

# Your Moray Citizens' Panel

## Newsletter No. 4 August 2008

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Moray Community Planning Partnership would like to thank all members of the Citizens' Panel for making this such a successful venture. Originally planned to have a membership of 850, the recruitment campaign established a panel of over 1200, which reflects the enthusiasm of Moray residents to participate in the consultation process.

The Panel allows consultation on a scale never previously attempted, providing valuable public perceptions and opinions about a wide range of services delivered across Moray. The surveys undertaken have had excellent response rates and we are very grateful to Panel members for taking the time to respond to our questions.

This newsletter is the fourth in the series and provides feedback to Panel members on the following surveys: Building Stronger Communities and Contacting Local Agencies. The newsletter acts as a vehicle for dealing with topics arising from this important research and in this edition we have responded to the issues you raised.

Full survey results and analysis can be downloaded from the Community Planning Website, [www.yourmoray.org.uk](http://www.yourmoray.org.uk), by clicking on the Citizens' Panel button. I hope you find the newsletter both interesting and informative.

**George McIntyre,**  
Convener of The Moray Council  
Chair of The Moray Community Planning  
Partnership

## 2. BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES SURVEY RESULTS

This survey aimed to gauge your views and experiences on a variety of issues relating to the Community Planning theme of 'Building Stronger Communities'. Specific topic areas included: perceptions of the sense of community in your area; experience of community consultation and decision making; housing; adult learning opportunities; volunteering; and equal opportunities and access. The survey was well received with 742 responses, a response rate of 66%.

### A sense of community

**You Said** The two most important things for building a strong community were to have close friends and neighbours close by and to have a variety of facilities, activities and services including village halls and a number of clubs and societies available to local residents. The existence of well-equipped services and facilities and the opportunity to attend community groups and activities was the most commonly mentioned way to build strong community relationships.

**Our Reply** **Community Learning and Development:** It is perhaps not surprising that the sense of a strong community is more prevalent in small, remote rural communities who have more in common than residents in larger conurbations. There is a more transient population in large communities with RAF personnel and economic migrants making greater impacts in towns.

### Getting involved

**You Said** 49% of you indicated that you or someone in your household had been involved in consultation or community decision making mainly in the past two years. However 44% of you had never been involved in any form of consultation. There were concerns regarding whether views were being taken into account by those making decisions and also around the extent to which feedback was given on consultation results or the actions stemming from them. 71% of you would like to see more opportunities for people to get involved in decision making. The most popular form of participation was to take part in occasional surveys (75%) and attendance at occasional meetings or events (63%).

**Our Reply** We have recently restructured the Community Planning Partnership, increasing the involvement of Elected Members which will help make the Partnership more accountable to the electorate. Alongside the Community Planning Board, which is the strategic decision making body, the Partnership has set up another strategic group to develop the Partnership's approach to Community Engagement. It will seek the views of communities and ensure that the views of the community are listened to and taken account of.

The Partnership is currently evaluating the Citizens' Panel and will look at how we can effectively address the issue of increased involvement. Individual agencies are also developing mechanisms for involvement of service users or the community such as the Patient Forum or Tenants Forums.

Community based area forums have been established across Moray and there are currently proposals for the establishment of Local Area Committees with some devolved responsibility for Council services. They will also give opportunities to communicate views to the Partnership. The new Community Engagement Strategic Group will work to maximise the opportunities for as many people as possible to contribute to the process in Moray.

## Housing in Moray

**You Said** 66% of you felt that there was a lack of Council or Housing Association properties for rent in Moray. In terms of assisting access to housing in Moray, 82% of you said that the Council should provide more homes to rent and that more affordable homes should be made available to purchase.

**Our Reply** Affordable housing is a key priority for the Council, identified in the Single Outcome Agreement and the Local Housing Strategy. The Council continues to work closely with Registered Social Landlords to ensure that investment in new housing in Moray is maximised. A number of initiatives are also underway, including a 'Rural Housing Enabler' pilot project in Speyside which is aimed at increasing affordable housing opportunities in the more rural areas of Moray.

## Adult learning

**You Said** 60% of you have never participated in any form of adult learning but half of you would be interested in doing so. You would also like to see more learning opportunities being made available.

**Our Reply** **Moray College:** This is very useful information for the College to have and to act upon. Moray College fully embraces the notion of "lifelong learning" and is striving to bring about more learning opportunities that are relevant, attractive and accessible to the Moray community throughout the lives of its citizens.

The College has a specific objective to significantly increase the number of enrolments on our courses and in particular part-time enrolments. The indications are that enrolments on College courses grew by about 10% in session 2007-08 with the vast bulk of these being part-time students. However the College believes that there is still scope for many more people in Moray to be taking advantage of the opportunities available.

The College takes seriously the need to try and ensure that opportunities are accessible across Moray and with this in mind is currently undertaking a major review of its Learning Centres in Keith, Forres and Buckie with a view to offering more opportunities in these locations.

In recent years the College has also used its mobile computing laboratory facilities to deliver opportunities in other locations and remains keen to do more of this wherever the demand exists.

The College is also intent on offering many more of its courses on-line so that people in Moray who wish to can access these from home at a time when it is more convenient for them to do so.

It is noted that Panel members may not be sure what is available by way of adult learning opportunities. The College already strives hard to make known what it is offering in our main campus and in our Learning Centres but acknowledges that we could do more. We are committed to working with the other public agencies to improve local advice and information services in relation to learning opportunities.

In acknowledging that cost is a factor in preventing uptake in adult learning, the College has used the scope that it has to try and make learning opportunities more affordable but recognises that more could be done. It is also possibly the case that more work needs to be done to advertise the financial support that is available that can make it much more inexpensive, free even, to take up learning opportunities.

**Community Learning and Development:** It is useful to know that 60% of Panel respondents have never participated in any form of adult learning. CLD will consult with partners including Moray College, Libraries and Museums and the private sector to discuss this issue.

CLD has two types of adult learning opportunities:

- (i) traditional adult learning/lesson type evening classes; and
- (ii) customised learning to meet the needs of targeted learners.

In the case of meeting the needs of targeted learners there is always consultation regarding time and venue of courses and content of the classes.

CLD, in all its forms of adult learning, endeavours to reach those adults in communities where needs are greatest, often working with adults who are referred by other agencies such as Social Workers and Health Visitors. CLD supports adults to become active citizens and effective contributors to adult life and local communities.

The CLD Service will continue to recruit learners using all media available to them in order to reach the most vulnerable people in Moray.

## Equal opportunities and access

**You Said** 42% of you considered that transport for people with mobility problems was a significant problem. Access to buildings for people with mobility problems and facilities for people with hearing/sight impairments were also seen as significant barriers to access. Older people (90%) and people with disabilities (79%) needed additional support to access services.

**Our Reply** The Community Planning Partnership recognises that there are issues around access, transport and support to access services. The Partnership is establishing a Moray Equalities Forum to engage with people with disabilities in order to help address issues relating to access.

### 3. CONTACTING LOCAL AGENCIES SURVEY RESULTS

This survey returned to a number of topics covered by the first Moray Citizens' Panel survey to identify any changes over time in Panel members' contact with Community Planning Partnership member agencies. The survey aimed to gauge your experiences of making contact with each of Moray Council services, health services, emergency services and voluntary organisations. The survey also asked for your feedback on your experience of being a Panel member and to suggest potential ways to further improve the Panel in the future. The survey was well received with 744 responses, a response rate of 68%.

The Community Planning Partnership and Partnership agencies are considering the general issues raised in the survey and the means to take these forward. However we have received the following comments from Grampian Police and Grampian Fire & Rescue Service which you may find interesting.

#### **Emergency services (police, fire, ambulance)**

**You Said** 60% of you indicated that the length of time you waited for a visit from the Emergency Services was not a problem. However 17% of you said that the waiting time was "far too long".

**Our Reply** **Police:** calls are graded on a five grade system. When taking factors into account in allocating calls, the volume of outstanding calls, the availability of resources and the source of the call are taken into consideration, as well as immediate risk. A Grade 1 immediate response is applied when violence towards a person is ongoing or appears imminent and immediate attendance is necessary to prevent injury. Grade 1 can also be applied to serious crime e.g. to prevent serious damage to property or apprehend suspects running away from the scene. A 999 call does not automatically equate to a Grade 1 call.

25 minutes is the maximum period of time set nationally to attend Grade 1 calls in rural areas. Since the grading was introduced in 1999 Moray has constantly achieved a very high success rate of 95% attendance within the 25 minute period. This indicates that there is a very high achievement in Moray in relation to Police attending priority calls and it is of concern that the survey indicates there is a perception that we do not do so well.

There then follows a grade system in relation to grade 2, 3, 4 and 5 calls, all of which have set criteria for attendance. Clearly Grade 5 calls do not require immediate attendance, in fact probably do not require attendance at all. The vast bulk of calls we receive are Grade 3, which we do attend but clearly we must attend the higher grade calls quicker - even if they do come in after the Grade 3 call.

We manage incidents and grade them accordingly on set criteria so that we address risk. There are nearly always more incidents than officers so we need to prioritise. This practice is replicated throughout the country and is not unique to Grampian Police or Moray.

It is worth highlighting that serious crime is on the decrease both locally and nationally. Serious crimes in Moray, although clearly regrettable, are not a regular occurrence. It is sometimes difficult for the Police to convey to the public the difference between perception and what is actually happening, given that media and court reports are naturally going to focus on the dramatic or serious incidents which do occur.

**Fire Service:** The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 created new duties for fire and rescue services to promote fire safety and help create safer communities. As a result of this Grampian Fire & Rescue Service initiated a programme of Home Fire Safety Visits and wider community safety activity throughout Moray.

The survey reflects this new approach identifying a 500% increase since 2005 in the number of contacts made with Grampian Fire & Rescue Service requesting fire safety advice.

Grampian Fire & Rescue Service are committed to reducing the frequency of incidents and the severity of incidents when they do occur throughout Moray.

For further information on fire safety or a free home safety visit contact Grampian Fire & Rescue Service on:

Telephone - 01343 547356

[www.grampianfrs.org.uk](http://www.grampianfrs.org.uk)

Email - [info@grampianfrs.org.uk](mailto:info@grampianfrs.org.uk)

## Your experiences of the Citizens' Panel

**You Said** General satisfaction was very high (80%) and very positive ratings were given in respect of key aspects of the Panel: clarity of survey forms and correspondence (91%), newsletters (81%), range of survey topics (80%), relevance of survey topics (80%) and frequency of surveys (79%).

**Our Reply** It is gratifying to learn that Panel members have such a positive opinion of the Citizens' Panel.

## 4. FUTURE SURVEYS

The first three-year programme of surveys is now complete. The Moray Community Planning Partnership is currently considering how to take the Citizens' Panel forward. We would like to thank you again for your participation over the programme.

## Any Questions?

To find out more about any aspect of the Moray Citizens' Panel, please contact:

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If you have a question about a letter or survey form that you have received, or wish to update your contact details, please contact:

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