

# Talking about...

## Solihull

Four times a year we consult with a representative group of residents from across the borough about Council services and priorities.

The results are then used to help us make decisions and improve our services.

**Decision making in Solihull**



**Recycling services**

**Street lights**



This newsletter covers the findings from our June 2009 survey.

In that survey we asked about:

- Decision making in Solihull
- Awareness and satisfaction with recycling services
- Street lights

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# Decision making in Solihull

**It's important local people turn out to vote and are engaged in the whole democratic process. To do this people need to have trust and confidence in their elected councillors.**

**There are standards for elected members and a process for making complaints about councillors if they do not meet those standards.**

We asked how people feel about councillors, especially whether they trust and have confidence in elected councillors.

We also asked if people know how to make a complaint about a councillor and what kind of things they can complain about legally.

## What do councillors do?

Your councillors have a very important role in helping shape future services for the community and are essential in representing public interest on council issues.

The borough is split up into **17 wards**. Each of the wards has three councillors - a total of **51 councillors** - who each serve for four years. A local election is held in three out of the four year period - each time one Councillor's seat will be up for election in each ward.

All councillors meet together as 'the Council' to decide Council policies, make decisions about all council services and set budgets. These meetings are normally open to the public. The Council appoints a leader, who then appoints a cabinet. The Council also appoints overview and scrutiny boards to monitor decisions made by the Council.

Councillors also represent the views of the people living in their ward. Many are also school governors and are active in local charities and voluntary organisations.

Overall the Council is responsible for most public services in the borough including education, roads, recycling and rubbish collection, parks and children's social care. Councillors make decisions about all of these services and more.

**Survey results over the page**

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# Decision making in Solihull

We asked a cross section of Solihull residents the following questions.

## Who is responsible for making decisions?

- Just over **5 out of 10** of those asked said that elected councillors are responsible for making decisions about council services.
- **2 out of 10** people did not know who is responsible.
- Just over **4 out of 10** rightly thought that elected councillors were ultimately responsible for decisions.

## What do councillors do?

- Just over **3 out of 10** people thought that Councillors make decisions about services and how money is spent.
- And just over **3 out of 10** people thought that councillors represent local people, communities or groups.
- Nearly **3 out of 10** people felt that they do not understand at all what councillors do, with less than **1 in 10** feeling that they understand completely.

## Do you know which councillors represent your ward?

- Over **8 out of 10** people did not know who their ward councillors were.

You can find out who **your ward councillors** are and how to **contact your councillors** on our website.

## Making the right decision

- Nearly **8 out of 10** people trust councillors to make the right decisions on behalf of Solihull to some extent.
- Almost **2 out of 10** do not trust them at all.

## How satisfied are you with councillors?

- We asked people if they were satisfied about how they could find out what councillors discuss in meetings. **5 out of 10** of them were neither dissatisfied nor satisfied.
- Asked if they were satisfied that councillors showed that they understand local community issues - again **6 out of 10** people were neither dissatisfied nor satisfied.
- **6 out of 10** people were neither dissatisfied nor satisfied when asked if they were satisfied that councillors showed that they care about local community issues.
- Nearly **6 out of 10** said they were not satisfied with how much you see councillors in the local community.

## Active in the local community

Just over **7 out of 10** people believed councillors are active in the local community to some extent.

The top two reasons given by people who think that councillors are very active were that they read about councillors in the newspapers and that councillors had made a difference to their local areas.

Whereas people who think that councillors are not at all active said it was because they never see or hear from them.

## Code of conduct

- **7 out of 10** people knew that elected councillors have to comply with a code of conduct. With nearly **8 out of 10** people knowing that elected parish councillors also have to comply with a code of conduct.
- But only **3 out of 10** people knew how to complain if they suspect an elected councillor is in breach of the code of conduct.

You can find more information about the **Code of Conduct** on our website.

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# Recycling services

There are already a number of ways in which people can recycle in Solihull. In September we are increasing our kerbside recycling collections to include more items such as card, cans and plastic bottles.

In the latest edition of our residents' magazine 'Your Solihull' there is a special pull out guide about our new recycling service.

Also in September, we will be providing people with a 140 litre black wheelie bin for any remaining household waste that is left after you have recycled.

We asked how satisfied people are with the current recycling services and what impact the new recycling services will have on how they recycle in the future.



Go to the next page to see what we asked and what you told us.

## Recycling sites

We have a **household waste recycling centre** at Bickenhill on the Coventry Road (A45), for general household waste disposal and recycling facilities for many other materials.

There are also over 28 mini-recycling centres throughout Solihull. You can find out **what you can recycle** at each of the sites on our website.

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# Recycling services

## Awareness

When asked what recycling facilities they were aware of in Solihull, **8 out of 10** people said kerbside collections; nearly **6 out of 10** mentioned mini-recycling sites.

## Usage

Based upon responses to the question 'How often do you use the recycling services available?' we found that over **9 out of 10** people recycle using our recycling services at some point. That's really good news.

- **9 out of 10** people use our kerbside recycling collections at least once a month.
- **4 out of 10** use the mini-recycling sites at least once a month.
- Just over **1 in 10** use the household waste recycling centre at Bickenhill at least once a month.

## New kerbside collections

With new kerbside collections for tins, cardboard and plastic bottles starting in September, we asked people if they thought they would still use mini-recycling sites.

- Over **3 out of 10** people thought they would use the sites the same as they currently do.
- Just over **5 out of 10** thought that they would use them less often.

## Information

We wanted to know how informed you feel about recycling services in Solihull.

- Over **7 out of 10** people felt informed to some extent about recycling services.
- **7 out of 10** recalled seeing specific information leaflets about recycling services.
- **5 out of 10** would like more information, saying they preferred specific information leaflets.

## Performance

We asked people how they thought we were performing in terms of recycling compared to neighbouring councils.

- Over **5 out of 10** people thought we were performing better or the same.
- Only **2 out of 10** thought we were performing worse.

Reducing the amount of household waste that is generated is a priority for the Council. We asked people what they thought were the main priorities in terms of reducing waste were. The three highest were:

- Promote initiatives to reduce and avoid junk mail.
- Lobby government and work with local businesses to reduce excess packaging.
- Support people to take up home composting of garden and food waste.

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# Street lights

We wanted to find out if people are satisfied with the street lights in Solihull and if they knew what to do if a light stops working.

## How do I report a problem?

To report problems with street lights (as well as traffic lights, pedestrian crossings or illuminated bollards) or about their location, you can:

- Phone us on 0121 704 8360 during office hours. In an emergency or out of hours situation, please contact our 24-hour call centre on 0121 704 8000.
- Use the online [street light hotline form](#) on our website.

## Satisfaction

- Nearly **9 out of 10** people said they were satisfied with street lights.

## Faulty lights

- Over **5 out of 10** people would telephone the Council to report a broken street light.
- Just over **1 out of 10** have reported a broken street light.
- With **9 out of 10** of those who had reported a fault being satisfied with how their report was dealt with and how easy it was to report it.

## Switch off

We wanted to know how supportive people would be if we were to consider switching off street lights for a few hours in the middle of the night.

- Nearly **5 out of 10** people were supportive to some extent.
- Less than **4 out of 10** were unsupportive, mainly because of safety concerns and fear of crime.



We keep  
more than  
**20,000 street  
lights alight  
in Solihull.**

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# Talking about...

## Solihull

All research was carried out  
by Brahm Research on behalf  
of Solihull Council.

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