



Aberdeen City **voice**

Aberdeen's Citizens' Panel Newsletter
Number 8, October 2006

Welcome to the eighth citizens' panel newsletter. This newsletter gives feedback to you, the Aberdeen citizens' panel members, on the results of the 8th questionnaire, which included the Community Planning themes of Being Informed and Arts, Heritage & Sport.

This newsletter provides a summary of the results of the questionnaire you completed last June, 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 at The Robert Gordon University. As always, all information provided is, of course, kept strictly confidential.

The 9th survey, focusing mainly on the Community Planning themes of Land Use & Environment, A Clean City and Aberdeen's Image, is included with this newsletter. Many thanks to all of you who have continued to complete the questionnaires and have returned them promptly over the last couple of years.

Please continue to 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

8th Questionnaire – Panel Response

The 8th questionnaire was sent out to you in September. The results have now been analysed and a summary is presented in this newsletter.

553 of you completed and returned the questionnaire promptly, giving a response rate this time of around 60%. 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 March, there were 921 members on the panel.

Being Informed

Local Consultation

Consultation is an important tool used by councils such as Aberdeen City for assessing the views of the local population and engaging the local people in the policy making process. Recent innovations in computer and Internet technologies have meant that electronic consultations such as online forums and questionnaires are now possible. While electronic consultations can never wholly replace traditional forms of consultation such as meetings, it is important to investigate the potential benefits of these new technologies for improving the local consultation process.

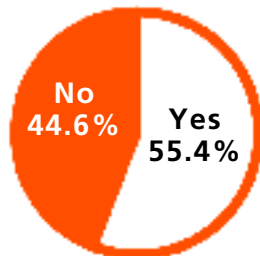
Questions on local consultation were asked to find out your experiences of participation in local consultation (both 'traditional' and online) and whether or not you would be willing to engage in online consultations.

Some of the key results are as follows:

- Approximately 16% of you had participated in another local consultation activity in the last 12 months, other than the City Voice.
- 85% of you would participate in an alternative consultation in the future.

The pie chart below shows that approximately 55% of you would participate in some form of online consultation.

Would you consider taking part in an online consultation?



When asked what form of consultation you would be willing to participate in, your responses were:

- 279 would participate in an online questionnaire;
- 210 would email about a specific issue;
- 143 would participate in an online discussion forum on a particular issue; and
- 60 of you would participate in a web chat with a Councillor/Head of Service.

There were, however, some concerns about online consultation. Approximately 17% of you indicated that you would prefer to talk face to face (40% of over 65s indicated this) while 16% of you were concerned that the system would be expensive to implement.

Local Consultation in Aberdeen – this is what we're doing

This information shows that there is support amongst panellists for using online consultation as part of the overall consultation strategy. However, there are clear concerns about validity, access and inclusion issues that must be borne in mind if online consultations are to be conducted in the future. The results of these questions will feed into a report that will be presented to Aberdeen City Council to help develop an effective consultation strategy that will allow for the maximum number of local people to participate and contribute their views to the policy making process.

Public Performance Reporting

There is a legal duty on all Local Government organisations to report publicly on how they are performing. This is called Public Performance Reporting. Grampian Police are already required to report on statutory performance. The Local Government in Scotland Act, passed in 2003, however, requires Grampian Police Force to go one step further and make local information available to local people. To do this, we need to establish what our local communities want, when they want it, and in what format.

- Over half of you feel that it is very important for Grampian Police to report their performance – a further 40% consider this important.
- 436 of you would like to know more about performance information on local initiatives, 376 about the quality of the service and 286 about ongoing force projects and reviews.
- The most popular performance indicators that you would like information on were: Overall Crime levels (430 respondents), Crimes of Violence (401) and Domestic Housebreaking (393).
- 397 of you would like to receive performance information through the local press, 201 through the free papers and 189 in leaflets through the door.

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

The results detailed above will be used along with those received from Moray and Aberdeenshire citizens' panels. They will inform Grampian Police's Corporate Strategy which will address the requirement of Public Performance Reporting as set out in the Local Government in Scotland Act. The strategy should be in draft form by the end of October.

Consultation on Major Planning Issues

Aberdeen City Council wants to know how well they communicate on important and contentious town and country planning matters. Town and country planning is the means by which local councils manage the development and use of land.

- The majority of you (61.5%) do not believe that the Council provides sufficient information on major planning matters.
- The most popular information medium that you would like the information provided was through community newsletters (365 responses). Newspapers were also popular with 305 responses while Press Coverage was indicated by 284 panellists.
- Over half of you (approximately 57%) did not believe that the Council are consulting people in a manner that is likely to effectively reach all sectors of the community.

The bar chart below shows that the majority of you (approximately 61%) believe that you are 'sometimes' given the chance to have your say on major planning matters, while approximately 27% feel you 'rarely' get the chance to have your say:

Do you think the Council is giving you the chance to have your say on Major Planning matters?



You were asked if you could think of any better ways to be consulted on planning matters. Some of the most common suggestions included:

- More public meetings in affected areas (16 comments)
- Mail shots (15)
- Ask the public and listen to their views (12)
- Questionnaires (10)
- More openness and transparency needed (9)

Consultation on Major Planning Issues in Aberdeen – this is what we're doing

The response to the consultation confirms that, whilst the Council is not bad at providing information and consulting people there is, as suspected, a need to be more effective in the way we do this. The suggestions made are particularly helpful in pointing us in the right direction. We shall investigate the extent to which community newsletters are already in existence and the scope for these to communicate news on major planning matters. We shall also look into making major planning issues more attractive to the Press to increase the profile of planning issues in the media as well as investigate with various venues (e.g. GP practices, shopping centres, Universities, supermarkets, nursing homes etc.) the opportunity for supplying through them planning information and consultation material. We shall also explore the opportunity for more active discussion of planning matters, for example, by the establishment of a planning weblog. Further matters to be followed up would include specific attention to the use of Plain English; the scope for producing audio material and use of text messaging; and the use of public transport sites and on-road advertising to reach commuters and visitors to the City. There are clearly resource implications for this and the focus will be on providing best value for the resources that are, or can be made, available. However, it may be that much can be achieved by simply doing things differently.

Arts Heritage & Sport

Culture

The City Council is currently exploring the idea of a new Cultural Centre in Aberdeen. Located in the city centre, the Cultural Centre will have the potential to offer an exciting new range of programmes and activities, building on what we currently have on offer here in Aberdeen, as well as providing a home for new cultural activities.

- His Majesty's Theatre and Aberdeen Art Gallery were the cultural venues you visited most often.
- Peacock Visual Art Centre and WhiteSpace were the venues you visited least often.

You were asked if we lack any cultural facilities or activities here in Aberdeen, that you have enjoyed elsewhere and felt it would be good if we could develop such a venue/programme here. Some suggestions included:

- Open air concerts/theatre/ballet/opera (10 comments)
- Repertory theatre – Tivoli (9)
- Festivals – e.g. Skye Music Festival, Edinburgh Festival, Celtic Festival (6)
- Street entertainers (4)
- Big national orchestras (3)

The new venue needs to look to the future. You were asked “**Given the advances being made in technology, what kinds of activity do you imagine you and your family would want to come together with others to enjoy?**”? Responses included:

- Live concerts will always be popular (44 comments)
- Nothing can replace the enjoyment of live concerts and plays (37)
- People will still want to attend in person but venues may offer online attendance too (3)
- Will be more advances in home technology but we will still go to live concerts (3)
- May become more populate as an alternative to computer-based leisure (3)
- More mobile pay per view webcasts or on local TV (3)
- Technology will enhance live performances – more interactive, better lighting etc. (3)



Culture in Aberdeen – this is what we're doing

The results of the questionnaire will be fed into the discussion that is currently ongoing on the Cultural Centre. This discussion is being led by an Elected Member task group which will eventually report its recommendations to the Policy and Strategy Committee of Aberdeen City Council.

Archaeology in Aberdeen

Aberdeen City Council Archaeology Unit is part of Museums and Galleries. It undertakes a wide range of work including excavations, historical research, care of the City's archaeological collections, the mounting of exhibitions, provision of publications, education projects, commemorative plaques, guided walks and tours, and re-enactments.

- The majority of you (over 90%) are interested in Aberdeen's history and archaeology.
- Over 95% believe that a short, relatively inexpensive guide could be produced for Aberdeen.
- 409 of you would like to see themed walking trails on Architecture around Aberdeen, 373 on Churches and Graveyards and 335 on Streets.
- 70% of you have heard about the excavations inside St Nicholas Kirk – awareness was higher among those that were older.
- Approximately 13% of you have visited the St Nicholas Kirk excavation while 10% of you looked for information about the excavation on the Council website.

Archaeology in Aberdeen – this is what we're doing

The Archaeology Unit is very pleased to see these results. They confirm and strengthen the information that we already have (from previous surveys and evaluations/oversubscription of individual projects) that there is an intense interest in local history and archaeology in Aberdeen as well as a desire to see more opportunities to interact with the City's past through exhibitions, publications, walks and re-enactments. We also note, in the Culture Section, the spontaneous mention of the need for a Museum of Aberdeen, as well as several occurrences of interest in historical re-enactments, tours of sites and heritage events, despite the fact that those areas were not being directly researched by that part of the questionnaire. We shall take the results of the survey into account when planning future events and hope to make use of the information in support of funding applications.

Aberdeen's Museums

Aberdeen has a number of museums operated by the Council. These are Aberdeen Art Gallery, Aberdeen Maritime Museum, Provost Skene's House and the Tolbooth.

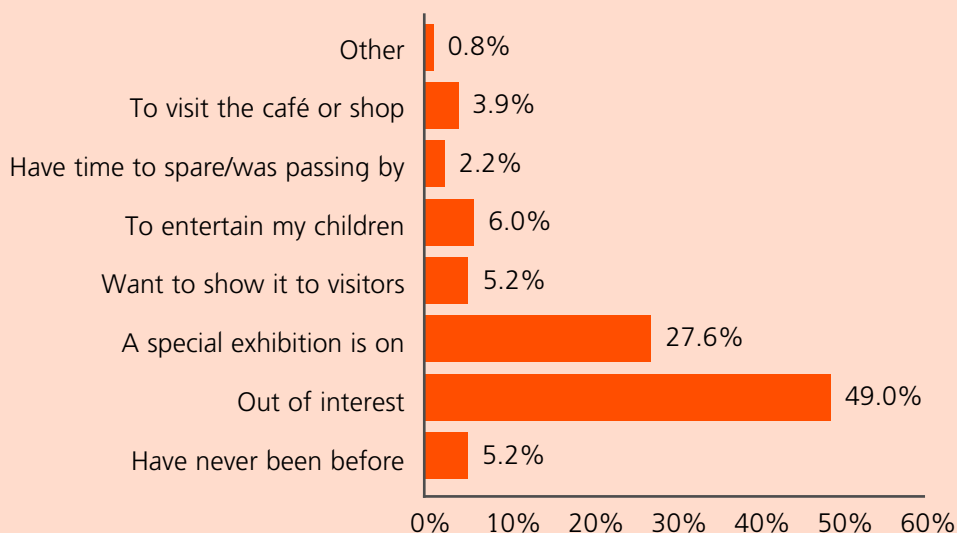
- Approximately 57% of you have visited one of the above museums in the last six months.
- Those of you over 65 were most likely to have visited a museum while only 41% of you in the 24-35 year old age group had visited a museum.

- The most popular museum to visit was Aberdeen Art Gallery (with 225 of you having visited in the last 6 months) followed by the Maritime Museum (151). 87 of you visited Provost Skene's House while 20 visited the Tolbooth.

The bar chart on the right shows that the main reason given for visiting a museum is 'out of interest' followed by a 'special exhibition':

- Approximately 60% of you either agree or strongly agree that museums should close on Monday's but open on Sunday's while 16% of you disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- Over 50% of you believe that Thursday would be the best day for museums to open late.

What is your main reason for visiting a museum?



Museums in Aberdeen – this is what we're doing

The responses confirm what we know about our visitors and their pattern of visiting. It is very positive to see 49% of you visited "out of interest" and that 27.6% were attracted by special exhibitions. Exhibitions form an important part of the work we do in presenting our collection to the public and also in getting them to visit and repeat those visits. We have a growing programme of organised visits for schools and groups and we are surprised that these are not better reflected in the statistics.

Your likes and dislikes do reflect the very positive feedback we receive about the work that we do within Museums and Galleries. The negative areas such as physical access, toilets, opening hours and activities for children are all areas that we are aware of and are being addressed. The development of these forms part of our Service Review and future plans.

The information about the opening hours within Museums and Galleries is extremely useful in planning future visitor access to the service. It is interesting that in extending the hours most of you prefer a Sunday rather than evenings. The positive response to closing on Mondays and staying open longer on Sundays is a little

unexpected but it is good to know that this model – adopted by Museums across the country – has had positive feedback. More surprising is your response that the most popular evening of the week is a Thursday. People may think this is the best night for them as the shops are also open but this was not borne out by late night Thursday opening which ran for many years and ceased due to poor attendances.

Overall the questionnaire confirms the very positive response to the work we do and highlight areas that we and the public are less happy with. The improvement and development of these areas are within our Service Review and future plans and work is on going.

The Tolbooth Museum

The Tolbooth Museum is housed within Aberdeen's historic and atmospheric 17th Century prison. The unique museum explored themes such as the history of crime and punishment and civic history. Currently the Tolbooth opens for a ten-week period over the summer months, with openings for other special events and re-enactments at other times of the year.

- Approximately 36% of you have visited the Tolbooth museum.

- The majority of you (53%) would like the museum to stay open throughout the year.
- Approximately two thirds of you would like the Tolbooth museum to be staffed by costume jailers.
- Over 90% of you would have no issue with the Tolbooth being financially supported by private, public or charitable donations.

Aberdeen's Tolbooth Museum – this is what we're doing

It is extremely encouraging to read that the majority of you would like to see costumed jailers in the Tolbooth rather than traditional Museum Assistants. This will be taken on board and we will endeavour to meet this desire. The response on opening policy, although marginally in favour of the Tolbooth being open all year still reflects the fact that almost 50% of you were satisfied with the current summer opening hours. This is a situation which we will monitor and ensure that we respond to any change in public demand for opening. The substantial majority of you do not seem to have concerns about funding coming from public, private or charitable donations, although a number of very reasonable concerns were articulated by the respondents which will all be analysed carefully.

Activities at Aberdeen Art Gallery

Aberdeen Art Gallery currently hosts a variety of activities for children, families and adults. These include musical recitals, talks and art activities. We would like to extend the range and frequency of activities, allowing more people to access the artworks held at the Art Gallery.

- Just over half of you (52%) were not aware that you could attend workshops/seminars on a variety of themes and subject areas at Aberdeen Art Gallery.

The table at the bottom of the page shows the activities that you would most like to attend:

The most popular are talks and lectures (284 responses) followed by musical performances (273) and demonstrations by artists (233).

- Advertisements in local newspapers (450 responses) and on Posters/ Flyers (260) are the most popular places you would like to find out about what is happening at the Art Gallery.
- Approximately 88% of you would be prepared to pay to attend activities/courses at Aberdeen Art Gallery.

What kind of activities would you be interested in attending at the Art Gallery?

Activity	Number
Talks/Lectures	284
Art activities for Children	183
Art activities for Adults	141
Drama performances	140
Demonstrations by Artists	233
Art activities for families	84
Musical performances	273
Dance performances	134

Activities at Aberdeen Art Gallery – this is what we're doing

These results will be extremely useful in helping us to plan future activities at the Art Gallery. Although it was disappointing that less than half of you knew about events at the Art Gallery, this result was not altogether surprising. The range of suggestions about where to advertise our events implies a desire on the part of respondents to know about and participate in future activities. This information will allow us to focus our advertising in the areas where it will be most effective and widely received. We already offer a very popular series of talks, lectures and musical performances, and it is encouraging to see that this popularity is reflected in the survey results. We will use your other responses to help programme future activities, and also to support the funding applications necessary to continue our work. While we remain committed to providing events and activities free of charge, it is extremely encouraging to see that nearly 90% of you would be prepared to pay to attend certain events.

Additional Questions

The Council Budget

The level of council tax you pay directly affects the level of services that the Council can provide. Council tax needs to increase at the same time as spending on most services is being cut because of inflation (pay and price increases) and the increasing number of people needing services. The level of services that the Council can afford to provide depends, in part, on the level of council tax you pay. Some local residents have said they would be willing to pay more council tax for specific improvements in services.

Overall, the top three services that you think should get the highest priority for Council funding are:

- Care services for elderly and adults
- Refuse collection and waste disposal
- Education and children's services.

More specific services you feel additional funding should be provided for include:

- Youth clubs/holiday activities (5 comments)
- Rehab for drug users (4)
- Footpath repairs (3)
- Street cleansing (3)

The most popular areas that you believe the Council could make savings on are:

- Customer Service (232 responses)
- Sport and Leisure (160)

The graph on the following page shows that the majority of you (approximately 65%) believe that the Council represents good value for money, while 28% of you believe that the Council represents poor value.

- Approximately 45% of you would be willing to pay a 2.5% increase in council tax and keep the same service, while 20% would pay a higher increase for a higher standard of service.
- 11.5% would prefer to pay less council tax for a much lower level of service, while 23.5% of you said you did not know.

The Council Budget – this is what we’re doing

The feedback provided will be used as part of the budget process for 2007/08 which will advise Elected Members and Council officers of the outcomes and feedback. This will be done through reporting to the Council’s Directors and at Budget Briefing Forums.

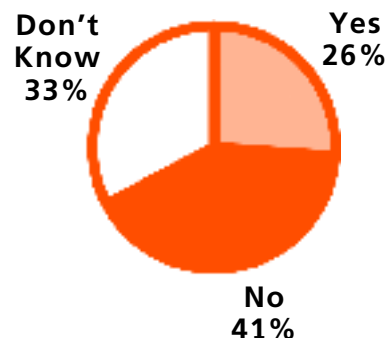
Graffiti

In 2005, Aberdeen City Council established the first full time squad in Scotland to deal with incidents of graffiti.

- 72% of you believe that graffiti is a minor problem in Aberdeen, while 17% of you believe that it is a major problem.
- 33% of you indicated that there is no problem with graffiti in your area and 56% that it was a minor problem.
- 8% of respondents believe that graffiti is a major problem in their area, all of whom live in Tillydrone, Stockethill, Kincorth, Mastrick or Garthdee.

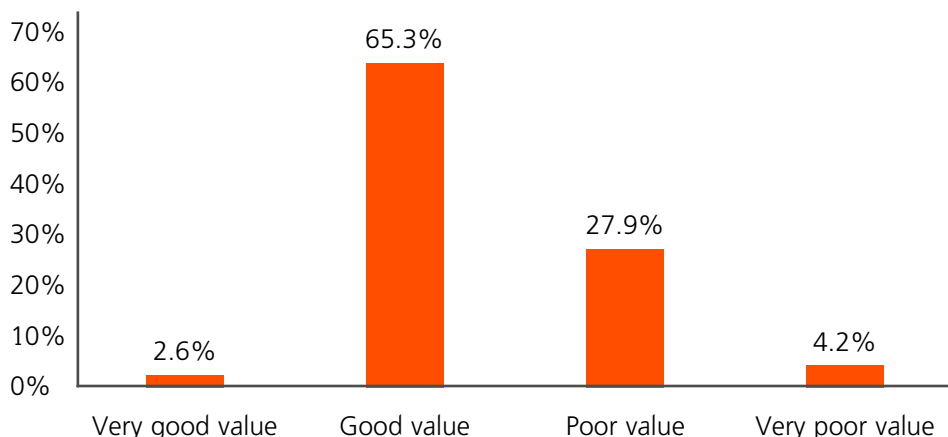
The pie chart on the right, shows that approximately 26% of you have had graffiti in your Neighbourhood in the last 3 months. All of these panellists live in Tillydrone, Northfield, Mastrick, Garthdee and Kincorth.

Has there been graffiti in your neighbourhood in the last 3 months?



- Approximately 33% of you who had experienced graffiti in your area were satisfied or very satisfied with the response time.
- 27% were dissatisfied and a further 10% were very dissatisfied, while 30% had no view on the matter.

Do you think the services that Aberdeen City Council provides represent good value for money?



Graffiti in Aberdeen – this is what we’re doing

Twelve months on from the establishment of the first full time graffiti squad in Scotland, Aberdeen City Council are pleased to see how respondents perceive the success of the team and how quickly graffiti incidents are being dealt with. The results and feedback make sense and will allow the Council to plan this service for the future.

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



Future Questionnaires

This newsletter and the full results of the 8th 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 (Broad Street), and all city libraries. Alternately, hard copies can be posted out by contacting me on the details below.

In November, Partners of the City Voice will be meeting to discuss the future of the citizens' panel. One of the main topics for discussion will be the Virtual Voice, an online edition of the questionnaire. Other issues we will discuss include the possibility of emailing the summary newsletter and questionnaire to those that want it, rather than posting a paper copy. If you have any comments or would like anything specific discussed, please return them in the prepaid envelope provided.

In the New Year we also hope to 'refresh' the panel with new members. At the same time we would like to know whether or not you wish to continue to be a panellist and update your personal details. I will issue Newsletter No. 9, a summary of the results of the enclosed questionnaire, at this time, while full survey results will be available on-line and in public libraries. In March the 10th City Voice questionnaire will be issued.

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

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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

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

Thanks for your assistance.