

Feedback on the 17th Citizens' Panel Survey

Dear Panel member,

Thank you for continuing to support the Citizens' Panel for East Renfrewshire, and particular thanks for the very strong response to the recent 17th Panel survey. The Panel is a really useful way for the Council to hear people's views, and your feedback helps us make sure that we continue to improve our services and meet the needs and expectations of our residents.

We do however want to make sure that communication through the Panel is not just "one way". This newsletter gives you some feedback on what we found out from the 17th survey, and more importantly how the Council is using your responses to shape our services and activities.

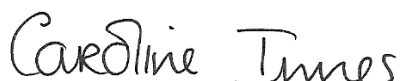
The 17th East Renfrewshire Citizens' Panel survey covered a range of topics relating to life in the area, such as:

- » Your experience of living in East Renfrewshire...including issues affecting your quality of life, community safety, and your views on our support for older people;
- » Your views on local priorities... including the main issues for local communities, particular issues for you and your family, and priorities for the Council;
- » Your views on poverty and financial issues, and how we should prevent local problems... including how well you are managing financially, and feedback on the help available;
- » Your views on the Council and its services...including the quality of Council services, value for money, and Council attributes; and
- » How the Council communicates with local people...including information on services, performance information, and electronic communication.

This newsletter highlights the key findings across each of these topics. If you are interested in reading more about the survey results you can access the full report at: <http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/citizenspanel>.

If you have any questions about the Panel you can contact Craigforth – who manage the Citizens' Panel on our behalf – on freephone 0800 027 2245 or email ERCP@craigforth.co.uk, or you can contact Leanne Dunlop at the Council's Policy & Improvement Unit on 0141 577 3660 or policyandimprovement@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely



Caroline Innes, Deputy Chief Executive

Over the following pages we provide a summary of what you told us through the survey, and how the Council is responding to your views...

Findings from the 17th East Renfrewshire Citizens' Panel survey

Your views on...Life in East Renfrewshire

The survey asked for your views on various aspects of life in East Renfrewshire. The key messages that came through the survey were:

- » Panel members are very positive in their views of East Renfrewshire - 93% of respondents were satisfied with the area as a place to live. This has remained very stable with no significant change over the past 4 years.
- » East Renfrewshire's good reputation and educational opportunities were the most common reasons for choosing to live in the area. East Renfrewshire's safe/clean environment has also increased in importance.
- » Panel members generally feel they have a good quality of life, most scoring this as 8 or more out of 10.
- » Just over thought that "we live in a community that supports older people" (52%). However there was some uncertainty - 39% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. More of you (56%) were uncertain on whether it is easy to get clear information on support for older people.

Our response to your views

We are delighted that such a high percentage of residents continue to be so positive about the area. We have continued to implement our eight-year plan (2009-2017) to further improve our education services. We have also opened our flagship state of the art Isobel Mair School and are working on several new artificial football pitches at Eastwood High School, St Ninians and St Lukes, as well as an improved pitch at the Millennium Park, Waterfoot Road.

To maintain our safe and clean environment, improvements are also being made at Cowan Park, Barrhead. We have secured Heritage Lottery Funding for Rouken Glen Park to upgrade the Pavilion, restore Glen Path, improve our boating pond and events area, provide a new play area and redesign the walled garden. We have also organised community events such as litter picks and initiatives in local schools and we are on track to be the highest performing Council in Scotland in terms of recycling.

Your responses highlighted some clear views around our services for older people. In response we are investing in our elderly residents to ensure they remain as safe and independent as possible by providing more Telecare health related aids for the home, promoting our community alarm service, and helping our older people get back skills they may have lost because of poor health or disability through our Reablement Service. We have also relaunched our Council website and are developing a Reshaping Care website.

Your views on...Local Priorities

There has been relatively little change in views on local priorities since 2007/2008, and Panel members' views on priorities for East Renfrewshire are clear:

- » Residents having access to a suitable job and education opportunities within East Renfrewshire.
- » Crime & antisocial behaviour, education and roads should be the Council's main priorities.
- » Around a third think that anti social behaviour and crime levels have increased, and there is a desire for "more visible" community safety services in local neighbourhoods.

Our response to your views

We are investing money and resources to improve our children's education services further and to stimulate economic development and jobs in the area. We have introduced our WorkER, 'I love Clarkston' and 'Place to Grow' campaigns. These have already helped local businesses grow and aim to attract new investment to the area. Jobs and business opportunities will also be created through the regeneration of Shanks Park, the Glasgow Road Corridor, the opening of ASDA in Barrhead, and through the extension of our Graduate Internship programme and the Family Firm scheme.

As for our roads, we have increased our budget this year by £1.75M to undertake more carriageway resurfacing schemes.

On reducing crime and anti social behaviour we will continue to work to reduce levels of crime through joint working with our police and community wardens, educational programmes at schools and home checks, and by providing additional community safety services including two mobile CCTV cameras.

Your views on...Poverty and Financial Issues

The survey asked for your views on whether tackling poverty in East Renfrewshire should be a priority for the Council and partners:

- » A majority identified this as a very high priority (54%) and only 1 in 20 as a low priority.
- » Just over half of you were managing well financially at the moment. However, the cost of living, financial concerns, and wider concerns about employment and the economic outlook remain significant issues for a substantial number of Panel members.
- » Relatively few of you had used Council services to discuss your financial issues. A number said that they might have used some of these services if they had been aware of them.

Our response to your views

We advertised our Money Advice and Income Maximisation Services by delivering leaflets and posters to all schools, Council buildings, health centres, libraries and community groups. We are also improving access to the income maximisation and money advice services online. To help our elderly residents we provide a Garden Assistance Scheme and Mr Diggitt service to help with gardening which is free of charge. We also offer a range of free IT classes through our library services.

Your views on...the Council and Council Services

The survey was also an opportunity to give your views on East Renfrewshire Council – both as an organisation and as a provider of local services. Your views highlighted that:

- » *Helpful, customer focused, reputable and professional staff* were the values mostly associated with the Council. Most also felt that we are a modern organisation.
- » The majority of you were positive about Council services, 74% being satisfied overall.
- » Fewer Panel members think that services have improved over the last year, most feeling that there has been no change in service standards.
- » Education services, libraries, theatre/arts and adult education/training are the highest rated Council services by users – well over 90% rated these as “very good” or “good”.
- » Just over half felt that Council services were good value for money and this has fallen since last year.

Our response to your views

We have continued to make sure that our services are efficient whilst retaining our excellent level of customer service. To maintain our reputation as a modern organisation we will also continue to develop our online services. This means that our residents can contact the Council through our website in a way which is more convenient and cost effective for them as well as the Council.

We have noted that fewer of you feel that Council services provide good value for money. We strive to ensure that we are an efficient Council and we continue to invest in the services important to residents. Despite huge budgetary pressures and a freeze in council tax levels there has been no significant change in the levels of satisfaction with Council services over the last 4 years. Indeed, users of our individual services report higher levels of satisfaction compared to last year. We plan each year to meet efficiency targets to ensure that resources are maximised and your money is well spent. Further details will be available in our Annual Efficiency statement published in August 2012.

Your views on...how we Communicate with Residents

We also asked for your views on your experiences and preferences on how the Council communicates with residents:

- » A clear majority (85%) preferred to contact the Council by telephone. The Council's website and email were each preferred by around half.
- » To get information about the Council the majority of you consulted our ER magazine.
- » Preference for using the Council webpage has increased being the single preferred means of accessing information by nearly half of all respondents (48%).
- » A minority of members (around 1 in 5) had experienced problems contacting the Council.

Our response to your views

Our contact centre is open from 8am until 6pm and we are developing ways to ensure 24/7 online access for our high volume services. As most of you get information about the Council from our ER magazine, we have changed its publication dates so that each edition includes as much up-to-date seasonal news as possible, including information on forthcoming events and activities. We are also developing an online ER so residents can hear about news and events occurring in between editions.

To meet the demand for information online we have made significant improvements to our website including an improved search facility, 'What's On' information and an easy to use online payment service. We are also using social media such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate more instantly with customers and are working on making our website easier to view on mobile devices.

Your views on...Preventative Services

The survey also asked questions on the ways in which the Council should meet the national focus on providing preventative services for tackling social problems within communities:

- » 44% agreed that the Council should "use more resources on preventative services, even if this means reducing the current levels of existing services." However nearly a third did not have a clear view, and a quarter disagreed.
- » Panel members were clearer on which service areas should be prioritised as part of the focus on prevention, crime & antisocial behaviour again rating as the top priority. Issues such as good health, access to health services and care for older people also ranked highly.

Our response to your views

The Council and its community planning partners have agreed to help grow the local economy and reduce poverty and disadvantage. In the coming months and years we'll be doing even more to try and prevent problems before they occur. This will not only have a positive effect on our communities but will reduce the need to spend resources on fixing problems that could have been avoided.

On improving levels of health we implemented schemes such as Weigh to Go, Active Children Eating Smart and we will continue our focus on improving the lives of our younger children through our Early Years campaign. Our work in Reshaping Care for Older People also includes the new Telecare Responder Service, we now have three Advanced Nurse Practitioners working with our GP's and are helping our older people in a number of ways to enjoy an independent, active social life for as long as possible. We are also working to identify and provide support for those most likely to be affected by national Welfare Reform.

Any questions?

To find out more about the East Renfrewshire Citizens' Panel please contact **Leanne Dunlop, Policy & Improvement Unit**, East Renfrewshire Council on 0141 577 3075 or email policyandimprovement@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk - or you can visit the Panel website at <http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/citizenspanel>

For questions about survey results or Panel membership, please contact **Chris Thornton, Director, Craigforth** on 01786 448610 or email c.thornton@craigforth.co.uk