

West Lothian Citizens Panel 2009/10 Newsletter

A decade of thanks

Welcome to the Citizens Panel Newsletter for 2009/10. This year the Citizens Panel is celebrating its 10 year anniversary and in that time you have provided invaluable information about how effectively partners within the West Lothian Community Planning Partnership are delivering their services. It is largely due to the time and commitment that you have given, in providing us with your views about living in West Lothian and the services that we provide, that we are able to identify where we need to improve and how to make the best use of the resources available to us.

Thank You

The organisations and services that you are helping

West Lothian Community Planning Partnership established and manages the Citizens Panel. Community Planning is a process which helps public, private and voluntary agencies to work together with the community to plan and deliver better services. Some of the organisations involved include West Lothian Council, NHS Lothian, Lothian & Borders Police, Lothian & Borders Fire & Rescue, West Lothian College, Chamber of Commerce and Voluntary Sector Gateway.

The partnership not only ensures organisations within West Lothian work together to provide better services for the community but, that they improve the connection between national and local priorities. This is achieved, in part, by making sure people and communities are genuinely engaged in the decisions made on the provision of services which affect them.



West Lothian delivers

The story so far: 2000 – 2009

Since the Citizens Panel was established in 2000 you have completed:

- ❑ **Three Roads surveys**
- ❑ **Four Waste Management surveys**
- ❑ **Four Neighbourhood Environment Teams & Land Services surveys**
- ❑ **Two Community Safety / Anti Social Behaviour survey**
- ❑ **Two Corporate Communications surveys**
- ❑ **One Cultural Services survey**
- ❑ **One Older People's survey**
- ❑ **One West Lothian Leisure survey**
- ❑ **One NHS survey**
- ❑ **One Transportation survey**
- ❑ **Three Quality of Life surveys**

In 2010 we will be carrying out the fourth Quality of Life survey and with the help of 'Research Resource' we will seek to recruit new members to the panel to ensure maximum representation of the different groups within West Lothian society.

Panel activity during 2009

During 2009 the Citizens Panel was consulted on eight separate issues by the following services:

Waste Management Services.

Cultural Services, Roads Services.

Transportation Services.

Older People's Services.

Housing & Building Services.

Cultural, Communities and Economic Development Services.

The services used both email and postal surveys to gather your views.

The following is a snapshot of some of the results, and actions we have taken to improve things.

Waste Management Services

Waste Management Services provide refuse collection, refuse disposal and recycling services. In May 2009 Waste Management Services conducted their fourth Customer Survey.



What you told us

The areas which customers rated either excellent or good were:

- ❑ Community Recycling Centres (90%)
- ❑ Type of materials accepted on site (93%)
- ❑ Helpfulness of staff on site (90%)
- ❑ Customers feel encouraged to recycle when visiting recycling centres (87%)
- ❑ How do you rate the ability to return bins to their original location (87%)
- ❑ How do you rate the damaged/stolen bin replacement scheme (83%)
- ❑ The professional conduct of employees – being helpful, courteous, helpful and treating customers fairly (91%)
- ❑ The fairness with which customers are treated (80%)

The main areas of concern, those which customers rated as more unsatisfactory than anything else were:

- ❑ Where there is a spillage from a collection vehicle, how do you rate its removal (73%)
- ❑ Experiencing a problem in Waste Collection in relation to: Bin not emptied (74%)

What we have done

As a result of the survey we have put into place the following actions to try and improve the service.

- ❑ The introduction of new vehicles to collect and contain brown bin effluent.
- ❑ Introduced a trial period of backshifts, to increase the range of hours in which we can respond.
- ❑ Initiated the analysis of why bins are not being emptied and monitoring this through our customer survey.
- ❑ Made preparations for a survey to be made live all year round on the Internet for on line completion. This will be able to monitor suggestions and improvements.



Roads Services

In March 2009 Roads services conducted their third Customer Survey. Roads services maintain the roads, footpaths, street lighting, road signs, road markings and winter maintenance in West Lothian.

The survey was a reviewed and revised version of previous surveys. The timing of the survey was changed in order to capture customers views of the winter maintenance service.

What you told us

The overall level of satisfaction in Roads Services for 2008/09 was 87.75%

The areas where the service scored good or excellent

- ▣ Coverage of street lighting: main roads / footpaths / residential areas (97.51%)
- ▣ Overall service provided by the street lighting team (96.38)
- ▣ Dealing with frost/ice conditions: main roads (94.23%)
- ▣ Dealing with snow conditions: main roads (95.84%)
- ▣ Present maintenance condition of main roads and footpaths (88.2%)
- ▣ Overall Service provided by the roads maintenance team (90.36%)
- ▣ Response to emergency situations affecting public roads (92.38%)
- ▣ Speed and manner in which we respond to flooding emergencies (91.61%)
- ▣ The quality of information provided regarding flooding and the work done to reduce the risk of flooding (91.07%)

Areas where we need to do better

- ❑ Dealing with frost/ice conditions: housing estates / footpaths / rural roads (32.52%)
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- ❑ Dealing with snow conditions: housing estates / footpaths / rural roads (34.61%)
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- ❑ Provision of grit bins (27.75%)
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- ❑ Present maintenance condition of rural roads (24.55%)
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What we have done

A full review of the way the Winter Maintenance service is delivered, including staffing levels and shift patterns was carried out. As a result the service aims to provide gritting salt for all our grit bins as and when communities ask us for it and this will continue to be the case, whenever it is possible.

In the coming year the service will continue with planned maintenance work on rural and C class roads throughout West Lothian – a total investment for 09/10 of nearly £1.2 million. In 2008/09 there was a total investment of over £1.3 million in rural and C class roads.

The best laid plans...

During a four week period from the 18th December 2009, West Lothian saw its highest snow fall and worst weather conditions in the last 30 years. As a result the Winter Maintenance Service was under extreme pressure to keep West Lothian's roads clear and open to allow the safe movement of traffic.

- ❑ The service was able to deliver all our statutory obligations throughout this period.
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- ❑ In line with our reviewed Winter Maintenance Policy, staff worked around the clock throughout this period, this included staff from NETs and Land and Building Services. As a result there were over 100 members of staff working on Winter Maintenance duties at any one time, utilising all available equipment including gritters, ploughs and mini tractors.
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- ❑ As part of the reviewed policy the service was able to employ private contractors to assist in the clearing of snow throughout residential areas and at local schools to ensure all schools opened as planned on the 11th January.
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- ❑ In total over 14,000 tonnes of gritting salt was spread on West Lothian's Roads and Footpaths. This was more gritting salt than was spread throughout the whole 08/09 winter period.
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- ❑ The service has projected spending of almost £3.2 million on the Winter Maintenance service 09/10.
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- ❑ A full review of this year's service will be carried out to identify areas for improvement.
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A full list of Roads planned Service Improvements can be found in the Operational Service Management Plan 09/10 which is available on the Council website customer.service@westlothian.gov.uk or by contact through the Call Centre on **01506 775000**



Cultural Services

Cultural Services focuses on six main activities – the arts; community recreation; heritage, museums and historical records; libraries and information; parks and open spaces; and sport.

In May 2009 Cultural Services published a draft of its first-ever cultural strategy. A survey was sent to panel members that included questions on specific aspects of the strategy – its vision, its values, the entitlements the council offers, and the service proposals in the strategy. We also asked for any further comments and suggestions for improving the service.

Although the completion rate of this survey was low, comments by the Panel have helped shape the following proposals:

- Introduction of bagpipe tuition in schools,
- Improving remote access to digital historical resources,
- Opening of the Fauldhouse Partnership Centre in 2010 and Bathgate Partnership centre in 2012,
- Improved standard of public facilities within West Lothian's three country parks,
- Building a new swimming pool in Bathgate.

Analysis of the responses from the Citizens Panel and other sources have been fundamental in the finalising and implementation of the strategy.

Older People's survey

The survey was part of a wider review of older people's services. The review took place to ensure that public and voluntary services are working together to provide the best possible service to older people.

For the purpose of the survey the 780 Citizens Panel members over the age of 60 years were asked questions relating to illness and disability, caring roles, isolation and loneliness, the importance of services to quality of life and barriers to accessing services.

What you told us

- 33% of respondents stated that they have a long term illness or disability. This would suggest more than 10,000 over 60s in West Lothian have a long term illness or disability.
- 12% of respondents said they looked after someone who has an illness or disability and cannot manage on their own. This would suggest 3,500 – 4,000 over 60s have a caring role.
- 12% of respondents stated that they spent time with friends and family less than once a week and 6% stated they felt lonely or isolated. Proportionally these figures would suggest that 3,500 – 4,000 overs 60s spend time with family and friends less than once a week and that 1,500 – 2,000 experience loneliness on a regular basis.



Most often indicated barriers to accessing services:

- 14% - poor health
- 10% - lack of transport
- 8% - cost
- 7% - caring role (free time)

What we have done

- A six month pilot project in 2009/10 to help older people maximise incomes by making sure they are claiming all the benefits they are entitled to.
- A new Senior People's Forum has been established to ensure older people have a say in how services are developed.
- A 'Change or Challenge' fund has been established to direct resources to priority areas.





Transportation survey

Transportation Services are responsible for road safety, traffic management, development planning, transportation structures and transportation policy across West Lothian.

The service recently updated and published the Transportation Directory which gives an overview of the service. The Directory was included in the survey. Transportation services work closely with the public transport team. Because of this, information regarding public transport and the Blue Badge Scheme were included in the Directory.

What you told us:

- 56.7% rated the service as good.
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- 7.5% rated the service as poor.
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- 45.9% stated their knowledge of transport services was poor prior to receiving the Transportation Directory.
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- 70% felt their knowledge of Transportation Services was good having read the directory.
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- 91.4% stated they would know who to contact regarding a transportation query, having read the directory.
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For access to the Transportation Directory and strategy please go to:
<http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/1523/Transportationpolicy>

The future

We hope you feel that being part of West Lothian Citizens Panel is worthwhile and enjoyable. We value your input and hope that you will continue to take an interest in what we do. Your feedback does help us to plan and deliver better services.

If you have any questions please contact the Community Planning team on **01506 281086**.