Borough Life* magazine to find

out information.

In August:

- ♦ **56%** of you said you agreed to some extent that you are worried about becoming a victim of crime—yet only 17% of you have been a victim in the last 12 months.
- ♦ **87%** of you agree that Wigan Borough is a good place to live.

Special points of interest:

- ♦ *54% of you would be encouraged to get more involved in helping change where you live if you "had more spare time."*
- ♦ *89% of you have a working smoke alarm in your house.*
- ♦ *If Wigan Council introduced an information request form 49% of you would prefer to find it on the councils' website.*

Communication is the key...!

Each year we ask panel members about the information they receive about the council and how useful the information provided is. We ask the same questions each time so that we can compare results and see where we have improved or indeed where we may need to improve.

This year we found that half of you are now relying on the council's website as an accurate source of information about Wigan Council. This is an increase from the 33% of you who said this in 2006.

There has also been a decrease in the number of

you relying on "word of mouth" from family, friends, neighbours etc. This has fallen—from 77% of you saying you relied on this in 2006 to 67% of you saying so in 2007.

Borough Life is now the form of information which is favoured by the majority of you. 79% of you now say that the magazine is the source which you rely on the most for obtaining information about the council.

In 2006 the most popular source of obtaining information about the council was the local media, which has fallen from 82% last year to 72% this year.



Other areas where there has been an improvement are:

More of you feel that the information Wigan Council provides is both useful and helpful, and fewer of you think that this information is difficult to understand than you did last year. We're pleased with this feedback as it suggests that we have made improvements from last year.

We also asked a question about services you feel you don't receive enough information about and the majority of you (56%) said road development. This is useful to know and we'll make sure the department responsible knows it is an area for improvement.

Providing Information—your views



The council is covered by the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, which allows people to request information about all aspects of its services.

There are various ways of contacting the council at the moment and we are trying to find out which way is the best for most people. This is why we asked a section of questions in the last survey so that we could find out whether introducing an information request form would be of help to people trying to get information.

From these questions we found that:

- 74% of you said that it is more important for the council to be able to answer specific questions about your case or service than publishing general statistics on how it is doing.
- Almost half of you (49%) said that if you have a question about a council service you would start by reading the local papers to see if you can find an answer.
- Again, almost half of you (49%) said that if an information request form was



introduced you would prefer to find it on the council's website. However a similar amount (49%) said you would also like to find this in local papers.

- The issues you were mostly interested in finding out more information were
 - ◇ Food hygiene in hospitals and restaurants, and
 - ◇ Recycling.

We will use the information you provided in this section when planning the future of information provision in Wigan Council.



Local areas—Local involvement



One section of the August survey asked you questions on community involvement and your local area. Some of the questions were asked on the survey in September last year, on behalf of both the council and the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS). This means we can now compare these results and work out whether we have improved or changed since during 2007.

Some interesting facts came from the answers you provided in this section. Among these were:

- Over the last 12 months a quarter of you (25%) feel that you have been able to

influence the council services provided in your local area or in the borough

- The majority of you still find out about what decisions are being made about council services through either *Borough Life* or the local media. These figures haven't really changed since the question was asked last year.

- 25% of you have said you would be happy for us to forward your contact details to the CVS so you can get more involved in local decision making. This is an increase on the 15% who agreed last year so thank you to all those who agreed.
- 38% of you agreed that you can influence decisions affecting your local area already



We will use the results from the questions to change how we do things in the future. For example if many of you haven't heard of us or our services, it will show us how we need to provide better information.



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 on the back page of this newsletter.



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: Where can I see the results of previous surveys?

A: All the Citizens' Panel newsletters are available to view on line on the council's website www.wigan.gov.uk and going to Consultation in the A-Z. You will also find lots of information about the panel and the different topics we've consulted on here.

If you've not got access to the web you can contact me, Liz Roberts, using the contact details at the end of this newsletter.



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 4 times a year and this is the fourth survey of 2007. The next survey will be done in March next year. 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.

Fire Safety...your views



relating to fire safety.

In the last survey we also asked a series of questions

The questions were drawn up by the Council's Community Safety Partnership and will be fed back to the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS). The answers will help them with their plans to increase the number of free home fire safety checks they do across the borough.

The GMFRS also wanted to find out how many of you already have an efficient smoke detector and who is more likely not to have one.

The answers will be used to

help them to target the people who are most likely not to have a smoke detector and also to plan where they will provide more of the free home fire safety checks.

They have also been involved in a campaign called "fire stoppers" which is a free-phone number being promoted across the borough to encourage members of the public like you to report deliberate fire setters and other problems like these.

From the survey only 19% of you had heard of this, so it



looks like the borough could definitely benefit from further promotion of this service.



It was really good to see that a huge majority of you (89%) said that you already have a working smoke alarm in your house. Although worryingly, 10% of you stated you didn't have one.

The fire authority and community safety team are available for any advice about this and all fire related issues. If you have any concerns and would like to speak to someone about this, don't hesitate to contact me (using the contact details below) and I will either pass on your details or put you through to the relevant person/team.



Dear all,

A huge thank you to all of you for taking part in the Citizens' Panel surveys throughout 2007. As always it is because of you that they have been such a success. This allows the council to continue to use your feedback to influence plans and improve the services provided throughout the borough.



I hope you have enjoyed being part of the panel throughout this year and wish you all the very best for a happy Christmas and New year.

The citizens' Panel will be back in 2008 and we look forward to hearing from you again then.



Many thanks

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**Next survey
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