

Welcome to 2007.....and our new panel members

Hello and a very warm welcome to 2007. This is the first edition of the Citizens' Panel News for the year and I am pleased to tell you that we have been joined by more than 250 new recruits!



A huge welcome to you and I hope you find

being a member of Wigan Borough's largest single consultation group worthwhile.

To ensure our Citizens' Panel remains fresh it does mean that we've had to say thank you and farewell to 250 of our longer standing panel members.

Meanwhile, another huge thank you to all 850 of you who returned their questionnaires for the last survey, especially with it being so close to the Christmas holidays.

It was great to see that so many of you stayed committed to the panel and found the time to give your opinions at such a hectic time of the year.

In this issue of the Citizens' Panel News I will update you with the overall opinions you gave in our last survey that covered:

- Community Payback
- Burglary and crime
- Budget setting
- Communication
- Community Protection Services.

April 2007
Inside this issue:

Welcome	1
Protecting your community	1
Special points of interest	1
Budgets	2
Crime - be aware!	2
Payback time!	3
Communication is the key	3
FAQs	4
Thank you	4

Special points of interest:

Protecting your community

In the last survey in November you were asked a range of questions that related to Wigan Council's Community Protection department.

The Community Protection department wanted to better understand residents views on the way that the borough's businesses operate, the goods and foods they sell and the area where residents live.

You were asked some specific questions in this

survey around the home and the responses you gave were as follows;

- 94% of you stated that you live in a decent home.
- When asked if you felt you lived in a home of your choice 85% of you agreed.
- 87% of you agreed that you live in a home you can afford.
- 83% of you have had an uninvited sales person call in the last 12 months and of this group,
- 41% have had it happen three times or more.

These figures will be looked into by the Community Protection department and I will report back to you on the progress of this work later in the year.



You were also asked a section of questions

- ♦ **78%** of you agreed that the borough needs better skilled and better paid jobs
- ♦ **52%** of you would make the area safe as a top priority if you were leader of the Council for a day
- ♦ **78%** of you agreed that community payback schemes have the potential to make the local area cleaner and safer



Budgets

In the November survey we asked you what you would do if you were council leader for the day. You were also asked a number of questions relating to which areas you feel the Council should be spending money and in which areas budgets should be reduced.

The top three key areas where panel members said they would like more money to be spent, even if this increased Council Tax, were:

- making the local area feel safer (70%)
- better roads and transport and cleaner streets (60%).

- supporting older people and those with a disability (56%).

The area where panel members felt most strongly that funding cuts could be made was in welcoming people of different backgrounds.

When asked what would be your priorities if you were Leader of the Council for a day over half of you (52%) agreed that making the area safe would be your top priority.

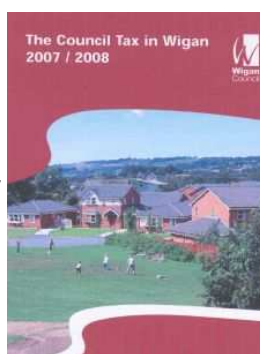
Second and third priorities

were creating a strong and modern economy (44%) and creating a good start in life (47%).

The Council has used the results to consider budget setting and the Council Tax levels for 2007/08.

If you would like to find out more about council budgets or Council Tax you can read more in the Council's Statement of Accounts or you can contact Steve Clegg, Assistant Director, on 01942 827206.

For general Council Tax enquiries please contact the helpline on 01942 828696 or email them at revenues@wigan.gov.uk.



Crime—be aware!



In the last survey the Community Safety Partnership asked you a series of questions about your awareness of the burglary campaigns on local radio and buses.

The purpose of these campaigns is to reassure the public that burglars are being caught. The members of the partnership also want to raise awareness of the work they are doing to catch burglars and to deter the burglars themselves.

The questions they asked will be used to understand whether publicity campaigns are a good way of getting important messages out to the public and to make the public feel more

confident in the agencies responsible for tackling burglary.

68% of you said that you are worried in some way about having your home broken into and something stolen.

Just one quarter (26%) of you believe burglaries have decreased in the last two years.

We ran burglary adverts on Wish FM radio between August and October last year. 10% of you heard the burglary advert.

The bus campaigns were more successful. 28% of you said that you saw the burglary advertising campaign on the sides and rears of buses

around Wigan, between October 16th and November 12th last year.

You were asked to consider all types of crime and to rate whether you feel that Wigan borough has more or less crime than Greater Manchester as a whole. Very few panel members believe that Wigan has more crime, just 6%. Two fifths (42%) believe that crime rates are the same and a third (34%) feel that crime rates are lower.

The answers you gave revealed a number of areas for concern and the Community Safety team will be using these figures, along with other work they have done across the borough, to ensure that priorities for residents are dealt with first.



Payback time!

Community Payback is here. In the November Citizens' Panel survey the Community Safety Partnership gave you the chance to have your say about the type of unpaid work offenders carry out in your community as part of their sentence.



Community Payback

the type of unpaid work offenders carry out in your community as part of their sentence.

Unpaid Work, or Community Service as it was once known, has been in place for over 30 years and is one of the probation service's most

successful interventions. Offenders are sentenced by the courts to carry out up to 300 hours of Unpaid Work for the benefit of the community.

The three types of unpaid work that panel members most want to see offenders doing in their local area were :

- Litter removal (71%)
- Environmental work such as cutting trees and removing weeds (59%)
- Graffiti removal (53%)



Most of you felt that you would

benefit in some way from Community Payback. 78% of you agreed that seeing offenders doing unpaid work in your local area would help make it a cleaner and safer place to live. 59% agree that it would increase your confidence that the Criminal Justice System brings offenders to justice.



The Community Safety Partnership will use these results to ensure that offenders are doing work, which local residents want to see them doing in their neighbourhoods.

Communication is key

Since 2003 we have been asking similar questions in the Citizens' Panel about the different ways Wigan Council communicates with residents.

The first time these questions were asked was in the October survey in 2003. These questions were asked initially to set a baseline for results so that we could go back year on year and make comparisons, to see where we were improving or where we needed to continue to improve.

We asked you about *Borough Life* in the November 2005 survey. At that time 71% of you



said you had received a copy of the latest *Borough Life* magazine and of those that had received it, 74% of you said your opinion of the magazine was either good or very good.

We have just asked these questions again in the last survey and the results you gave were as follows;

- 77% of you said that you received a copy of the last *Borough Life* in September

Of those of you who had received the magazine, 74% said you thought it was either good or very good.

- 79% of you said the magazine gave you a greater understanding of the work of Wigan Council

- 82% of you said that you felt better informed about services which are available locally because of the magazine

This is good news for us as it shows that our award-winning magazine is well thought of by residents too, and is making a difference.

The Public Relations team however are concerned that 15% of you said you hadn't received the September copy and 2% said they had never received a copy at all. They are taking a closer look at the results to see if it is particular areas of the borough that don't get copies and will be taking steps to make sure every household gets their copy.

Your questions answered...



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 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. 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.

Dear all,

Thank you to you all for taking the time to fill in the questionnaires throughout 2006 and for reading this newsletter. I hope you have found it both interesting and informative. I look forward to continuing to keep you up to date with all the Citizens' Panel results into 2007.

I always appreciate hearing your opinions both of the questionnaires and the newsletters in general. So if you have any feedback, questions or comments you would like to make please get in touch with me using the details below.

Many thanks

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**Next survey
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