

# **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

## **Report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services**

**Community Participation Committee : 29 August 2012**

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### **Subject: West Dunbartonshire Citizens' Panel - Evaluation**

#### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1** This report informs committee members about the evaluation of the West Dunbartonshire Citizens' Panel on two fronts :
- Evaluation of panel members' experiences.
  - Evaluation of panel users' experiences (people who commission survey questions and focus groups).

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** In conclusion, the evaluation of both the panel members and panel users indicates a high level of satisfaction in general with how the Panel is working.

Members of the committee are invited to note the contents of the report and in particular the increased number of panel members who agree there is evidence of community planning partners listening to and acting on their (Panel Members) feedback.

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1** Citizens' Panels are used widely in the public sector to gather the views of citizens on a range of subjects. Our Panel is an important consultation tool which enables us to:
- check if what we are already doing is working
  - test out new ideas
  - measure change
  - test awareness of services and new developments and
  - inform future planning of policies and services.

Using our Panel effectively helps to ensure that our services and policies reflect the needs of West Dunbartonshire residents.

- 3.2** West Dunbartonshire Citizens' Panel is run on a community planning partnership model. This approach maximises resources and helps coordinate partner consultation, contributing to delivering Best Value in consultation and engagement.

- 3.3** The Panel is administered by Hexagon Research & Consulting. We evaluate our panel regularly to ensure that it is working effectively and delivering value for money.

#### **4. Main Issues**

##### Survey Response Rates

- 4.1** During 2011-12, survey response rates have remained high, with an average of well over 1000 respondents per survey (over four surveys).

##### Panel Members Evaluation

- 4.2** Panel members receive a summary of the findings of each survey with the next questionnaire. In addition, once a year, we provide an Annual Newsletter “Feedback” which goes into more detail on how community planning partners have responded to what Panel members tell them. Panel members are asked to read this before answering the evaluation questions. The full Panel evaluation report is contained in the Health and Social Care Services Survey, June 2012, available on request.

- 4.3** Four surveys were carried out during 2011-12 and the vast majority of panel members regarded them as relevant and useful:

- Community Safety – 96%
- West Dunbartonshire’s Local Development Plan – 89%
- One Stop Shops – 85%
- Council Services – 95%

- 4.4** On three key ‘listening’ measures there has been a further important improvement. We asked panel members if the Feedback Annual Newsletter provides evidence that community planning partners are listening to what they tell us:

- in developing and changing the way we provide services, 80 % agreed compared to 74% in 2011,
- on evidence of targeting resources at issues of concern, 77% agreed compared to 68% in 2012 and
- on evidence of providing information in better ways 80% agreed compared to 74% in 2011.

This is excellent evidence that Panel members agree we are responding to their feedback.

##### Panel Users Evaluation

- 4.5** An evaluation of panel users – those who commissioned surveys and focus groups during 2011/12 - was carried out early in 2012.

The full evaluation report is listed as a background paper, available on

request. 14 responses were received and feedback was very positive with key points as follows:

- High satisfaction with the administrative process for commissioning a survey with 93% judging this very good or good (72% and 21% respectively).
- 93% rated the quality of advice on developing questions very good or good (64% and 29% respectively).
- 93% rated the quality of the report very good or good (57 % and 36% respectively).
- Overall, all respondents rated the service from the Consultant and from Community Planning and Policy as very good or good (67% and 33% respectively).

Information from both sets of evaluation will be used to further develop the Panel.

## **5. People Implications**

**5.1** There are no people implications.

## **6. Financial Implications**

**6.1** There are no financial implications.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

**7.1** There are no risks associated with the issuing of this report. It is necessary to maintain the funding of the Panel and the officer resource, including partner input, to maintain the current high standard of operation.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

**8.1** An Equalities screening has identified no significant issues in relation to this evaluation. The demographic information on panel membership provides the opportunity for analysis of survey results to assist with identifying equalities issues.

## **9. Consultation**

**9.1** The evaluation of the Citizens' Panel is a method of consulting with panel users and panel members on the working of the Panel. It provides information for the development of the Panel. It also provides evidence of impact, showing that the panel members agree there is evidence of listening to their feedback and acting on it. The Community Participation Committee also provides a level of scrutiny on the working of the Panel.

## **10. Strategic Assessment**

- 10.1** The Citizens' Panel is an important tool for consultation and can provide relevant information in relation to all the strategic priorities, which can be used to develop and improve services.

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**Angela Wilson**  
**Executive Director of Corporate Services**  
**Date: 16 August 2012**

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**Appendices:** None

**Background Papers:** WD Citizens' Panel, User Evaluation Feedback 2012, Health and Social Care Services (and summary) June 2012

**Wards Affected:** All wards