



Your Moray Citizens' Panel

Newsletter No 5: February 2010

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Message from the Chair

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, there are currently 973 members, 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 fifth in the series and provides feedback to Panel members on the following surveys: Grampian Fire &

Rescue Service Consultation; Identifying Priorities for Moray; Community Safety; Designing Better Services – Customer Services; Fairer Scotland Fund; Budget Consultation and Trading Standards. 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;
<http://www.yourmoray.org.uk/Resources/CitizensPanel.htm>

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

Grampian Fire & Rescue Service Consultation

November 2008 to January 2009

The consultation involved issuing copies of Grampian Fire & Rescue Service's draft Action Plan for 2009 to 2012. This included a short questionnaire asking for views on the proposals set out in the draft Action Plan. Below is feedback to consultation findings from the Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

Grampian Fire and Rescue Service is extremely pleased to be able to work in partnership with Moray Council and the members of the Citizens Panel. It provides the Service with an invaluable opportunity to put forward plans and proposals, and to get feedback and opinion from people who are interested in and affected by the way our services are delivered. We are very grateful to the substantial number of Panel members who took the time to complete our questionnaire and who provided additional comments.

While the majority of respondents were in favour of most of the proposals contained within the draft plan, there were three proposals which attracted additional comment: environmental protection; recruitment of staff from under-represented groups; and the refurbishment of fire stations to be used as community facilities.

Many people commented that, while in favour of environmental protection, our response to emergency calls should not be hindered by environmental considerations. Grampian Fire and Rescue Service will always put life-saving and emergency response as a priority but is legally obliged to ensure that the environment is considered. As an example, this means that water used for firefighting is contained and does not run into rivers causing pollution. It does not mean driving at slower speeds to conserve fuel.

Respondents also commented that the best person for the role of firefighter (and other roles) should be sought, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or age. This is central to the principles of the Service, with the same high standards applied to everyone. However, we will actively promote Grampian Fire and Rescue Service as an employer to under-represented groups in order to break down stereotypes and to widen the knowledge of the Fire Service and its potential as an employer to a wider range of the community.

Many respondents suggested that while our proposal to refurbish more fire stations for use as community facilities is of value it may be seen as detrimental to the main use of fire stations and may adversely impact on existing community facilities. For any future developments, Grampian Fire and Rescue Service will consult with local communities to ensure the need and desire for a community facility is there and will ensure that emergency response is never compromised and that the safety of all using such a facility is a priority.

In addition to responses directly relating to the proposals, a number of comments were received regarding the style, layout and language of the document and questionnaire. We have taken all these comments into account and will make sure that future documents are in plain language, with clear definitions of terms where necessary. We will make sure that abbreviations are avoided where possible and if they have to be used, we will provide a clear explanation. We will also make sure that more background information is provided so that informed judgement can be made.

Overall, the majority of respondents were in favour of the remaining proposals contained within the draft plan. Grampian Joint Fire and Rescue Board approved the final document at the Board meeting of 24th April 2009, providing strategic direction for the Service for the next three years.

Consultation is an important element of the development of our Service plans and the participation of Citizens Panel members is invaluable in helping shape the future of Grampian Fire and Rescue Service. We are very grateful for the contributions made to our consultation and to the finalisation of our plans.

Peter Murray
Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Identifying Priorities for Moray

November 2008 to January 2009

The Moray Council undertook wide ranging consultation in early 2009 around Identifying Priorities for Moray, to inform development of the Council's Single Outcome Agreement which will shape activities by the Council and partners across Moray.

The consultation involved Moray Citizens' Panel members, local community organisations identified through MVSO, Local Area Forums, the Patient Participation Forum and representatives from the Moray Equalities Forum. The consultation asked participants to identify key priorities for services in relation to the: economy and employment; education and young people; health; social issues; housing and homelessness; transport; and the environment.

Survey response and findings

A total of 756 responses were received to the consultation, representing a 50% response rate from Panel members and other groups.

Generally, there was consensus among the participants, that health, employment, education/ young people, the economy and social issues were the most significant priorities. For panel members, employment was a particularly high priority, as was health and Education & Young People. Transport also emerged as important, especially for allowing people to access essential services.

Council response to findings

The Moray Council received positive feedback from the Scottish Government on how information gathered through its Identifying Priorities consultation were used in developing the current Single Outcome Agreement.

Designing Better Services: Customer Services

March to May 2009

Designing Better Services is Moray Council's response to a Scottish Government initiative to realise service improvements and efficiencies in local government.

The process began in March 2008. Phase 1 of the programme involved the collection of information to identify opportunities to standardise, simplify or share services, as well as any savings that could be made. Customer Services emerged as a major theme by the end of Phase 1.

Phase 2 involved gathering more information to build the case for changing how the Council does business with its customers. This Customer Services consultation was therefore developed to learn more about how customers currently deal with the Council, in addition to the type of changes they would like to see.

Survey Response

628 surveys were completed, representing a response rate of 61%. The views represented in the survey informed a set of proposals to change services which were approved by the Council's Policy and Resources Committee in December 2009.

Changes to be implemented

- An expanded Contact Centre dealing with enquiries for all Council services
- 6 contact telephone numbers to replace the existing 220 advertised contact numbers
- Extended opening hours for telephone enquiries
- More enquiries resolved first time
- More services available through the internet
- Self-service facilities at Access Points
- Access to specialist staff through appointments and duty arrangements.

Work is now underway to implement this new business model across all Council services.

Safer Communities

May to July 2009

The survey asked for views on community safety and crime in Moray. As in previous surveys Panel members were asked to comment on a range of topics including community safety and crime levels, antisocial behaviour, road safety and fire safety. In total, 621 people responded to the survey, a response rate of 60%.

You Said

Litter and dog fouling were identified as the main concerns among people living in Moray. For 60% of respondents rubbish or litter was a problem at least once a week as was dog fouling for 59% of respondents.

Our Reply

The Community Analyst will identify areas within communities where dog fouling and litter are particular problems. These areas will then be targeted by Community Wardens and Environmental Officers using both prevention and enforcement. The local press and posters will be used to inform the community of these issues. Offenders will receive warnings, and fixed penalties may also be used.

You Said

Public drunkenness and bad behaviour were common concerns. Underage drinking was a problem for 35% at least once a week, and public drunkenness was a weekly problem for 27% of people. Rowdy behaviour among young people affected 21% of respondents at least once a week.

Our Reply

Operation Avons are a multi agency initiative involving Grampian Police, Detached Youth Workers, NHS Grampian and Social Work. Operation Avons will be deployed to areas identified as having problems with under-age drinking and congregation of youths. Community Wardens also identify areas within their communities where young people gather, and target these areas to build relationships with the young people. They also work with young people to provide safe areas for them to gather without annoyance to communities.

You Said

Antisocial behaviour and road safety initiatives were seen as high priorities by those living in communities in Moray.

Our Reply

Antisocial Behaviour Driving initiatives take place within all communities where this is identified as a problem. Drunk Driving campaigns occur throughout the year, and Young Drivers are also targeted through the Driving Ambition and Safe Drive Stay Alive campaigns. Community Wardens regularly undertake campaigns on other ASB issues, particularly Litter and Dog Fouling. These can take the form of Dog Shows, Community Litter picks and Adopt a Street. Anti-Social Behaviour Reporting is advertised regularly and used extensively by all communities in Moray.

Fairer Scotland Fund Consultation

June to August 2009

Citizen's Panel members were invited to a series of focus groups held across Moray to discuss the best use of the Fairer Scotland Fund. The groups identified a number of areas that could be supported by the Fairer Scotland Fund in order to tackle longstanding social and economic issues in the local authority area.

Key Survey Findings**Employability Service**

The Employability Service will employ key workers to support all vulnerable groups in finding employment and/or training. The service will focus on specific areas and groups identified through this consultation, in addition to other research including the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2009.

Financial Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan

The Financial Inclusion Strategy was identified as an area that could be funded by the Fairer Scotland Fund, particularly at the level of community based provision. The focus groups also mentioned the importance of finding ways to engage with individuals who are not accessing services; raising awareness of services among remote and rural communities, and early intervention education provision for children and young people.

Moray Assisted Recruitment Scheme

This scheme aims to provide vulnerable young people in Moray with employment for 2 years. The project will provide funding to employers to employ and train 30 young people. Consultation identified that communities felt there was a need to increase apprenticeship opportunities for young people and that employers required financial support to employ young people. This information was used when developing the detail of the scheme, and has strengthened the evidence of need included in the funding applications.

Ad hoc funding applications

As well as these initiatives, a number of other individual services were taken into consideration using the evidence gathered in the consultation.

Future impact of findings

The consultation results will contribute to:

- The ongoing development of all the above noted services. This is particularly the case for the Financial Inclusion Strategy and targeted provision through the Employability Service.
- The revision of the existing Social Inclusion Strategy and the setting of new priorities for the next 12 months.
- The ongoing developments of the Fairer Scotland Fund over the next 12 months most particularly in the ongoing consultation with the Area Forums and other community groups.
- Developing future priorities for the wider Community Planning partnership in relation to National Outcome 7 of the Single Outcome Agreement – ‘We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish Society’, and the setting of local priorities..
- The ongoing work of the Employability Action Group and the Social Inclusion Implementation Group.

Budget Consultation

November 2009 to January 2010

The consultation on budget cuts to Moray Council services over the period from 2010-2014 was undertaken during November and December 2009. The 973 members of the Citizen’s Panel were sent a copy of the summary consultation document and short survey questionnaire. The consultation document asked the Panel members to comment on proposed cuts to Community Services, Education Services, Environmental Services, and other services including Council Tax, Estates Management, Financial and IT.

A total of 479 people responded, which is just over half of the Panel. This is a high response rate given that participants had to absorb and comment upon a very detailed consultation document in a relatively short period of time.

Key Survey Findings

Community Care & Social Work was seen as the most important specific service area by 70% of all survey respondents.

Schools & Nurseries, Roads & Transport and Children & Families services were also identified as highly important for local communities by over 50% of all respondents.

The rating of other services was varied, although most services were seen as relatively important by the majority of respondents. The least important services tended to have little direct contact with local communities - for example Economic Development and Financial & IT services. However, Planning & Development and Parks & Open Spaces were also identified as relatively unimportant services, despite both having a fairly direct relationship with local communities.

Panel members were largely in agreement over the relative importance of service areas, with many opposed to cuts in frontline services altogether. There was, however, some difference in responses depending on the age of participants. Older respondents would prefer to see Council Tax & Benefits cuts delayed until later in the period to 2014, while the majority of younger respondents wished to see cuts to schools & nurseries budgets delayed for as long as possible.

Future impact of findings

The consultation responses will be used to inform the Council's deliberations over the timing of the budget cuts.

Trading Standards Consultation

December 2009 to January 2010

The Moray Council's Trading Standards Service works to maintain fair trading in Moray and provides services to both residents and businesses. The consultation involved 300 Citizen's Panel Members, 285 local businesses and all 14 Trading Standards staff. A total of 222 survey responses were received, representing an overall response rate of 37% - this is somewhat lower than typical Panel consultation exercises, and was affected by a lower response from local businesses and the timing of the consultation around the Christmas holiday period.

The survey asked about awareness of the service, views on the importance of its work and improvement suggestions. Staff members were asked about their experiences working for the service, and what could be improved.

Key Survey Findings

Awareness of the Service

Businesses were more aware of the service than Panel members; 45% had dealings with the service in some capacity, compared to 35% of the Panel. However most Panel members had at least heard of the service in Moray, typically through leaflets or word of mouth. Between 25-33% of businesses and Panel members felt they were not very well informed about the service.

Trading Standards: tough enough?

Businesses tended to think that the approach of Trading Standards to enforcement was “about right”, with 64% indicating this. Fewer than half (44%) of Panel members agreed however, with 26% feeling that the service could be tougher on businesses that were in breach of trading standards regulations.

The Work of Trading Standards

Panel members, businesses and staff members all felt the work of Trading Standards to be important in tackling rogue traders; ensuring retailers do not sell restricted products; ensuring consumer goods are safe; tackling loansharks; dealing with Customer Credit agreements, and preventing scams. Respondents generally thought that the service should focus on handling complaints, prosecutions and undertaking inspections.

Views of Staff

Staff generally felt valued and included in the work of the Service. Some felt they could be better informed about Service activities, and the Council in general. Staff generally felt the Service was good at giving advice, and they had good access to line managers and opportunities to improve their skills.

Improving the Service

All three groups of participants commented on how the Trading Standards Service could be improved, although some felt they were not well-enough informed to comment on this. More enforcement, investigations and inspections were popular improvements, in addition to better promotion of and access to the service.

Any Questions?

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

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