

Your **VIEWS** of Your Council

WELCOME to the first edition of the Angus Citizens' Panel News giving you feedback and information from each survey.

Your views are very important to the elected members and employees of Angus Council as we work towards greater citizen involvement in planning relevant, reliable and cost-effective services for the county. The responses from the Citizens' Panel will play an important part in helping to inform and influence future plans of the council.

Over 800 responses were received for the first survey where you were asked for your views of the services provided by the council and your level of satisfaction with them. Many thanks to all those of you who took the time to complete the questionnaire and whilst satisfied with this 60% response rate we will continue to aim for 100% in an effort to ensure that the findings most accurately reflect the views of the Angus community.

In general terms it appears you are happy with the way Angus Council is carrying out business on your behalf. However there is always room for improvement and there are clearly areas where we can do better. You will find some information on planned improvements outlined in this newsletter.

The information you have provided in this first questionnaire will be vital to us as we look at how we consult you, how we modernise the way we do business and decentralise our activities and services.

Thank you once again for your commitment to the Citizens' Panel, I hope you enjoy reading more about the findings of the questionnaire.



Sandy Watson, Chief Executive

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HOW WE communicate with you

ALTHOUGH 90% of you say you are interested in the council's plans fewer than four in ten actively seek this information at present. As the majority have never read any plans and less than half of you are aware that you can comment on them there is obviously a job to do to make information more accessible and available.

The council currently uses many ways to keep you informed of plans and performance and we will continue to explore new means of promoting service information. Systems are also being put in place to co-ordinate consultation on plans to make sure you aren't bombarded with questions about a whole host of things all at the same time.

Those of you who indicated you'd like access to council minutes will be pleased to note that you'll soon be able to request copies from ACCESSLine or download them from our web site as well as viewing them at the library as has always been the case.

What's Important To You?

EVERYTHING, seems to be the answer to that! Not surprisingly education tops the table, with 99% giving it high importance. The same goes for essential services such as refuse collection and roadways.

It is good to know that the services provided by Angus Council are important to the overwhelming majority of you. However the challenge for local authorities lies in not only providing services that people need and want in the right place at the right time but also providing value for money within a set budget.

That is why it is important to know what your priorities are to help us shape future plans of the council. Your comments will be taken account of in any future discussions about the services we provide and how they are provided.

Having YOUR say

ONLY one in five of you has ever formally provided feedback on services although 86% think services could be improved if it was easier to make comments. We'll take account of this as we review our customer systems.

Two thirds of you currently relay any comments via your local councillor, and whilst it is one of the most popular methods of making your views known we have also noted your willingness to use a wide range of ways of passing comment.

Your TOP 10

YOUR responses show that the vast majority of you are pleased with the services you use. The top ten services that you are either happy or very happy with are:

- 1 Nursery schools
- 2 Concessionary fares schemes
- 3 Libraries
- 4 Primary Schools
- 5 Recycling facilities
- 6 Museums and Art Galleries
- 7 Refuse collection
- 8 Adult social services
- 9 Leisure/sports centres
- 10 Special refuse uplifts

At the other end of the scale around a third of you are unhappy with road and pavement maintenance and just under half are happy with council tax collection. Further investigation is obviously needed to find out more about the reasons for this apparent dissatisfaction and we will be looking into this in some detail over the coming months.

How you want to contact the council...

ONE of the clearest messages to emerge from the survey is your desire to have available many ways of making contact with the council.

Libraries remain very popular and are valued as a way to access information but perhaps more surprising is the growing number of you who have welcomed the arrival of email as an additional means of contacting us and we have taken on board the comments about the speed and quality of responses email users have had.

The telephone remains the preferred means of contact but some of you expressed a degree of frustration about finding the person you need to speak to. Fortunately ACCESSLine appears to be starting to address this issue.

This relatively new 'one-stop' telephone service offers a direct line for general telephone enquiries and has a tracking system to ensure your query is dealt with efficiently and effectively. Now in its second year of operation plans and proposals for ACCESSLine include extended hours and the introduction of booking and payment facilities for hall lets and theatre tickets.

All of the comments made about response times will be used in the ongoing development of the council's Customer Care Strategy.

information @angus

THE fact that 40% of you are willing to use email to contact the council reflects the increasing popularity and accessibility of Internet technology. However although the council is committed to the development and improvement of services available via the Internet and

email it will still be an additional facility for service users, complementing the traditional means of contact. Greater promotion of the web site is already underway and this will increase as more and more services become available on-line.