

First ... a very **BIG** Thank You!

Welcome to the first Hart to Hart Newsletter. We intend to produce a regular newsletter to keep members of the panel up to date with the results and impact of consultations.

The Citizens Panel has now been running for more than six months and has grown to more than 300 members throughout Hart. You have responded to 12 surveys and been invited to eight focus groups. Thank you for taking part!

We hope you enjoy this newsletter. Please send any comments or suggestions to consultation@hart.gov.uk

The Performance Team

Service Reviews

After launching the panel in April last year, the Council carried out a series of service reviews. We took a critical look at what we do, how we do it, asked our customers what they thought of our services and how we can make improvements.

We would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of the Citizens Panel.

We have now completed 20 service reviews of front line services such as street cleaning, parking, commercial environmental health, licensing, housing, refuse & recycling and leisure plus support services such as IT and finance.

Many of the service reviews included Citizens Panel surveys and focus groups. You sent us more than 1,200 replies which were fed back to the service review panels of staff, managers and Councillors.

Members of the Citizens Panel have also attended public focus groups with officers from the services and council members, and once again your contribution has been

invaluable, telling us your views and ideas for improvement.



Panel members, officers and council members at a service review focus group meeting.

Each review lead officer was required to produce an "action plan" with practical steps to make the improvements identified in their review.

Every three months these action plans are reviewed by the original team, to assess progress and ensure that improvement is being achieved.

What have we done as a result? Turn over to find out!

Join the Hart to Hart 'CREW'!

We attended the Yateley Crime Reduction and Environment Week event at the Tythings on 25th October, to recruit more members to the panel. The CREW events bring together agencies involved in crime reduction, community action, community safety, elections and the environment. They promote local initiatives and provide an opportunity for local residents to discuss their concerns and to learn about action to improve the local environment for all.

The next CREW event is at the Hart Shopping Centre on Friday 18th and Saturday 19th January. Richard and Sarah from Hart's Performance team will be present to answer questions about the Citizens Panel and to raise awareness of the panel and recruit new members!

Your Feedback – Outcomes

Many of the actions from the service reviews were directly influenced by the feedback from the surveys and focus groups. Some of these include:

Street Cleaning – the changes to the cleaning of Fleet, Hartley Wintney, Yateley and Odiham centres were as a direct result of the suggestions made by the panel – in particular, the panel questioned the effectiveness of a machine cleaning around street furniture. This work is now done manually and we have had feedback that the situation is much improved.



Licensing – the panel members complained about the lack of information available about licensing applications. Licensing application details are now published on the Council's website for the public to view.

Sports Grounds & Countryside

– observations were made by the panel about the loss of facilities at the Peter Driver Sports Ground. A contractor has now been engaged for the refurbishment of the 5 - a-side hard court and this work will commence in the next few weeks.

Positive comments were made about the floral displays in Fleet. This feedback was influential in the decision to provide the winter floral displays.

The council website now includes information on rights of way thanks to a suggestion from panel members.

P **Parking** – One of the areas of criticism that the council has been able to address is the inconvenience of the payment machines. These are soon being brought up to date to accept pre-payment 'Smart Cards' as well as cash. The machines in Church Road, Station Approach and Hartley Wintney car parks will also accept chip & pin credit and debit cards. The new machines will start to be installed from February.

Want to see more? - All the results of the Citizens Panel surveys and the action plans from each service review are

available on the Council's website. Go to www.hart.gov.uk and click on the 'Hart to Hart' logo.

Our survey on the Citizens Panel

In November we sent you a survey asking, among other things, what your views were on being a member of the Hart to Hart Citizens Panel. The full results are published on the Council's web site.

- **75%** of you thought the surveys were about the right length, **79%** about the right frequency
- **89%** were satisfied with the content of the surveys, **98%** with how easy they were to complete
- **60%** thought it was likely that the Council would use the results of the surveys to improve services.

You also gave us lots of suggestions for improvements!:

You told us ... *"...personally I feel that some of the questions asked are a little closed, with few opportunities to express an accurate opinion."*

"...in my view the questions should either be more detailed or there should be an option for comments"

What we will do ... 11 out of the 12 surveys which we sent to the panel for the service reviews had an "any other comments" box. Your comments have been used to inform the review panels and have been very useful to highlight particular areas of concern. We will try to ensure that future surveys always include space for additional comment where possible. This will especially apply where the answer to a question might not be straightforward.

You told us ... *"...disappointed that the attendance at the review sessions is so low"*
"...it would be nice for the focus groups not to be during typical work time (9-5) so that people who work full time could attend"

What we will do ... Most of the Citizens Panel focus groups have been held during the working day, mainly to ensure the

availability of all the required staff. We recognised that this may limit attendance of the panel, and did arrange an evening group for the review of refuse and recycling. When we arrange focus groups in the future we will plan a mix of daytime and evening sessions to allow and encourage more panel members to attend.

You told us ... *“The success of the panel is when we see some tangible results”*
“...perhaps a bit more feedback and some information on what’s been done with the results.”

What we will do ... Each service review panel produced an action plan of improvements to be made in the long and short term. Progress on these plans is being monitored at three monthly intervals and the action plans are being updated with this progress. We will update the action plans on the website to show what progress has been made. We will also report through this newsletter and Hart News where actions have resulted from specific suggestions from the panel.

You told us ... *“The surveys seem to vary greatly in the quality of questioning”*
“...the questions are not well validated, in that the answers available in the options do not always convey the answer that I would prefer to give ..”
“...some of the surveys asked loaded questions, like the one on refuse collection. I thought this was very badly designed and had no room for people who didn’t like the alternate weekly collection service to make their views known”

What we will do ... Question design is always difficult and we have learned a lot during the first 6 months! Your feedback has been very helpful.

Surveys and questions are often focused on specific areas so the questions are targeted to get opinions on these issues only. This might mean that we don’t ask questions about topics already been consulted on, discussed and decided as Council policy – such as the alternate weekly bin collections.

But we will always include an ‘any other comments’ box at the end of each survey, so that it is possible to comment on other aspects of the service.

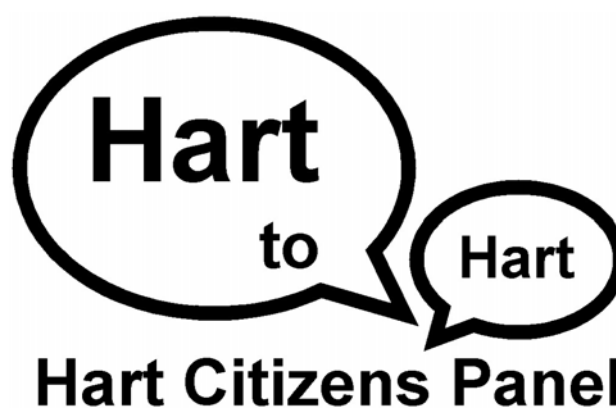
Looking Forward to 2008...

During 2007 the Citizens Panel provided us with lots of helpful feedback on our services which we used during our programme of one-week service reviews.

The 20th and final service review was held in December 2007, but we will to keep asking you for your views! We are currently planning a programme of consultation for 2008. We hope that this will include surveys on:

- CCTV
 - Equalities
 - Countryside Education Activities
 - ‘Five times Fitter’ – leisure activities
- and will be adding more topics to this list

Do you have any suggestions for future surveys? Let us know by emailing consultation@hart.gov.uk



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