

Falkirk Council Citizens Panel June 2014

Welcome to this Citizens Panel questionnaire

This survey asks about two different areas of the Council's work:

Falkirk's Local Development Plan - which shows how land will be used

We review our Local Development Plan every five years. The plan is essential for all building and development work in the Council area. It explains how land and buildings will be used – for example for new housing, leisure activities, parks, or business use. The plan also considers environmental issues such as renewable energy, flooding and woodlands. The plan does not deal with individual planning applications, but what it says provides us with important guidance for deciding whether or not to approve an application.

So it is important that local people are involved in discussions about the plan. We want to know if you have heard about the Local Development Plan, and what aspects of it might interest you in future.

The Management of Falkirk's Cemeteries and Crematorium

We are reviewing the way we look after our cemeteries and crematorium to make sure they meet the needs of everyone who uses them. There are only a few questions here, as this is part of a wider consultation which will also include some discussion groups. We also ask if you would like join in one of those discussions, which will take place in the autumn.

Your answers to this questionnaire will help us improve the way we provide services in future. Remember, all your answers are useful.

Please let us have your completed questionnaire by 21 July 2014.

Section 1

Local Development Plans

We write a Local Development Plan every five years. It explains how land and buildings will be used – for example for new housing, leisure activities, parks, or business use. The plan also considers environmental issues such as renewable energy, flooding and woodlands. The plan guides our decisions on individual planning applications..

1 We have been preparing a new Local Development Plan over the last three years, and have run a number of consultation events. Have you heard anything about this?

- No
- Yes, I've heard of it
- Yes, I've taken part in some of the consultations
- Don't know

2 In future, would you be interested in being involved in discussions about what should be in the Local Development Plan?

- I'd be interested in discussing the plans for the whole Falkirk area
- I'd be interested in discussing the plans for my own area
- I'd only be interested in proposals very near to my house, (for example a new housing scheme or shopping centre)
- No

3 Would you be interested in discussing any of the particular issues covered by the Local Development Plan (tick all that apply)

- New housing developments
- Parks and greenspace
- Business and industrial developments
- Green belt
- Sport and leisure facilities
- Town centre developments
- Energy related development (e.g. windfarms, coalbed gas extraction)
- Climate change

4 If you have not taken part in the consultations about the Local Development Plan please tell us why not (tick all that apply)

- I didn't know about it
- I'm not interested
- I don't think my involvement would make any difference to the decisions
- I don't know anything about the issues
- It's not got anything to do with me
- I trust the Council to make the best decisions for the area

5 If you wished to be involved in future Local Development Plans, how would you prefer to find out about the plan? (tick all that apply)

- Looking for information on the Council's website
- Reading about the plan in the local newspaper
- Going to a local library or One Stop Shop to read the documents
- Visiting the Council's planning office to speak to a planner
- Email updates
- Updates by post
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter etc)
- Going to a local drop-in exhibition about the plan (e.g. at your local supermarket or library)
- Going to local workshop or meeting to discuss the plan
- Other (please specify)

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6 Please tell us if you would like to be added to a mailing list about the Local Development Plan

- I'd like to receive updates by email

Please give us your name and email address

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- I'd like to receive updates by post

Please give us your name and address

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- I don't want regular updates about the Development Plan

7 Do you have any other comments about Local Development Plans?

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Section 2: Management of Cemeteries and Crematorium

The Council is reviewing the way we look after our cemeteries and crematorium to make sure they meet the needs of everyone who uses them.

- 8 Have you visited a Falkirk cemetery or the crematorium in the last year?
 Yes No
- 9 Do you know about the Cemetery Rules and Regulations?
 Yes, I've a reasonable idea of what's in them
 I've heard of them, but I don't really know what they say
 No
- 10 Would you be interested in coming along to an Open Day at the Crematorium?
 Yes No
- 11 Do you think we should provide areas for memorial benches and memorial trees?
 Yes – memorial benches only
 Yes – memorial trees only
 Yes – memorial benches and trees
 No
 Don't know
- 12 We are considering restricting headstones to a maximum of 4 ft (1.22m) high because of concerns that taller ones can become unstable and topple over in time. What do you think?
 Families should be able to choose any headstone they like
 Taller headstones should not be permitted because of safety considerations
 Don't know
- 13 Would you be interested in taking part in a small discussion group to talk about how we should manage our cemeteries?
 I do not want to take part in a discussion group
 I would like to take part in a discussion group

Please give us your name and email address

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- 14 Do you have any other comments about the management of the cemeteries?

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Section 3: About You

We ask these questions each time, so that we can break down the results by area, age, etc. where necessary. You do not have to answer these questions, but it will help us if you do.

18 What is your postcode?

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19 Are you...

Male Female

20 How old are you?

Under 16 16-24 25-44
 45-64 65 -74 75 or over

21 Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

Yes No

22 Citizens Panel surveys can also be completed online. This is cheaper for the Council than paper copies and may be easier and quicker for you to complete.

Would you be happy to receive future surveys online?
If so, please give us

Your Name

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Your email address (please print)

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Results of Citizens Panel Questionnaire 10

The last Citizens Panel in March 2014 asked about three different topics. Here are the key results and the actions we have taken.

Library Services

We asked for your feedback to support the new Library Development plan being drawn up by Falkirk Community Trust who run the Falkirk libraries. What do you like about your public libraries and what could be better? The Trust also wanted to know if there was anything it could do to attract people who don't use libraries or who have recently stopped using libraries.

You said: Of those who filled out this part of the Citizens Panel questionnaire, 30% were regular library users, 30% were occasional library users, 19% used to use libraries but have stopped, and 21% have never really used libraries. This has provided some very interesting data both from people who use the service and from non-users.

Respondents who use libraries particularly like that they can borrow books for free, that the public libraries are welcoming places and that the staff are helpful.

The reasons given by people who have recently stopped using libraries were: they now prefer to use e-books; they don't have time to visit the library any more or they would struggle physically to visit the library. Car parking in Falkirk was also a problem.

The reasons given by people who seldom or never use libraries were: they don't read many books (38%) or they prefer to buy (27%) or download books (26%) instead of borrowing them. Many people also felt that they would struggle to physically visit a library – due to mobility problems or problems with parking – or that they don't have enough time to make a special trip to the library.

Most people knew about the services that the libraries provide. There was also a lot of interest in knowing more about several areas, especially downloadable e-books; downloadable audiobooks and local history and genealogy.

We will: The Trust already has some downloadable e-books, magazines and audiobooks and it is hoping to develop the range of items further.

The Trust has lots of plans to explore local history and genealogy as part of the commemoration of the First World War. It wants to work with customers to research the impact that the First World War had on this area and on local families.

Many of you volunteered to join focus groups and the Trust will get in touch in June/July to invite those who are interested along to meetings. This will help the Trust develop ideas for the services it provides in the libraries.

The Trust will use the data from the Citizens Panel, along with information from other surveys of library customers and non-users, to help decide how to develop library services. The Trust will write a Library Development plan by November this year. This will explore the different themes that it wants to concentrate on in the next few years to encourage more people to use the service and to ensure that the services develop to meet the changing needs of our communities.

Housing Services

We asked if respondents used the Housing Service and, if so, what did they use it for.

You said: About one quarter of you (26%) said you use the housing service. The rest of this section looks at the answers those people gave.

Nearly half (49%) of the housing services users rent a council house and another 13% are applying for one. 21% get benefits advice, 17% use it because of antisocial neighbours. Smaller numbers (around 4-6%) use our landlord registration service, the property factoring service, or the homeless service / accommodation resource centre.

We also asked those respondents who used the service if they preferred to meet an officer in their local Council office, or if they preferred to be visited at home. If they preferred a visit at home we wanted to know what was the most convenient time for a visit, and what kind of information they would like the housing officer to be able to provide.

You said: 47% said they would prefer a visit at home, with only 16% preferring to visit the office (the rest didn't mind where the meeting took place.) Twice as many people said weekdays are the most convenient time for a meeting, compared to those who preferred evenings or Saturdays.

Respondents thought it was important that their housing officer could answer questions on all housing-related issues (64.1%) and to be able to tell them who to contact in the council if they need information on anything else (50.5%). Other respondents wanted an officer to be able to check progress on all applications, repairs, complaints or other queries reported to the Housing Service (44.7%). About one in three thought it important to be able to book an appointment on line.

We will: Based on the information you provided through the Citizens Panel survey, the Housing Service will look at ways to adapt service delivery so that more of the service is provided in your home at a time that is convenient to you, and with the ability to provide more accurate and relevant information to you, our customers. We will also explore information technology solutions to enable officers to visit you at home and provide the information you are looking for and will carry out a pilot study on an appropriate area of the service.

Self Directed Support

We asked if you had heard about the new arrangements for providing support with daily activities to frail older people or those who are ill or disabled. We also asked where you would be most likely to look for information about this support.

You said: Very few respondents (10%) had heard about Self Directed Support (SDS). 73 respondents said they or someone in their household already receive support with daily activities but they were no more likely to have heard of SDS.

When asked where you would find out about information on getting help with daily activities over half would phone the council to ask or pick up a leaflet in a library or One Stop Shop.

There were some interesting differences in the answers from people who already receive support and those who do not. People already receiving support were much more likely to ask a support worker or member of their family if they wanted more information about help with daily activities. But people not receiving support were much more likely to look for such information on the Council website. Other responses suggested leaflets about SDS could be available in GPs surgeries.

We will: Based on the information collated from the Citizens Panel survey, the SDS team will be distributing SDS leaflets to all libraries, One Stop Shops, and council offices. In addition we are talking to health colleagues about distributing SDS leaflets to doctors' surgeries and Health Centres. We will make sure that frontline workers discuss Self Directed Support options with all new service users when their needs are being assessed, and that existing service users are given the options through a review process. National campaigns are also underway with Self Directed Support commonly referred to as personalisation.

Additional Feedback from Citizens Panel Questionnaire 9

We have now had the opportunity to review the findings from last November's Panel and can let you know more about how the information you provided is being used:

Online Payments

We asked if you had heard of or used the Council's Online Payment Facility for paying Council bills. We also asked what respondents used it for and how we could improve your experience.

You said: A high proportion of respondents (68.3%) had not heard of the Online Payment Facility. Those who had were most likely to have heard about it by browsing the Council website.

10% of respondents have made an online payment to the Council at some time and 4% are using it at least four times a year. The majority of people who use the facility use it to make payments to their child's school, or for paying Council tax. Over half of the respondents who have children at secondary school did not know that they could use the facility to make payments for school meals, events, or design & technology and home economics classes.

About 80% of those who have made online payments found the system easy to use.

We asked how you'd like to be kept informed about online payments in future. 38% of respondents preferred to be updated about the facility via the Council's website whilst 27% didn't want to be kept updated.

We will publicise our online payment facility more widely. We have placed an advert in the Business & Community Directory 2014 and will also provide information through an article in the Falkirk Council News and updates on the Council's Twitter feed. The new Falkirk Council website prominently features the online facility to make it easier to access.

We will continue to provide the same online payment facility for the foreseeable future. However, we are working with other authorities to review the existing schools online payment facilities. We hope this will lead to the development of a national approach, which will provide a greater range of payment options, aimed at meeting the needs of parents and guardians. We will use the comments made by Citizens Panel members to identify some of the features that we would like to be included in the new system.

Community Councils

We asked about your awareness of community councils in the Falkirk area.

You said: There is not a high level of knowledge of community councils in Falkirk. Over 65% of respondents did not know if there was a community council in their local area, 70% of respondents did not know any details about their local community council and 79% were unaware of the recent community council elections.

We did: The policy development panel considered the Citizens Panel findings and decided there was a need to better promote community councils in the area.

Citizens Panel respondents had indicated that the main way they would like to be informed about community councils is by way of a leaflet drop. With this in mind an election in Slamannan and Limerigg was advertised by means of a leaflet drop to each household in the area. Following this, ten nomination packs were requested - in comparison to no requests for either of the previous two elections.



Other Formats

If you have any queries about the Citizens Panel questionnaire, or if you want to receive questionnaires and feedback reports in other formats (e.g. Braille, large print, a different language etc.), please contact us at citizenspanel@falkirk.gov.uk, or call 01324-506011.



Falkirk Council