Feedback to points raised in the autumn 2011 Citizens’ Panel survey

These are the points raised by respondents to the online survey in response to the question: “Do you have any comments about this questionnaire, survey or the Citizens’ Panel?”

Below you can read, in full, all the 90 points raised. Only obvious spelling mistakes and personal references have been changed.

I have tried to answer questions where I can, in boxes, below the question.

There are three issues that often come up, which I’ll try and answer up front.

**Issue 1**: People ask whether information from a survey like this changes anything. The survey results are reported to the people who run the services and who originally put the questions on the survey.

For this survey, which deals mainly with waste and recycling issues, results were reported in full to the council’s top managers dealing with these services.

Council policy is that these reports must be reported publicly within 6 months of the end of the survey. I do this on these Citizens' Panel web pages.

**Issue 2**: Some respondents say that they find the tick-box format too restrictive. Ideally everyone should have a totally free rein to answer in their own way. However the free text format is expensive to process and analyse. Also the whole idea of asking a large group of people is to get more reliable information. But working with large numbers does require some simplification of the information, i.e. tick boxes. I try to offer somewhere to provide more nuanced information on each major subject area, though it is not possible for each question. This survey generated more than 50 pages of free text responses – all of which have been read by the top managers dealing with these services.

**Issue 3**: A related issue is choice of subject-matter, e.g. why aren’t we asking about parks? There are three main reasons. 1) If the content was set by the Panel it would be impossible to manage. And, as only a few people could get their way, it does not guarantee any more satisfaction all-round or for the individual. 2) Each survey must be selective. The aim is over the months and years, to cover a wide range of subjects. 3) The content is set as follows: the recycling team approaches me say they need this-or-that information. I can not go to each of the 700 or so services e.g. the parks people at the council, or to the police, and say ‘you need to ask about this’. So I can only include subjects which people have come forward with, usually because a decision needs to be taken on a subject.
No I think this sort of questionnaire is a good thing - to give people greater say in the running of services.

I think the refuse and recycling service has improved considerably since the introduction of the new bins.

Health and safety does not seem to matter as far as bin collections are concerned, as they are left on public paths and are dark in colour-invisible to blind people.

Glad to help if it resolves issues, a good thing to do.

I am pleased that you are interested in your customer's response.

Not sure how representative the survey is, and not clear that the results are acted on.

The 'sample' a) has a random basis to selection b) is representative in the sense of matches the population in most ways (sex, location etc) which is the best proxy (and only low-budget proxy) for attitudinal/behavioural representativeness. The exception here is age: under 30's are under-represented in the sample. To counteract this would be too costly.

Pleased for this opportunity to comment on two services (waste collection and GP appointment systems) that can have such an impact on people's everyday lives. From a positive experience (waste collection) to a wholly inadequate one (GP appointment system).

It's ok keep up the good work.

The first time the survey has asked relevant questions, without seeming to be politically correct, this team seem interested in the subject not like the previous surveys.

Great to be asked. Questions relate to real issues needing addressing. Thank you.

I feel that surveys of this type are vital to:- monitor the work of the council, for it to be influenced by the residents who contribute via council tax to the services For the services to be needs led

Very good.

I have tried to recycle old shoes clothing as stated on sheet put in separate bags but it is never taken, but left by the side of the green box.

Use it.

Useful way to feedback to the council.

I would like confirmation that the council have examined the cost of this Citizens' Panel and compared it with the savings that have been made by implementing our views and made a decision of retaining the Panel based on cost effectiveness.

I'm afraid I can't offer you that, as the benefits are a) often diffused in time and throughout the council’s services, b) not quantifiable without extraordinary expense. Also, the benefits are sometimes in informing the decision not to do
something, which as a non-started project doesn’t get costed fully. Also results get considered as part of a wider mix of factors, rarely as the decisive factor in decisions.

When the new waste collection scheme was introduced it was claimed that this would save expenditure in the future - is this still a fair claim.

Yes, savings are ongoing. Landfill tax increases by £8 per tonne per year so the more we recycle the more savings are made.

Good clear positive questions with clear options.
Excellent idea to run such surveys electronically. Survey well designed and easy to follow. Thank you for this service.
Clear and concise - my only reservation is in having to save each page
Good idea
None.
I am happy to continue adding my views and hope that they prove occasionally useful.
I find some of the questions do not apply, it would make it easier if a not applicable box was available with a space for explanation.
See issue 2 at the top of this document.

Section B, residential care homes shouldn’t be all about money, quality of life in ones final years should be a primary factor

Just regarding green boxes. Questions assume ‘we’ have one box and concerns about separation of contents contained therein. At our address we have three boxes; glass, paper/card, light plastic containers and tins. Were there more items of separate agenda we would use further containers; easier for all concerned. We do not have any food waste, birds have what little there is and veg waste, peelings etc goes to compost (old dustbin). We do have the space to do all this; we realise many don't.

Additional green boxes are available to help people segregate recycling in the way you do. In the Spring we will updating our information to explain the best ways of separating out material.

It was good to have the opportunity to answer questions about the recycling system, it is a good service on the whole and valued, thanks.
It is nice to be asked
It would be good to show the final end result from this recycling to show that it is productive and is serving a real purpose - to convince the doubters who still think that it all finishes up in landfill.

This is a really important point and we will produce an article in a future edition of NSLife
None

Good that the council is asking for feedback from people. Would be interesting if the results could be posted or compiled in such a way that you could see for yourself what people are saying and how, if anything, the council have responded.

As you’ll know if you are reading this, full results of the survey are online at http://consult.n-somerset.gov.uk/consult.ti/cz2011/consultationHome

Nothing more to write

Good survey. Easy to follow

Please take notice of my comments and take some action. The service I am getting from my local authority is not very good!

This survey as always is easy to complete and well written. Thank you for taking the time to do this. I do feel that in some aspects of your services I feel listened to. Well done.

At the present things are working really well. More exact information would be helpful on exactly why some plastic is good to recycle and others are not.

We will produce an article in a future edition of NSLife

No

No problem it's good that views are sought and acted upon

You asked about my knowledge about the cost etc of the alarms before I'd read the questionnaire and then again after but the questionnaire did not give any information on the cost of the alarms so my knowledge didn't change!

Sorry. The survey is supposed to measure levels of knowledge rather than influence them! For more information, go to http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/Social+care/olderpeople/Carelink/default.htm or call 01275 888 801.

Does anyone really listen or is this just a costly public relations exercise?

I would like to feel that our comments are read and some attention given to looking into the points raised.

For both the above two points, see issue 1 at the top of this document.

Some of the forms send do not resolve themselves correctly in my browser (safari).

I do test the questionnaire on MACs and on Mozilla and Safari. But there are so many possible individual browser + computer combinations and, on top of that, settings, I’m sorry but I just can’t diagnose the situation.
A very interesting survey and I will be interested in the results when published.

I feel that this kind of survey is well worth the effort in sending out to people and for us to respond as we are given an opportunity to air our views and for those receiving it to have an insight into how the public are receiving and responding to these services

No further comments

none

Good, easy to follow and covered all the points I think.

Nice to have such a tightly focussed questionnaire

Very useful - keep them up!

none

Very happy to be involved in such surveys which can assist in making improvements to the work of the council for the benefit of the community as a whole.

No useful comments, seems to work well.

Well constructed and useful survey.

With regards to Green Bag collections, I never put them out, as they are rarely taken. I can only assume they think the contents are not appropriate?! Often there is a small amount of soil on the plants... I therefore take the bags to the tip myself on a regular basis.

Large amounts of earth on plants can affect the composting process. For more information about what can be recycled, see http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/Environment/Recycling+and+waste/whatcanberecycled.htm

Q44 was phrased in a way which did not allow me to answer the way I needed to. I was offered the options of answering either as 'reluctant to use website' or 'prefer to use website'. I am neither. It assumed web access and did not take into account a situation where I'd want to contact the Council with a specific question that required a response or information urgently, which can only be done by telephone.

Good point. All I can say is that, in the interests of saving space we had to simplify what we asked (preference/reluctance to use the web). To fully explore it would have added an extra page.

I did not have the skill to answer Q30. I do not know how to get another green box which would be helpful in separation of contents and I think green bags can be purchased from some shops but not where.

Finding out that you don't know is a useful answer.
To order an extra green box, email streetsandopenspaces@n-somerset.gov.uk

Here is a list of green bag suppliers https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/Environment/Recycling+and+waste/greengardenwaste-faq.htm#11

Very easy to complete

No

Very good - well done !!

Although not fully related to rubbish collection, It seems that you send pavement sweepers on the same day as rubbish collection. Would it not be better to sweep the pavements the day after?

Although it is good practice for street sweepers to follow waste teams, it is accepted the timings do not always work. Part of this is because we have different contractors carrying out recycling/waste collection and street cleansing. The Waste Team will look at improving this.

It's a good idea to ask people's opinion. Is a survey on the state of the roads coming soon?

No plans to do one via the Citizens’ Panel but we do monitor what people think of this by other means.

Very easy to use, and seems to ask relevant questions.

No

Section B, C and D were a bit odd - as I thought the whole survey was about rubbish. Were these sections meant to be there?

Yes, to save money we do have to piggyback subjects rather than do stand-alone surveys. Agreed, they sometimes make odd neighbours.

Lets hope the council takes note of the survey and makes some improvements.

This is in my opinion a good thing why not have them on other services

Important subject covered in this survey, a question on how confident you are each week about your recycling \ rubbish collection actually happening would have been good. My response would have been not at all confident.

The waste services are a shambles - the council creates the impression of doing me a favour. I pay for your services.

No

A good idea, but it won't make any difference as Councils, Councillors and their bosses whosoever is in Government at the time, only interested in cost
not people - except when it comes to their health, their pay and their expenses!!! And we foot the bill - well, those of us who actually pay taxes!

This has taken 45 minutes of my valuable time as I am still running my company at age 74 in November.

A very quick and easy survey to complete.

I would request that a full survey of the Citizens Panel be made on the presence, approval of, management of, sanctions against, and closure of failing and poorly run addiction treatment centres and associated accommodation houses/units in Weston. We have far more than our fair share of these units in the area, and the opinion of the Council-Tax paying public should be sought as to whether a cessation of approvals and thinning out of existing units should be enacted.

See issue 3 at the top of this document.

These are good as the council will read what is actually going on in Weston
No problems at all
No Comments

It seems like a good idea to get the views of a cross section of the public on their local refuse services. Do you also ask the workers operating the services about their experiences with some of the uniformed public and the inappropriate items which are put out for recycling?

Yes, the people running waste services are always talking to the recycling crews. These crews also report back on households where inappropriate items are placed out and leave a card at these premises informing them.

Always happy to participate. It’s important to air views and attitudes

I think this Citizens' Panel Survey is a brilliant idea making use of new technology to get the views of taxpayers who foot the bill for Council and Government services. The current Citizens Panel published report seems very long winded. Could there be a succinct report of the last Citizens' Panel Survey which can be simply accessed to maintain participants' enthusiasm.

I hope this time it meets your expectations, though I suspect someone else will say it’s too short!

Yes. You did not allow people to disagree with your dogmatic attempts to keep people living alone and make entry to care homes as difficult as possible.

I would like to know the results of this survey
No

I think these surveys are well structured and worded, and are I hope a valuable contribution.
Excellent that you take the trouble to ask people their opinions and I think the questionnaire is about right

I think you should do a survey on Social Care for older people. I think there are holes in the system and older people sometimes slip through.

See issue 3 at the top of this document.

None

None

It is a good idea. This survey gave less opportunity for raising particular frustrations with aspects of the recycling scheme.

It is important that the public’s opinion is sought and acted upon.

They emergency response buttons are too expensive probably to pay for all the advertising you do about it.

I’m sorry you feel that way. We scrapped the £75 installation charge. Most of the advertising has been paid for out of a specific grant from central government.