

# Talking about... Solihull

We regularly ask residents from across the borough about Council services and priorities. The results are then used to help us make decisions and improve services.

This newsletter gives you a summary of the feedback from surveys we carried out in 2009-2010.

In these surveys we asked about:

- Volunteering in Solihull
- The Council's budget and priorities for spending
- Anti-social behaviour
- The Council's performance
- The Council's brand

## The Council's performance



## Anti-social behaviour



## The Council's budget



# Volunteering in Solihull



*Volunteers repaint the playground equipment in Palmers Rough recreation ground in Shirley.*

*This work would have cost Solihull tax payers £3,500, but instead cost just £150 for the paint.*

**We wanted to know people's views about volunteering and how many of you currently volunteer. Also what barriers may exist to prevent people becoming volunteers.**

We found that the number of females and males who gave unpaid help to groups were about the same.

Those aged between 30 and 44 were the largest group who said they did voluntary work. Overall only 3 out of 10 people said they had done voluntary work in the last 12 months.

For the 7 out of 10 people who don't do voluntary work, their top reason why they didn't was because of their work commitments. Other reasons were - have to look after children/the home; do other things with their spare time, too old, never thought about volunteering.

## FACTS BOX

### Volunteer in Solihull

Meet new people. Try something new. Learn new skills. Make a difference.

Volunteering can be a rich and rewarding experience if you have some free time or are looking to improve your employment and career prospects.

There are hundreds of voluntary organisations in Solihull looking for your skills, your time and your enthusiasm. Why not give it a try? It can be a one-off or a longer-term commitment. The choice is yours.

### To talk to someone about volunteering

Call SUSTAIN on 0121 705 8820 or email [volunteering@solihull-sustain.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@solihull-sustain.org.uk)



# The Council's priorities for spending and budget

## Priorities for spending

**Value for money and working towards new government targets to deliver efficiency savings continues to be central to our plans for transforming services.**

**We have already consulted with residents to establish a list of priorities for public spending in Solihull. We have grouped these into five broad themes.**

**We wanted to find out whether residents thought these priorities are still right for Solihull and how much of a priority for spending they thought each of these five themes were in Solihull. The results of the survey were used to help us set our 2010/2011 budget.**



**Under each of the five themes we list below the top three areas that residents think should have the highest spending priority.**

### **Developing healthier communities**

- Encourage older people and those with disabilities to live with dignity and independence.
- Supporting carers.
- Supporting people with mental health needs.

### **Creating safer places to live**

- Cracking down on violent crime and disorder.
- Reducing anti-social behaviour.
- Diverting young people away from crime.

### **Encouraging people to be active in their communities**

- Helping those who because of circumstances are excluded from normal life.
- Encouraging people to take part in learning and making sure local people are served by a well qualified workforce.
- Encouraging communities to work together to tackle local problems.

### **Creating a prosperous Solihull**

- Help people gain skills/jobs.
- Making sure Solihull is a nice place to live/new developments well designed.
- Making sure Solihull has high quality public places/spaces.

### **A brighter future for children and young people**

- Making sure all children have access to the same support and opportunities regardless of background.
- Making sure organisations who work with children and young people work together to improve lives of children in the borough.
- Making sure children and young people have things to do and places to go.



# The Council's priorities for spending and budget

## The Council's budget

### Value for money

When asked, almost 4 out of 10 people thought we did the best we can with the money we have available.

We then asked the same question, but this time explaining that *"Solihull Council has one of the lowest council tax levels in the country, one of the lowest staffing levels in the country and is rated as a good council by the government."*

This changed the result to over 5 out of 10 people saying they thought we did the best we can with the money available.

Half of all those surveyed said they agreed that the Council provides value for money.

More than 6 out of 10 people said they were satisfied with the way we run the Council.

### Budget decisions

Only 1 out of 10 people thought that Councillors should make the decisions about the budget.

More than 3 out of 10 people agreed that provided the Council have asked people's views on priorities, Councillors should make the decision where cuts should be made.

Almost 6 out of 10 people agreed that any cuts which directly impact on local people should be tested out with them first and Councillors should use these results as the basis for their decision.

When told it can cost thousands of pounds to ask local people about the budget, more than 8 out of 10 people said their answers would be the same.

## FACTS BOX

- Solihull Council receives the lowest government grant per head of all metropolitan authorities whilst its council tax levels are amongst the lowest in the country.
- Comparisons with other councils also show that we have one of the lowest staffing levels in the country.



# Anti-social behaviour



We wanted to find out what people considered as anti-social behaviour; and what were their experiences of anti-social behaviour in Solihull. This helped us to better forward plan and focus on the ways we deal with anti-social behaviour.

These are some of the questions we asked.

## What behaviours do you associate with anti-social behaviour?

- 5 out of 10 people said rowdy behaviour and gangs/teenagers on the street.
- Almost 4 out of 10 people said criminal damage.
- Whilst nearly 3 out of 10 people said noise nuisance, street drinking drunkenness and intimidation, harassment or racial incidents.

## How much of a problem is anti-social behaviour in your local area?

- More than 3 out of 10 people said not a problem at all.
- Almost 6 out of 10 said a slight problem.
- With less than 1 out of 10 saying it was a serious problem.

## Do you think anti-social behaviour has reduced, stayed the same or got worse in the last 12 months in your local area?

- More than 6 out of 10 people said it had stayed the same.
- Just over 1 in 10 thought it had reduced.
- And just over 1 in 10 thought it had got worse.

## Are there any typical 'types of places' in Solihull which attract anti-social behaviour?

- 4 out of 10 people said local shops.
- 4 out of 10 people said parks.
- Almost 2 out of 10 people said pubs and clubs.

People said that late evening (8pm to 11pm) was when they thought anti-social behaviour is most likely to happen.

Teenagers continue to be seen as the main offenders, with older people being seen as the most likely victims of anti-social behaviour.



# Anti-social behaviour

## Personal experiences of anti-social behaviour

More than 6 out of 10 people said that they or their children had **never** experienced anti-social behaviour in their local area.

For those who said they had experienced anti-social behaviour, the most common experience was intimidation, harassment or racial incidents.

5 out of 10 people reported these incidents, with 8 out of 10 people reporting them to the police. More than 5 out of 10 residents who reported anti-social behaviour saying things improved as a result of reporting it and were satisfied with how the police, council and Solihull Community Housing dealt with it.

Almost half of those not reporting felt the anti-social behaviour experienced was not serious enough to report.

## Reducing anti-social behaviour in Solihull

7 out of 10 people said they thought the police were responsible for reducing anti-social behaviour. With over 4 out of 10 people saying they would like to see more police and patrolling police improve and reduce anti-social behaviour.

Nearly 8 out of 10 people thought that there is a role for the community to help reduce anti-social behaviour through reporting it and getting involved in community events.

## Safer Solihull

Reducing crime and disorder and making our communities feel safer is something we all want to see. This is not the responsibility of just the police, but of all the agencies in Solihull. The government wants local organisations to work together to improve the quality of life for local residents.

In July 2009 we launched the Safer Solihull Partnership that is led by five principal partners:

- Solihull Council
- West Midlands Police
- West Midlands Police Authority
- West Midlands Fire Service
- Solihull NHS Care Trust

Working with other partners such as elected councillors, the Probation Service, Youth Offending Service, Solihull Community Housing, Connexions, magistrates and others, our aim is to reduce crime and disorder in Solihull and make the borough a safer place in which to live, work, learn and play.

The 2008-11 Solihull Safer Communities Plan sets out what we will be doing to address crime, disorder, the harm caused by drug and alcohol misuse and anti-social behaviour in our borough over the coming years.

**To find out what we're doing to reduce crime and disorder in Solihull to make our communities feel safer, or to get advice on how to avoid being a victim of crime and find out where you can get help, you can:**

- Call 0121 704 6644 or email [safersolihull@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:safersolihull@solihull.gov.uk) for general enquiries about Safer Solihull.
- Report anti-social behaviour on 0121 717 1515.
- Join Neighbourhood Watch, call 0121 704 8577.



# The Council's performance

In our September 2009 survey we asked if our residents thought we were performing well as a Council; and how satisfied they are with what we do.

We have carried out similar surveys over the last three years so that we can compare and use the information to monitor our performance.

We asked a cross section of Solihull residents the following:

## Overall how satisfied are you with the Council?

The results showed that this year 6 out of 10 residents were satisfied with our performance.

This was down from last year when just over 7 out of 10 residents said they were satisfied, but was similar to the results from our first survey.

## We asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following statements?

*The Council acts in the best interests of the Borough.*

6 out of 10 residents agreed. This follows the same trend as the previous question, slightly down on last year, but similar to our first year results.

*If you had to contact the Council over an issue, your views would be listened to.*

Just over 5 out of 10 residents agreed. This year has seen an increase from last year when just under half agreed; and the previous year when half agreed with the statement.

*The Council provides sufficient opportunities for residents to be involved in decision making.*

4 out of 10 agreed with this statement this year. There has been no significant change from other years.

*What extent do you agree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?*

Just over 4 out of 10 people agreed they could influence decisions – a leap from only 3 in 10 people agreeing in the previous year.

*Generally, would you like to be more involved in the decisions that affect your local area?*

Over 6 out of 10 people said it would depend on the issue.



# The Council's performance

## We asked "How well informed do you feel about certain things?"

On average around 5 out of 10 people said they felt well informed about the following.

- What the Council wants to achieve for the Borough in the future.
- How the Council spends its money.
- What the Council has achieved in the last two years.
- Whether the Council is delivering on its promises.

Whilst around 6 out of 10 said they felt well informed about the following issues.

- How well the Council is performing.
- What standard of service you should expect from the Council.
- The services the Council provides that are relevant to you.
- Keeps residents well informed about the services and benefits it provides.

## Annual report

We produce an **annual report** as a way of explaining the positive outcomes that we have achieved across all of our priorities.

The annual report provides a summary of financial, performance and environmental headlines and sets out some of our key achievements over the last financial year.



# The Council's brand

Our Brand of *'being open, honest, approachable and keeping our promises'* is about the way we behave as a council. It is the key to tackling, with integrity, the challenges that drive our business - 'closing the gap of inequality', 'understanding the needs of customers' and 'more for less'.

It is important that we check how satisfied residents are with how we run the council and if we are delivering our key brand values - being open, honest, approachable and keeping our promises. We last asked about these brand values in April 2008 and we wanted to know if we had lived up to them.

## Our Brand

- Open
- Honest
- Approachable
- Keeping our promises

## Our Vision

Solihull in 2018:  
where everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and prosperous.

We read out a number of statements about the service we give and asked people how satisfied they were with each one. Here is what we asked and the number of people who said they were satisfied:

- People at the Council deal with the public in an appropriate manner – **nearly 7 out of 10**
- People at the Council represent the Council in a positive manner – **over 6 out of 10**
- Councillors demonstrate that they care about local community issues – **over 6 out of 10**
- Councillors demonstrate that they understand local community issues – **again over 6 out of 10**
- People at the Council are good at their job – **just under 7 out of 10**
- People at the Council admit when they are wrong – **5 out of 10**

6 out of 10 people said how easy it was to access services when they needed to. With just under 7 out of 10 people saying they were satisfied with:

- The methods we use to contact them.
- How easy it is to speak to someone on the phone.
- How easy it is to speak to someone face-to-face.

There has been no change in the results compared to 2008, with around 6 out of 10 people saying they are satisfied overall that we are open, honest, approachable and keep our promises.

All the results show a significant increase in satisfaction from the previous year.



# Talking about... Solihull

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

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July 2010



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