

Voice!

Committee Services

Members Support

Recycling Motivations

Hydrogen Bus Project

Green Spaces



Welcome

Happy New Year and welcome to the 33rd citizens' panel newsletter! This newsletter gives feedback to you, a member of Aberdeen's citizens' panel, on the results of the 33rd questionnaire that you completed in September 2014. Topics in that questionnaire included Committee Services, Members Support, Recycling Motivations, Hydrogen Bus Project, and Green Spaces.

Your responses are important in informing and contributing to future plans by all partners of the City Voice. The data is analysed by our research consultants at the Robert Gordon University. As always, all information provided is kept strictly confidential.

The 34th questionnaire, focusing on topics such as Police Scotland, Roads, Environmental Health & Trading Standards, Fire Scotland and Community Safety 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 get in touch if you wish to make any comments on the citizens' panel.

Sharon Wilkinson
City Voice Co-ordinator

Future Questionnaires

This newsletter, and the full results of the 33rd questionnaire, is available to view on the Community Planning website www.aberdeencityvoice.org.uk. Internet access is provided at libraries throughout Aberdeen and hard copies will be available at Marischal College Customer Service Centre and all city libraries. Alternatively, hard copies can be posted to you by contacting me on the details below.

We plan to issue Newsletter No.34, a summary of the results of the enclosed questionnaire in June 2015, along with the 35th Questionnaire.

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

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Aberdeen City Voice is an initiative by Aberdeen's Community Planning Partnership, including Aberdeen City Council, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, NHS Grampian and Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations.



Did you know... that as an existing panellist you can invite people to join the panel. As long as they live in Aberdeen City and are aged over 16 - we would love to hear from them. If you enjoy completing the questionnaires and telling us your views, why not tell someone you know to see if they would like to take part. They can join up online at www.aberdeencityvoice.org.uk, or they can email us at cityvoice@aberdeencity.gov.uk. We currently have 908 citizens on our panel. We would love to get that figure to over 1,000 panellists - this will help to ensure we are covering a wide range of "types" of people. This includes different ages, gender, employment status and location.

The City Voice team have recently moved into the Town House. Because of this move, our freepost address has now changed - we will let you know the new freepost number once this has been confirmed with Royal Mail. Our email address (cityvoice@aberdeencity.gov.uk) and our web address (www.aberdeencityvoice.org.uk) remain unchanged. You can also contact us by phone on 01224 523179.

And finally... many congratulations to Annina (your usual City Voice Co-ordinator) who gave birth to a beautiful baby girl.

32nd Questionnaire - Panel Response

Here are the results of the 33rd questionnaire you completed in September 2014. The results have now been analysed and a summary is presented in this newsletter. At the time of issuing the questionnaire, we had 902 people on the panel and we received 637 completed questionnaires. This gives us an overall response rate of 70.2%. We are delighted to see such a high response rate. Thank you to everyone who responded.

It is vital for the success of the City Voice that we keep response rates as high as possible so please continue to complete them. If you wish to change the format that you receive the questionnaire in, for example move from hardcopy to electronic questionnaires, please do not hesitate to contact us. And if there is a reason you are not replying, please let me know

Please recycle this newsletter when you have finished with it

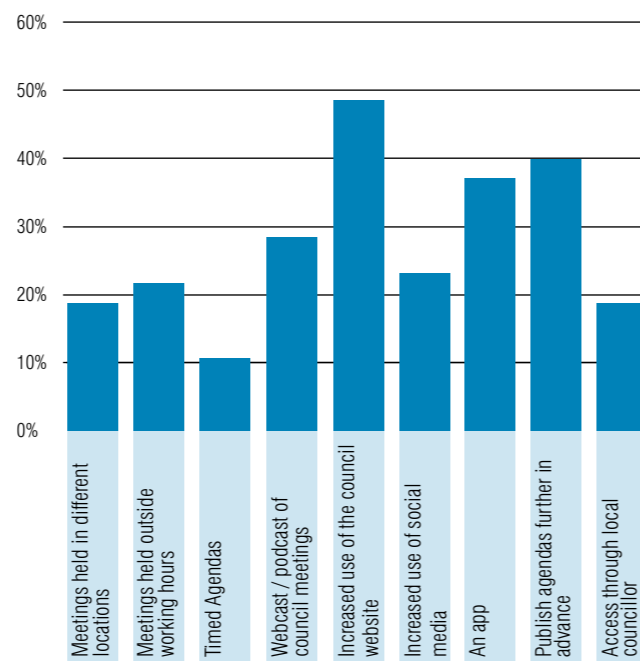




The Committee Services team within Aberdeen City Council is responsible for the democratic process throughout the council supporting both council and committee meetings. The Committee Services team want to make the democratic process more accessible to the public, ensuring that committee information is easily available to all. The first question in this section asked panellists how interested they were in the democratic process at the council. A large majority of respondents (53.3%) stated that they were interested in the democratic process with a further 16.7% being extremely interested.

The panellists were asked what could be done to make committee meetings / decisions more accessible. The most popular answer was 'increased use of the council website' (48.4%), followed by 'publish agendas further in advance' (39.9%).

Figure 1: What could be done to make committee meetings/decisions more accessible?]



Panellists were also given the option of providing 'other' responses to this question. The responses included 'a page in local press / encourage press to cover meetings', 'council publication / newsletter / radio station', and 'better advertising generally and greater accessibility of relevant documents'.

Panellists were asked if they would make use of a facility which broadcast council meetings live on the internet. 55.4% of respondents stated that they would use this facility. The younger age group of respondents (16-34 year olds) were more likely to state they would use this service. Panellists were also asked whether they were aware of the recently established Petitions Committee. Only 7.6% of respondents were aware of this committee and that the public could use this resource to ask the council to look at a particular issue. 79.4% of panellists stated that this committee would be a resource they would consider using. Of those that stated they would not use this resource, the main reasons given were 'lack of trust that views would be heard and would influence decision due to previous experience', 'too difficult to get 250 signatures', and 'lack of interest'.

This is what we are doing

We were pleased to see that there was a high level of interest in the democratic process, and it was gratifying to see such a high number of the 16-34 age group were keen to be engaged in democracy, as well as those respondents aged 65 and above. We were particularly interested that 80% of respondents did not feel that it was easy to find out about decisions taken by Councillors at Committee meetings, as the result backs up comments we have previously received from members of the public who have attended Committee meetings, or who have contacted us after a meeting in relation to a particular item. This will help to inform our thinking about how we can widen access to democracy. The team has already been considering whether there are any visual aids which can be employed at meetings which would assist in communicating information to those in attendance (for example, clearly displaying the outcome of a vote where there may have been more than one amendment to what was being proposed). The team also makes use of Twitter to publicise when Committee decision sheets have been published to our website (this is done within four days of the meeting being held), and based on the results of the questionnaire, we may need to look into how we can promote and publicise these decisions more widely to members of the public.

We were also pleased that a majority of the respondents make use of the information we publish to the Council website, and that in the main, people find the pages easy to navigate. We had similar concerns that the search facility online was not particularly user-friendly, and will share the results of the questionnaire with colleagues in IT to ascertain whether this can be improved. It was also interesting to see that people make use of the Central Library to access information on Committee meetings and Councillors. We recently held information sessions at the Central Library to try to promote involvement in the democratic process and we will be holding further public sessions in future, perhaps in a different location.

We note that the majority of respondents suggested making more use of the Council website in order to increase access to committee meetings and decisions. We recently undertook an overhaul of our webpages to make them more user-friendly, and will speak to IT colleagues to see if we can make better use of the Council website. It was very interesting to note that a high percentage of those questioned would be interested in an app — this is something we would be keen to take forward if possible. We will also have further discussions about how to promote involvement in democracy to those who are not able to use the online information.

The responses to the questions on the Petitions Committee are extremely helpful. The Petitions Committee was set up to enable the public to get involved with the Council and at the moment, the take-up has been very low. We were concerned that the public were perhaps not aware of the petitions facility, and the results of the questionnaire support this. We also note the comment that it is difficult for people to obtain the necessary 250 signatures to proceed with a petition, and the fact that not everyone is able to use the petition facility. The Committee will also accept paper petitions, but perhaps we need to make this clearer to the public. Officers were asked to review the Petitions Committee after a year, and we will be able to use the findings from the City Voice questionnaires to inform that report. We will also have further discussions within the team about how we can promote the Petitions Committee. As part of our discussion on the results of the City Voice, we have agreed to update the Petitions webpage with a 'You Said... We Did' section so that the public can see what has happened with previous petitions in terms of action by the Council.

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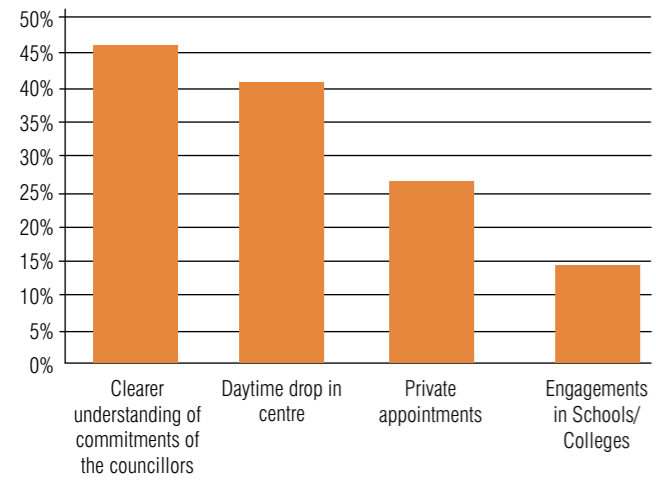


Members Support

Members' Support is a small team whose primary role is to provide a non-political, comprehensive support system to the councillors to assist them in carrying out their duties. The first question in this section asked panellists if they knew who their councillor was — 66.9% of respondents answered positively that they did know. When asked if you knew how to contact your councillor, 74.9% of respondents answered that they did know how to do this. We then asked you how you made contact with your local councillor. The most popular option was 'by email' (19.6%), followed by 'by phone' (9.9%).

Panellists were asked 'what would make councillors more accessible to members of the public?' Figure 2 highlights that the most popular answer was 'a clearer understanding of the commitments of the councillors'.

Figure 2: What would make councillors more accessible to members of the public?



Panellists were given the option of providing 'other' responses to this questions. The main responses were 'door to door visits/ flyers / or drop in meetings in each relevant locale', 'access by email / through forms on website', 'better information about who the councillors are and how to get in touch and their availability', and 'better use of social media / online presence'.

Panellists were asked how members' support could assist the public in communicating with councillors. 44.6% of respondents selected that 'taking email messages' was a good way to assist. Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide 'other' information. Panellists suggested that members' support could provide 'better advertising / publicity about what members' support services can do and how to contact them', 'tracking queries/ actions and follow up', 'arranging meetings with councillors and public / support to arrange meetings', and 'providing information to residents in each ward about issue and councillor accessibility'.

This is what we are doing

We were encouraged that the majority of respondents knew who their Councillors were and also how to contact them. We think there is a task for Officers and Elected Members to increase these majorities along with the % of people who were aware of how the Councillors can assist citizens.

The general demographics indicated in the report show that the need to contact Elected Members is greater in the North and Central areas of the City and this statistic, along with other stats were interesting but may well reflect the wider demographics in the City. In terms of how citizens contact Members we were not surprised that via e-mail and by phone were high and we would like to progress the promotion of the service via social media to the extent that if the questionnaire was repeated in years to come the use of social media to contact Members would increase. We were encouraged by the responses on other ways to contact the Members and will progress these ideas through our Improvement Plan. It has started us thinking more creatively and we will explore other ways of contact. What we found concerning is that 82.5% of 16-34 year olds have never contacted their councillors. This may be addressed through greater involvement with schools and universities in the democratic process.

In terms of what would make councillors more accessible to members of the public what surprised us (based on the earlier stat that a majority understood how councillors can assist citizens) is that 46.6% suggested that a clearer understanding of the commitments of the councillors would help make them more accessible. We think that this is an area that needs to be explored further. It was encouraging to see that the main areas that Members' Support can help the public in communicating with the Councillors was evenly split as this is replicated in the day to day office activity.

As a Team we are very interested in exploring the other suggestions of how Members' Services could assist the public in communicating with the Members. We had concerns that the website search facility online was not particularly user-friendly, and will share the results of the questionnaire with colleagues in IT to ascertain whether this can be improved.

Overall the results have been very thought provoking and will spur us on to continue to improve the service. Many thanks to the panellists for their responses.

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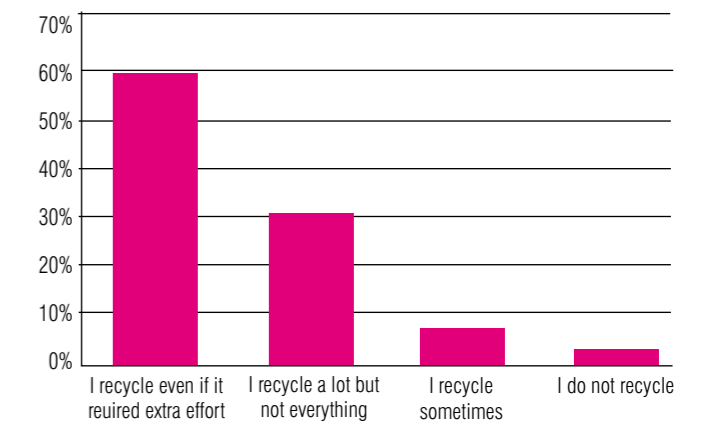


Recycling Motivations

Over the last 10 years, the waste service has asked panellists about their opinion on a wide range of issues and have found the responses to be very helpful. In this questionnaire, the waste service want to find out more about panellists motivations to recycle.

Panellists were asked, out of four statements which best applied to them. The results show that 59.4% of respondents would recycle even if it required extra effort. When the results were broken down by house type (you were asked about your house type in the first question of this section) it showed that those of you who live in a house (rather than a flat) were more likely to recycle even if it required an extra effort

Figure 3: Which of the following statements (about recycling) best applies to you?



Panellists were then asked what would encourage them to recycle more. The most popular answer was 'more accepted items' (58.9%), followed by 'information on what can be recycled' (34.1%). Panellists were also given the option to provide 'other' ideas on how to motivate people into recycling or recycling more. The answers provided included 'better access to recycling facilities/better kerbside recycling / community recycling for flats', 'sorting the recycling into fewer containers', and 'seeing others do their part'.

Panellists were then asked to select the top 3 ways they would like to receive information on recycling. There were 11 options to choose from with the most popular being 'leaflet through door' (74.9%), followed by 'newspaper article' (33.3%), and 'council website' (32.8%). The top option provided through the 'other' response was 'email sign up'.

This is what we are doing

The Waste and Recycling service would like to thank all questionnaire respondents for their valuable input as the feedback will be used to inform short term and long term services, changes and associated communications for awareness raising.

To help us pinpoint awareness raising for different types of properties across the city, our first question asked about what housing type the questionnaire respondents currently live in and the majority reside in a house (72.5%). Within the flat sector we further drilled down to find out what type of accommodation respondents lived and 61.5% are in tenements. Through analysing the responses from these different property groups, it helps us to identify appropriate awareness raising strategies and identify any groups that are not recycling and what would motivate them to start.

Encouragingly the data shows strong support for recycling with 59.4% indicating they recycled even if it required extra effort. Non recyclers were in a low minority at 2.9% and within this group 18.2% were sheltered housing respondents. This identifies where further awareness work is required and can focus various housing sectors to help improve recycling rates.

Positively, the question which focused on motivations for either starting or recycling more, the most popular response was if more items were accepted (58.9%). This is an important finding as the service will be rolling out a mixed recycling service to all city residents from 2016 which will increase the variety of materials collected. A significant percentage was also keen to receive more information on what can be recycled. This again aids us in planning the communications for delivering the new service. Previously annual communication has only been sent to households (e.g. collection calendars), but not to flats. However, recently as part of the food recycling rollout to flats, we delivered the first annual communication to these properties which included what materials could/ could not be recycled, the process and benefits of recycling etc. In the future we plan to incorporate additional information about other services within the annual communication. In addition to the annual calendar for households, more awareness raising information will be included.

As a service we needed to identify which type of media works for delivering information to city residents ensuring that resources are used most efficiently. Interestingly the most popular option was a traditional approach of a leaflet through the door (60.4%) followed by information provided in an article or advert in the newspaper and this was consistent across all property types. This is consistent with results from a door step survey for food recycling in 2014 and from previous focus groups. Additionally it gives us further confidence we are taking the correct approach for rolling out new services and also reinforces the value of delivering an annual programme of communication to city residents. In addition to current marketing, we also asked how residents would like to see information provided for future service changes and once again the majority favoured a leaflet through the door (74.9%) followed by a newspaper article (33.3%). This information is valuable for when we deliver service changes with the mixed recycling being rolled out and assists us in allocating resources.

Finally we asked questionnaire respondents if they had spoken to our Recycling Officers at any community event and surprisingly a low 20.1% said they had done so. The Recycling Officers are an essential part of our service in delivering any service changes and informing the public about recycling and waste issues. This finding will be considered ensuring the public are made more aware of this valuable resource, especially when we roll out the mixed recycling across the city and any other service changes in the future.

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Aberdeen Hydrogen Bus Project



The Aberdeen hydrogen bus project is a £19 million project which has funding from Europe, the UK Government and the Scottish Government. The project will see 10 hydrogen powered vehicles introduced into the existing Stagecoach and First bus fleets in Aberdeen. The project will also see a state of the art hydrogen refuelling station built in the centre of Aberdeen.

Panellists were asked what type of communication they had seen or heard from the council about the introduction of hydrogen buses to the city. The most popular option was 'newspaper' (47.4%), followed by 'none' (39.4%), and 'radio/tv coverage' (11.8%). Panellists were also given an 'other' option — the responses included 'advert on a bus' and 'through knowing someone working

on the project / at the council / at work'. Panellists were then asked if they felt adequately informed about the introduction of hydrogen powered buses. As shown in figure 4, 63% of respondents selected 'no' to this answer.

Figure 4: Do you feel adequately informed about the introduction of hydrogen powered buses?



We then asked you what information about introducing hydrogen powered buses would you like to know. The most popular response was the 'routes the buses will be running on' (63.9%), 'benefits the buses will deliver for passengers and the city' (54.2%), 'are more of these buses planned for the city in the future' (48.2%), and 'what the fare will be on these buses' (40.3%). Respondents were then able to provide 'other information for this question. Responses included 'don't want any information', 'cost to the council/ public of providing these buses', and 'comparative analysis of the carbon footprint/ energy used/ pollution vs. conventional buses'. Panellists were then asked to select the option that they would most like to know about. The top answer was 'the route the buses will be running on'.

We then asked you if you would be willing to use the hydrogen buses when they begin operations. The majority of respondents (85.1%) answered positively that they would be willing to use these buses. Panellists who answered no, were invited to provide their reasons. They included 'I don't generally use buses', 'bus services too slow/ unreliable/ infrequent/ inconvenient / dirty', and 'bus services too expensive'.



This is what we are doing

The results of this survey indicate a low number of people use public transport, with only 6.6% of respondents using public transport every day, and most, 43.6% using public transport rarely. This figure is consistent with the low number of Aberdeen commuters who use public transport — only 14% (Scottish Household Survey 2012). The main motivations for using public transport more often were not surprising — greater frequency and lower fares, this information will be passed on to our partners and discussed to see if this is something the hydrogen buses could help to address.

One point which was surprising is that 63% of respondents felt they had not been adequately informed about the introduction of the hydrogen buses. This is something we will look to address by including more information on the council website, and informing the media of all upcoming activities with the hydrogen buses. These are two of the most popular methods in which respondents would like to be kept more informed; we will also look into having an e-newsletter sign up available.

We were not surprised by the number of respondents who wished to know the routes the buses will be used on, 63.9%. Unfortunately this information is unavailable until First and Stagecoach have fully tested the buses and decided on a route, this information will be made public once available. One last positive note is we were pleased to see that the majority of respondents would be willing to use the hydrogen buses when they come into service, 85.1%.

These results will be shared with the project partners and funders, and will also help the project team provide more relevant information to the public, via a method which they are most likely to use. This survey will be repeated during the bus project operations, which will provide the team with a comparison on if we have improved public perceptions and improved any initial concerns raised in this survey.

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Green Spaces

Aberdeen City Council currently maintains approx. 827 hectares of green space, which brings benefits to both residents and visitors. Panellists were asked what they think about these green spaces, how they are maintained and the service they provide. You were also asked about your thoughts on Aberdeen's participation in the Keep Scotland Beautiful 'Beautiful Scotland' competition.

The first question you were asked was about the participation in this competition. The vast majority (90.9%) of respondents felt that we should continue to participate. Following on from this you were asked if local communities should be encouraged to be more involved in the competition. Again a large majority (98.7%) answered 'yes' to this question.

Panellists were then asked to rate the level of importance for a number of topics. The main topics that received a high level of responses of being 'extremely important' were 'keeping public parks clear of dog fouling' (57.2%), 'ensuring dogs are kept under control in parks' (53.7%), 'public parks' (46.7%), and 'maintenance of children's play areas' (45.3%).

We then asked you to rate performance in several areas from 'excellent' to 'very poor'. The option that had the highest percentage of 'excellent' responses was 'provision of public parks' (16.4%). The 'provision of flower beds/floral displays' had a 'good' rating from 51.1% of respondents. The options that were rated as 'very poor' included 'provision of public toilets in parks' (15.6%), and 'ensuring dogs are kept under control in parks' (9.1%).

You were then asked about your awareness of dog walkers and personal trainers in public parks and open spaces. 51.4% of respondents were aware of these activities with 6% of respondents finding them 'very disruptive' and a further 12.3% finding them 'disruptive'. Panellists were then asked to provide information on how these activities affected their visit to the park or open space. Some of the responses included 'affected by dogs not under control/ dog foul not being picked up', 'happy for anyone to use parks as long as they treat it with respect and don't affect other users', 'majority of professional activities are fine' and 'trainers/ professionals are sometimes rude/ loud/ intimidating'.

This is what we are doing

Environmental Services was delighted to see that the vast majority of respondents backed both Aberdeen's participation in Keep Scotland Beautiful's 'Beautiful Scotland' competition and the involvement of local communities in that aim. Aberdeen City Council believes that Beautiful Scotland is important to the city and it is great that the entry has the whole hearted support of its residents.

The high importance indicated for the provision of both public parks and play parks reflects the current priorities of Environmental Services. It is therefore heartening to see that 72% felt that our provision of public parks is good or excellent and 51.9% rated the provision of children's play areas as good or excellent. The questions in this survey relating to the priorities of green spaces and the related performance were included in the 2011 City Voice 24. The answers given this year provided excellent data that will allow comparisons to be made and will help determine the direction and focus of service delivery.

The questions relating to professional dog walkers and personal trainers provided interesting data. Local authorities throughout Scotland have seen an increase in these professionals using their parks and open spaces and the worry is that their activities are impacting on other users. The result that just over 50% were aware of the professionals' activities and of them 18.3% found their activities disruptive or very disruptive would indicate that currently the public does not have a problem with their work. However the fact that a small number of people's visit to the park was disrupted in some way by the work of these professionals is worth noting and may need to be reviewed again in the future.

These results will be presented to the Service Management Team and will provide good statistical evidence that will influence budgetary and policy decisions. Environmental Services would like to thank the panellists and the City Voice Team for their time and effort in providing this valuable data.

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