



November 2006 Citizens' Panel Survey Feedback of Results

In November 2006, we sent you our 14th Citizens' Panel survey. The survey was themed around four different topics, which were: Communications, The Regional Spatial Strategy, Bus Priority Schemes and Housing Developer Contributions towards the provision of Local Education Facilities. We received 1,259 completed surveys by the closing date, representing a response rate of 63%. Thank you to those of you who responded!

This feedback sheet aims to highlight the main findings from the survey and provide you with some information about what officers are currently using the results for. The full results analysis can be downloaded from our website www.worcestershire.gov.uk/citizenspanel

Section A: Communications

42% of you remember receiving a copy of our Word on Worcestershire (WoW) magazine in September 2006.

Of those who remembered receiving WoW magazine, 85% of you thought the magazine was informative, 85% thought the information was easy to understand and 60% thought the magazine had an appealing design and style.

The most popular things you would like to read about in future issues of WoW are: how we spend your money, feature articles about services and contact details for our services.

Our Communications Officer said: "Our Editorial Board of Councillors have used the results to decide how we produce WoW in the future. The general approach seems to be well received so we're carrying on in a similar style for the next year. Some of the extra comments that were added to the survey have led us to increase the font size and make the backgrounds more clear, so it's easier to read. We also plan to experiment with a slightly larger format so we can include a broader range of items. Distribution will continue to be via newspaper insertion for the foreseeable future because the extra cost of direct postal delivery is too high, but we plan to find ways to save money by combining other publications with WoW. We were pleased with the generally positive response but we're committed to making improvements."

Section B: The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

94% of you think it is either very or fairly important for the County Council to have a role in influencing the content of the RSS review.

When we asked you which option for housing development should be incorporated into the RSS review, 50% of you thought we should include Option 1 (1250 houses/year until 2026). A third of you opted for Option 2 (1890 houses/year until 2026) and 18% of you opted for Option 3 (2500 houses/year until 2026).

Overall you thought that the majority of new house building should be concentrated within, or adjacent to, existing towns. There was also an overall consensus that house building should be concentrated on brownfield sites in preference to green field (91% agreed).

Finally, an overwhelming 95% of you agreed that the RSS should require all new residential, industrial and other infrastructure development to include provision to adapt to changes in the climate.

Our Planning Officer said: “The results were used by officers to inform the advice they gave to the Council’s cabinet, when they considered their response to the Regional Spatial Strategy. The results will also be of use in developing the Worcester and Wyre Forest Transport Strategies by giving us additional background information on people’s views on transport issues in these areas. The strategies will be developed over the next few months to assist in the preparation of future funding bids for investment in the Worcestershire network.”

Section C: Bus Priority Schemes

Currently, 16% of you use the bus at least once a week. Bus usage is higher in Redditch and Worcester City, with 24% of respondents in Redditch and 21% of respondents in Worcester City, using the bus at least once a week.

Over 50% of you said you would be more likely to use the bus, or use it more often, once the bus priority measures have been introduced.

Just under half (49%) of you thought that the bus priority measures should be introduced on a systematic basis, along a limited number of roads and bus service corridors.

The Passenger Transport Development Team said: “The findings from the survey are being used in the development of Passenger Transport Projects and Strategy for Worcestershire. The results have confirmed that bus usage in general is low and highlights the need to deliver an affordable, convenient and modern network that can attract an increasing market share. It is very encouraging to see that 50% of respondents would use the bus, or use it more often, should measures to improve the reliability and journey times of bus services be introduced. We are currently developing proposals along various routes within Worcester City and considering possibilities elsewhere in the county.”

Section D: Local Education Facilities

82% of you agreed with the principle of asking housing developers for contributions towards local education facilities.

47% of you thought the exemption for affordable housing was fair, fewer (31%) thought the exemption was unfair. A higher percentage of you (58%) agreed that the exemption for specialist housing and one bedroomed homes was fair.

Just less than half of you (48%) thought the rules for calculating the amount building developers must pay is fair, however a quarter of you neither agreed nor disagreed that the rules were fair.

Our Children’s Services Strategic Planning Officer says: “The results confirmed the public acceptance of the principle of asking housing developers to fund local education facilities when it is likely that the new homes will lead to pressure on catchment area schools. The principle has formed the basis of supplementary planning documents adopted by Wychavon District Council, Malvern Hills District Council, Redditch Borough Council, Worcester City Council and Wyre Forest District Council, which will enable the County to request contributions towards education facilities. The results of the Citizens’ Panel Survey have been included in the consultation reports, which are a legal requirement as supporting evidence for the supplementary planning documents.”