

INVERCLYDE COUNCIL CITIZENS' PANEL NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2016

Dear Panel Member

Welcome to the latest Citizens' Panel newsletter.

We were pleased with the response to the Survey issued in Spring 2016. Sixty-five per cent of you completed a questionnaire and provided valuable feedback that we will use to improve services provided by the Council.



Topics in the Spring 2016 Survey were:

- *Inverclyde Council's Local Development Plan*
- *libraries in Inverclyde*
- *community safety.*

The Autumn 2016 questionnaire focuses on priority outcomes for Inverclyde; community justice; and Inverclyde Council's performance. We look forward to receiving your completed Survey.

This newsletter outlines the key results from the Spring 2016 Survey and what we are doing in response to your feedback.

1. Inverclyde Council's Local Development Plan

The first section of the Survey asked questions about the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP). The Plan identifies land use policies and proposals which help guide development to the most appropriate locations in Inverclyde, while also protecting the area's valued assets. The Council is reviewing its LDP and sought the views of Panel members on the main issues that the document should address.

Housing: Just over three quarters (76%) of respondents stated that the LDP should continue to prioritise development in Greenock East and Port Glasgow, ahead of other areas in Inverclyde. Almost all respondents (95%) stated that the Plan should continue to prioritise previously developed land in Inverclyde's three towns, rather than sites in the Green Belt.

Business and industrial land: The vast majority (94%) of Panel members said that business and industrial land should be identified for another use if it has been undeveloped for a period of time.

Town centres: Three quarters (66%) of respondents said they thought the mix of uses in the Greenock, Gourock and Port Glasgow town centres is right.

Renewables: The top three types of renewable energy that respondents stated they would favour were 'energy from waste' (85%), 'solar/photovoltaic' (54%) and 'hydro' (50%).

Coastline: Inverclyde has 23 miles (37 km) of coastline, 17 miles (27 km) of which is in the urban area. Panel members were asked to indicate what the Council's Regeneration and Planning Service could do to enhance/protect/utilise this resource. A variety of suggestions were

made including 'more walking and cycling routes'; 'maintain beaches, wildlife and the natural environment to a high standard'; and 'encourage use for leisure'.

The waterfront: Just over half (55%) of respondents think that connecting access from the waterfront routes in Inverclyde's three towns to the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park would benefit local communities.

Tourism: Almost two thirds (65%) of Panel members agreed that 'To support tourism, the LDP should identify areas for tourist facilities and accommodation, for example, holiday chalets, caravan parks'.

Open space: Half (50%) of respondents said there are open spaces in their neighbourhood which they think should be identified and protected in the LDP.

What are we doing with your feedback?

The Council's Regeneration and Planning Service welcomes the wealth of information provided by the Citizens' Panel regarding the LDP. The Citizens' Panel is part of a wide engagement process that is being undertaken in advance of the Main Issues Report (MIR) which is the first stage of the new LDP and will be published in Spring 2017. Consulting with the Panel allowed us to evidence the breadth and depth of our LDP consultation process. Scottish Ministers expect local authorities to employ a range of innovative methods to meaningfully engage with stakeholders and communities with the emphasis at this stage on identifying and assessing issues and options. The responses from the Panel, together with all other comments from other stakeholders, will be taken forward and used in the preparation of the MIR.

2. Libraries in Inverclyde

This section of the Survey asked about library provision in the local area. Panel members were requested to respond to these questions only if they had used a public library in Inverclyde in the last 12 months; 43% said they had used a public library in the previous year therefore those respondents completed this part of the Survey.

Of the Panel members who said they had used a public library in Inverclyde in the previous 12 months, 83% said they were either very satisfied or satisfied with public libraries in Inverclyde.

Respondents were then asked to consider a number of aspects relating to local libraries and indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with each of them. The top three aspects that respondents

were most satisfied with were:

	Satisfied/Very Satisfied
Opening hours	85%
Locations of libraries	80%
Children and young people's provision in libraries	67%

In contrast, the aspect that respondents was most dissatisfied with was:

	Dissatisfied/Very Dissatisfied
Range of books and materials	19%

What are we doing with your feedback?

Inverclyde Council's libraries service is delighted to note that 83% of Panel members who had used a public library in Inverclyde in the previous 12 months said they were satisfied or very satisfied with local public libraries. It is also pleasing to note that 'children and young people's provision in libraries' is one of the top three services that respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with, given that this was identified as a priority for the Council in 2010.

In contrast, while it is disappointing that 19% of Panel members were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the range of books and materials in libraries, this perhaps reflects the 25% reduction in the relevant budget since 2013 which would have impacted on the amount and variety of titles available. However, Panel members acknowledge that a good service is provided against a backdrop of limited funding.

At the same time, it should be noted that there has been a move nationally to offering books, talking books and magazine titles in electronic versions; however, this is a more expensive option than traditional formats. In response to this changing demand for service, Inverclyde libraries launched an eMagazine service in 2014 and, together with our eBook/eAudio service, this has proved to be very popular.

It should also be noted that, since the Greenock Central Library moved to refurbished premises with slightly smaller floor space in 2015, the amount of stock offered at that location has subsequently reduced, something that is likely to have impacted on satisfaction rates.

Finally, the libraries service welcomes the Panel's very positive comments about its staff.

3. Community safety

Inverclyde Council and its community safety partners aim to make Inverclyde safer by promoting wellbeing and safety and reducing violence, crime, disorder and unintentional injuries. Panel members' responses to questions in this part of the Survey help us to better understand the community safety issues affecting residents in Inverclyde and identify areas where we could improve.

The first part of this section of the Survey asked Panel members about their satisfaction with the local area as a place to live. The following tables outline the responses, together with the replies when the same questions were asked in 2011 and 2014:

% Who are satisfied with Inverclyde as a place to live		
2011	2014	2016
72	72	75

% Who are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live		
2011	2014	2016
84	85	81

Respondents were then asked to look at a variety of crimes and state how concerned they were about them in their neighbourhood. The top three issues that people are most concerned with are:

- 'theft/robbery' (46%);
- 'vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property' (40%); and
- 'people starting fires' (36%).

The next part of this section of the Survey asked Panel members how safe they felt outside. The vast majority of people (96%) said they feel safe in their neighbourhood outside during the day; at night, however, the figure drops to 73%.

Twelve percent of Panel members said that either they or someone in their household had been a victim of a crime or anti-social behaviour in the last 12 months. Respondents who had been a victim of a crime or anti-social behaviour were most likely to report it to the Police (82%), followed by Inverclyde Council (including the Community Wardens) (37%) and their housing provider/landlord (27%); 18% of respondents said they did not report the incident.

Of the people who had been a victim of a crime or anti-social behaviour, 12% thought the offence was a hate crime (a criminal offence committed against an individual or property that is motivated by a person's hatred of someone because of his or her actual or perceived race, religion, transgender identity, sexual orientation or disability). Almost two thirds (63%) of the 12% of respondents did not think the incident was a hate crime and a quarter (25%) of the 12% of respondents said they were not sure.

Panel members were then asked if they had noticed a reduction in anti-social behaviour in the past 12 months. The following table outlines their responses, together with the replies when the same question was asked in 2011 and 2014:

% who have noticed a reduction in anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhood in the past 12 months		
2011	2014	2016
10	13	33

What are we doing with your feedback?

It is pleasing to note that three quarters (75%) of Panel members are satisfied with Inverclyde as a place to live, an increase of 3% since 2014. While there was a small reduction (4%) since two years ago in the number of respondents who are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live, we are encouraged to see that the figure remains very high at 81%.

There has been a huge increase (20%) in the number of Panel members who have noticed a reduction in anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhood, rising from 13% in 2014 to 33% this year. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was a corresponding small drop in the number of people who are aware of the Inverclyde Anti-Social Behaviour Helpline number; we will however work with our partners and the community to promote this facility.

The Panel provided useful comments regarding what would help them feel safer in their neighbourhood, together with comments about community safety in Inverclyde. We will engage with Council Services and external agencies to provide feedback in community safety reports which will be published on the Council's website. In terms of specific comments made about CCTV, we are currently reviewing public space CCTV provision in Inverclyde.

While the Council cannot respond directly to the Panel's comments regarding additional Police patrols, we have shared this information on an anonymised, confidential basis with colleagues at Police Scotland. It should be noted, however, that the Council works closely with Police Scotland with daily meetings arranged to discuss reported incidents. Additionally, joint patrols frequently take place between the Community Wardens and neighbourhood policing teams.

The fairly low percentage (12%) of victims of crime or anti-social behaviour who identified the incidents as 'hate crimes' could be for diverse reasons. For example, there may be a low number of hate crimes taking place in Inverclyde or there could be poor understanding of what constitutes a hate crime; the fact that 25% of respondents were not able to say if the offence was a hate crime or not could perhaps indicate the latter. We are currently exploring the establishment of Council premises as 'Third Party Reporting Centres' (where trained staff can assist a victim or witness to submit a report to the Police); promotion of these Centres may help to increase understanding of what constitutes a hate crime.