



PARTNERSHIP AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

REVIEW OF WEST LOTHIAN CITIZENS PANEL

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to inform the Panel of the proposal to review and refresh the Citizens Panel and carry out a Quality of Life Survey in summer 2020.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Panel notes the proposal to review the Citizens Panel and carry out a Quality of Life Survey in summer 2020.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; developing employees; making best use of our resources; working in partnership
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	A small number of performance indicators are informed by the Quality of Life Survey and will be reviewed with the new survey
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	The Quality of Life Survey will be aligned to the new LOIP
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	There will be a cost attached to the review of the Citizens Panel and to carry out the Quality of Life survey. Indicative costs are provided with this report. Budget is still to be identified.
VII	Consideration at PDSP	None

VIII Other consultations

The proposal will be discussed at the CPP Board in March 2020

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Background

West Lothian Citizens Panel was established in 1999 and is supported by the Community Planning Partnership (CPP). The panel was set up to help identify people's views on various aspects relating to living in West Lothian, and the services provided by the CPP. The panel is managed by an external organisation, with a tender process carried out every few years. The contract for the management of the Citizens Panel was awarded to Engage Scotland in 2018.

Membership of the panel is on a voluntary basis. Individuals are either invited on to the panel through random selection or can request to be involved themselves. The panel has tended to be refreshed regularly to ensure that it remains representative of the West Lothian population and to give other West Lothian residents the opportunity to take part. The panel currently has around 2,700 members. The demographic profile of the panel indicates that is fairly representative of the West Lothian population in terms of gender, tenure, ethnicity and multi-member ward; however there is under-representation of some groups (e.g. younger people).

Quality of Life Surveys have traditionally been carried out with the panel every three years. This survey asks a wide range of questions around a range of issues about life in West Lothian. Topics covered include West Lothian's economy, community safety, health, travel and the environment. A full refresh of the panel was not carried out prior to the last Quality of Life Survey in 2016/17, which may explain the low response rate. The survey was also very lengthy. The next Quality of Life Survey is due in 2019/20; however this has been put on hold while the panel is reviewed.

Consideration has been given to how the existing Citizens Panel can be reviewed and reformed in light of wider discussions around community empowerment.

D.2 Proposal to review and refresh the Citizens Panel

The review and refresh of the Citizens Panel has been discussed with Engage Scotland. A proposal for refreshing the panel and carrying out a Quality of Life Survey has been developed, drawing on their experience of what works in other areas.

Regular refreshment of panel membership is recommended to maintain engagement levels and to correct for any under or over-representation that may develop over time. This usually involves retiring a portion of the panel and recruiting new members through a large scale recruitment exercise issued to a random sample drawn from the Open Register. Panel refreshment is an opportunity to consider the number and profile of members required for the panel. Refreshment of the panel will ensure that future panel activity and response is maximised.

As the panel is a means of gathering robust data on residents' views across a wide range of issues, it will include a cross section of the West Lothian population. While a panel is unlikely to achieve 'perfect' representation, the membership should include good representation across key population groups.

While the profile of the panel membership is important, it should be noted that it is the size and profile of the achieved response to consultation exercises that drives

the robustness of results. As such, a large membership with good representation across population groups only adds value if strong response rates are achieved.

At 2,700 members, West Lothian's Citizens Panel is amongst the largest panels in Scotland; however the panel saw lower than expected response rates in the most recent Quality of Life Survey. This may reflect some 'consultation fatigue' and disengagement from longer-standing members. Boosting engagement is a key focus for the refreshment exercise. It is expected that response rates would increase to at least 50-60% following refreshment.

The refresh would involve retiring a number of current members and recruiting new members to ensure they represent at least a third of the new panel membership. It is also proposed that panel refreshment is used as an opportunity to re-consider the panel size, reducing membership to 1,800-2000. This would be sufficient to provide robust results at local authority and ward level and to identify differences in views across key population groups; whilst still improving engagement and survey response rates. This would also reduce the cost of individual panel exercises, offering potential for more frequent panel consultation which would again help to maintain engagement over time.

As well as a large scale postal recruitment exercise to secure new members, promotional recruitment would also be carried out to ensure the process is as open as possible and to provide an opportunity to target key population groups likely to be under-represented by postal recruitment. Promotional materials would be distributed initially via community planning partners' websites and social media channels, with Engage Scotland also providing electronic and printed materials to local community venues and service access points. More targeted promotion would be used to boost membership within under-represented groups. The focus of this work would be tailored in response to the profile of new members secured via large-scale postal recruitment. This would likely include younger people, social tenants, BME community and others who may be less likely to respond to postal panel recruitment.

D.3 Quality of Life Survey

It is proposed that the Quality of Life Survey continues to be carried out every 3 years and that the next survey is carried out in summer 2020, following the panel refreshment exercise. Analysis and reporting of results will be carried out by the end of 2020.

The Quality of Life Survey has in the past been aligned to the priority themes in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (previously the Single Outcome Agreement). Currently the survey includes a range of thematic areas: West Lothian's economy, community safety, health, travel and the environment. Consideration will be given to the format of the survey, ensuring that it is more user-friendly and shorter than the previous survey. The development of the new Local Outcomes Improvement Plan means that the CPP will now focus on a smaller number of priority areas. Consideration will be given to how these areas are linked in to the Quality of Life Survey, as well as getting broader views on wider topics about living in West Lothian. Community planning partners will be consulted on the question set.

The plans to refresh the Citizens Panel and carry out a Quality of Life Survey in summer 2020 will be discussed at the CPP Board in March 2020.

D.4 Costs

Engage Scotland have provided the costs below for the panel refresh and for carrying out the Quality of Life Survey, based on a reduced panel membership of 1,800. The budget to cover these costs is to be identified.

Panel Refreshment Costs	Cost (exc. VAT)
Design and setup	£339
Large-scale panel recruitment	£4,980
Compiling refreshed panel	£722
TOTAL	£6,041

Quality of Life Survey	Cost (exc. VAT)
Panel survey – 1,800 membership (includes distribution of the survey, full analysis and reporting on the results)	£3,350

E. CONCLUSION

The membership of the West Lothian Citizens Panel is now due for refreshment. It is proposed that the panel is refreshed in early 2020 and that a Quality of Life Survey will be carried out with the new Panel in summer 2020 as a way of obtaining residents' views about a range of topics relating to West Lothian. Refreshment of the panel will be used to re-consider the size of the panel and ensure new members are representative of the West Lothian population, in order to substantially improve engagement and survey response rates. The Panel is asked to note this proposal.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Appendices/Attachments: N/A

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