

Citizen Insight Report Summer 2013



Customer Insight Summer 2013

November 2013

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and method

The West Lindsey Citizens' Panel was established in April 2007. It is the aim of the panel to help develop and improve the services the Council provides by taking into account the views and opinions of local people from the District. This report summarises the views of panel members from the twelfth panel survey, carried out in July 2013 with engagement events undertaken with residents, Parish Councils and West Lindsey District Council Members.

With reduced budgets from central government it is critical that resources are directed in a way that benefits residents and meets their needs and priorities. The cover letter accompanying the questionnaire introduced the survey's aim to give residents a say in their local area and about local services and this was also explained at the beginning of the events held.

Topics covered included how residents feel about our current services and views on how the Council might explore efficiencies and potential income streams to fund key services and what residents actually value in life.

All 1,433 current members of the Citizens' Panel were sent a copy of the questionnaire, and a single reminder mailing was administered. A total of 586 completed questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 41%.

The sample included individuals in employment, the unemployed, including those not claiming unemployment benefit, residents looking after the home or caring for a family member, those prevented from working by long-term illness or disability, students, and retired people.

A sample size of 660 respondents has a maximum standard error of +/-3.8% at the 95% level of confidence. However, the margin of error changes on individual questions depending on what method of engagement was used and the number of respondents.

1.2 Report contents

This report contains a written analysis of the findings of the panel survey and the survey undertaken with residents who are not on the panel through the Lincolnshire Show, the Riverside Festival and through meetings throughout the district. In addition to these surveys 7 events were undertaken where members of the public were invited to attend and vote on options which the Council has proposed. All these findings have been gathered together in this report.

Figures and tables are used throughout this report to assist explanation and analysis.

Specifically this activity:

- Informed people on Area needs and strengths;

- Informed residents of the financial challenges as WLDC cannot keep cutting and needs to think differently;
- Considered what is valued and important to residents and considered the Councils role in this;
- Reviewed options for savings and new proposals.

Statistics quoted refer to a base of 'valid responses only' (where 'don't know' and 'not provided' are removed from the base).

1.2.1 Rounding issues

Occasional anomalies appear due to 'rounding' differences, but these are never more than +/-1%. These occur where rating scales have been added to calculate proportions of respondents who are very satisfied, or who strongly agree for example. In these instances, respondents who rate 'fairly' satisfied, or 'tend to agree' are added to those who place their rating at the strongest end of the scale, i.e. very satisfied or strongly agree.

As an example, when providing an overview of those who tend to agree or who strongly agree with a statement, where 55.5% tend to agree and 7.9% strongly agree, these figures would be added and would appear in the text as 63% (rounded down from 63.4%). In another figure, both ratings could also have been rounded, thus appearing as 56% who tend to agree and 8% who strongly agree; totalling 64%, which provides the 1% difference.

2 Council Services

2.1 Services the Council run

The survey asked if the residents are aware of which services the District Council already runs. From this information it was made aware that the residents do not differentiate between the District and the County Council as more than 70% of the residents believe that the District council runs Social Services and Schools (76% and 74% respectively). Out of all the services though only 61% of those who responded believe that the council runs a service around affordable housing.

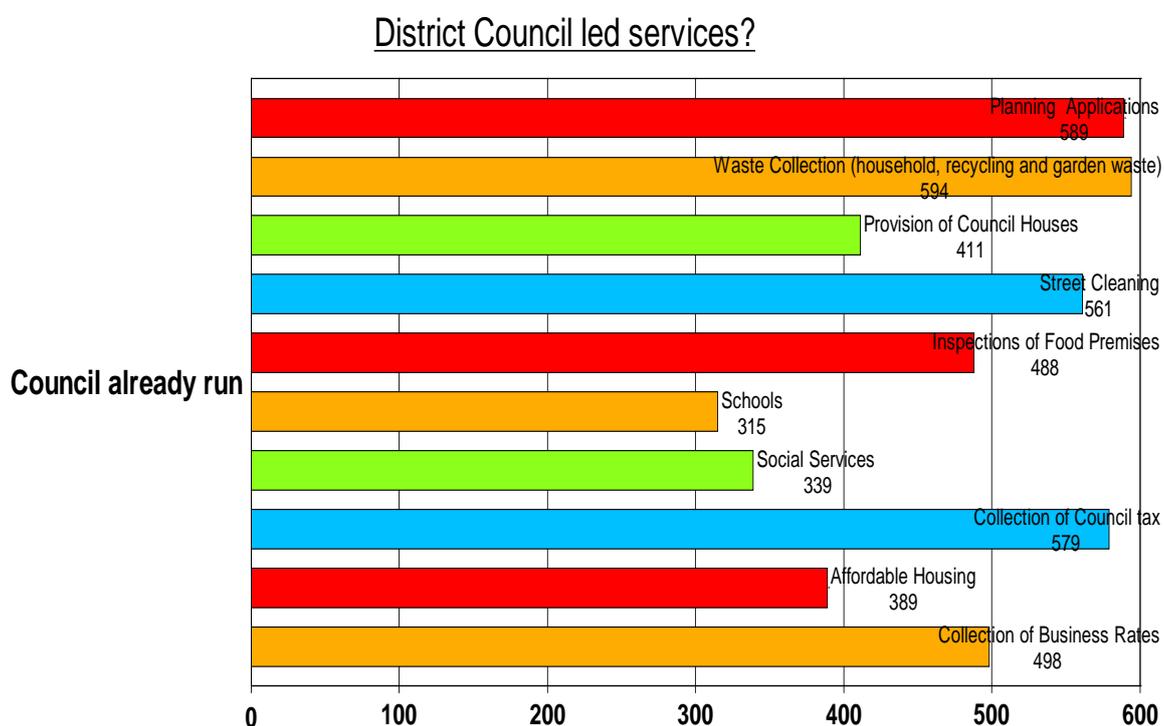


Chart 1: District Led Services

2.2 Satisfaction of Services

Among all the services that were listed, the top 5 for the highest satisfaction were all from the Waste Service with General waste collection, household recycling collections and garden waste collections all being 85% satisfaction or above. The other waste services in the top five most satisfied are Bulky waste collections and bin deliveries.

The 5 least satisfied services are Empty Homes (47%), Planning Enforcement (44%), Housing Enforcement (31%), Affordable Housing (32%) and Fly tipping (30%) with at least 3 in 10 people feeling dis-satisfied with these services.

The main reasons that residents gave to being dissatisfied were:

- the lack of affordable housing for first time buyers.
- not seeing anyone picking up litter or road sweeping in villages.
- the amount of fly tipping in the district.
- reporting instances to members of staff and not hearing a response either at all or for a long time.
- Applying for planning/ benefits etc. are all too long winded and complicated.
- The way the roads are maintained or lack of maintenance.
- The level of council tax charged
- The charge for removal of bulky waste items
- Unhelpful staff
- More dog bins needed
- Too many empty homes
- Lack of consideration of drainage issues
- Bins not put back where they were collected from, sometimes blocking the paths/roads
- Garden waste to be collected during winter months
- Too much planning allowed – removal of “green belt”
- Building control/planning not listening to complaints from neighbours

Satisfaction of services

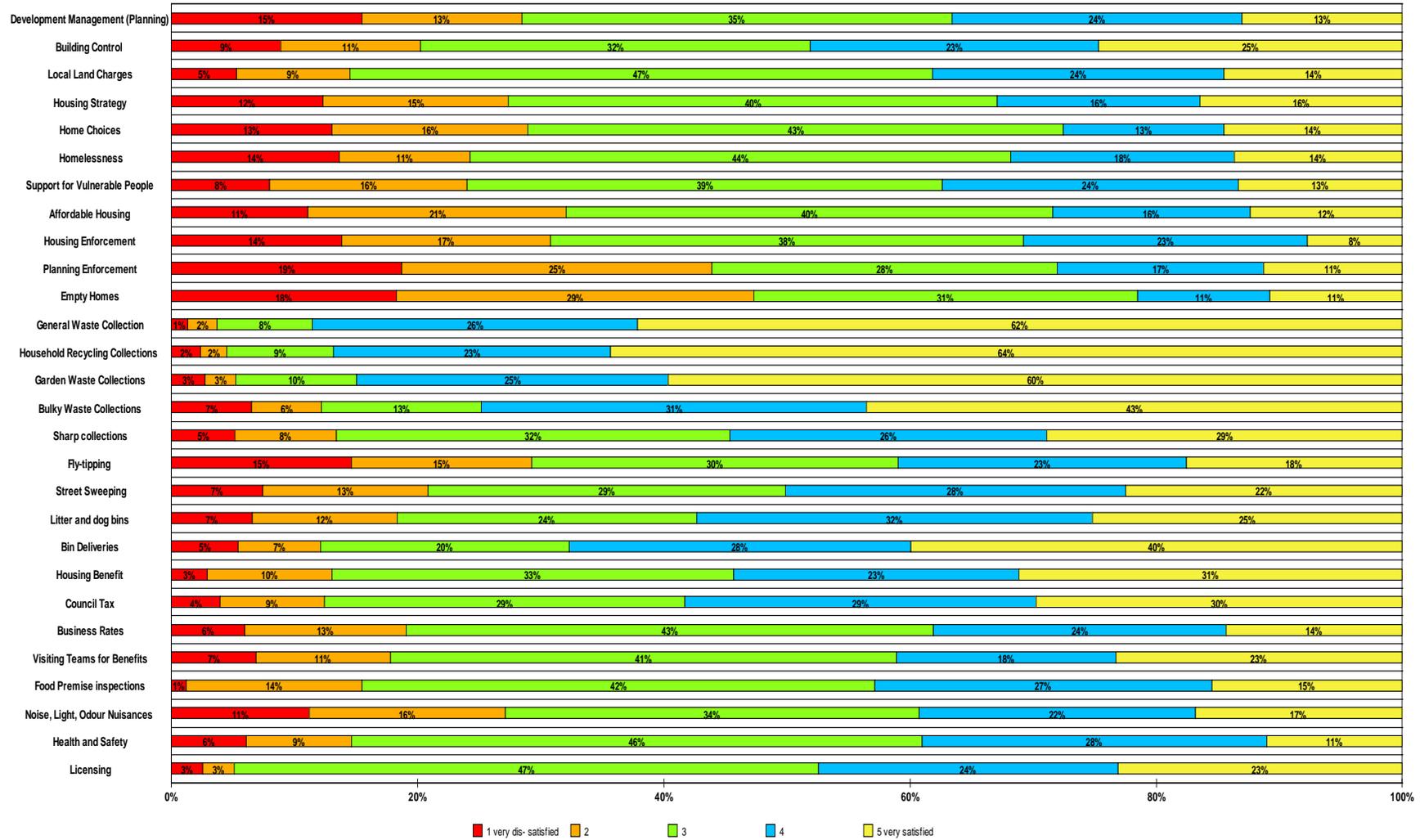


Chart 2: Satisfaction of services

3 Proposed Options

3.1 Methods of Engagement

Due to the scale of the challenge being faced a range of options were discussed with residents around potential changes to some services and approaches to 'plugging the gap'. This feedback will inform the Councils future decision making and was in no way intended to suggest that any of the proposals were 'done deals'.

To ensure a wide spread of views was received the options were engaged in different ways depending on the topic. These have been noted in each individual option but were through discussions from events throughout the district or through a survey undertaken online and through the West Lindsey Citizen Panel. In some circumstances both of these methods for engagement were used.

3.2 Paper Collections

Currently plastic, glass, paper and card are collected in the blue bins, however as paper is mixed with other materials it becomes a poor quality product which is destined for export.

If separate paper collections were undertaken the higher quality material could be sold on to UK paper mills.

It would be reliant on residents presenting their paper separately. Last year approximately 9400 tonnes of material was recycled, paper and card amounted to around 40% of this.

Engagement took place through 7 events throughout the district involving Parish Councils, residents, West Lindsey Councillors and the Citizen Panel. Further surveys were undertaken online and with those Citizen Panel residents who couldn't attend the workshops. In total 289 residents voted on these options.

| Option 1 | Option 2 |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Continue with current service | Residents to separate paper from the existing recycling and present on top of blue bin for separate collection |
| 64 | 225 |
| 22% | 78% |

Comments received around this option were that a separate receptacle would be needed to hold the paper and therefore a way for the waste collectors to be able to hold this separate. It was noted that a box with no lid would not suffice and putting the paper into bags is not acceptable in this day due to the environmental effect. The number of votes for was under the assumption that this was taken into account.

3.3 Green Waste

Introducing a charged service would mean that only those who use (and value) the service actually pay for it, there are also environmental benefits too as residents would be encouraged to home compost and the Council's fleet mileage would reduce.

Councils that have introduced a charge include City of Lincoln and North Kesteven DC with both experiencing higher than expected take up of the service.

A charge of around £25 per year would cover service costs.

Engagement took place through 7 events throughout the district involving Parish Councils, residents, West Lindsey Councillors and the Citizen Panel. In total 128 residents voted on these first options.

| Option 1 | Option 2 | Option 3 |
|------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Leave service as it is | Charge for current service | Charge for service and expand the service to include monthly collections in winter |
| 42 | 71 | 15 |
| 33% | 55% | 12% |

Feedback from those who attended the events was that they are quite happy to pay for the green bin as long as the cost didn't shoot up after the 1st or subsequent years to an amount that was not acceptable.

Further surveys were undertaken online and with those Citizen Panel residents who couldn't attend the workshops.

The first question was around what level of charge they would be prepared to pay. On this question 144 residents voted.

| Option 1 | Option 2 | Option 3 |
|----------|----------|----------|
| £20 | £25 | £38 |
| 126 | 11 | 7 |
| 88% | 8% | 5% |

The second question was around whether additional winter collections should be introduced. On this question 156 residents voted.

| Option 1 | Option 2 |
|--|--|
| Add additional winter collections to the service | Continue with current level of service |
| 71 | 85 |
| 46% | 54% |

3.4 Street Cleaning Standards

The Council provides a five star standard of cleanliness for its residents. There are options around reducing this level of service and make savings. Should the Council focus more on areas which are more prone to litter than operate standard schedules.

Engagement took place through 7 events throughout the district involving Parish Councils, residents, West Lindsey Councillors and the Citizen Panel. In total 136 residents voted on these options.

| Option 1 | Option 2 |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Continue with current service | Provide fortnightly service for those areas currently cleansed weekly. |
| 73 | 63 |
| 54% | 46% |

| Option 1 | Option 2 |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Continue with current service | Stop providing new litter and dog bins. |
| 70 | 66 |
| 51% | 49% |
| Option 1 | Option 2 |
| Continue with current service | Reduce work undertaken on main road verges. |
| 125 | 11 |
| 92% | 8% |
| Option 1 | Option 2 |
| Continue with current service | Stop using pavement sweeper in Gainsborough. |
| 84 | 52 |
| 62% | 38% |

Feedback around these options was that unless the residents lived in Gainsborough then they felt that it wasn't their place to vote on something that didn't affect them. This is therefore why the figures are lower on the numbers voting. For the option around reducing the work undertaken on main road verges it was stated that this should not be reduced as this gives an overall impression on the whole of the district and can be taken as an indicator for businesses which may want to set up within the district.

One option suggested was that the money spent around street cleaning could be split between the parishes for them to undertake their own street cleaning according to the level which they felt necessary.

3.5 Provision of Loans and Equity

Provision of loans and equity to deliver community priorities, whilst also achieving a financial return for the Council (as opposed to previous approach of grant funding)

Engagement took place through 7 events throughout the district involving Parish Councils, residents, West Lindsey Councillors and the Citizen Panel. In total 122 residents voted on these options.

| Option 1 | Option 2 | Option 3 |
|---|--|---|
| Do not provide loans or equity investment and purely focus on grant payments. | Provision of loans or equity which will generate a purely financial return | Provision of loans and equity stakes which will generate a financial return and / or deliver a significant social benefit |
| 48 | 20 | 54 |
| 39% | 16% | 44% |

During this engagement the residents who went to the events wanted more information on how this could be run and what is trying to be achieved. The attendees felt that they would like to be involved in the development of this option and this could be achieved through another event focused just on this option.

3.6 Channel Shift (e-accessibility)

Use of 'Channel shift' to provide enhanced access to services whilst also saving money and offering 'self serve' opportunities to those that want them.

Engagement took place through 7 events throughout the district involving Parish Councils, residents, West Lindsey Councillors and the Citizen Panel. Further surveys were undertaken online and with those Citizen Panel residents who couldn't attend the workshops. In total 290 residents voted on these options.

| Option 1 | Option 2 | Option 3 |
|--|--|--|
| Offer 'on-line' information and no more. | Some high demand transactional services available on-line. | Desire to offer 24/7 on line service offer for all major Council services. |
| 33 | 102 | 155 |
| 11% | 35% | 53% |

Feedback on these options was that residents felt that more should be done on the website but not at the risk of taking away the use of speaking to an officer, whether this is face to face or on the phone. It was also highlighted that it may be a good idea to work this up in stages rather than suddenly going from just information on the website to being fully on-line with all services.

Since these events Councillors have made the decision to make e-accessibility a priority until 2015. As a result an e-accessibility project is currently being pulled together.

3.7 Trade Waste Collections

The current trade waste service is not marketed or widely used with little focus in this area. There is an opportunity to re-launch the service and achieve significant income generation.

Engagement took place through 7 events throughout the district involving Parish Councils, residents, West Lindsey Councillors and the Citizen Panel. Further surveys were undertaken online and with those Citizen Panel residents who couldn't attend the workshops. In total 296 residents voted on these options.

| Option 1 | Option 2 |
|---|---|
| Do not investigate re-launching the service | Investigate the possibility of re-launching the service |
| 13 | 283 |
| 4% | 96% |

The feedback on this option was very positive as the attendees seemed to value the Waste Service and felt that if this was a viable option then it should be investigated further. However it was noted that this would be an option only if the level of service currently received by the residents wasn't reduced due to the additional work.

3.8 Undertake work for other Authorities or outside West Lindsey boundaries

The Council could consider using waste service crews and frater lorries to provide services for other authorities at weekends or when we are not using them.

Engagement took place through 7 events throughout the district involving Parish Councils, residents, West Lindsey Councillors and the Citizen Panel. Further surveys were undertaken online and with those Citizen Panel residents who couldn't attend the workshops. In total 299 residents voted on these options.

| Option 1 | Option 2 |
|---|--|
| Do not investigate additional work outside the boundaries | Investigate the possibility of developing the service to undertake work outside the boundaries |
| 30 | 269 |
| 10% | 90% |

As with the last option, residents were happy for additional work to be investigated as long as the level of service currently received by residents wasn't affected due to the increase in work.

4 Resident Values

4.1 Values

Information has been collected on what the residents of West Lindsey value in their life so that these values can be matched to our services and see how we can assist residents in achieving those values. The top 5 values which came through were around how the residents value the environment of which they live. This value was focused around the rurality of the district and the cleanliness. The next was around the access to medical facilities mainly Doctors surgeries and Hospitals. Transport links were classed as being important but this ranged from access on roads to bus links and the Call Connect service. A good education and feeling safe in the community were two other values which were highlighted as being very important.

A further in-depth list of the values are here but for ease of reading these have been grouped by our services were possible:

Housing

- Home
- Community
- Independence

Planning

- Community
- Rural environment
- Access to local facilities
- Parking
- Open Spaces

Revenues and Benefits

- Employment
- Financial stability

Operational Services

- Presentation of a clean organised well-loved and maintained environment

Localism

- Safe and crime free

Public Protection

- Health

- Medical services
- Entertainment
- Good Hearing
- Mobility
- Peace and quiet
- Care in the community

Economic Development

- Good education and facilities

Other comments

- Freedom of speech
- Family
- Equal opportunities
- Friends
- Transport links
- Library service

5 Other comments

5.1 Further comments submitted

A number of comments were received on how the council could help the community which included:

- Offer admin/finance services to parish councils for a fee
- Charge for long term parking in Market Rasen
- Encourage parishes to undertake litter picks
- Private sector investment - in service provision/partnership
- Own or shared ownership of properties to get young people on property ladder
- Sell advertising on website, buildings and vehicles
- Sell Mortgages
- Green material to be sold back to residents
- Send county news electronic
- More district located meeting such as events undertaken (4 in each area per year?)
- Crematorium in West Lindsey
- Solar panels on councils buildings
- Rental properties

6 Next Steps

6.1 Further engagement

This engagement is to be used for Members to help set the budget for the next year. To develop this engagement further though for the services, a number of workshops will be held with residents to look into topics on a more in-depth focus. These will be held from autumn 2013 onwards. From this 170 residents showed an interest in being involved in further workshops.

Part of the survey undertaken with the Citizen Panel was to find out what types of topics they wish to be engaged on. A list of those topics are:

- Planning
- Housing
- Food safety/Hygiene
- Waste/recycling/street cleaning
- Road Maintenance
- Council Tax
- Conservation
- Social Care
- Benefits
- Youth Services
- Vulnerable people
- Recreational services
- Community Hiring
- Transport
- Homelessness
- Statutory nuisance
- Anti-social behaviour
- Shop-mobility
- Trinity Arts Centre

Feedback of the events which were run throughout the district was very well received. Those who attended felt the workshop style ensured that everyone had a chance to give their views and that the events were run with two way

communication with the residents and officers. It was highlighted that by residents this felt to be a refreshing and interactive way to engage. When asked if they felt this should be used more often it was raised that residents would be happy to attend more events, even up to quarterly during the year as long as the topics felt worthwhile to those attending.

6.2 Citizen Panel development

Longer term the vision of the Citizen Panel is to grow it to the size of 10% of West Lindsey's population. It is hoped that this will be achieved within 3 years through continued yearly recruitment drives. To add to the Citizen Panel we also hope to develop a youth panel which will consist of young people within West Lindsey up to the age of 16.

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