



Aberdeen City **Voice**

Aberdeen's Citizens' Panel Newsletter
Number 6, March 2006

Welcome to the sixth citizens' panel newsletter. This newsletter gives feedback to you, the Aberdeen citizens' panel members, on the results of the sixth questionnaire, which included the themes of Health, Safety, Transport & Connections, Culture, Council Tax, Customer Service, Performance Management and Neighbourhoods.

In this and future newsletters, we will let you know the main results of the questionnaires that you have completed and how we plan to use this information. Your responses are important in informing, and contributing to future plans by all partners of the City Voice.

Aberdeen Citizens' Panel is an initiative by Aberdeen City Council, Grampian Police, Grampian Fire and Rescue Service, Scottish Enterprise Grampian, NHS Grampian, Communities Scotland and Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations. The partnership wants your opinions on services and issues relating to service provision and Community Planning. By knowing what residents think on different issues, we can aim to provide services that meet your needs.

Questionnaire data is analysed by our research consultants. As always, all information provided will, of course, be kept strictly confidential.

The 7th survey, focusing on the Community Planning themes of Health & Social Care, Safety, Homes, Getting Involved and Being Informed, is included with this newsletter. Thanks to all of you who have continued to complete the questionnaires and returned them promptly over the last couple of years.

Please get in touch if you wish to make any comments on the citizens' panel so far, or on future feedback newsletters. You will find my contact details at the end of the newsletter.

SONIA BOYD
CITY VOICE ADMINISTRATOR

5th Questionnaire : Feedback

Firstly, a big thanks to all that responded to our last newsletter and report. As a result, we have decided to issue only a summary of the 6th questionnaire results in the form of a newsletter. Details of how to view the full report are available at the end.

Secondly, we have shortened the 7th questionnaire (included), and hope you find this more convenient. Any comments you have on the changes would be welcome, and can be returned, along with the completed questionnaire, in the pre-paid envelope provided.

Thirdly, we have drafted a timetable for the coming year to help you, as panellists, be better informed about when to expect the 7th, 8th and 9th City Voice questionnaires and newsletters.

Dates are as follows:

- **7th Questionnaire,**
Early March.
Report/Newsletter,
Mid June.
- **8th Questionnaire,**
Early June.
Report/Newsletter,
Mid September.
- **9th Questionnaire,**
Late September.
Report/Newsletter,
Mid January.

From now on, we are intending to mail the current questionnaire along with the newsletter summarising the results of the previous questionnaire, in order to avoid wasting paper and postage and packaging costs.

6th Questionnaire : Panel Response

The 6th questionnaire was the first questionnaire to include our newly recruited panellists. It was issued in early June 2005, and analysed last autumn. We apologise for the length of time it's taken us to inform you of the results.

634 of you completed and returned the questionnaire promptly, giving a response rate this time of around 63%. We are ultimately striving for as near as possible to 100% response rate to get the most accurate picture possible of the views of Aberdeen City residents. By completing the surveys you are helping to shape future plans of the City Voice Partners.

At the time of distributing this questionnaire in June, there were 1,006 members on the panel.



CULTURE (ARTS & HERITAGE)

WhiteSpace is the city centre venue for the Arts Development team, which has the lead role for the delivery of participatory arts activities for Aberdeen City Council. The questions asked by the Arts Development team in the 6th questionnaire were designed to determine what changes need to be made to the service to encourage more participation and improve the quality.

- Approximately 4% of you currently use WhiteSpace, with a slightly higher percentage of females than males.
- The biggest incentive to use WhiteSpace you said, would be to have more and varied outreach workshops in your area (163 responses), and/or an Arts concession card that would enable cheaper rates for city residents (161 responses).
- 61% of you believe that the WhiteSpace programme should be marketed more widely and also be available out with the city.

Culture in Aberdeen – this is what we're doing

The Cultural Service Development team, along with colleagues in Museums and Galleries, are currently working on a Service Review and forward planning for the next five years. Along with existing participant questionnaires, your responses from the 6th citizens' panel will be used to assist with the planning of the Cultural Services work in the City, in its action plan for 2006-2010.

HEALTH

Health is one of the fourteen key themes of the Aberdeen City Community Plan **aberdeenfutures**.

During the next 15 years the population of Aberdeen is predicted to change quite significantly. For example, the 2002-based population projections produced by the General Register Office for Scotland indicated that the population of the city could fall by 12%, with the number of young people in the population falling by 25%-30%. Correspondingly, there would be significant growth in the elderly population, with a predicted 50% increase in the number of people over 85 years of age.

The health service in Grampian is trying to plan services for the future in light of a whole variety of factors including population changes and their likely impact. They presented a range of questions to you, as panellists, to help them better understand your thoughts in relation to services now and in the future. Your opinions will influence their thinking when considering how best to ensure good health services for all in Aberdeen over the coming years.

Some of the key results are as follows:

- Over 99% of you are registered with a doctor/GP in Aberdeen, with 70% living within 2 miles of your practice.
- 57% of you travel to the doctor by car, the most popular method across all age groups; with 86% of you saying that it is very easy or easy to get to your practice.
- 68% of you consider ease of access to your practice very or fairly important.
- 70% of you have been registered at your practice for over 10 years.
- 71% of you consider it very or fairly important that you can consult with a doctor/practice that knows you and your family.

Overall, the following table shows many of you are willing to see someone other than a doctor for some conditions, with 90.7% happy to see someone other than a doctor for minor injury treatment.

Condition	% willing to see someone other than a doctor
Back and knee pain	68.1%
Consultation for problem/symptom	67.6%
Immunisation (child and adult)	73.7%
Minor illness (fever, cold and viral illness)	80.4%
Minor injury treatment	90.7%
Travel advise and inoculation	83.4%

However, 31% of you indicate you would not be happy seeing anyone other than a doctor for consultation for problems/symptoms, and 20% for the management of a chronic disease.

Some of the comments you gave relating to the above include:

- The doctor is best qualified;
- Nurses are inexperienced/under qualified;
- The Health Service is being 'dumbed' down; and
- Doctors might see something that others may miss.

The table below highlights the factors that you consider are most important in relation to your doctor/GP.

These include:

	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice
Family Doctor	120	89	86
Quality of Service	323	187	50
Range of Services	5	60	124
Convenient Location	6	37	57
Appointment Times	4	65	124
Waiting time for an appointment	158	179	173

Health in Aberdeen – this is what we're doing

One of the most interesting findings from the survey was the number of people who stated they would be happy to see a qualified health professional other than a doctor for a wide variety of services. This model of care is already in place for a variety of services, and the range of services

provided by the wider healthcare team will continue to grow and develop over the coming years. The survey findings demonstrate a need for NHS Grampian to work with the people of Aberdeen to ensure that the diverse and changing healthcare workforce are able to meet the health care needs of the changing population while maintaining quality, confidence and trust.

SAFETY

Safety is another key theme of **aberdeen futures**. In the 6th questionnaire, Grampian Police focussed their questions regarding Safety on Touch Screen Terminals, the Prostitute Management Zone and the Beach Boulevard.

Touch Screen Terminals

A new way for Grampian Police to enhance their service to you could be by introducing touch screen terminals at Police Offices so that members of the public can report crime (or crimes committed) or seek advice when the Police Station is unmanned.

- 58% of you say you would be confident using this facility, with most feeling confident using it for reporting minor offences (78 responses), reporting crimes or complaints (69 responses) or seeking advice (37 responses).
- 21% said you would not be confident using this facility, with 32 responses noting that face to face contact with Police is preferential while 15 comments were concerned that no further action would be taken.

Prostitute Management Zone

Grampian Police operates a Prostitute Management Zone, which is situated in the North East corner of the harbour area of Aberdeen.

- Just over 41% of you said you were not aware of the Prostitute Management Zone in Aberdeen.
- Almost half of you (49%) believe that the policing of street prostitution should be given a medium priority **within** the Zone when compared with the daily demands placed on Police officers in Aberdeen, while 44% think that it should be given a medium priority by Grampian Police, **out with** the Zone.
- Approximately 94% of you were not aware of the report published by the National Expert Group on Street Prostitution.

Beach Boulevard

The Beach Boulevard in Aberdeen has, over the decades, been seen as a traditional meeting place for motorists. This has raised a certain amount of issues in terms of people who live, work and pass through the area, reporting careless and reckless driving etc. Grampian Police have carried out a number of operations over a period of time, including reporting many offences and educating motorists.

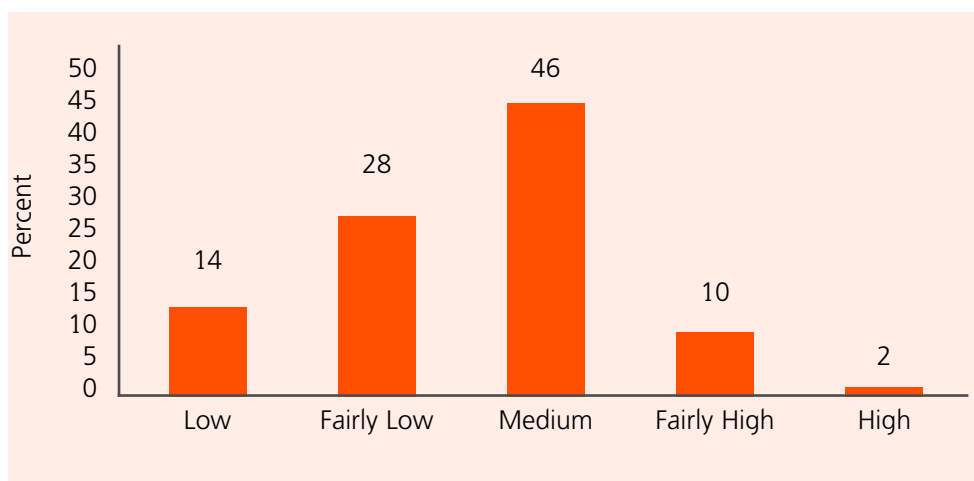
- 63% of you perceive that there is a problem in relation to antisocial driver behaviour in the Beach Boulevard area, particularly dangerous driving (80 comments) and antisocial behaviour e.g. loud music, gangs, intimidating atmosphere etc. (73 comments).
- Nearly 90% of you are aware of ongoing police activity regarding antisocial behaviour in the Beach Boulevard area.
- The graph below shows that 42% of you felt that the issue should be given a low priority or fairly low priority when compared with the daily demands placed on Police officers in Aberdeen, while 46% of you thought it should be given a medium priority.

Safety in Aberdeen – this is what we're doing

Grampian Police find it pleasing to see that over half of you are confident in using any potential touch screen facility. Although the Police would rather deal with you face to face, in this age of high demand we already have a Service Centre dealing with the public over the phone. While there are no plans to introduce a touch screen facility in the near future, it remains one of the communication options for consideration by the Police.

We find it interesting that although over half of you are unaware of the Prostitute Management Zone, there are more comments supporting the zone than given against it. Police will be monitoring the situation in terms of the proposed legislation, which means that both buyers and sellers of sexual services will be subject to Scots law, as well as any other issues which may arise to warrant changes to the current situation.

In line with your views, we agree that it would not be a sustainable solution to have heightened police activity in the Beach Boulevard area for the long term, given current resources. There are, however, ongoing discussions with other agencies, local residents and businesses regarding possible solutions such as closing the Beach Boulevard at certain times of the night and providing venues for the drivers to use as an alternative to the Boulevard.



TRANSPORT AND CONNECTIONS

Aberdeen's Transport Strategy aims to ease problems for all forms of travel, whether by car, public transport, delivery vehicle, bicycle or foot. At the same time, it aims to improve the attractiveness of the most sustainable forms of transport so that travellers will increasingly choose these.

- 61% of you feel that equal preference should be given to car users and non-car users.

Other common comments included:

- Make public transport cheaper/more reliable;
 - More cycle lanes; and
 - Allow cars and motorbikes in bus lanes.
- Agreement among you on the building of new roads was higher among households with at least one car, with 69% thinking new roads were a good idea.

The table above shows the statement that received the strongest level of agreement was "New roads help the local economy" with 350 (57.8%) of you responding that you agree with this statement. The statement with the lowest level of agreement was "New roads reduce the number of bus, cycle and pedestrian journeys" (53.8%).



	Agree	Don't Know/ No Opinion	Disagree
New roads should only be built if some parts of the existing road network are given over to buses, cyclists and pedestrians only.	40.1%	17.5%	42.4%
New roads encourage people to drive more.	39.2%	15.3%	45.5%
New roads reduce the number of bus, cycle and pedestrian journeys.	17.6%	28.6%	53.8%
New roads help the local economy.	57.8%	28.2%	14.0%
New roads help improve local air quality.	29.7%	26.9%	43.4%
New roads will contribute to global warming.	26.6%	29.8%	43.6%

- If roads are widened, over three quarters of you (75%) think that buses, bicycles and car sharers should use the widened roads.
- Nearly 50% of you believe that more 'long stay' commuter parking is needed in the city centre, however, approximately 42% of you also believe that more short and long stay car parking will increase city centre traffic, pollution and congestion.
- When asked about the best aspects of public transport, the highest number of positive comments related to the quality of public transport, including the overall bus network (113 comments), reliable/frequent buses (58 comments) and bus/taxi lanes (32 comments)

Comments on the worst aspects of transport in Aberdeen included:

- Congestion/too many cars;
 - Bus fares too high;
 - Bus service not reliable enough; and
 - Too few bus routes especially outside city centre.
- 85% of you have the use of at least one car, which is the most frequently used form of transport, followed by buses. Park and Ride facilities are used least frequently.

Transport and Connections in Aberdeen – this is what we're doing

The City Development Services of Aberdeen City Council, are currently conducting a review of the Council's Local Transport Strategy. The findings from this questionnaire, alongside similar responses from the general public, will be used to help shape the development of a draft Transport Strategy. A cross-party Members/Officers Working Group has already been established to bring forward the review and it is intended to present the findings of this questionnaire to the Group. In particular, these results challenge some significant misconceptions regarding transport policy in the City – in fact, a majority support balance or pro-public transport strategies rather than pro-car, and although most would like to see new or widened roads, they believe that these should afford priority to buses. Such findings will be the cornerstone for building a new Local Transport Strategy review upon aligning to national guidance and political aspirations for the City.

COUNCIL TAX

- 94% of you find your Council Tax bill very easy or fairly easy to understand, and 60% feel the information leaflets enclosed with the council tax bill are useful.
- If new payment methods were offered, 7% of you indicated you would start paying by debit card and 5% by credit card, while 87% of you would choose to keep your existing payment method.
- 75% of you find the existing opening hours for the Council Tax office convenient, while 33 responses suggested later opening hours every day, and 27, opening on a Saturday morning.
- Overall, 63% of you indicated you are very satisfied or satisfied with the way Council Tax is collected.

Council Tax in Aberdeen – this is what we're doing

The fact that 95% of you find the Council Tax bill very easy or fairly easy to understand supports the Services' decision to have the Plain English Crystal Clear Mark for its annual Council Tax bill. The Council Tax Service offers a variety of payment options including the availability to pay since 1 April 2006 at the Post Office. The Service is now enabling payment via debit and credit card and will shortly be enabling payment via the Internet and via 24 hour telephone.

Overall the survey sees the Service in a good light and the Service will seek to evaluate the practical issues of introducing extended opening hours.

CUSTOMER

CONTACT CENTRE

Aberdeen City Council is committed to improving the quality of services that our customers receive. As a result, we have developed a programme of work called 'Customer First' to help us deliver these improved services.

One of the key parts of Customer First is the development of our telephone services. Our aim is to develop a 'contact centre' where customers can get in touch using the telephone, email or writing, to discuss their situation. We already have customer comment cards available, but are looking for ways to encourage customers to use them – both to compliment and to complain about our services and employees.

As can be seen in the table below, some of the most popular services you wish to contact the Council about over the telephone are waste (517 responses), environmental issues (461 responses) and noise disturbances (368 responses).

- 82% of you indicate that extended opening hours of the Contact Centre, to include evenings, would be more convenient for you, while 18% of you indicate mornings before 9am would be more suitable.
- 94% of you would respond to a comment card following a matter with the council, with 54% of you more likely to respond if you had a positive, rather than a negative, experience.

Customer Service in Aberdeen – this is what we're doing

The responses to the question regarding which services would be most contactable through the telephone is helpful in terms of assisting the authority in prioritising services to be transferred into the contact Centre. We are pleased to confirm that the council has identified Environmental Services (including waste) to be transferred into the Contact Centre in the first phase of modernisation.

As part of our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Project, aimed at improving service delivery, the Council has already expressed a commitment to review opening hours of our services in line with customer needs/preferences. Your views expressed in this survey will be taken into consideration and acted upon as part of this review.

We recognise the importance of understanding how our customers' expectations match their experience of Council services. The overwhelming indication that reply paid comment forms will be used needs to be considered by service managers when designing feedback mechanisms. The fact that 54% would be more likely to respond if they had a positive experience is an exceptionally encouraging response.

Service	Number of responses
Council Tax or Housing Benefit	313
Environment (including reporting problems with roads)	461
Housing Repairs	151
Leisure and Libraries	288
Noise disturbances	368
Other Housing (e.g. allocations, homeless etc.)	97
Planning matters	270
Recycling	342
Schools	181
Social Work	156
Trading Standards/consumer advise	349
Waste (e.g. bin collection, heavy uplifts)	517

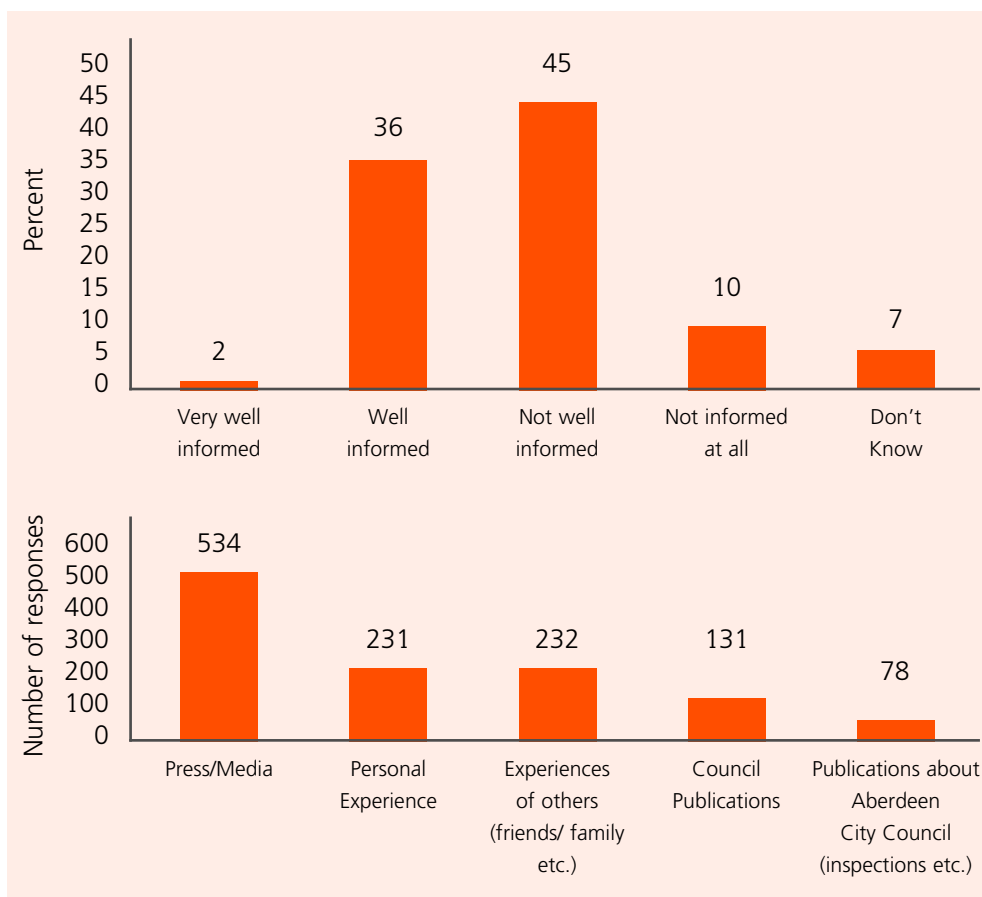
PERFORMANCE REPORTING

Aberdeen City Council provides a wide range of services to the people who live and work in the City.

We try to provide information on how well we perform in the delivery of these services and we are keen that this information reaches as many people as possible.

As can be seen in the 1st graph adjacent, 55% of you do not feel well informed or not informed at all about the performance of Aberdeen City Council.

- The only service that the majority of you feel most informed about is Cleanliness and Waste Management (51% of you said you are well informed).
- The services that most of you indicated you are not well informed about are Roads and Transport (62% of you said you are not well informed).
- The information that most of you would like to be provided with is in regard to Roads and Transport (394 responses), Cleanliness and Waste Management (386 responses), Council Finances (287 responses) and Planning (285 responses).
- 46% of you would like to receive information on Council Performance in a single report, while 23% of you would like individual detailed reports.



The 2nd table above shows the most common ways for you to find out about the council's performance in delivering services. The most common way you find out about the council's performance in delivery services is through the press/media, with 534 responses received. 232 comment that the experience of others is the way that you find out about the council's performance in delivering services were received, while 231 indicate they find out through personal experience.

Additional Comments

Please let us know if your personal details have changed:

Name: _____

Previous Address: _____

New Address: _____

I no longer wish to be a panellist

I would like to take part in the discussion group on Gypsy/Travellers

Please return the above information in the prepaid envelope provided, or email SoBoyd@aberdeencity.gov.uk.

Thanks for your assistance.



Reporting Performance in Aberdeen – this is what we're doing

The Office of Chief Executive, Aberdeen City Council will continue developing Public Performance Reporting by considering serialising information throughout the year to focus on those areas people are most interested in. Correspondingly, Lead Officers/Members should liaise on a planned basis with the local press on performance issues, while Service level reporting to target audiences (e.g. Schools to parents, Housing to tenants) should continue, though be continually reviewed.

NEIGHBOURHOODS

The members of The Aberdeen City Alliance (TACA), the Community Planning Partnership of Aberdeen City, have designated 37 Neighbourhoods across Aberdeen, based on what were deemed to be 'natural local communities'.

Currently, work is progressing to collate data on each of these Neighbourhoods (e.g. existing resources, facts on health inequalities etc.). At the same time, existing consultation exercises on needs and priorities for each Neighbourhood are occurring. The intention is to have Neighbourhood Community Action Plans relating to each of the 37 Neighbourhoods by March 2006, with short, medium and long term actions relating to local need.

Please feel free to make any additional comments on the Questionnaire or Newsletter:



- 61% of you are not aware that Aberdeen City has been designated into Neighbourhoods, and 62% of you are not aware of the name of your Neighbourhood.
- The majority of you (88%) agree with the benefits of having Neighbourhood Community Action Plans, with 10 comments highlighting that these plans must be implemented and not just discussed.
- A newsletter to each home is the method that most of you think would be most effective for communicating the work relating to Neighbourhoods that the Council and Partners are doing, as well as the opportunities there are to get involved (485 respondents).

Neighbourhood Awareness in Aberdeen – this is what we're doing

The results from the panel are extremely encouraging to Aberdeen City Council. That close to 40% of you are aware of designated Neighbourhoods and are aware of your own Neighbourhood is a higher figure than anticipated at this stage (20-25% recognition was anticipated through the promotion of information to Community Councils and Forums). It will be useful to check in future panels if this percentage increases as we start to communicate more individually to households.



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Opportunities for further participation

As you are aware, Aberdeen City Council has a particular problem with Gypsy/Travellers' unauthorised encampments, in particular the associated public health issues and antisocial behaviour.

Taking into consideration the human rights of Gypsy/Travellers, it would be interesting for the Council to obtain the views of the settled community regarding this problem, for example, how the public perceive what the associated problems are with unauthorised encampments, and what the Local Authority can, and should, do to have these problems resolved.

If you are interested in participating in a discussion group on this topic, please contact Andrew Lamb, Senior Environmental Health Officer, on (01224) 522063 or alamb@aberdeencity.gov.uk. Alternately, tick the box on page 7 and return it in the pre-paid envelope provided.

Contact/Feedback from Previous Questionnaires

This newsletter and the full results of the 6th questionnaire are available to view on the Aberdeen City Council website (www.aberdeencity.gov.uk), in the section titled Aberdeen City Voice. Internet access is provided at libraries throughout Aberdeen City and hard copies will be available shortly at The Point, and all city libraries. Alternately, hard copies can be posted out by contacting me on the details below.

If you have any further queries or would like to feedback your comments, please contact:

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