



Aberdeen City **voice**

Aberdeen's Citizens' Panel Newsletter
Number 10, June 2007



Welcome to the tenth citizens' panel newsletter. This newsletter gives feedback to you, a member of Aberdeen citizens' panel, on the results of the 10th questionnaire. Topics in this questionnaire covered the Community Planning themes of Aberdeen's Image, Health & Social Care and Land Use & the Environment.

This newsletter provides a summary of the results of the questionnaire you completed in March, 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.

Questionnaire data is analysed by our research consultants at The Robert Gordon University. As always, all information provided is kept strictly confidential.

The 11th survey, focusing mainly on the Community Planning themes of Being Informed, Neighbourhood Action – Locality Planning, Prosperity & Jobs, Arts, Heritage & Sport and Transport & Connections, 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. You will find my contact details at the end of the newsletter.

Sonia Boyd
City Voice Co-ordinator

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

News

Firstly, many thanks to all of you that responded to the last questionnaire. We included a second questionnaire on behalf of Grampian Fire & Rescue Service, and although there was not as great a response rate, they really appreciated every questionnaire that was returned. Thanks also for the number of you who gave additional comments. You can be assured that each comment does get sent to the relevant service, and we do request that they respond to you direct if it is required.

On 7 June we held a very successful City Voice reception in the Town and County Hall, Town House. Presentations were given by Aberdeen City Council, Grampian Fire & Rescue Service and Grampian Police, who all gave examples of the way your responses have helped them plan services in the city. Many thanks to all of you who came along to the evening and took part. Unfortunately, only limited numbers could attend, but we may look at holding a similar even in the future.

The Aberdeen City Voice citizens' panel is now being fully funded by Aberdeen's Community Planning Partnership **aberdeen futures**. As a result, all City Voice information is now available on the Community Planning website. You can access all previous questionnaires, newsletters and reports, find out more about other consultation opportunities, and answer the questionnaire on-line, by going to **www.communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk**, and clicking on **Aberdeen City Voice** on the left hand menu.

And finally, I have an update on the 9th Questionnaire some of you completed last September. Unfortunately at the time of going to print we hadn't received a service response on the Community Stadium questions you answered. Sandy Beattie, Senior Planner for Aberdeen City Council, has since responded:

Your results confirm that there is widespread support for a community stadium in the City. This was reported to Councillors at a workshop on 13 November 2006 and resulted in the selection of possible locations for the project. The range of facilities and locations you identified has been used to develop the next stages of feasibility of the project. Sites in north, south and central Aberdeen have been identified and are currently being tested in line with this initial consultation process. Your results from the City Voice were interesting and highlighted the level of support for the project. This will be used to inform a city-wide consultation later in 2007. Ultimately, your responses from the City Voice questionnaire have given the Council confidence to proceed with the feasibility stages.

10th Questionnaire – Panel Response

Here are the results of the 10th questionnaire you kindly completed in March. The results have now been analysed and a summary is presented in this newsletter. Many thanks for the 686 prompt and helpful replies you sent in. At the time of issuing the questionnaire there were 790 of you on the panel – this gives us a response rate of 87%. It is important that as many of you as possible respond each time. This will help us put all your views and concerns before the Partnership which is involved in providing services for Aberdeen residents and planning for your future.

Please let me know if there are any reasons for you not replying. Are the questionnaires too complicated? Too long? Are we asking about the things of little interest to you? What would you like us to ask you about? Please let me know by completing the tear of slip at the back of this newsletter.



ABERDEEN'S IMAGE

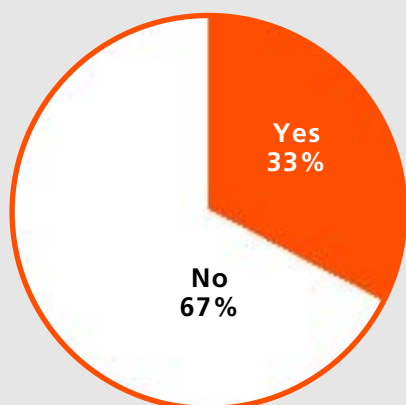
The West End

Over the last couple of years there have been a number of planning applications seeking a change of use in the shops in the west-end of the city centre. The changes are mainly from retail use to either commercial use such as estate agents, banks and building societies, or to leisure and entertainment uses such as pubs, clubs, restaurants and betting shops. The west-end of the city centre is the area from Union Row and Bon Accord Terrace to Alford Place and Holburn Street.

These planning applications have generally been resisted in order to protect the ground floor shopping function of Union Street. It can be argued, however, that as a result there are now too many vacant shop units in the west-end of Union Street. There is another argument that there is less demand for shopping in the west-end of the city centre and instead people want a mix of retail, commercial and leisure uses.

We wanted to find out what you think about the west-end of Union Street, in particular whether you think that allowing a greater mix of uses in the west-end of the city centre would be a good idea and will improve the vitality of the area.

Is the West-end of Union Street an attractive place to shop?



The previous chart shows the 67% of you do not think that the west-end of Union Street is an attractive place to shop. When broken down by age the results show that approximately 40% of 35-54 year olds believe it is attractive, compared to only 22% of you that are over 65.

The main reasons you gave for why the west-end is not attractive were:

- Too many vacant premises (84 responses)
- Not enough shops (78)
- Untidy/unclean/run down (66)
- Too many pubs/clubs (57)
- Lack of variety of shops (45)

93% of you would like to see more retail premises in the West End.

However, nearly 74% of you would rather the units were occupied by commercial or leisure/entertainment uses than just be left empty.

Aberdeen's West End – this is what we're doing

The majority of you said you did not think that the west-end of Union Street was an attractive place to shop. We are trying to address the main reason you gave through a review of the Union Street Frontages Policy Guidelines.

It was interesting to see that 93% of you said that you would like to see more retail at the west-end of Union Street. It was also interesting to note

that, whilst you want more retail at the west-end, the City Centre is your main shopping destination for clothing and footwear. When it comes to household goods, furniture and electrical goods most of you said that you shopped at retail parks.

It has often been argued that there is less demand for retail at the west-end of the City Centre and that people want a mix of uses. It was, therefore, interesting to see that 74% of you said that you would rather have commercial or leisure/entertainment uses than empty units at the west-end. It was also interesting to note that a larger proportion of the 25-34 year olds supported the proposal to have alternative uses rather than empty shops units at the west-end, in comparison to the over 65s.

These results, along with the results from a specific consultation exercise on the use of shop units at the west-end of Union Street, will be included in a report to Planning Committee in the summer. If there is support from the public and specific stakeholders, it may be appropriate to relax the planning guidelines that control the percentage of shops and non-retail uses (e.g. banks and restaurants) at the west-end of Union Street. The aim of this would be to reduce the number of vacant shop units and improve the vitality and viability of the City Centre.

Gary Purves
Planner, Aberdeen City Council.

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

Woolmanhill Hospital and Denburn Health Centre are due to close over the next few years and the services provided at these sites will be moved to other facilities in Aberdeen. It is proposed that one of these facilities will be the new Aberdeen Community Health and Care Village.

NHS Grampian and Aberdeen Community Health Partnership want to make sure that the people of Aberdeen and surrounding areas can influence these changes. The questions you answered in the City Voice were part of the wider consultation process.

Woolmanhill Hospital and Denburn Health Centre

Woolmanhill Hospital and Denburn Health Centre are no longer suitable for providing modern health services. Some services that are currently provided at Woolmanhill will move to Foresterhill and others will move to the new Health and Care Village. Some of the services currently provided at Denburn will also be moved to the Health and Care Village. The three GP Practices at Denburn will move, but a GP Practice will be retained in the city centre and suitable sites are currently being sought.

Two thirds of you were not aware that Woolmanhill Hospital is closing. Awareness was lowest in the 16-24 year old age group and highest for over 65s. Approximately 48% of you have/do attend a clinic, surgery or department at Woolmanhill. Of the people that use the Hospital, approximately 40% are aware that it is closing.

Nearly 70% of you were not aware that Denburn Health Centre is closing. Again the awareness of the closure was higher amongst older panellists than younger panellists. Of the 19% of you that attend/have attended Denburn Health Centre, 55% are aware that it is closing.

The main things you liked about both Woolmanhill and Denburn included:

- Central Location
- Easy Access
- Good Car Parking
- Friendly Staff

The main things you disliked about both Woolmanhill and Denburn were:

- Old and outdated
- Unattractive exterior and interior
- Difficult to find way around

New Health Facilities

The Scottish Executive and NHS Grampian recognise the need to change the way we deliver health services to make sure that patients receive good quality care. The main aim is to deliver services within communities with patients only being cared for in hospital when they are acutely ill and in need of complex care.

One of a number of projects being planned is the Health and Care Village. This new facility will be housed in a building close to the centre of the city and will provide a range of diagnostic and treatment services, for example x-ray, physiotherapy, podiatry, minor surgery, out-patients clinic and sexual health services.

The graph below shows that the most common ways you would travel to the new health building is by driving a car (42%), followed by bus (33%) and walking (19%).

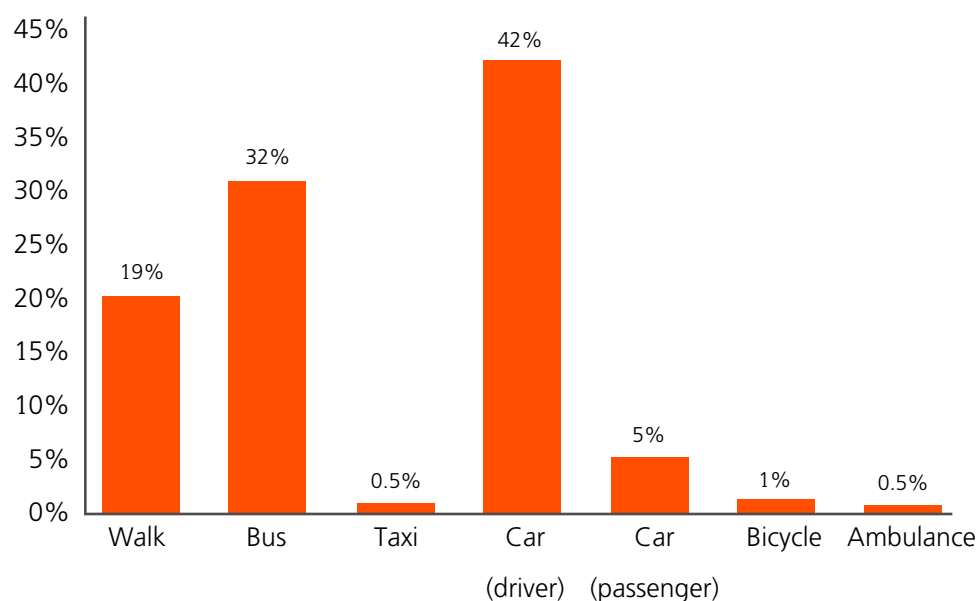
The majority of you (55%) find it easy to get to the city centre, and a further 28% find it fairly easy. There was no significant difference when the results were broken down by age, gender or whether you had children.

You were also asked which facilities you felt were important to have in the new health centre. The most common included:

- Easy access to bus routes (559 responses)
- Disabled access throughout building (511)
- Well lit, safe access to building (490)
- Clear signposting (480)
- Helpful, welcoming reception staff (459)

Most of you would like to be kept informed of progress by newspaper articles (stated by 430 of you) followed by newsletters (382 responses). 182 of you also said you would like to be kept informed via the Council website.

How would you travel to the new health building in the centre?



Health Aberdeen – this is what we're doing

Similar questions to those you were asked in the City Voice questionnaire, were asked of service users at both Woomanhill Hospital and Denburn Health Centre recently during 150 patient interviews.

The information obtained from both your responses and the interviews are already influencing planning for the new facilities. The project team now has a better understanding of what is important to you, for example, good access to parking and close proximity to main bus routes. We also understand better what you like and don't like about the current facilities. This will help us to create a picture of what the new facilities need to be like to meet the needs of future users of services.

The information you provided is an extremely valuable resource for use by the project team over the coming months.

Jackie Bremner

Service Planning Lead, NHS Grampian

LAND USE & THE ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Strategies

Environmental strategies and policies are important to counteract the risks associated with climate change.

At a local level Aberdeen City Council has a team which is dedicated to taking forward projects to reduce the environmental impact of both the City and internally within its own business. The national media portrays information on the environment on a daily basis but knowledge on what Aberdeen City Council is doing with regard to the environment is less well known.

The graph below shows that 54% of you think that environmental strategies, projects and events should be very important for the Council. When broken down by gender, 61% of females rated this very important compared to 47% of men. In total, 87% of you think that environmental strategies, projects and events should be very important or important for the Council.

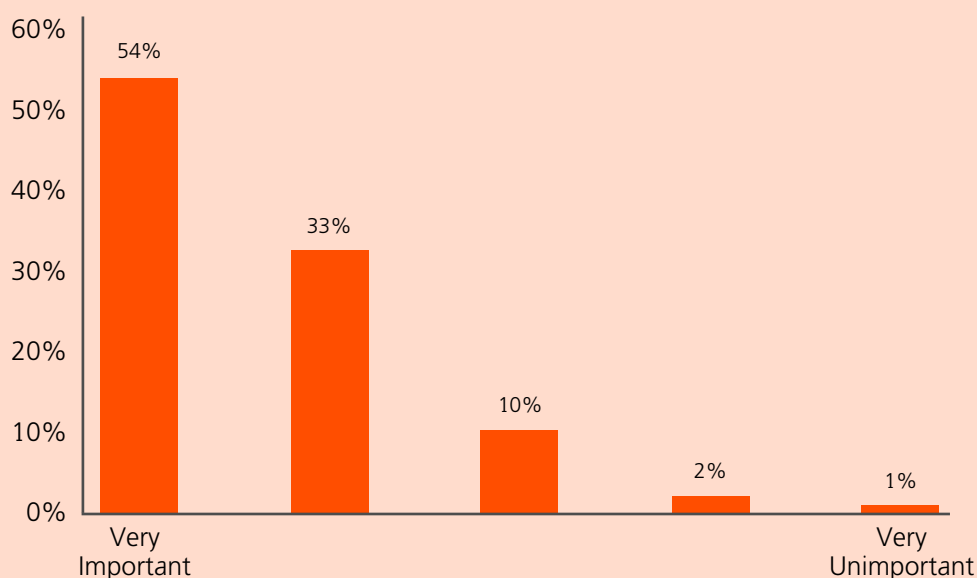
A number of strategies, projects and events were listed in the questionnaire, which the Environmental Sustainability Team is responsible for. Of the strategies that were listed, the Waste Management Strategy was the one that most of you had heard of (611 responses). There was also a high level of awareness for the Clean City Initiative (459) and Energy Efficiency Initiative (466).

The Waste Management Strategy was also selected when you were asked which strategy did you consider to be most important (294 responses), followed by Public Health Promotion (131). The initiatives that fewest panellists had heard of were Aberdeen EcoCity Events (146 responses) and Biodiversity (159).

The strategies you would like to find more out about included:

- Energy Efficiency (210 responses)
- Public Health Promotion (202)
- Waste Management (190)

How important should environmental strategies, project and events be for the Council?



Environmental Strategies in Aberdeen – this is what we're doing

You indicated that environmental strategies, projects and events are important for the Council. This shows us that past and future investments in such strategies are worth the effort. The information you have given us will assist in our review of how we focus future effort.

Both nationally and locally significant resources have been invested into Waste Management, Clean City and Energy Efficiency awareness and initiatives. So while it was no surprise that you selected Waste Management as the most important strategy, we were surprised to see that it was followed by Public Health Promotion. The next surprise was that the natural environment, otherwise known as Biodiversity, was unknown to 77% of panellists and was seen, along with EcoCity, as the least important. Biodiversity is a national priority and susceptible to Climate Change. Biodiversity is also an area of risk for the North East of Scotland. It is therefore important that our service, along with operational and external colleagues, work together to ensure that the general public understand the importance of our natural environment for today and the future.

Your answers have helped us find weaknesses in current areas of awareness and have given an indication of the best media to use. EcoCity is a new concept and the ideas you have given us about where it would best be promoted are very helpful and will be used in future planning. This has been an excellent process where we have learned where there are strengths and weaknesses. The citizens' panel has, yet again, given us valuable feedback to adjust plans and consider the movement of effort and resources.

Jan Falconer

Strategies – Sustainable Development, Aberdeen City Council.

Gypsy Travellers

As you may be aware, there are particular issues which arise around unauthorised Gypsy Traveller encampments in the city. There are difficulties in attracting many Gypsy Travellers to the official Traveller site at Clinterty because of its location and the quality and range of facilities on offer there.

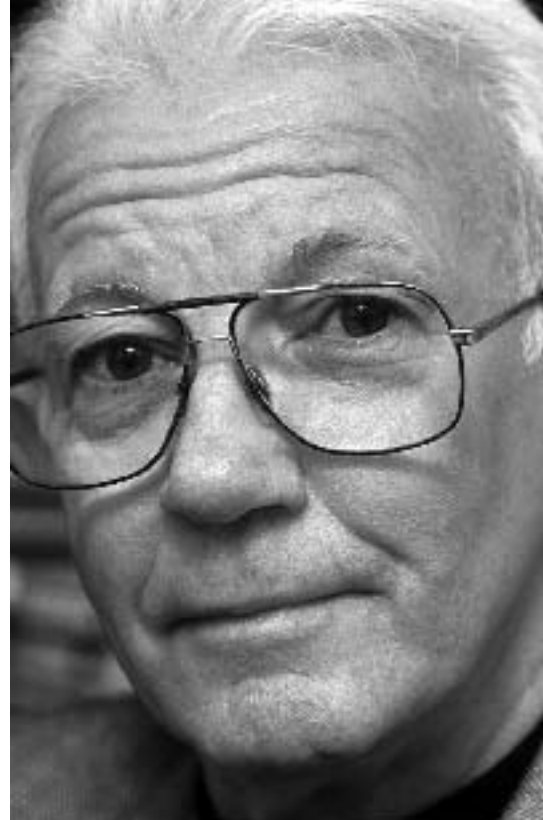
Gypsy Travellers have consistently told us over the years that what they would use is a network of official short-term halting sites across the country. The Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Executive have recommended this as the way forward and Aberdeen City Council has approved, in principle, the development of short-term halting sites. These sites would comprise a basic standing with access to water, toilet and waste collection provision as these are the features which Gypsy Travellers say they require. The Council is consulting with Gypsy Travellers direct, but in trying to decide potential locations for short-term halting sites, the Council would like to involve you in drawing up the criteria against which the suitability of any potential locations can be assessed.

There are certain criteria that are considered important for the location of short-term halting sites. You were asked to rank these in order of importance. The answers you gave were:

- 1st (most important) – Privacy/screening/landscape (223 responses)
- 2nd – Access to medical services (142)
- 3rd – Proximity to housing/business (134)
- 4th – Access to public transport (81)
- 5th (least important) – Access to shops (68)

Other criteria you thought should be taken into consideration included:

- Access to education (68)
- Waste collection facilities (33)
- Charges for use of services provided (24)



You were also asked what you thought the main concerns of local residents would be when thinking of short-term halting sites:

- Litter/mess during and after stay (305 responses)
- Noise (142)
- Crime (70)
- Waste disposal (51)
- Appearance of site and local area (51)

The sites you thought would be most appropriate as short-term halting sites for gypsy travellers included:

- Hazlehead – old caravan park (51 responses)
- Bridge of Don (33)
- Nigg (31)

Gypsy Travellers in Aberdeen – this is what we're doing

It was very encouraging to see the interest generated in this topic as it will be essential to get the community on board with the concept of short-term halting sites for Gypsy Travellers. There is widespread recognition that until such land is identified, there will be a never-ending cycle of Gypsy Travellers moving from one unauthorised site to another.

You indicated that the most important criteria for the location of short-term halting site was first "Privacy/screening/landscaping" followed by "Access to medical services and closely behind "Proximity to

Opportunities for further participation

Would you like to take part in discussions on climate change and transport?

A student from the Robert Gordon University is looking for participants to be part of some focus groups for her PhD research. Some of the questions she would like your opinion on include:

- How concerned are you about climate change?
- What barriers do you think there are to public transport use? and
- How you would like to see transport and energy use in Aberdeen in 30 years time?

If you are interested in participating in a discussion group on this topic, please contact **Wendy Graham** direct on prs.graham1@rgu.ac.uk or **07800 670021**.

Alternatively, you can write to her at Room 217, Aberdeen Business School – Phase 1, Garthdee Road, The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, AB10 1FR.

Future Questionnaires

This newsletter and the full results of the 10th questionnaire are available to view on the Community Planning website (www.communityplanning.org.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.

I aim to issue Newsletter No.11, a summary of the results of the enclosed questionnaire, in late September along with the 12th Questionnaire.

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

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Community Planning
in Aberdeen

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.