Community Planning Aberdeen

Review of City Voice

1. Summary

1.1 The aim of the Aberdeen City Voice review was to ensure it is a useful and robust source of data and feedback from the public, as one part of a wide spectrum of community engagement, to help shape decision making and inform policy and planning across partner organisations of Community Planning Aberdeen.

1.2 The review considered three main areas of investigation:

- Effectiveness of having a citizens panel
- Survey participation and response rates
- Communicating impact on decision making

1.3 The key features of the current City Voice (Aberdeen City's citizens panel) include a panel of 1,379 people and an annual questionnaire. City Voice was first established in 2003 and 45 questionnaires had been published by February 2022. City Voice has informed a number of important partnership documents including the Population Needs Assessment, Local Outcome Improvement Plan, Locality Plans and Regional Transport Strategy.

1.4 Our overall assessment is that City Voice continues to have a place in the wider Community Empowerment Strategy for Community Planning Aberdeen and individual partner organisations. The review looked at both the strengths and weaknesses of City Voice and the review group reached the conclusion that it needed to be reinvigorated rather than abandoned.

1.5   **Key benefits of the Aberdeen Citizens panel**:

- Aberdeen City Voice Panel aims to be broadly representative of the population
- Allows targeting of specific groups for ad-hoc surveys
- Ability to send paper copies to ensure it is accessible to people who do not wish or are unable to take part digitally
- Can track changes in responses and areas for improvement over time

1.6   Our recommendations for improvement have been grouped under the three areas of investigation and are summarised below.

Citizens Panel	Survey Participation	Communicating Impact
- Refresh the existing panel now and every 3-5 years, with ongoing recruitment - Targeted recruitment to address under-represented groups now and ongoing - Registered email addresses to validate respondents as panelists - Information about other characteristics of the panel should be requested to help us understand differences between groups and identify issues that require a more targeted response.	- Surveys should be kept short and take no longer than 15 minutes - Flexible approach to the number of surveys required based on questions received from partners. - Forward planning to help cut down the production timeline - A user panel to help develop good surveys. - Reminders issued to encourage completion. - Encourage digital participation with option for paper surveys - Prize draw incentives to encourage participation	- More timely reporting of results - Modernise communications strategy - Improved information on how responses are used - Testing of a translation service for City Voice and other accessible communication formats available on request. - Signpost to further opportunities to get involved.

1.7   Whilst the review group supports the continuation of the Aberdeen City Voice panel as a form of consultation with the general public, it is clear that it should not be the only way that we seek the views of local people. The Community Empowerment Strategy, which is currently being revised, aims to provide a wider range of opportunities for citizens to be involved in improving outcomes for people and communities across the City in a more participatory and empowered way.

2.

Contents

3.

Introduction

3.1 The review of City Voice was requested by Community Planning Aberdeen's Community Empowerment Group. The Group considered that the time was right to review the City Voice approach following the refresh of the Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan and Locality Plans in 2021. City Voice is an important source of information about how well the Community Planning Partnership is doing to achieve the improved outcomes within these shared plans for people and communities.

3.2 City Voice has been running since 2003 and to date we have published the results of 45 questionnaires. It was last reviewed in 2017 at which time a number of changes were made. Four years later, this review looks at the effectiveness of the current City Voice approach. This forms part of a wider review of the Community Planning Aberdeen Community Empowerment Strategy.

3.3 The aim of the review is to ensure Aberdeen City Voice is a useful and robust source of data and feedback from the public to help shape decision making and inform policy and planning across Community Planning Aberdeen.

3.4 The review was undertaken between December 2021 and March 2022 by a subgroup of the Community Empowerment Group with representation from Aberdeen City Council, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership and Grampian Regional Equality Council. Engagement with wider stakeholders including panel members and the Youth Council was also undertaken. See Appendix 1 for full Terms of Reference.

3.5 The approach we took was to consider three main areas:

- Effectiveness of having a citizens panel
- Survey participation and response rates
- Communicating impact on decision making

4. Citizens Panel

KEY FINDINGS

- Having a panel helps secure broad and balanced input from the public and allows for tracking of trends, changes in views and opinions over time.

- The representativeness of the panel is important. The Aberdeen City Voice panel was last refreshed in 2017 based on 2011 census data.

- Younger people are under-represented on the current panel and older people are over-represented. There is also over-representation from our least deprived communities.

- A representative panel does not guarantee a representative response to questionnaires. The ability to match panelists to respondents is critical to monitor the participation levels of panel members.

- There are limitations to what the City Voice panel can be used for and it should not be relied upon as the only form of engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Refresh the panel now and at least every 3 to 5 years, with ongoing recruitment as required to ensure it continues to be representative of the population.

- Targeted recruitment to the panel should be undertaken for under-represented groups as part of the refresh and following publication of census data in 2023.

- Registered email addresses to validate respondents as panelists.

- Date of birth should be sought for all panel members to maintain accurate information on age group.

  Information about other characteristics of the panel should be requested to help us understand differences between groups and identify issues that require a more targeted response.

4.1   A citizens panel is a dedicated group of people who sign up to take part in regular surveys to provide insight into public preferences and opinions. They are typically used by public service agencies, particularly local authorities and their partners, to identify local priorities. Citizens Panels are more effective than polls and surveys in supporting informed considerations from the public on policy issues due to the benefits listed below. See Appendix 3 for full options appraisal.

- Panel broadly representative of the population (although the panel members who respond may not be).
- Ability to send paper copies to ensure accessible to people who do not have/use computers/smart phones etc.
- Allows targeting of specific groups (e.g. those in a particular locality or in a particular age group) for ad-hoc surveys
- Can track changes over time (although not necessarily the same people who respond to each survey).

4.2   Currently there are 1,379 people on the Aberdeen City Voice panel. The number of people required for a representative panel of Aberdeen is 384. However, it is better to have a larger sample and City Voice generally aims for over 1000 people. It has consistently been between 1200 and 1400 which is similar to other local authority panels. The current response rate amounts to approximately 400 people. Table A in Appendix 2 provides a breakdown of the panel by gender, age group, ethnicity, locality and SIMD Quintile. Analysis of the panel data shows that there are some areas which require attention. For example, the panel is under-represented in the younger age groups (particularly 16-24 years and 25-34 years) and over-represented in the older age groups. Additionally, the ethnic composition of the city is based on census data from 2011 and is therefore quite dated. The results from the next Census come out in 2023 and will provide a clearer picture of the population of the City.

4.3   The Aberdeen City Voice Panel was last refreshed in 2017. To ensure the panel is a representative sample of the population we propose that a refresh is undertaken and that membership is systematically updated every three to five years with ongoing recruitment as required to maintain representativeness of the panel. Participants are generally recruited through random sampling of the electoral roll. This means that everyone has an equal opportunity to be a part of the panel. There should also be targeted recruitment of under-represented groups. For example, engaging schools, youth groups, colleges/universities and using social media to recruit young people. A targeted approach needs to take into account a range of factors to minimise the risk of skewing results. For example, targeting universities alone to recruit young people may achieve representation in the age group but not social

Panel member: "We need to find a better way of communicating with our citizens especially the younger ones. Truthfully we need to prioritise engagement more give it better/ smarter funding get young and really young ones engaged. Can't keep listening to/engaging with white middle class crinklies like me."

background. The 2023 census information will provide updated information about the diversity of the City to support targeting of under-represented groups.

4.4   A representative panel does not guarantee a representative response to City Voice Questionnaires. Not all panelists respond to the questionnaires which means the results can be skewed. For example, although the panel is slightly over-represented in SIMD quintile 5 (20% least deprived) at 42.3%, the response rate to the last City Voice questionnaire shows that 51.8% of respondents were from quintile 5, compared to 37.1% of the population. Similarly, SIMD quintiles 1 and 2 (40% most deprived) are well represented on the panel (31.4% compared to 32.5% population) but only 23.4% of respondents to the last survey were from quintiles 1 and 2.

4.5   The review group explored whether there was anything that could be done regarding the make up of the panel to compensate for groups where response rates are consistently low. For example, based on analysis of responses to previous questionnaires it could be predicted that responses from panelists in SIMD quintile 1 and 2 would be lower compared to their representation on the panel. One solution would be to over-represent from SIMD quintile 1 and 2 on the panel to achieve a more representative response. However, it was felt that a refresh of the panel should be completed in the first instance to give new members the chance to participate.

4.6   Another option considered was the use of weighting to correct under and over sampling. For example, in City Voice (CV) 45, young people were under-represented (compared to the population for Aberdeen City as a whole) and older people were over-represented. A very basic weighting was calculated for all age groups and applied to the results. In the example question below, the percentage of respondents who reported they had taken an online course increases from 45.2% in the unweighted sample to 58.1% in the weighted sample which would probably make sense given that younger people are, on the whole, more likely to have taken an online course.

Have you ever taken an online course?	Unweighted	Weighted by age group
Yes	45.2%	58.1%
No	54.8%	41.9%

4.7   The review group agreed that it may be useful to look at weighting in some circumstances for overall results where groups are significantly under-represented but that it should not be applied as a matter of course. Firstly, it relies on panel members providing the necessary information to do this accurately or there is a risk of excluding panel members. E.g. post code, date of birth, ethnicity. Not all panel members wish to disclose this information. Secondly, the review group felt that an alternative method would be to conduct sub-group analysis. This would have the advantage of enabling us to look at differences between groups for a range of different characteristics (e.g. age or gender or SIMD). Using the same question as an example, the table below shows how responses differ by age group.

Have you ever taken an online course?	16-34	35-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Yes	66.7%	68.3%	50.0%	38.2%	21.7%
No	33.3%	31.7%	50.0%	61.8%	78.3%

4.8   A fundamental issue remains that no matter how representative the panel appears to be, at the moment we have no real way of knowing which panel members are active and responding to questionnaires. It is possible to match responses to panelists who receive paper copies as panel numbers are written on paper copy questionnaires. However, this is not the case for people participating online which makes up 65.4% of the panel.   Up until CV42, Survey Monkey was used for online questionnaires. This allowed matching of responses to panellists. This has advantages when using a panel:

- Able to match demographic information to allow sub-group analysis without including demographic/personal characteristic questions in every survey
- Able to send reminders (possible partial reason for the much lower response rates since CV42 since no reminders were sent out for CV 43, 44 and 45)
- Able to 'weed out' consistent non-responders to questionnaires (i.e. those people who are on the panel but who never participate in surveys)

4.9   Currently we use Citizen Space which is a completely anonymous platform and survey responses cannot be validated as panellists. The review group identified this as a critical issue as it undermines the benefits of having a panel over an open survey. Discussion with the provider of Citizen Space, Delib has resulted in a potential solution. Respondents would be required to provide the email address they used to register to validate them as a City Voice panel member. The email address is then stripped from the dataset prior to analysis to ensure that individuals cannot be identified. This has been used successfully by the Council in Kensington and Chelsea. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the review group that email addresses should be requested for future online CV questionnaires so that respondents can be validated as a panellist and that the participation levels of the panel can be kept under review.

4.10   Whilst the review group supports the continuation of the Aberdeen City Voice panel as a form of consultation with the general public, it is clear that it should not be the only way that we seek the views of local people. The Community Empowerment Strategy, which is currently being revised, aims to provide a wider range of opportunities for citizens to be involved in improving outcomes for people and communities across the City in a more participatory and empowered way.
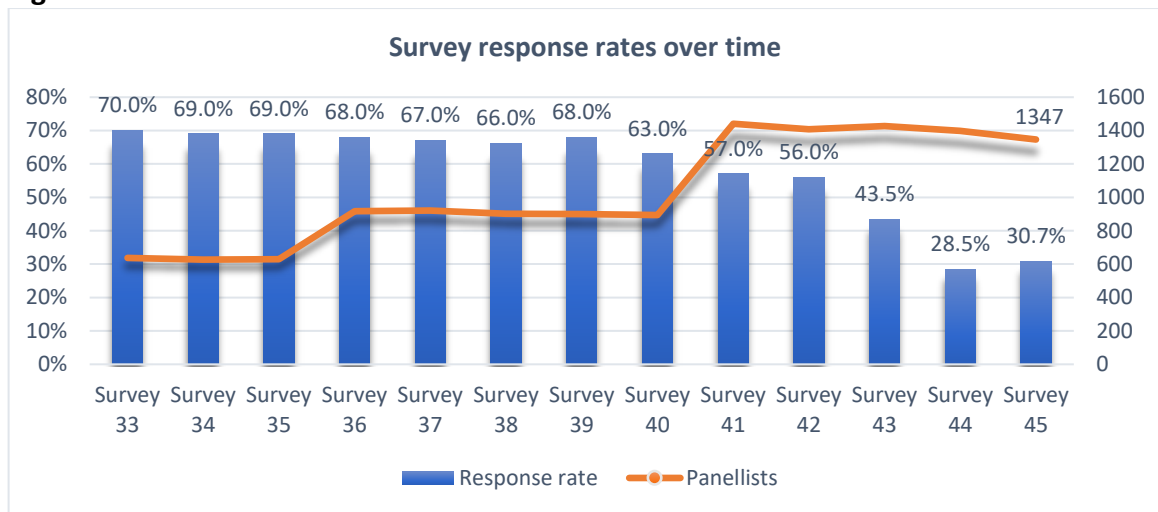
5.

Survey Participation

KEY FINDINGS

- Following a recruitment refreshment exercise conducted in Spring 2017 there was an increase in City Voice panel members in time for the 41st survey, but there was also a lowering of the response rate.

- City Voice response rates have been in steady decline since 2017 with the lowest response rate being 28.5% in 2020, likely impacted by Covid-19.

- The change to an annual survey in 2017 has resulted in long surveys which take from 25 minutes to complete. 83.9% of panellists say a survey should take no more than 15 minutes.

- There is a four month production time for each questionnaire which creates a lag in data.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- City Voice questionnaires should aim to be a maximum of 15 minutes to complete.

- Forward planning to ensure the number of surveys carried out over the year are based on questions received.

- A user panel should be considered to help develop and quality check surveys before they are issued.

- Reminders should be issued to panel members to encourage completion of surveys.

- Encourage digital participation with option for paper copies of the questionnaire to be available on request

- Introduce prize draw incentives to encourage participation

5.1   Participation of City Voice panellists in questionnaires is critical to gain an understanding of what people across the City think about key issues and to inform actions to make things better. A healthy survey response rate is necessary to place confidence in the results and to recognise when there are issues emerging or when we have achieved improvement.   It also helps us to know that the process is meaningful and rewarding for those involved. Survey response rate is calculated by taking the number of people who answered the survey divided by the number of panel members who were sent the survey.

5.2   Achieving an acceptable survey response rate is important because too low a figure can give rise to sampling bias, particularly if the number of nonresponses is unequal among survey respondents. See para 4.5.

5.3   Following a recruitment refreshment exercise conducted in Spring 2017 there was an increase in City Voice panel members in time for the 41st survey, but there was also a lowering of the response rate. Figure 1 shows the total number of panellists and response rates.

Figure 1

Survey response rates over time

5.4   Typical survey response rates can lie anywhere in the region between 5% to 30% range and a survey response rate of 50% or higher is often considered to be excellent for most circumstances. The continued decline in response rate to City Voice since 2017 is a cause for concern, particularly in recent years when the response rate dipped to as low as 28.5% in 2020. Although the Covid-19 pandemic has undoubtably been a factor, this review aimed to understand the other possible reasons for the lowering response. rate These are summarised below.
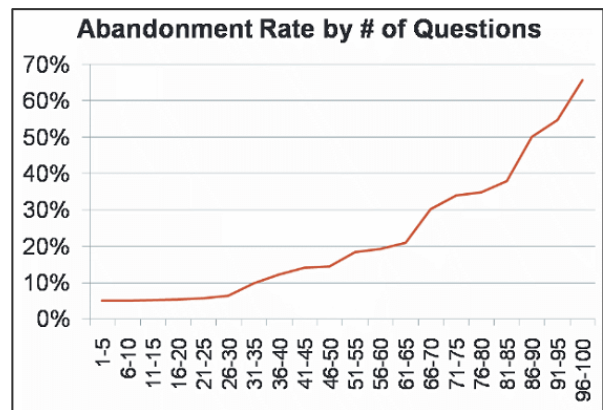
- Survey fatigue/ lack of interest
- Questions repeated
- Surveys are too long
- No reminder
- Panel members change of circumstance
- Lack of evidence that past participation has led to change

11

5.5 Survey fatigue is what happens when the panel becomes bored or uninterested in the surveys. This can happen when they are asked to complete too many surveys or when the questionnaire is poorly designed. In 2017 there was a decision made to issue one City Voice survey per year and therefore it is unlikely that panel members are overwhelmed by this number. Indeed a survey conducted with the panel as part of this review shows that 99% of respondents are content with the frequency of questionnaire or wanted to increase the number to two or three shorter questionnaires per year.

Panel member: "2 or 3 a year gives City Voice an opportunity for greater agility in tailoring the questionnaires to very current topics and particularly topics that may have arisen unexpectedly. I'd be happy to respond 2 or 3 times a year and for the questionnaire to continue to be a bit longer. It's a great opportunity to have a say and make your voice heard even from the comfort of your own home."

5.6 It was agreed in 2017 that as well as the annual City Voice survey, there would be another targeted specifically at people living in priority neighborhoods (Torry, Seaton, Tillydrone, Woodside; Northfield, Mastrick, Middlefield, Cummings Park and Heathryfold) and that these would be administered by the three Priority Neighbourhood Partnerships. Since 2017, there has only been one questionnaire targeted at priority neighbourhoods. This is partly because we now provide a breakdown of responses to the annual City Voice survey by locality which has lessened the need for an additional survey.

5.7 Whilst the frequency of the survey does not seem to be an issue, the survey design may be having an impact on participation performance. City Voice gives priority to questions relating to the delivery of priorities within the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP). Individual partner questions are also accommodated within the survey as far as possible. The move to an annual survey has meant that there is only one opportunity to include all the questions the Partnership wishes to ask and the result this means the surveys have become long, taking at least 25 minutes to complete and can include many of the same questions asked the year before. When the panel was asked 'ideally, how long should the surveys take you to complete?' There was a clear preference for shorter surveys with 83.9% saying it should not take more than 15 minutes to complete. Research suggests that the best performing surveys are those that should take 5 minutes or less to complete. Unsurprisingly, longer surveys have lower completion rates because the demands on the survey taker's time (See chart to right).

Source: Study by Vovici, a survey software company.

5.8   The recommendation of the review group is that City Voice surveys should be shorter, taking a maximum of 15 minutes complete and less where possible. This may result in more frequent surveys but forward planning will ensure the number of surveys carried out over the year are based on questions received to avoid survey fatigue.

5.9   The process for each City Voice survey begins with a call for questions from Community Planning Partners. Prior to the review in 2017 there had been three surveys per year but due to difficulties as one (or sometimes two) survey would often collide with either the summer holiday or the Christmas break which made it difficult to identify questions. It is proposed that a call for questions should be made at the start of each calendar year to allow for forward planning. The number of questions received will dictate how many questionnaires will be needed over the course of the year to ensure that all questions are asked at the same time as ensuring the surveys take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. Some prioritisation of questions selected may still be necessary to prevent the need for an excessive amount of surveys during the year. Planning the year ahead is expected to reduce the current four month time period between partners submitting questions and production time for each survey.

5.10   The quality of questions asked in the survey may also be a factor in the lowering response rate. As there are different parties contributing to the questions in the City Voice survey the quality of questions can vary. The review group felt that the questions asked as part of City Voice should have relevance to the general public to engage the majority of panellists. Taking a thematic approach to the City Voice surveys may help ensure questions are logically ordered and make for a more cohesive survey that will provide comprehensive data on a topic and encourage a higher response rate. To reduce the risk of asking tedious or inappropriate questions that the panel is not keen to respond to then setting up a user panel (made up of a sample of willing panellists) should be considered to help develop and quality check surveys before they are issued.

> Panel member: *"I am one of the people who has not responded as much as I used to. That's because I have found the topics irrelevant and not what I expected to answer. I don't feel I can give any meaningful answers to things I have no experience of. I think the City Voice should stick to asking questions on what people like/dislike and what type of improvements they suggest for Aberdeen city. That is what I thought it was about but it doesn't usually feel that is what it is currently for. I think people would be more likely to complete the questionnaire if they felt they could meaningfully participate and the questions should be aimed at the general public, and not so specific in nature."*

5.11   It was noted that with the change in system to Citizen Space after CV43 (see para 4.10), reminders are no longer issued to panellists to complete their questionnaire which may also contribute to the decline in responses. The review group considered that reminders may help gently nudge respondents and partial respondents to compete the survey as the close draws nearer. Studies suggest that following up can boost survey response rates from 20-30% to over 85%. There are different ways of doing this using email, automated reminders and social media. The recommendation of the review group is that reminders should go out at scheduled intervals to help maximise panel participation.

5.12   The online survey is one of the best methods for reaching out and evaluating the views of people quickly and cost effectively. Currently 65.5% of the panel participate in City Voice surveys online and 34.5% receive paper copies. The response rate is higher for people completing paper copies which could have a correlation with the over-representation of older people on the panel as younger people will be more inclined to engage with surveys online. The review group acknowledged the many benefits of City Voice being distributed online from increased speed and minimal cost of set up to ease of survey distribution, data gathering and analysis. However, it was also in agreement that it is important that people that don't have digital access or an email address should not be discriminated against or excluded. It was suggested that libraries or other community settings could offer access and support to panel members that are otherwise unable to complete the survey online. This would also encourage people to visit their local library or other community setting which could have greater benefits for the individual such as reducing social isolation or improving digital skills. Panel members will still be offered the opportunity to receive a paper copy of the questionnaire should this be the only way they wish to participate.

5.13   Finally the review group considered the use of incentives to encourage participation. In exchange for completing a survey, respondents are awarded with an incentive which may be cash, a voucher or prize draw. Incentives come in many different forms and are a great way to increase response rates and thank respondents for their time. However, there are also pitfalls to using incentives as respondents who are only in it for the incentive may also hurry through the survey instead of giving thoughtful responses. Timing can also be an issue as research on survey incentives have shown that prepaid incentives are the most effective at increasing participation, but this method is difficult to execute for online surveys and is more costly since the incentive is provided to everyone. Promised incentives are much easier to execute after the survey. There is limited budget for public service citizens panels and it is more common to have a prize draw. This has been used in the past for Aberdeen City Voice to encourage recruitment to the panel and is something that we propose could be offered again. For example, offering the Aberdeen Gift Card.

6. Communicating impact

KEY FINDINGS

- General communication with panel members before, during and after surveys is limited.

- More timely reporting of results to staff, panelists and members of the public needed.

- Feedback on how we use the responses and what difference we are making as a result are lacking.

- Panel members are not informed about how their contribution feeds into the bigger picture and what opportunities there are to get further involved in influencing and shaping public services in the City.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Modernise communications strategy to include making use of social media and improvements to the City Voice website.

- Improved information on how responses to the survey will influence partnership activity. You said, we did.

- Testing of a translation service for City Voice and other accessible communication formats available on request.

- City Voice communications to signpost to Locality Empowerment Groups and Priority Neighborhood Partnerships.

6.1   The results of the City Voice surveys are published on the City Voice webpage
        https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/cityvoice/ via the Survey Outcome Report
        and Summary Newsletter. This is the main communication with panel members, other
        than the initial invitation to respond to the survey. The Report and Newsletter are
        published online as soon as they are available. However, panel members are only alerted to this when they are being contacted about the next questionnaire. Paper based panelists receive a copy of the last newsletter along with the letter asking them to participate in the next questionnaire. As the surveys have been running only once per year since 2017, communication with panel members also tends to happen just once a year. The review group agreed that there needs to be more timely communications with panellists. This will be in part met by the proposal to move to more frequent surveys.

6.2   The review considered the quality of the outcome reports and newsletters. The outcome reports provide a comprehensive overview of the results and the newsletter offers a highly visual summary. However, detailed feedback on how the results will be used was found to be lacking in both the full report and summary newsletter. It is proposed that going forward those submitting the questions will be required to provide more detailed information about the impact results have had on decisions and how responses will be used to make changes. This could involve preparing guidance or a checklist to be used by staff and teams. For example, as one panel member suggested, adopting the use of 'You Said, We Did'. See example below of University of Aberdeen reporting back following engagement with students.

Panel member: "I would like to hear the overall findings of the survey and planned actions, if any following from that. It does feel as if we're contributing but are never aware of what difference, if any, had resulted from the consultation. If it's merely an exercise to "tick the box" to say consultation has taken place, this is of no benefit to people taking the time to complete the surveys and this may be a major contributing factor to loss of contributors. If there was some measurable and acknowledged change or new idea, this would I feel encourage participation."

16

Student feedback is used to shape the improvements we make to our services. Below you can see the improvements we've already made as a result of student feedback.

Digital Experience	⌄
Health and Wellbeing	⌄
Opportunities and Activities	⌄

6.3   It was felt that communication with staff and wider communities on the results of City Voice surveys and indeed general awareness raising around City Voice needs to be better. Results of questionnaires are shared with staff who submitted the questions and used to update relevant indicators within the [Aberdeen Outcomes Framework](). The Community Empowerment Group is the only group that receives a copy of the survey outcomes report. While the newsletter is produced primarily for panel members, the review group felt that staff and wider communities would benefit from receiving a copy of this, along with a link to the full report.

> *"I suggest you provide more feedback and information in relation to who receives the data gleaned from the surveys and what they do with that information, i.e. is it briefed to council officials or Councillors, what is the process of progressing suggested improvements and dealing with constructive criticism of council actions affecting the community."*

6.4   As discussed in the previous chapters of this report a key concern of the review group was the representativeness of the panel and participants. Following engagement with the Equality Participation Network the review group considered whether City Voice communications could be made available in other formats such as audio or translated versions to promote inclusiveness. For example, the availability of City Voice in Polish could help engage Aberdeen's large Polish community. It was agreed that this is a service we could test to see if it results in increased

17

participation from diverse groups. Happy to Translate is a national membership scheme which enables organisations to engage effectively with people who speak little or no English. Incorporation of the Happy to Translate logo communicates the willingness of an organisation to make information available in other languages. However, there is a fee for membership to the scheme and use of the logo. An alternative might be to design our own logo to communicate the availability of the City Voice survey in other languages/ formats or adopt the NHS logos. This would be a logo that could be attached to all Community Planning Aberdeen communications where this service was offered and free to be used by all public service partners offering this service across the City and indeed Grampian. It is recommended that this is explored further with partners along with the use of other accessibility tools such as web plugins.

This resource may also be made available on request in the following formats:

translations | easy to read | audio | BSL | large print | braille

☎ 0131 314 5300
✉ nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net

Prototype CPA Translation Logo.

6.5   As well as the what, when and who, the review group considered how we communicate about City Voice with panel members, prospective panel members, communities, staff and the public at large. The current communications plan for City Voice needs to be renewed to be fit for purpose and should incorporate modern ways of communicating using social media such as facebook and twitter and new communication channels which are becoming more prominent for younger people, for example Snap chat, Instagram, tik tok.

6.6   Finally, the review group recommends that City Voice communications should also sign post readers to more information about how citizens can get more involved in influencing and shaping public services in the City through their local community group, Locality Empowerment Groups, Priority Neighbourhood Partnerships or other partner opportunities.

Community Empowerment Network

Community Planning Aberdeen

Join our network

The Community Empowerment Network is a forum for community groups and organisations to connect with each other and with members of the Community Empowerment Group to stay informed and develop further opportunities for public services, third sector organisations and community groups to work together.

ALL community groups and organisations are welcome! You can sign up for community updates, explore our website and register for the next network event to find out more.

Find out more about CPA

Working with communities

Community Empowerment Group

Sign up for community updates

7.

Overseeing Progress

7.1 The review was carried out by a sub group of the CPA Community Empowerment Group. Thanks to the following members for their commitment, curiosity and contributions throughout the process.

- Michelle Cochlan, Community Planning Manager and Chair of the Community Empowerment Group

- Anne McAteer, Research Officer and Lead for Aberdeen City Voice

- Dave Black, General Manager Grampian Regional Equality Council

- Bryan Nelson, Station Commander, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service.

7.2 Thanks also to the City Voice Panel, Youth Council, Equality Participation Network, Community Empowerment Group, colleagues from SCDC and other stakeholders consulted during the review for their feedback.

7.3 The Community Empowerment Group will oversee the implementation of the recommendations within this report and monitor improvement in the following areas.

- City Voice Panel Representativeness

- City Voice Response Rates

- City Voice Panel Members involvement in Improvement

Appendix 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.   PURPOSE

1.1   The purpose of this review is to ensure Aberdeen City Voice is a useful and robust source of data and feedback from the public to help shape decision making and inform policy and planning across Community Planning Aberdeen.

2.   SCOPE

2.1   This review will examine the effectiveness of Aberdeen City Voice and make recommendations on options for improvement.

3.   BACKGROUND

3.1   Aberdeen City Voice is a panel of Aberdeen City Residents who have agreed to give their views on a wide range of issues which impact on the local community. Management of the panel and city voice questionnaires are coordinated by Aberdeen City Council on behalf of Community Planning Aberdeen and has been running since 2003. Further information on the panel and copies of past questionnaires are available online https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/cityvoice/.

3.2   City Voice was last reviewed in 2017 to ensure alignment with the newly developed Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan, Locality Plans and Engagement, Participation and Empowerment Strategy. The review examined the format, frequency and management of City Voice to improve strategic alignment with the priorities of Community Planning Aberdeen. For a copy of the review report see Item 3.2, page 207 of the following document https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/CPA-MG-Agenda-301017-V1.pdf

3.3   Following consideration of the latest City Voice Survey Report by the Community Empowerment Group, it was agreed that it would be timely to conduct a further review of City Voice. The review will seek to examine the effectiveness of current arrangements and address any areas of weakness.

20

4.   AIM & OBJECTIVES

4.1   The aim of the review is to ensure Aberdeen City Voice is a useful and robust source of data and feedback from the public to help shape decision making and inform policy and planning across Community Planning Aberdeen

4.2   Objectives:

- Examine the effectiveness of using the current panel
- Ensure the panel is representative of Aberdeen City Residents
- Improve the response rate of City Voice
- Consider how this is or could be complemented by or integrated with other mechanisms for capturing feedback from the public including Citizen Space, Simulator and other good practice
- Develop a clear understanding of the role City Voice plays within the range of community engagement, participation and consultation activity linked to Community Planning Aberdeen. We will be clear about who we want to hear from and on what types of issues.
- Propose options for improvement to how we plan, coordinate and deliver the City Voice Panel in a way which meets the needs of both the CPP and customers and citizens

5.   KEY DELIVERABLES AND TIMESCALES

5.1   This review is planned to take place before the next City Voice Questionnaire is due to commence early 2022. The key deliverables are as follows:

- Project team established   Nov 2021
- Commence weekly project team meetings Dec 2021
- Commence evidence gathering   Dec 2021/ Jan 2022
- Complete baseline assessment   Jan 2022
- Baseline assessment to CEG   27 Jan 2022
- Identification of best practice   Jan - Feb 2022
- Consultation with key stakeholders   Jan – Feb 2022
- Draft Report to CEG   24 Feb 2022
- Final Report to CEG   31 Mar 2022

6.   PROJECT TEAM

6.1

6.

Project Sponsor	Michelle Cochlan, Chair of Community Empowerment Group
Project Board	Community Empowerment Group
Project Lead	Michelle Cochlan, Community Planning Manager Anne McAteer, Research Officer
Project Team	Michelle Cochlan, ACC Anne McAteer, ACC Dave Black – GREC Bryan Nelson – SFRS Gordon Edgar – ACHSCP
Key Stakeholders/ Consultees	Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) Youth Council City Voice Panel Equalities Participation Network Community Empowerment Group
Benchmarking	Other Community Planning Partnerships/ Councils. E.g. Aberdeenshire

METHODOLOGY

6.1   The review methodology will include:

- Desk top analysis of current system
- Gathering of evidence of best practice/ case studies etc
- Consultation with key stakeholders/ consultees
- Discussions/ interviews with external representatives e.g. colleagues from other Councils and external organisations where relevant
- Discussion of findings with key stakeholders/ consultees
  Survey and focus groups with panel members and under-represented groups (i.e. young people)

Appendix 2

PANEL BREAKDOWN

	City Voice panellists (Total = 1,379)		Aberdeen City population
	Number	%	%
Gender (n= 1,378)			
Male	612	44.4%	49.8%
Female	766	55.6%	50.2%
Age group (Median age = 62 years)			
16-24	17	1.2%	11.5%
25-34	56	4.1%	18.6%
35-44	101	7.3%	14.4%
45-54	161	11.7%	12.2%
55-64	251	18.2%	11.7%
65-74	274	19.9%	8.9%
75-84	158	11.5%	5.0%
85+	43	3.1%	2.1%
All	1061	76.9%	11.5%
Missing	318	23.1%	
Total	1379	100%	
Ethnicity			
White Scottish	1071	77.7%	75.3%
Other British	134	9.7%	7.6%
Other White	69	5.0%	9.1%
African or Caribbean	21	1.5%	2.5%
Arab	5	0.4%	0.1%
Asian	10	0.7%	4.3%
Other	39	2.8%	0.9%
All	1349	97.8%	
Missing	30	2.2%	
Total	1,379	100.0%	
Area			
North	393	28.6%	31.3%
South	483	35.1%	33.9%
Central	499	36.3	34.8%
Total	1,375	100.0%	100.0%
SIMD			
Quintile 1 (most deprived)	147	10.7%	10.1%

Quintile 2	283	20.7%	22.4%
Quintile 3	182	13.3%	16.0%
Quintile 4	178	13.0%	14.4%
Quintile 5	578	42.3%	37.1%
Total	1368	100.0%	100%
Survey type			
Paper	476	34.5%	-
Online	902	65.4%	-

Source: Data for Aberdeen City population estimates are based on National Records of Scotland, mid-2020 population estimates. Percentages for Ethnic groups for Aberdeen City are from 2011 Census. SIMD comparison is based on population at SIMD20 (V2).

2.1   Panel - gender

Panellists were asked if they were Male or Female (no additional options were given). Most (55.6%) panellists are Female. Females are over-represented compared to the population of Aberdeen City (50.2%).

2.2   Panel – age

Unfortunately when the panel was originally set up, new panellists were only asked what age-group they belonged to. Depending on how long they were on the panel, it is therefore likely that some will have moved out of their original age group. To try to rectify this, at CV 40 and CV41, panellists were asked to update their details. This included asking for Date of Birth. Not all panellists responded and information on date of birth is available for only 1,061 panellists. Using this information, panellists have been put into age groups. The panel is under-represented in the younger age groups (particularly 16-24 years and 25-34 years) and over-represented in the older age groups. However, it should be noted that we do not have Date of Birth information for almost a quarter (23.1%) of the panel.

2.3   Panel - ethnicity

Information on ethnicity is available for 1,349 panellists. Based on comparison to Census data, the panel is slightly over-represented in Scottish and Other British categories and under-represented in other ethnic groups. (Note: the Census data is from 2011 and is therefore quite dated. Until the results from the next Census come out, we won't have a clear picture of ethnicity in the city.)

2.4   Panel - locality

Comparison to total population for Aberdeen City shows that panellists are slightly over-represented in South and Central and under-represented in North.

2.5   Panel – SIMD

Postcode information was available for 1,368 panellists. Comparison of the proportion of panellists within each SIMD quintile to the proportion of Aberdeen's population within each quintile suggests that that panel is over-represented in the SIMD quintile 5 (20% least deprived) and slightly under-represented in Quintiles 2, 3 and 4.

Appendix 3

CITY VOICE
OPTIONS APPRAISAL

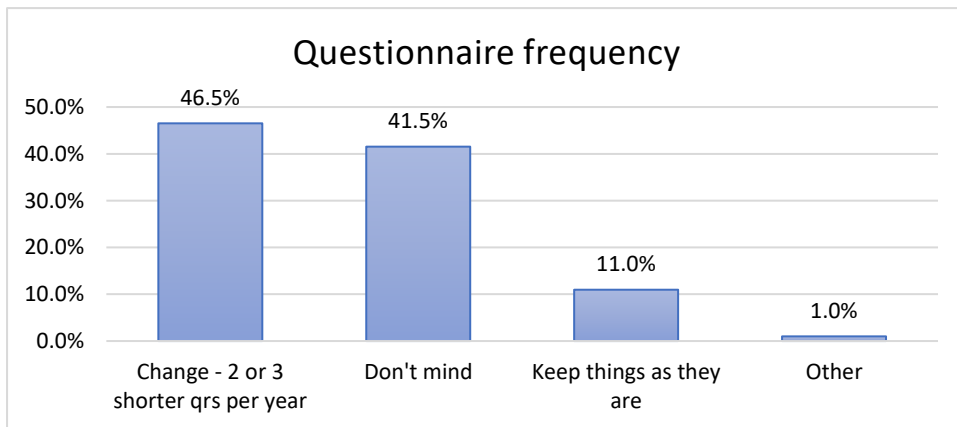| Options	Pros	Cons
1. Continue with current Citizens Panel	• Panel broadly representative of the population. • People have to sign up to City Voice and therefore there is a level of interest and commitment to being involved from the get-go. • Panel members can sign up to for paper copies of the questionnaire which prevents exclusion of people. • Know characteristics of panel which allows for more focussed work/ targeting of specific groups. • Can track changes over time. • General population rather than interest groups.	• A representative panel does not guarantee a representative response. • Not necessarily the same people who respond to each survey so not measuring exactly like for like. • Currently unable to match panelists to respondents. • Cost of producing hard copy designed questionnaire is high.
2. Change to Online Open Questionnaire	• Easier and quicker to set up and administer. • More cost effective as no designing, printing and postage associated with online questionnaire.	• Excludes people who will not or cannot participate online. • Not a representative sample as no panel means it is open to the entire population. • Unlikely to hear from 100% of the population so could lead to questionnaire bias. • Results could become skewed by over representation of specific interest groups.
3. Hybrid, Citizens Panel with improvements	• As for Option 1.	• The recommendations for improvement set out within this paper seek to address the cons listed above.

Appendix 4

CITY VOICE PANEL SURVEY

Responses to this survey: 306 out of possible 892

Survey opened 10 Feb 2022 and closed on 20 Feb 2022.

1: Currently we send out one questionnaire a year. This can sometimes mean that the questionnaires **are** quite long. One option we are considering is changing to two or three shorter questionnaires a year. Would you prefer to?
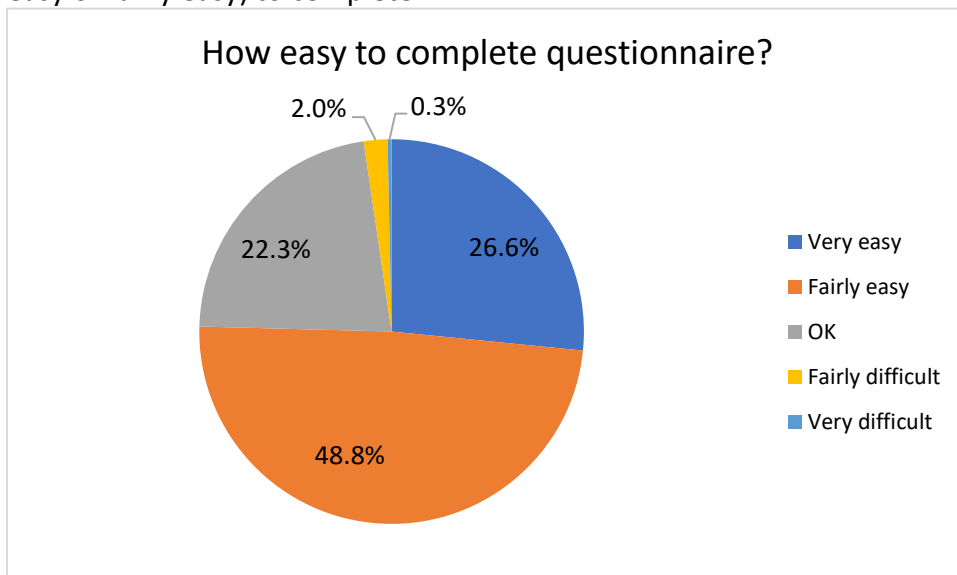
The most common response (46.5%) was to change to two or three shorter questionnaires per year. A slightly smaller proportion (41.5%) reported they didn't mind whether there was one longer questionnaire or two or three shorter questionnaires per year with 11% wanting to keep things as they are with one (longer) questionnaire per year.

Base = 301

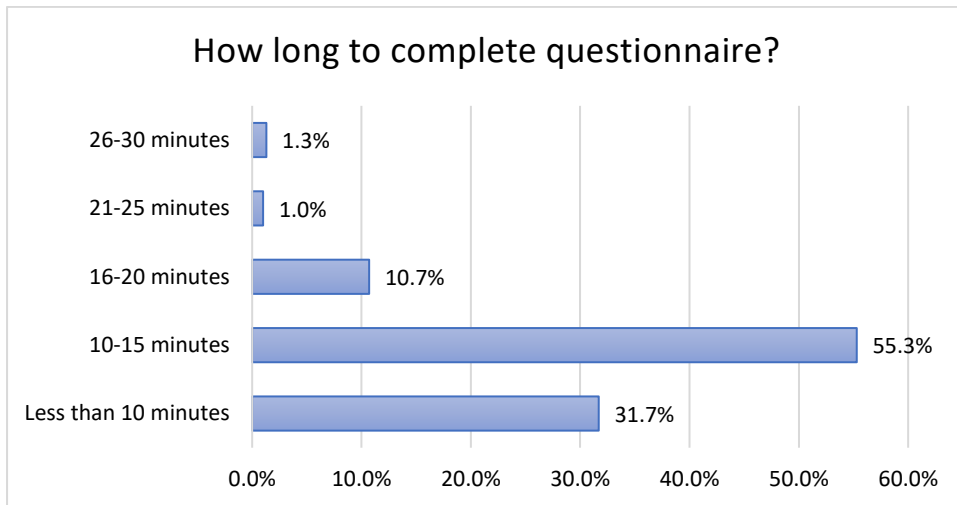2: On the whole, how easy do you find the questionnaires to complete?

Almost three quarters (73.7%) of respondents said they found the questionnaire easy (very easy or fairly easy) to complete.

Base = 301

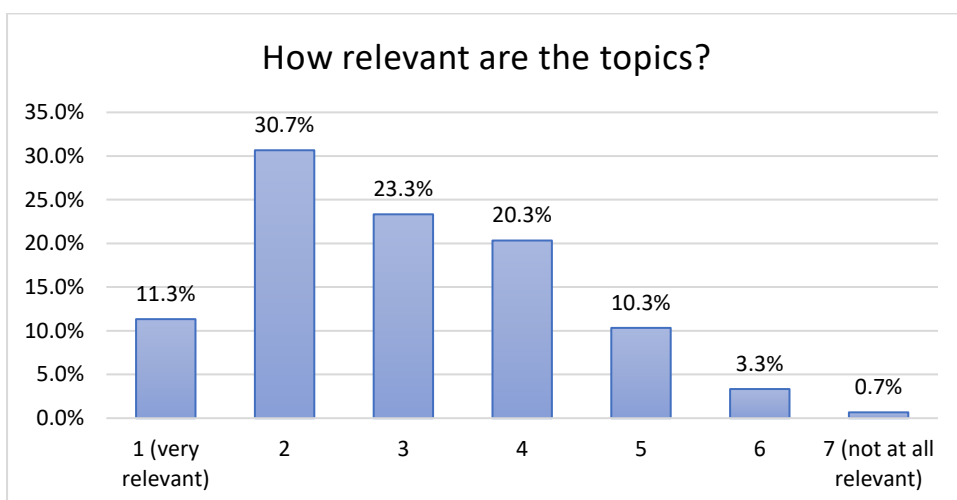### 3: Ideally, how long should the surveys take you to complete?

There was a clear preference for shorter surveys with 87% saying it should not take more than 15 minutes to complete, with the most common response being 10-15 minutes to complete.

How long to complete questionnaire?

Duration	Percentage
26-30 minutes	1.3%
21-25 minutes	1.0%
16-20 minutes	10.7%
10-15 minutes	55.3%
Less than 10 minutes	31.7%

Base = 300

4: The questions included in City Voice surveys cover a range of different topics that affect our communities. On the whole, how relevant do you find these topics?
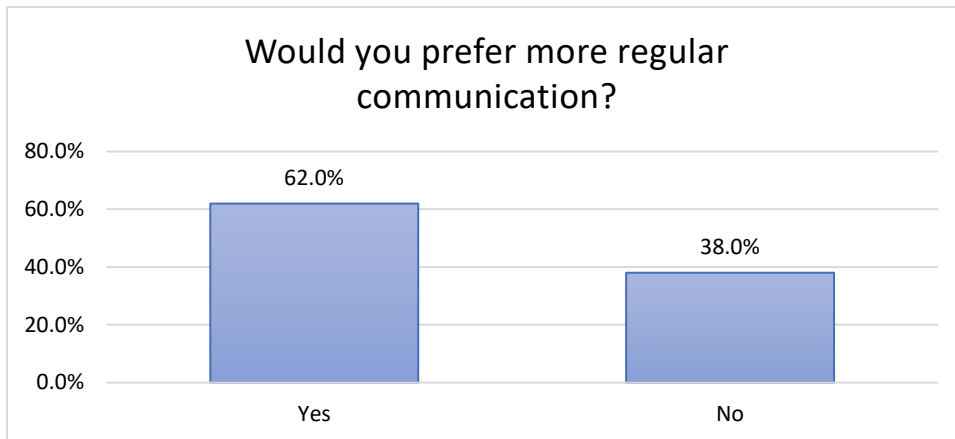
Panellists were asked to rate how relevant they found the topics included in the City Voice on a scale of 1 (very relevant) to 7 (not at all relevant). A score of 1, 2 or 3 suggests that they found the topics relevant, a score of 5, 6 or 7 that they did not find the topics relevant and a score of 4 suggests a more neutral response. Almost two-thirds of respondents (65.3%) gave a score of 1, 2 or 3 suggesting that they found they topics relevant, with the most common score being 2 (30.7% of respondents). 14.3% of respondents gave a score of 5, 6 or 7 suggesting that they did not find the topics relevant. A fifth (20.3%) gave a 'neutral' score of 4.

How relevant are the topics?

Score	Percentage
1 (very relevant)	11.3%
2	30.7%
3	23.3%
4	20.3%
5	10.3%
6	3.3%
7 (not at all relevant)	0.7%

Base = 300. Average (mean) score was 3.0.

27

5: Currently panellists generally only hear from the City Voice team when a new survey is going out. Would you prefer to have more regular communication from us (e.g. advance notice of surveys or news about events that are happening in your community)?
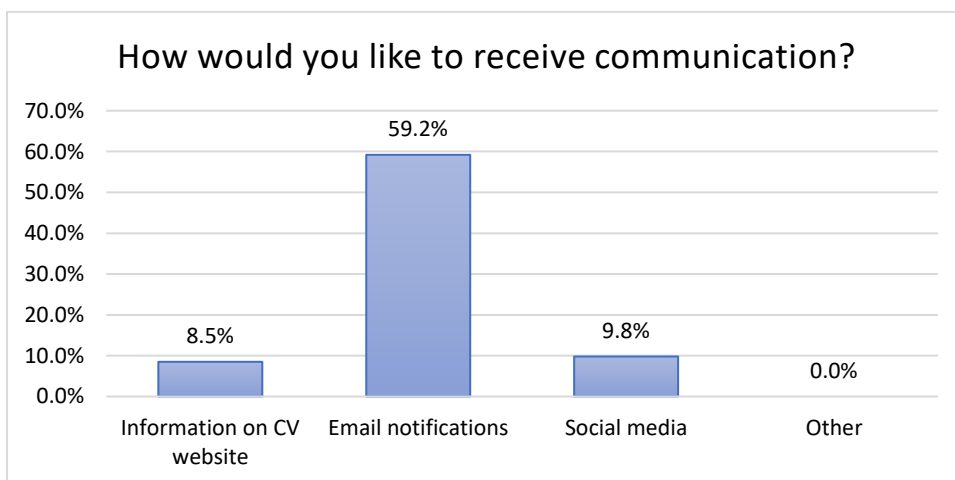
When asked if they would like more regular communication from the City Voice team out with surveys, most survey respondents (62.0%) said that 'yes' they would.

Would you prefer more regular communication?

	Yes	No
	62.0%	38.0%

(Chart: Yes = 62.0%, No = 38.0%; y-axis 0.0% to 80.0%)

Base = 305

6: If you answered 'yes' to the above question, how would you prefer to receive this communication? (Please tick all that apply)

Panellists were asked how they would like to receive this communication. They were given 3 options (information on website, email notifications and social media) as well as an 'other' option. They could tick any that applied. By far the preferred method of communication was via email (59.2%).
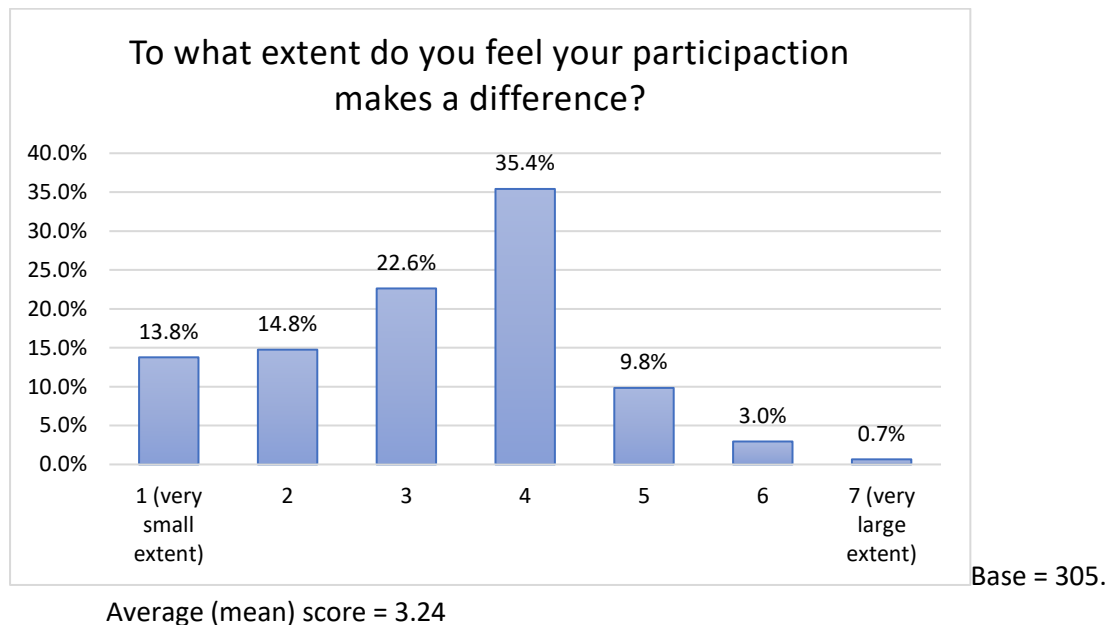
How would you like to receive communication?

Information on CV website	Email notifications	Social media	Other
8.5%	59.2%	9.8%	0.0%

(Chart: y-axis 0.0% to 70.0%)

Base = 306

7: To what extent do you feel your participation in the panel makes a difference?

Panellists were asked to rate to what extent they felt their participation on the panel makes a difference on a scale of 1 (very small extent) to 7 (very large extent). A score of 1, 2 or 3 suggests that they do not feel their participation makes a difference, a score of 5, 6 or 7 suggests that they feel their participation does make a difference, and a score of 4 suggests a more neutral response. Responses to this question indicate that most respondents (51.1%) do not feel their participation makes a difference (score of 1, 2 or 3). The most common choice (35.4% of respondents) was '4'

which suggests a neutral response. Only 13.4% of respondents gave a score of 5, 6 or 7 suggesting they felt their participation makes a difference.

To what extent do you feel your participaction makes a difference?

Score	Percentage
1 (very small extent)	13.8%
2	14.8%
3	22.6%
4	35.4%
5	9.8%
6	3.0%
7 (very large extent)	0.7%

Base = 305.

Average (mean) score = 3.24

8: The response rate to City Voice surveys has dropped in recent years. What do you think we could do to encourage more people to complete the surveys?

This was a completely open text question and received the most comments of any question. A total of 242 comments were received.

All comments received as part of this questionnaire were considered by the City Voice Review Group.

PANEL SURVEY – COMMENTS

Basic content analysis – looking at common themes. Broad overview given below for each of the questions (with example comments).

Q1 - COMMENTS ON SURVEY LENGTH/FREQUENCY

Total of 10 comments

There were a mix of comments in this section, with a couple indicating that they would prefer 2-3 comprehensive questionnaires a year (rather than 2-3 shorter questionnaires), while other comments indicated that more frequent, shorter questionnaires would be better. Some also indicated a preference for single subject questionnaires. A few comments also mentioned the advantage of more frequent questionnaires in terms of being able to react more quickly.

"2 or 3 a year gives City Voice an opportunity for greater agility in tailoring the questionnaires to very current topics and particularly topics that may have arisen unexpectedly. I'd be happy to respond 2 or 3 times a year and for the questionnaire to continue to be a bit longer. It's a great opportunity to have a say and make your voice heard even from the comfort of your own home."
"I would prefer to focus on shorter single subject questionnaires and have several per year"

Q2 - COMMENTS ON HOW EASY/DIFFICULT THE QUESTIONNAIRE IS TO COMPLETE

Total of 34 comments

A number of comments indicated that how easy or difficult they found the survey to complete depending on their **knowledge/awareness** of the topic.

"I only find them difficult if I have limited experience of the subject but still want to give an opinion"

"They are often on issues I have no experience of and there is not always an appropriate option. I would prefer to be asked questions about how to improve the city but the questions are usually nothing like I had expected to answer."

Other comments indicated the question wording/format could make answering difficult.

"Having to rank an answer can be a pain i.e. the very easy/easy/acceptable/difficult/very difficult type questions"

"I sometimes find that none of the answer options really capture my thoughts."

"The language used can sometimes be confusing. More plain English please"

A few comments indicated that the **length** of the questionnaire was an issue.

"Have previously completed questionnaires and during, the page has refreshed or something else has occurred on my phone which has reset the survey. An option to save as you go would be beneficial. Due to the amount of information I had typed, decided wasn't worth completing again in that instance so did not redo."

"Sometimes can take quite a long time to complete"

Q4 - COMMENTS ON RELEVANCE OF TOPICS

Total of 37 comments

A number of comments suggested that some of the topics were not relevant to them or they had little knowledge or interest in the topic.

"As I'm a disabled pensioner I'm not out too often so a lot of the questions are of no relevance to me"

"I understand that there is a desire to cover a broad range of topics. I find that I frequently cannot make a meaningful contribution due to lack of experience or awareness of some of the topics."

Other comments suggested that while the panelist did not necessarily find all the topics relevant, that this was not an issue/to be expected.

"Some will be more or less relevant depending on services used or interests."

"Topics cover a wide range of issues so it's unlikely everybody would find everything of interest or relevance to them."

Some comments suggested that the topics in the questionnaires were either not what they expected would be asked about and/or not what they should be asked about. Some also commented that the questions were repetitive.

"I just feel the topics are not what I expected to be asked about. I thought the City Voice would ask our opinions and get a feel for what the general public want or like but I often feel the topics are random and unconnected to my reason for signing up."

"I think some topics on more focussed issues would be helpful e.g. bus services, museums, parking, cycling lanes, insulation, public parks, beachfront development ...."

"They are too far removed from the man in the street fairly regularly."

"It seems to me the questions are repetitive and from memory concentrate on modes of transport. They are predetermined and not always relevant to residents. More open questions along the lines of "what is important to you". As an example, I deplore the loss of trees in some residential areas, but the questions are always along the lines of do I feel safe in local parks."

Q6 - COMMENTS ON HOW PANELLISTS WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE COMMUNICATION FROM CV

Total of 5 comments

Mix of comments – one suggesting email notifications, another a Facebook/Instagram page, a third saying it would be useful to know when a questionnaire was coming, the fourth was someone who was not confident with 'tech' and the fifth was a broader comment about ACC.

Total of 242 comments
This was a completely open text question and received the most comments of any question. Comments are split by theme.

Feedback and being listened to

One of the main themes that came up was around the issue of whether panellists felt their **views were listened to** and the importance of **feedback** to let people see how their views impacted decisions.

"Maybe people think that their responses don't matter too much. Show people what use is made of the their thoughts."
"Give us feedback to encourage us to think our ideas are useful."
"I would like to hear the overall findings of the survey and planned actions, if any following from that. It does feel as if we're contributing but are never aware of what difference, if any, had resulted from the consultation. If it's merely an exercise to "tick the box" to say consultation has taken place, this is of no benefit to people taking the time to complete the surveys and this may be a major contributing factor to loss of contributors. If there was some measurable and acknowledged change or new idea, this would I feel encourage participation."
"Maybe if there was evidence that these survey have impacted decision making process. Even if was the survey suggest is being rejected maybe the reason why"
"Improved information sharing, during the year and updates on outcomes."

Some comments suggested **disillusionment**, feeling that their views did not matter or were just a 'tick-box' exercise.

"Act on the information received on the surveys. I have been completing the City Voice for many years and it does not seem to make any difference."
"People are possibly disillusioned about what difference they can make through surveys. The city council seems to do its own thing anyway"
"The drop in response may be due to the fact that many people feel that the views of ordinary people are simply ignored as local government (IE city councillors) are more interested in pushing their respective political viewpoints forward."
"It feels like a tick box exercise to demonstrate local consultation. The opportunity to influence the contents of the questionnaires plus meaningful feedback along the lines of "you said we did" would be a basic starting point for me."

Some panellists suggested specific ways of providing feedback or the type feedback that they would find useful.
"I suggest sending updates on the current Plan and progress which would provide more relevance to the Survey. Information on the impacts on the Plan due to survey contributions, important to feel taking survey plays actual part in decisions and not ignored. It may be able to have a web site to access which shows survey answers against Plan targets and progress, this may get younger people interested as well."

"I suggest you provide more feed back and information in relation to who receives the data gleaned from the surveys and what they do with that information, ie is it briefed to council officials or Councillors, what is the process of progressing suggested improvements and dealing with constructive criticism of council actions affecting the community."

Questionnaires

A number of panellists commented on different aspects of the questionnaire. Broadly, panellists seemed supportive of **shorter and/or more frequent** questionnaires.

"Make shorter, more frequent and easier answers. Some will not understand the questions and can be confusing."

"Reducing the length and maybe sending out surveys quarterly? Also reducing the number of questions I feel would make it easier to concentrate when completing the survey."

"Definitely make shorter and easier, hopefully that would encourage engagement"

"I feel it would be better to have several surveys per year. This would enable those creating surveys to ask about any current issues as well as general issues"

A few panellists also commented on the **wording/format** of the questions:

"maybe shorter surveys. clearer questions. sometimes I can't give a proper answer because haven't an exact option to chose."

"I sometimes get the feeling that: questions are asked just so officers can say they consulted the public, and limited-response options are designed to elicit approval and limit any potentially critical feedback."

"Sometimes I think it is very repetitive and quite long. The questions need to shorter and sharper."

Comments on questionnaire **topics** suggested a range of different views. While most of these indicated that they did not find the topics relevant, there were differences as to what they thought would be relevant.

"When I signed up I thought I would be able to help make a difference on things that interest me. But many of the questions being asked have no relevance to my life, so I don't feel I can offer an opinion."

"Make it about issues that are more 'local' i.e those impacting Bridge of Don, Cults, Kingswells etc..."

"I am one of the people who has not responded as much as I used to. That's because I have found the topics irrelevant and not what expected to answer. I don't feel I can give any meaningful answers to things I have no experience of. I think the City Voice should stick to asking questions on what people like/dislike and what type of improvements they suggest for Aberdeen city. That is what I thought it was about but it doesn't usually feel that is what it is currently for. I think people would be more likely to complete the questionnaire if they felt they could meaningfully participate and the questions should be aimed at the general public, and not so specific in nature."

"We seem to be asked the same questions over and over"

A number of panellists indicated they would prefer **specific subject/more focussed** surveys:

"Maybe specific subject surveys so you would only complete surveys relavent to you. For example, I've no children so surveys on schools are not applicable to me."

"More frequent single subject questionnaires, I personally would be happy with 1 per month."

A few panellists indicated that a **paper** option should be available.

"Make the surveys available as paper version not everyone uses the internet"

"I have filled in these surveys for many years. The last time I filled it in, it took me a long time, so I pressed the button to "save and come back later". When I returned to the survey it was blank again, so I spent another forty minutes filling it in again, pressed the "save and come back later" button and again it was all blank when I returned to it. At this point I gave up, but found this discouraging, I preferred the paper surveys, but realise that this is wasteful."

Increasing awareness about the city voice/broaden participation

A number of panellists commented that increased **awareness** of the City Voice along with **broadening participation** might encourage people to respond and some gave ideas for how that could be achieved.

"None of my friends have heard about City Voice, so maybe more awareness needed . Put more on social media to encourage people to join the panel"
"Create a CV member ethos, include CV members in regular communication despatches demonstrate where possible where CV responses have helped inform and shape decisions/strategy - appreciating sensitivity here but there must be some non sensitive examples."
"Social media, notices on community notice boards and community shop's notice boards (Co-op, Sainsbury etc). Organisations staff pages would be good too."
"Find ways to encourage new people to participate."
"Put requests out via emails to schools and work places etc as part of a recruitment drive to make the wider public aware. Make some kind of information poster/ post which visually clearly makes obvious what it is, what is required and how it helps the city."

Incentives

A number of panellists suggested using **incentives** of some sort to encourage panellists to respond.

"Rewards always make people take notice. Free coffee or similar etc."
"some incentives eg. entered into a prize draw; coupons; vouchers"
"Small prize draws as the logic of collective action states that at the base of all community engagement activity is "what's in it for me""

Other

A number of other suggestions to increase response including use of **reminders**, or including panel members in the **design of the questionnaire**.

GENERAL COMMENTS ON CITY VOICE

Total of 58 comments.
This was a completely open text question.

Feedback and being listened to
Again, one of the main themes was around whether panellists' **views were being listened** to, the importance of **feedback** and general **disillusionment** (with CV but also more broadly with the Council…)
"Great that we get the results of findings but I don't recall seeing what influence/decisions are made based on the panel - what is the point of me doing this????"

"Also you probably have less replies as like me I have lost all faith in the council and that they have any interest in doing what the residents of Aberdeen want. Majority voted for a raised UTG, council decided not to. Residents wanted a lovely Marischal Square with an actual proper square, instead we were given an ugly glass monstrosity that nobody wanted. What is the point in contributing if the council don't listen or care to hear our opinion"

Questionnaires

There were some comments about the **questionnaires/formatting** of questions – some indicating they felt they couldn't give the answer they wanted because of the question formatting.

"I know that it is more processing work for you, but I feel each multiple choice question should have a space for comments, because sometimes the format does not allow me to express my views."
"At the end of each survey should be box to give opinions, doubts or explanation."
"I have sometimes felt too busy to respond, maybe if it looks more attractive and catches my interest it would help."

Topics

There were also a few comments in this section relating to the **topics** included in the CV surveys.

"A wider range of topics would be interesting and more inclusive for all."
"Include current and on going issues which affect us all"
"All subjects are important and worthy of an opinion test but perhaps slip in some fringe lighter issues?"

Broader panel/more engagement

A small number of comments in this section suggested the need for broadening engagement/participation.

"In my experience most participants do this because already have/had experience of civic engagement so it's the same old voices chiming out rubber stamping what's gone before. I put myself in that camp. This format is tired and we need to find a better way of communicating with our citizens especially the younger ones. Truthfully we need to prioritise engagement more give it better/ smarter funding get young and really young ones engaged. Can't keep listening to/engaging with white middle class crinklies like me."

Positive comments

A few comments indicated that they find taking part in the City Voice interesting/useful/rewarding.

"I enjoy getting insights into the plans of the council and other bodies eg police/fire brigade. These may be available elsewhere but not put in front of your face."
"As a former Council employee of a number of years I find City Voice a useful tool to try to influence the Council members to make decisions that improve our quality of life in Aberdeen."
"I have found it an interesting experience which often raises issues about which I was not, or only partially, aware. That encourages research to find out more which is rewarding in itself."

Appendix 5

SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK

Three focus groups were held with the following groups:
City Voice Panel – 9/02/22
Aberdeen City Youth Council – 23/02/22
Equalities Participation Network – 24/02/22

What do you think of the idea of City Voice?

- Generally a good idea. Can sometimes feel a bit sterile - mainly multiple choice questions - questions can be pretty similar.
- If taken from a wide range of groups, diverse, then it can be a good thing. It gives us a good up to date understanding of a broad range of views
- Only one young person within the ACYC had heard of City Voice before the information was circulated on the site prior to the session. The YP who had heard of it used it in his workplace, but prior to this had not heard of it before.
- Mixed response from young people with some saying they were unsure of the purpose and what it could be used for, whilst the person who used City Voice in their work found it extremely useful regarding data.

We have many people on the panel who don't respond to the surveys. What do you think would make them more likely to respond to the survey once it's circulated?

- There is no attempt to engage the panellist and so no sense of ownership is built hence the questionnaires are not that high priority for lots of people.
- The emails containing link for the questionnaire are very bland, not the most appealing, eye -catching. Maybe too much council speak which does not necessarily resonate with how people view the city?
- Branding on the web page was unappealing, as a "swipe" generation the page did not capture attention. No graphics or images to make it stand out. It is too busy with lots of wording. The wording is not youth friendly, more images and less words are needed, needs to be more interactive. Needs to be more accessible from the first click onto the page.
- How do you determine if the questionnaires are completed by a diverse people group? Younger generation may not be part of this form as some ethnic minorities. Currently we know more elderly people complete the questionnaire.
- More publicity - friends have never heard of it. Greater presence on different platforms/use social media. Still use online link to complete the survey but information about the CV should be more broadly available.
- More feedback on what results are used for. Publicise the results - use civic spaces/public notice boards/social media. Get the results out there - provide

opportunities to feedback on the results - "this is what we found - what do you think? Do you agree?" May encourage more people to join/participate.

- There are lots of 'hot' topics around just now (e.g. pedestrianisation of Union Street, Union Terrace Gardens etc.). The inclusion of topics that a lot of people are interested in would encourage people to complete the questionnaire. At the moment the topics covered seem pretty generic or not relevant or out of date - not what I am interested in or what I thought I would be getting asked about when joining the CV.

Suggestions for how this could be improved

- Large social media push on youth friendly sites (Instagram, snapchat and Tic Tok) to make it appealing, raise awareness across all youth sectors in the city.
- The use of the term "Tic Toc generation" was used here where its is fast paced and swiping is second nature. Items need to grab you in the first 5 seconds. Surveys need to be snappy, interactive and engaging.
- Direct contact with community groups to introduce city voice, the need for their input and get representation from them to complete the questionnaires, this way, it is more balanced.
- Use of more accessible digital platforms like WhatsApp, rather than email and paperwork. A WhatsApp group will be better received and easier to engage and complete the questionnaire.
- Reduce the length of the questionnaire or break into segments where people can choose what they are interested.
- Include engaging content to build ownership within the panellist, maybe one-off virtual meetings too.
- Shorter surveys, different themes, 7 minutes or so, once every month or two months. Focus on one or two topics - allows faster feedback.
- Translating into some languages, e.g. Polish, and having an audio version would make it more accessible.
- Getting feedback from services about how the info is used will be really important
- Would be good to see more of an element of active participation, e.g. face to face meetings, sub-panels. Currently you fill in a questionnaire and can feel like it goes into a black hole - takes ages for feedback to come out. Also, when you fill in a questionnaire you know what your views are but you don't know what other people think. In a smaller panel you would get to hear other viewpoints and it would provide more interesting/useful feedback.
- Information Session in school, sessions from youth workers.
- One example that was provided that the group felt was a great example of how to interact with YP was the Lockdown Lowdown survey carried out by Young Scot - [LockdownLowdown - Breakdown of Key Findings - Young Scot Corporate](). A reward of Young Scot Reward points for completing the survey was seen as appealing to certain age groups.

How important is it to offer an alternative to digital?

- Using public spaces, like libraries, where people can fill it out. Not everyone able to leave home, important to have a paper option.
- Encourage online but should probably still be an option to have a paper copy. Increase accessibility for those who don't have access to or are not comfortable using digital tools. Make copies available in places like libraries/supermarkets.
- Nowadays there can't be many people who don't have access to a smart phone - even a lot of older people will have a smart phone and know how to use it (cited her parents and elderly neighbour). There should be enough older people who do have access to digital to ensure that demographic is covered in the panel.