

Welcome to the Viewpoint Summer newsletter where you can read all about the consultation exercises that we have carried out over the past 6 months. To begin with, we have some new members on our panel so we would like to say thank you to them for agreeing to be a member of Gateshead Residents' Panel - Viewpoint.

The panel is a great way for us to find out about residents' needs, ideas and opinions on a

wide range of important issues. We have recently undertaken a recruitment exercise to bring more new members to the panel and so far have welcomed more residents to the panel as a result of this.

If you know of anyone who would like to become a member of Viewpoint and make their voice heard, please ask them to ring the consultation officer on **0191 433 2826** or join online at www.gateshead.gov.uk or via e-mail at viewpoint@gateshead.gov.uk

Adult Learning

We wanted to know whether we are offering the right kind of adult learning opportunities for Gateshead residents. This included courses at the right level, that courses are offered at convenient times and places, and that the quality of the teaching from our tutors is always of the highest standards.

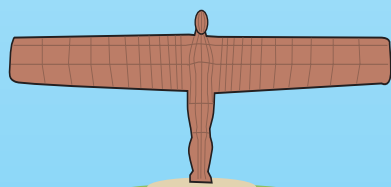
The group was directed at those who have recently undertaken an adult learning opportunity provided by Gateshead Council. The general feeling towards adult learning in Gateshead was that it is a high standard, though having to pay for what was once free wasn't popular. The choice of courses were also said to be good and the availability was of a high standard.

Gateshead Strategic Partnership Peer Review

In March 2007, Gateshead Strategic Partnership (GSP) commissioned the Improvement and Development Agency, Warwick Business School and SOLACE Enterprises to carry out a peer review. The review is intended to help identify its current strengths as well as areas for improvement. This was a review of not just Gateshead Council, but also its partners including the NHS, Connexions and Employment Service.

The peer review included consultation with partners, residents (Viewpoint), businesses, and community groups. The peer review helped highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the GSP and what will be the key challenges facing the GSP in the future.

The review also helped shape priorities for the delivery of Gateshead Strategic Partnership's sustainable community strategy, Vision 2030, and how to drive forward the big ideas for Gateshead.



Viewpoint

The citizens' panel for Gateshead

Priorities and Planning Cycle 2007

Viewpoint members were asked to let us know what services you think should be a priority for the council in the coming year. Also which services they felt are in need of improving, what services are already of a high standard and are there any gaps in service. Services recognised as of a high standard were environmental services e.g. floral displays and street cleaning and cultural facilities. Services that were highlighted as needing improving were car parking facilities and, linking in with this, parking on footpaths. The amount of materials which can be recycled was also highlighted as in need of improvement

Upcoming Focus Groups

Continuation of consultation of the Local Government Bill and consultation on the new South Tyne and Wear draft waste management strategy.

We would like to thank you for all your help in these consultation events and hope to see you all soon in the future.


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Social Care Fees and Charges

In 2007, proposed changes to the fees and charges for social care was proposed. Members were asked to give their views on the charges currently in place for social care and, in some cases proposed increases. Three focus group consultations were carried out. The general feedback was that charges were about right; with the exception of the residential maximum charge, which was considered to be too high.

Although it is not proposed to increase the maximum weekly charge for home and day care services a significant number of service users still felt that this charge is too high. The charge is lower than the national average. The opportunity was also taken to ask service users in meetings if they were happy to pay flat rate charges for transport and the shopping service. The majority were in favour of retaining this system.

All charges reflect the council's unit costs of providing these services and increase in charges to the council.

Future Consultation

The Viewpoint Summer Survey is included with this newsletter. The survey covers Fairtrade in Gateshead and a small number of Community Safety questions along with current corporate issues.

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