

# Citizens' Panel newsletter



Issue 35 - June 2010

Informing citizens of our services...

## Welcome!

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

The February Citizens' Panel survey was mailed out to all 1173 Panel members between 16th February and 26th March. 764 of you completed the survey this time. This gave us a response rate of 65%.

I would like to again take this opportunity to thank each one of you who took the time to complete the survey.

All of your responses matter to us and the results we get from these surveys help us to influence changes and improve services as much as possible.

It is crucial to us that whenever we are changing or improving services, we have considered the views of Wigan Borough residents and that is where you come in and why your opinions and feedback in these surveys are so important to us.

The topics asked in the February survey included:

- Organisational Development,
- Customer Services,
- Communications and
- Greenheart Project.

This newsletter is provided to give you an update on how the panel responded to this overall, why we asked the questions and what we will use your feedback for.

## Inside this issue..

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Thank you

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## Special points of interest...

- Over half of you (54%) have contacted the Council in the last year.
- 81% of you agree that the countryside in Wigan Borough is accessible to you.
- 82% of you rely on Borough Life magazine as an accurate source of information about Wigan Council and its services.

## Coming up in this survey...

In the survey this time we are asking a variety of questions from different sections across the Council.

The topics for this survey include:

- **Adults Services:** who are asking a set of questions relating to Health and Social Care Services
- **Children and Young People's Services:** who want your input into the Children and

Young People's plan that they are currently reviewing.

- **Environmental Services:** who are getting feedback on the services they are responsible for in order to identify any problems and to prioritize their future work
- **Council Budgets:** who want to obtain a public view on how residents feel the money which comes

from council tax should be used.

We really value your feedback and look forward to using the views you put forward to develop the work of the Council.

We hope that you find the survey interesting and if you have any further comments or feedback regarding the information in the survey please get in touch. My contact details are on the back page of this newsletter.

## Organisational Development

This section of questions was asked in order that we could do some comparison to the same set of questions which were asked last year.

The priorities for Wigan Council include:

- Working for local communities to enhance their lives
- Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Working together to achieve results
- Delivering on our promises
- Challenging what and how we do things to improve
- Providing value for money by using our resources effectively.

The council has developed an organisation development strategy to help make sure that everybody working in the

Council has the skills, knowledge and tools to work in this way. We want this to have a positive impact on the way we deliver services to you as residents of Wigan Borough.

To help us monitor the impact of this strategy we have asked you these questions again. We will use the views and perceptions, which you provided for both surveys, to find out if you feel the council is improving, staying the same or getting worse.

We have included below some of the comparisons and figures which you, as panel members, provided:

- In 2009 47% of you agreed that Wigan Council provides value for money.

In 2010 this figure was 46%. While this is consistent it is still disappointing that less than half of you agree with this.

- In 2010 67% of you were satisfied with the overall quality of service provided by Wigan Council. In 2009 this figure was the same (67%)
- In the survey this year 12% of you think the way Wigan Council runs things has got better, although 15% of you feel this has got worse with 73% feeling this has stayed the same. Of those who feel it has got worse the top three reasons given for this included: Refuse collection, State of the roads and street cleaning.

## Customer Services

Wigan Council is trying to “put the customer at the heart of everything we do” to help us do this we want to find out what is important to Wigan Borough residents.

These questions were asked on a survey last year and the feedback panel members provided has helped to develop our Customer Access Strategy as well as many other pieces of work.

Our aim is to compare the results from 2010 to those from the 2009 survey and get an idea of how things have changed/ developed and where we may need to focus these services in the future

Some interesting information we have gathered over the 2 surveys includes:

- In 2009 60% of you contacted the Council within the last year of the survey, this figure was 54% in 2010
- 83% of you said that the knowledge of Wigan Council staff was either good or excellent. This is very encouraging although
- A quarter of you (25%) stated that in your experience the first person you speak to being able to deal with your enquiry was either poor or very poor.

We will use this information as well as what you told us about the importance of the Council being accessible through a small number of common telephone numbers where over three quarters (78%) said that this was important.

Wigan Council will use this

information to feed into the work we are currently doing to develop the way the public contacts us.

The Council is working within departments and also with our partners such as Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust (WLCT) and the NHS etc to ensure this information is listened to and that we move on to work better together.

One of the main ways we are working to improve customer Services in this way is through the Life Centres. For more information about these go to:

[www.wiganlife.com](http://www.wiganlife.com)

## Communication

Wigan Council wants to ensure that it communicates effectively about a wide range of issues.

The ways we currently do this are through Borough Life (residents magazine), our website, the local media, leaflets and booklets, information in public places such as libraries and housing offices, plus our staff and Councillors who aim to provide accurate and useful information on request.

Each year we ask you as panel members about the information you receive about the council and how useful the information provided is. We do this so that we can understand which sources of information you find

are accurate and whether or not they help you to understand what we do. 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.

77% of you stated that you agreed that the information Wigan Council provides is



helpful, although almost half of you (48%) said you thought it was difficult to understand.

The Council is currently running the “My Council” campaign (see poster to the left) to highlight council action in the areas that really matter to residents such as:

- Refuse collection,
- Economy & employment,
- Education etc.

In this survey 10% of you had seen the poster shown here, we will be asking these questions again in future citizens’ Panel to find out whether the ongoing work on this campaign is making a difference.

## The Greenheart Project

Greenheart is a partnership programme which is aiming to make the countryside more accessible to people living in Wigan Borough.

The links between sites such as canals are also key parts of Greenheart as they help to link the countryside sites together.

The four key objects to the Greenheart project are:

- To provide recreational and leisure facilities to be enjoyed by local residents and visitors across the Borough and beyond.
- To support ecological habitats of regional and national importance, including wetlands, waterways and woodlands.
- To provide economic benefits to the local community. And
- To support the development

of sustainable communities.

You may remember that we asked questions relating the Greenheart project on a Citizens’ Panel survey in 2008.

We intend to use the results from both the 2008 and 2010 surveys to make comparisons and see how progress has been made with the delivery of the Greenheart Regional Park.

Over half of you (57%) told us that you visit the countryside within the Borough once a month or more.

The top 3 places you told us you visit are:

- Haigh Hall
- Canals and
- Pennington Flash

The top 3 reasons you told us you visited these countryside

areas were to:

- Walk/dog walk
- General recreation
- Play areas

With the top 3 reasons that you don’t currently use these areas being:

- Lack of time
- Bad health/mobility problems
- Not knowing where they are

The information you provided will be passed back to the Greenheart Project Team leaders so that they can take this into account when planning where they focus their work/improvements in the future.

For more information about this project you can visit their website at:

[www.visitgreenheart.com](http://www.visitgreenheart.com)

## 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 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: 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 first survey of 2010. The next survey will be done in the summer. 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: Where can I find out about and get more information on the Citizens' Panel and other ways of getting involved with Wigan Council?**

**A:** You can either get in touch with me using the contact details below and I will be happy to talk you through some ways of getting involved and send information out to you or you can visit the Wigan Council Website at:

[www.wigan.gov.uk](http://www.wigan.gov.uk)

and then clicking on the orange "Have your say" button at the top of the web page. This links you to all the information we have on how we involve Wigan Borough residents in the work we do at Wigan Council.

**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 the Autumn and look forward to hearing from you again then.**

**Many thanks  
Liz Roberts**

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