

## Welcome!

Hello and welcome to the summer edition of the Citizens' Panel Newsletter.

I want to start the newsletter by saying a huge thank you to every one of you who took the time to complete the last survey.

Out of 1200 panel members who were sent a survey 875 of you returned completed surveys to us, 280 of these were from new panel members.

As always we are really grateful for the time you

spend giving us your feedback and your opinions play a huge role in helping to ensure Wigan Council is listening to what residents across the borough think about its services.

In this edition of the Citizens' Panel Newsletter you can expect to find more information relating to:

- Organisational Development
- Customer Service
- Communication

- Borough Life Magazine
- Leisure Activities
- Special points of interest
- Your questions answered

For these sections I will provide some feedback on what you said to us in the May survey and what we are doing with these findings.

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...

31% of you agree that the council has a good reputation amongst residents in the borough

When you contacted the council 65% of you thought the staff knowledge was good

67% of you would prefer to continue receiving a paper copy of Borough Life Magazine

## Organisational Development

In order to monitor the impact of the councils organisational development strategy we asked you a number of questions to find out your views and perceptions.

58% of you said that you are fairly satisfied with the overall quality of service provided by the council, while 11% said you were fairly dissatisfied.

When thinking about the value for money and quality of service, 49% of you said that you were

fairly satisfied by the way the council runs things.

13% of you said that you were fairly dissatisfied.

31% of you agree that the council has a good reputation amongst residents in the borough, 23% of you disagree.

And finally, thinking about the way the council runs things, over the past year 71% of you think it has stayed the same, 18% think it has got better and 11% think it has got worse.

Our Organisational Development Strategy has now been launched, which will help to ensure that the people who work in Wigan Council are able to look for ways to work more effectively and are focused on delivering outstanding services to our customers.

We will work hard on these areas and hopefully when we ask you about this again next time, the actions we have taken will have made a positive impact on how well you think we are performing.

## Customer Service

In order to try and further improve the customer service you receive from the council, we asked you a number of questions to find out what is important to you when you get in touch with us and what you think we could do better.

60% of you said that you have had contact with the council in the last year.

When you contacted us 65% of you thought the staff knowledge was good, however 23% said that we were poor when it came to getting the outcome you wanted.

When asked if you have had any contact with a list of public services, the top rated responses were:

- Your GP (65%) - by appointment
- Environmental Services (35%) - by phone
- Primary Care Trust Services (32%) - by appointment

When asked how important you feel it is for all public services to be accessible through a small number of common telephone numbers, 48% of you thought it was very important, while 35% said it was fairly important.

When thinking about contacting the council, 54% of you said it was easy to find the right number for the department you want. A further 11% said it was very easy, however, 20% of you said it was difficult and 3% said it was very difficult.

In July 2009 we began implementation of our Customer Transformation Programme which will deliver improvements to our customer service provision across the Council by December 2011.

A key element to this work is listening to what our customers tell us and making sure that we deliver services that meet your needs and expectations. As an example we asked you about how we work together with other organisations. Generally you felt that each organisation in Wigan works separately and we are using this feedback to try and form better partnerships with relevant services such as health to make sure that you get a more joined up service and only have to give information to us once.

## Communication

Since 2003 we have asked similar questions in the Citizens' Panel about the different ways the council communicates with residents.

We also want to make sure that communication is a two-way process, so that people can tell us what they think, and influence the things we do.

34% of you said that you feel fairly well informed about local public services, however 32% of you said you didn't feel very well informed and 27% not well informed at all.

33% of you agree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area, however, 50% of you disagree with this. A further 13% of you strongly disagree.

You said that you don't rely on the following as accurate sources of information about the council and its services:

- Council meetings (e.g. Planning meetings to review planning applications)
- Personal contact with your councillor or MP
- Direct contact with or from the council (Face-to-face contact, e-mails, letters, telephone calls)

However you did say that the things you rely on most are:

- Borough Life magazine
- Word of mouth from family, friends, neighbours etc.
- The local media (e.g. newspapers, radio, TV)
- The A-Z Directory of Wigan Council Services and other council leaflets

We asked you are there any council activities that you feel you don't receive enough information about, the most common responses were:

- Road development
- Reports on planning
- Waste/control recycling
- Council Tax expenditure figures

Positively, when asked about the council and the information it provides, 53% of you agree that Wigan Council is approachable and 66% of you think the information the council provides is useful.

This information will be passed on to officers in these sections and will feed into their future plans for these services.

## Borough Life Magazine

In order to try and make improvements we asked you a number of questions on all aspects of the magazine.

Positively, 88% of you said that you read all or some of Borough Life magazine. 80% of you said that your overall opinion of the magazine was either very good or good.

52% of you said that Borough Life contains information that is relevant to you.

87% of you said that you like the design of Borough Life. When we asked you how the design could be improved, some of the things you said were; more information on activities going on throughout the borough and longer articles.

We then asked you if there is anything that you would expect or like to see in Borough Life that is does not contain. From the list provided the most popular responses were:

- Information about leisure services
- Planning notices / applications
- Job advertisements

16% of you said that you would prefer to receive an email version of the magazine. The majority (67%) said that you would prefer to continue receiving a paper copy.

Borough Life currently costs approximately 25 pence per copy to produce and deliver, 75% of you either strongly agree or agree that this represents value for money.

Your views and comments about Borough Life have been invaluable in helping us to plan the future of the magazine. We'll be looking at the frequency of publication as well as the kind of information you want to see more of. The magazine is our most important means of communicating with residents and so it's vital that it continues to be something that most people find interesting and useful.



## Leisure Activities



Wigan Council, NHS Ashton, Leigh & Wigan, and Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust, have joined forces to deliver free swimming under the umbrella of Wigan Life.

The aim is to tackle inequalities in health, education and skills, and raise ambitions and aspirations across the community.

The free swimming initiative has been running since Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 and is available to all residents.

From a communication perspective, before reading the questionnaire 82% of you had heard about free swimming. Only 16% of you had not.

When asked where or how you heard about the free swimming, these were the top five most popular responses:

- Borough Life magazine
- Newspaper
- Friend
- Family
- Billboard (roadside) advert

We then asked if you or a family member have taken up the offer, 17% of you said that you have, with 22% saying a family member has. 59% of you said that you have not taken up the offer.

As part of the Wigan Life initiative you may have seen in the news recently the Queen officially opened Leigh Sports Village. It is the biggest investment in public sports, recreational and educational facilities in Wigan borough for many years and is transforming Leigh into one of the finest hubs of activity in the North West.

Leigh Sports Village is aimed primarily at renewing and extending facilities for sport, physical activity, education, health and leisure to serve the whole community in Leigh and District.

Also, you may be aware that work has begun on the new Wigan Life Centre, and it is already bringing cash and much-needed jobs into town.

One of the most ambitious council projects ever undertaken in the country, the Wigan Life Centre will, in two years, see a new 'one stop shop' where the public can access council, health, leisure and housing services, or visit a state of the art library or swimming pool.





## Your questions answered...



**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](http://www.wigan.gov.uk). Alternatively write to me or give me a call on the details below and I would be happy to answer any questions and provide you with further information regarding the Citizens' Panel.

**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 second survey of 2009. The next survey will be done in November. 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.

**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.**

**Many thanks**

**Steven Sinclair**

Research Analyst

Wigan Council, Town Hall, Library Street, Wigan, WN1 1YN

Phone : 01942 488388

Email : [S.Sinclair@wiganmbc.gov.uk](mailto:S.Sinclair@wiganmbc.gov.uk)

