

1. Summary

The current contract to carry out the Citizens' Panel surveys was awarded to Hexagon Research and Consulting in 2008. The contract was to run for three years, with the possibility of an extension into a fourth.

We are now at the end of the three year period. This provides a good opportunity to review the role and use of the Citizens' Panel. This paper makes recommendations for action in the short- to medium-term.

2. Recommendations:

- In the short-term, the Partnership approves the extension of the contract with Hexagon Research and Consulting for a fourth year, and we verify with Hexagon Research and Consulting that they are also in agreement with this extension.
- In the medium-term the role and purpose of the Citizens' Panel should be reviewed as part of the work on the community engagement strategy, currently being developed by the newly formed Third Sector and Communities CPP subgroup.

3. Detail

The current contract for the Citizens' Panel was awarded to Hexagon Research and Consulting in February / March 2008. The contract was designed to run for three years, with a possibility of extending the contract into the fourth year.

As of March 2011, we have reached the end of the third year, and are now seeking the approval of the Partnership to continue the contract for the current year. Over this year, the purpose and use of the panel should be reviewed, and recommendations for the longer term developed.

Over the three years that the contract has run, Hexagon Research and Consulting have carried out the following work on behalf of the Partnership (table 1).

Year		Work carried out
Year one	2008-2009	Recruitment of new panel membership
		Survey focussing on satisfaction with services offered by partner organisations
Year two	2009-2010	Survey focussing on impact and perceptions of economic recession; community engagement

Year		Work carried out
		Survey investigating factors panellists consider to be important in making somewhere a good place to live and which of these factors are most in need of improvement in their area; Panellists' satisfaction with a range of Council services; role of Strathclyde Fire and Rescue
Year three	2010-2011	Refreshment of part of panel membership
		Survey tracking factors panellists consider to be important in making somewhere a good place to live and which of these factors are most in need of improvement in their area; panellists' satisfaction with a range of Council services; the Council's budget consultation and Service review options.

In addition, Hexagon Research and Consulting have carried out additional survey and focus group work on behalf of individual partners, drawing on the panel membership.

At present, we have the following themes scheduled for inclusion in a spring 2011 survey:

- Volunteering behaviour (held over from 2010)
- Trading standards / bogus callers
- Policing / crime
- Child protection (held over from 2010).

Over the last few years, it has become increasingly difficult to attract themes for inclusion in the Citizen Panel surveys. This has resulted in the delay of themes for inclusion until enough have been gathered for inclusion in a survey.

Where surveys / focus groups have been carried out in addition to the Citizens' Panel surveys, these have focussed on very specific topics (e.g. development of the Local Housing Strategy; how panellists contact the Council; waste management in Helensburgh and Lomond), asking more questions than would be possible in the current format of the Citizens' Panel surveys.

This then raises questions with regard to:

- The level of use that is currently made of the panel
- The format of the panel surveys, and their relationship to wider community engagement issues.

We recommend that the Citizens' Panel survey should be included as part of the work on the community engagement strategy, which is currently being developed by the newly formed Third Sector and Communities CPP subgroup.

For further information:

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