

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE
29 JUNE 2009

WAVELENGTH 19 - SURVEY RESULTS

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Executive of the results of the Wavelength 19 survey conducted in April 2009

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The nineteenth survey covered six areas: The objectives of the survey were

- Sport and exercise -To measure the level of recreational activity
- Museum & gallery - To measure the level of museum and art gallery attendance
- Parks, playing fields and allotment - To identify usage and pattern of use for parks, playing fields and allotments
- Customer Service - To measure satisfaction with the Customer Service Centre and understand the nature of user's visits
- Community involvement – To gain further insight into local decision making and community involvement
- Community Forum – to explore ways of making the community forum more attractive to audiences

- 2.2 In total **601** forms were returned from **915** forms sent out. This is a return rate of **65.7%**

- 2.3 This is the fifth survey conducted with the current Wavelength panel. The panel is representative of the city for gender and for ward population but is slightly skewed towards the older groups. To compensate for this a weighting has been applied to ensure the percentage figures reported are reflective of the city's population.

3.0 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

3.1 Sport and exercise

The survey asked a number of similar questions to those used in the Sport England Active People survey which was conducted in 2007/8 with the intention of tracking people's participation levels.

The key findings within this section are:

- Walking was the most popular activity (46.4%) followed by gym/exercise classes (28.2%) and swimming (22.1%)
- Over two thirds (69.5%) of the activities cited caused the participant to be breathless or break sweat

- Over half of respondents (56.5%) said that they took part in a sporting or recreational activity for more than 12 days in the previous four weeks

3.2 **Museum and gallery attendance**

These questions focused on usage of museums and art galleries and were specifically asked to monitor participation in these areas whilst the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM) is closed and a RAMM - out and about programme is running in the library and community venues.

The key findings within this section are:

- The majority of respondents (62.6%) had visited a gallery or museum in the last 12 months
- Female respondents were more likely to visit than males
- A small percentage (14%) had attended a RAMM out and about event in last 12 months

3.3 **Parks, playing fields and allotments**

The parks and playing fields questions explored the activities people undertake in the facilities and the changes in use between the spring/summer and autumn/winter periods. They also looked at the impact parks and playing fields have on people's lifestyle choices. This information will be used to improve and target the marketing of events and activities within the facilities.

The key findings are:

- Walking is the most popular activity, with over three quarters of respondents using the park at least monthly.
- Picnicking, cycling and running are also popular
- All activities are less popular in autumn/winter than in spring/summer although dog walking and walking only fall slightly.
- The most popular sporting activities within parks were cycling (spring/summer 37.7% and autumn/winter 25%) running (spring/summer 24.2% and autumn/winter 21.5%) and tennis (spring/summer 13.8% and autumn/winter 2.3%)
- Age clearly influences the reason for using parks with nearly 40% of the 55-74s visiting for the floral displays and 20% of 25-44s visiting the free events
- Parks, play areas and allotments have an influence over lifestyle choices for a significant minority of respondents such as choice of place to live, walking and cycling routes and fitness activities

3.4 **Customer services**

Since the Customer Service Centre (CSC) opened in 2005 periodic tracking questions have been undertaken and the continuous monitoring provided by the Govmetric system has recently been introduced. The results from this section show that:

- Levels of satisfaction with service are high
- The main reason for visiting CSC is to make a payment (38.3%) followed

by general enquiries (29.6%), handing in documents (28.8%) and collecting information (28.8%)

- The majority (82.6%) felt that they were dealt with efficiently and 80.1% described the service as good.
- Male respondents are more likely to describe the service as good than female respondents

3.5 **Local decision making and participation**

The results for this area of work in the Place Survey (2008) were slightly disappointing and therefore additional research has been carried out to help the Council better understand the issues. This work will be fed into the review of community involvement being undertaken. The results from the questions in W19 show that:

- Wavelength panellists feel more informed about how to get involved in local decision-making than the people in the Place survey (38.2% vs 28.3%)
- A majority of people (59.3%) said they were not aware of their local groups and 39.4% said they lacked time to get involved
- In terms of getting involved, 26.2% of respondents said they would like to be more involved in decision-making; this figure is higher than in the Place survey (21.1%)
- Interest in participation is largely dependant on the issue/subject being dealt with as recorded in the Place Survey
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3.6 The survey also asked about people's involvement in their communities and the results show that:

- There are low levels of participation in local community groups
- Although 61.9% were aware of who their councillor was, there is a large minority who are unaware of who their councillor is or how to contact them.
- Age clearly influences awareness of the local councillor with older people being more aware additionally men are far more likely to be aware of their councillor than women, these findings reflect trends previously noted

3.7 To ensure the Council provides information to people around this issue in the most effective way people were asked about how they would like to get information about getting involved. The Exeter Citizen is the most favoured method for getting council information (74.9%) followed by local newspapers on 48.4%.

3.8 The survey also repeated the overall satisfaction with the Council question from the Place Survey. Levels of satisfaction with Exeter City Council (62.6%) are higher in this survey than those demonstrated in Place Survey (55.7%). This may suggest that people who are more engaged with the Council tend to view it more positively.

3.9 **Community Forum**

The community forum is being reviewed as part of the overall review of community involvement. The questions asked here are part of a wider consultation to help understand what type of event would be most attractive to audiences. The results below show that:

- Guildhall was the favoured option for the vast majority (72.6%)
- There was a large majority (62.8%) in favour of evening meetings
- Older respondents (55+) were more likely to prefer an afternoon
- There was a small majority in favour of changing the format to allow people to drop-in as and when they wished
- The most popular format was to have forums based around a theme (56.2%) followed by question time style (26.8%)

4.0 **NEXT STEPS**

4.1 Some more detailed analysis of the questions around sport and exercise will be conducted for the Head of Leisure and Museums. The customer service findings will be used to benchmark the service in the Customer Service Centre, the parks and open spaces findings to improve marketing of the service and the findings from the sections around local decision- making and community forums will feed into the review of community involvement

4.2 As part of the commitment to the Wavelength Panel, a short newsletter giving the results of this questionnaire and indicating how the Council is addressing the issues will be produced. In addition an article will be run in the September 2009 edition of the Exeter Citizen and the results posted on the website and on the intranet.

5.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 It is recommended that the Executive note the report.

ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT

Local Government (Access to information) Act 1985 (as amended) Background papers used in compiling this report:

Wavelength 19 full report.