

Residents' Panel News Issue 5 – October 2007



Dear Member,

Welcome to the fifth edition of the Waltham Forest Residents' Panel newsletter. This newsletter updates you with information about different activities, provides feedback on surveys and other consultations undertaken and lets you know what we plan to do with the results. Attached to this newsletter is a questionnaire which I hope you can take the time to complete. We are seeking your views on a range of issues including what it is like to live in Waltham Forest, the introduction of Compulsory Recycling, Climate Change, receiving information about Council Services and contacting the Council.



Residents' Panel Manager – Jo McAreevey

Refreshing The Panel

This year we refreshed the Panel membership as it had been operational for three years and it was time to replace some members with new members to ensure it continues to be representative of the population of the borough and that participation levels remain high. We have now replaced a third of the panel with 495 new members and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for agreeing to be part of the Waltham Forest Residents' Panel.

Results from recent panel activities

Thank you to all of you who managed to return the last survey in May 2007 which in addition to demographic questions to recruit new panel members included questions on Sports & Leisure, the Environment and Community Safety.

Below are some of the key headlines from the survey.

Sports and Leisure

You were asked how many times in the last seven days you had undertaken moderate or vigorous exercise for at least thirty minutes. Amongst the total sample, 28% said once or twice, whilst 20% said no times at all and 20% said three times. Eight percent said four times and 9% five times. 12% said that they had exercised more than five times in the last seven days.

You were also asked about your usage of sports clubs or leisure centres. 18% of respondents indicated that they were members or regular users of Council-owned clubs/leisure centres, 14% said that they were members or regular users of other sports clubs or leisure centres, whilst 64% indicated that they were not members or regular users of any sports clubs or leisure centres. A list of facilities owned by the Council was provided to help answer this question.

Barriers and Motivators to Usage of Council Owned Leisure Centres

Those of you indicating that you do not use a Council owned leisure centre (including those who do not use any) were asked to provide the reasons for this. The most popular three reasons were 'I don't feel they are for me' (26%), 'I don't have the time to use one' (25%) and 'Too expensive' (23%).

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13% of total sample said 'Poor facilities' whilst only 7% said 'too far away' and 6% said 'Poor customer service'

The information from this survey will be used to inform the outcome of a Service Review into the borough's leisure services which is currently underway and is likely to include targeted action to engage with hard to reach groups.

For more information contact:

Clive.morton@walthamforest.gov.uk or visit the Council's website: www.walthamforest.gov.uk

The Environment

The next section of the survey covered environment enforcement issues. This was part of the consultation on a review into the Enforcement powers of the Council. The aim of the review was to ensure the Council and its key partners made full and proactive use of powers available to meet local priorities including reducing enviro-crime and anti-social behaviour.

Prompted with a list of issues, you were asked to select the three issues that you would like to see dealt with as a priority in the borough. Littering was mentioned by the highest proportion of respondents (70%), followed by fly tipping (45%) and dog fouling (44%) and then excessive waste in front gardens or private land (37%).

As a result of this and other consultations the Council will be extending the powers of Street Wardens to allow them to issue fixed penalty notices for a range of anti- social behaviour. This new scheme will be initially introduced in the Walthamstow High Street area during November 2007 with a view to introducing it across the whole borough by March 2008.

For more information contact:

Robin.tuddenham@walthamforest.gov.uk

Community Safety

Respondents were asked how much a fear of crime in the area influences their quality of life. Answers were recorded on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicated that fear of crime had a big influence and 5 no influence at all. This question and others in this survey relating to community safety were also asked of the Waltham Forest Panel in 2005. The results show that on average fear of crime does not impact on the quality of life of local residents. However in this year's findings, older people were more likely to consider fear of crime an influence on their quality of life than their younger counterparts.

You were also asked how safe or unsafe you feel when outside in Waltham Forest after dark, 44% of respondents say that they feel unsafe, 21% feel neither safe nor unsafe, whilst 32% say that they do feel safe. As in the 2005 survey, in every scenario, respondents felt safer during the day than they did after dark. The majority of you feel safe in your own homes after dark, (76% compared to 75% in 2005).

The top five crimes that concerned you most were:

- Street Robbery (79%)
- Drug related crime (65%)
- Having your home burgled (65%)
- Having a car or other vehicle broken into (60%)
- Drunk people causing a problem at night (58%)

These concerns were identical to the ones expressed in 2005.

In order to address some of the issues raised in the survey we will be:

- Getting a breakdown on a ward by ward basis of the issues that are of most concern
- Targeting wards with residents who have been identified as having higher levels of fear of crime to offer support

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- Developing a new initiative to tackle concerns on anti social behaviour on a ward by ward basis
- Use the information to develop plans with our partners to focus on areas and communities identified as most affected by crime

Other Consultation

Borough-wide general Performance Survey

A borough-wide survey of over 1,100 randomly selected residents took place between September and December 2006. The aim of the survey was to assess residents' satisfaction with the services provided by the Council and compare these against a similar survey conducted in 2003/04. All local authorities are required to conduct this type of survey every three years.

Some key highlights include:

- Overall satisfaction with the service provided by the Council has improved from 42% in 2003/04 to 45% in 2006/07
- Satisfaction with complaint handling has improved from 27% in 2003/04 to 29% in 2006/07
- Satisfaction with cleanliness has improved from 47% in 2003/04 to 61% in 2006/07
- Satisfaction with Waste collection has improved from 47% in 2003/04 to 61% in 2006/07
- Satisfaction with Sports/leisure facilities has improved from 47% in 2003/04 to 55% in 2006/07

State of the Borough Debate

The Council's annual State of the Borough Debate is an opportunity for partners and residents to join elected Members in debating the key issues of concern for the borough.

This year's State of the Borough Debate brought over 100 young people together with their councillors to take part in activities relating to the themes of citizenship and community. The event formed part of the Council's One Community Campaign, which celebrates the strength and diversity of Waltham Forest and aims to promote community pride. By directly engaging and involving our young people and giving them opportunities to discuss the issues they find important openly and honestly with their councillors and decision-makers, they were encouraged to take more active roles within their local communities.

The workshops encouraged young people to think about the ways they could take action on important issues. They fed back that they had learnt that they should speak up about their views, get involved, and contact their councillors. At the end of the event, one of the young people commented "I really enjoyed the evening as I got to meet my local councillors and find out more about politics, which is something that more children need to understand."

Further Information

This newsletter provides a summary of the feedback that you have provided and the action the Council has taken/ will be taking to ensure that the information is used to improve the services we provide.

For more detail on the results of the May 2007 survey and other consultations go to the Council's website www.walthamforest.gov.uk Alternatively, you can request details from Joanne McAreavey on tel 020 8496 4599 or e mail:

Joanne.mcareavey@walthamforest.gov.uk

Thanks...

Once again I would like to thank you for participating in the surveys and focus groups. All the information has been passed to managers within the Council for action. This information

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will be used to inform future Council policy development. I will keep you informed in future newsletters of the progress made.