

Residents' Panel News



I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for agreeing to be part of the Waltham Forest Residents' Panel.

Joanne Mcareavey, Residents' Panel Manager

Why do we have a Panel?

The reason we have a panel is for the council to consult with the borough's residents on issues important to you, your community and the council.

It is very difficult for the council to ask everyone's views and of course not all residents are interested in taking part in such exercises. So, in order to obtain valuable information from the borough's residents, we ask the views of a sample of the population. A residents' panel is one of the best methods of ensuring that a large number of residents are consulted and that the members accurately represent the various groups within the community. You were asked personal questions about your age, gender, and ethnicity at the recruitment stage so that the structure of the panel matches the proportions of these groups within the whole population of the borough.

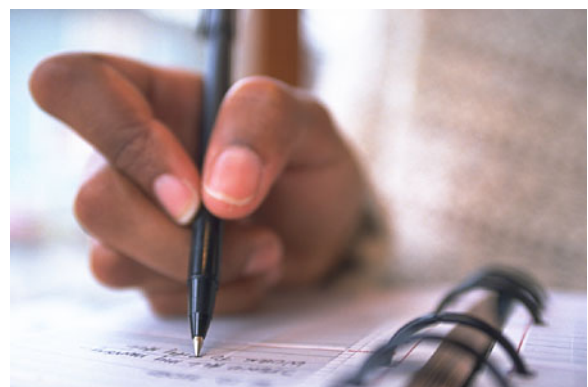
How does it work?

There has been a residents' panel in existence in Waltham Forest since 1999. However, good practice tells us that after a few years it is time to start afresh with a

new panel. This is because people move out of the borough or move house, get older, change their jobs and so on, and gradually the panel becomes less representative.

This is why we employed a company called BMG to recruit you and your fellow panel members. They are experienced in carrying out such an exercise effectively and managing a residents' panel. Using an outside company also means that your personal details are kept separate from the council that is asking you the questions.

We will contact you about council services, up to five times a year. There will be at least two surveys annually and some of you may be asked to participate in focus groups. Some individuals aged between 18-24 have been asked to opt for e-mail consultation rather than receive postal consultations, and may receive surveys particularly aimed at finding out the views of young people in the borough. If you are interested in receiving information via e-mail please contact me.



What do we ask?

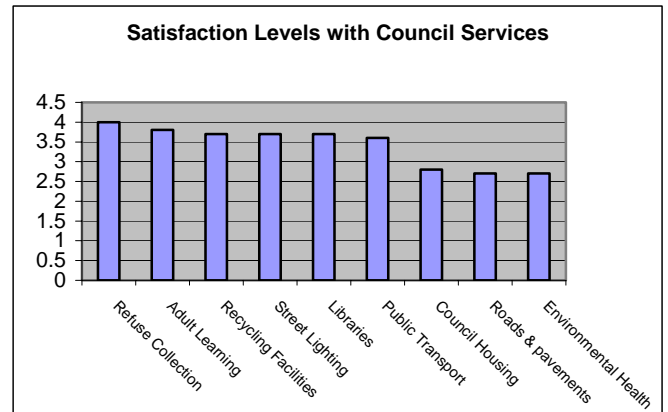
To give you some idea of the type of research we have already done, here is a reminder of the areas we have covered in surveys, and some results from the first survey.

The first survey was used to recruit the panel so had some questions about you in it. But in addition we used it to ask some questions about your general satisfaction levels, your views on community safety and on the ways in which you communicate with the council.

Key Headlines from the recruitment survey

- The majority of residents are fairly satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live, with 41% of the total sample endorsing this.
- Residents are generally satisfied with the quality of council services in the area with refuse collection, opportunities for adult learning, recycling facilities, street lighting, libraries and public transport all scoring well.
- Three areas where residents are currently dissatisfied with services are the repair of roads and pavements, environmental health (e.g. noise, nuisance) and council housing.
- Feelings towards the council are generally more positive than negative, with 39% of respondents being fairly or very satisfied, compared to 36% being fairly or very dissatisfied.

The table below summarises the level of satisfaction with Council services as a “mean score”. A score of 1 indicates very dissatisfied, 2 fairly dissatisfied, 3 neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4 fairly satisfied, 5 very satisfied.



- 34% of respondents said they had been a victim of crime in the last 12 months. The two most prevalent crimes are ‘having your car broken into/damaged and having something stolen from it’ (39%) and ‘being insulted or pestered while in the street or in a public place’ (33%). 56% of those who said they had been a victim of a crime reported it to the police.
- 69% of the total sample said they had made contact with the council in the last year. The main reasons for contact were to request a service (25%) or report a problem (24%).
- 41% of residents feel that the council keeps them fairly well informed about the services and benefits provided.

Some of you have also been very busy participating in focus groups on crime and meeting with the Audit Commission inspectors to feed in your views on the Council.

The focus group on crime identified the following areas as priorities that you wish the council to concentrate on:

- Violent crime
- Anti-social behaviour
- Drugs and alcohol
- Youth crime

This will be used as part of a wider consultation on community safety, to frame the future policy of the borough’s crime and disorder reduction partnership, SafetyNet.


We will not have details of the outcome of the Corporate Assessment inspection until

later in December, so we will provide you with an update in the next newsletter.


The second survey that you received recently includes questions about council tax levels for 2005-06, the new Community Strategy, public health, social services and schools. The results of this will be published in a newsletter in the new year.

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