



Viewpoint News

February 2010 • Issue

25

Welcome to your latest edition of Viewpoint News.

Issue 25

Welcome to the 25th edition of Viewpoint News. We would like to extend a warm welcome to our new Viewpoint members and hope you find your time on the panel rewarding and enjoyable. The 'Frequently Asked Questions Page' in this newsletter is all about 'Tees Achieve' (previously Stockton Adult Education and Training and Employment Services).

This newsletter includes:

- ✓ What the latest survey is about
- ✓ Results from Viewpoint 27
- ✓ Outcomes from previous consultations
- ✓ 'Frequently Asked Questions'
- ✓ What's on in March, April & May 2010

In the Viewpoint 27 survey we asked you about the following topics:

- ✓ How We Spend Your Money
- ✓ Standards Committee
- ✓ Customer Service Contact Centres
- ✓ Scrutiny
- ✓ Electoral Registration
- ✓ Democratic Services

The Viewpoint 28 questionnaire is about the following topics:

- ◇ Climate Change
- ◇ Stockton Sparkles



Christmas Competition - Winner from Viewpoint 27

The lucky Viewpoint winner of the £100 High Street Vouchers was Julie from Thornaby. We hope you enjoy spending them and continue to be a valued member of Viewpoint.

Viewpoint 27 results

Section 1 - How We Spend Your Money

In this section we asked you to provide us with the top three services you would like the Council to spend less on. Top three services identified by Viewpoint respondents were as follows:

- ✓ Healthy Living Promotion
- ✓ Allotments
- ✓ Tourism

What we will do

- ✓ The above results together with the views of local business were discussed with Elected Members at a seminar on 21st January 2010. This seminar considered the priorities of the Council alongside budget allocations for the next three years. A final decision on the budget was taken by the Council on 24th February 2010. We will inform you of the outcome in our next Newsletter.

Section 2 - Standards Committee

The Council's Standards Committee consists of elected Councillors; representatives from Parish Councils and persons independent of the Council, one of whom is the Chair. In Viewpoint 27 we asked about your awareness of this Committee and its roles.

- ✓ 54.6% of respondents had not heard of the Standards Committee, 33.3% had heard of it and 12.1% of respondents were not sure whether they had heard about it or not.
- ✓ When asked if they had seen any publicity about the role of the Standards Committee, 81.2% of respondents had not seen any publicity, 8.2% said they had and 10.6% of respondents said they were not sure whether they had or not.
- ✓ 86.3% of respondents had not seen any publicity about how to make a complaint about a Councillor, 6.2% had and 7.5% of respondents were unsure whether they had seen any or not.
- ✓ When asked have you contacted Stockton Borough Council with a complaint about a Councillor's conduct in the last 12 months, 98.9% of respondents had not.

What we will do

- ✓ These results will be fed back to the Standards Committee to help improve communication and awareness of the Committee's work.

Section 3 - Customer Service Centres

This section of the survey asked Panel members to tell us about their experiences of and views on contacting the Council face to face. The results are summarised below:

- ✓ 44.9% of respondents said 'yes' they would like the Customer Service Centre to stay open after 5pm on one weekday evening, 39% said 'no' they wouldn't and 16.2% of respondents 'didn't know' whether they would or not.
- ✓ When asked how late they would like the Centre to stay open on a weekday, 53.5% of respondents said 7pm, 24.2% said 6pm, 19.8% said 6.30pm and only 2.5% said they would like the Centre to stay open until 5.30pm.
- ✓ When respondents were asked if the Centre was to stay open on an evening, which day would they prefer to visit 36.2% of respondents preferred a Wednesday evening, 20.2% said Monday, 19.2% said Thursday, 13.6% said Tuesday and 10.8% of respondents preferred Friday.
- ✓ Considering weekend opening, 49.6% of respondents would like the Centre to stay open on a Saturday morning so they can visit in person, 34% would not and 16.4% of respondents couldn't decide. Of those respondents that did want the Centre to stay open on a Saturday, 68.2% said morning was most convenient to them, 15% said afternoons and 16.8% thought both morning and afternoon was convenient to them.
- ✓ Respondents were asked what facilities they thought were important if they were to visit the Council in person. The top ten results are listed below in order of priority:
 1. Being given an estimated waiting time for your enquiry to be dealt with (75.7%)
 2. Toilet/washroom (74.6%)
 3. Private interview rooms (69.6%)
 4. A cashiering point open where you can pay bills (47.9%)
 5. To be able to view topical information about Council services/events (42.5%)
 6. A member of staff to greet/direct you at the entrance of the Centre (42%)
 7. Magazines or other sources of information to read (21%)
 8. Children's toys and books (13.1%)
 9. To listen to background music (4.2%)
 10. To be able to watch television (4.2%)



Section 3 - Customer Service Centres Continued

This section of the survey also asked Panel members to tell us about their experience of and views on contacting the Council by telephone. The results are summarised below:

- ✓ When respondents were asked if they had contacted the Council by telephone in the last 12 months 49.2% said they had, 47.9% had not and 2.9% couldn't remember whether they had or not. Of those respondents who had contacted the Council by telephone, 'Care For Your Area' and 'waste/recycling' were the most frequently contacted services.



Respondents also told us about their overall experience of contacting the Council by telephone. The results are summarised below:

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
Staff were helpful (Base 248)	47.2%	44.8%	4.4%	2.4%	1.2%
Staff were knowledgeable (Base 244)	40.2%	38.5%	15.6%	4.1%	1.6%
The first member of staff I spoke to was able to deal with my query (Base 243)	41.2%	30.9%	8.6%	14.4%	4.9%
Staff dealt with my call in a timely manner (Base 245)	44.1%	42.0%	6.9%	4.9%	2.0%
Staff were fair (Base 240)	46.3%	40.4%	10.4%	2.1%	0.8%

What we will do

The responses to questions about the Council's Customer Service Centres provided lots of useful information about how and when residents might like to get in touch to request services or seek information. Nearly half of you would still like to see the Centres open on a Saturday morning and late one night during the week. In asking these questions, we also learned a great deal about the facilities that are important to you, with 'being given an estimated waiting time to be dealt with' coming out as the highest priority for you.

Of those of you who had contacted the Council in the last 12 months a very pleasing majority of you were in agreement that staff were helpful, knowledgeable and fair and that you were dealt with in a timely manner. However when asked if the first member of staff you spoke with was able to deal with

What we will do continued

your enquiry a fifth of you disagreed. Consequently this will be an area for focus and planned improvement.

The feedback from Panel members will not only help to develop a new Stockton Customer Service Centre but help to shape the Council's 'Access to Services' Programme as a whole.

Section 4 - Scrutiny

Scrutiny enables Councillors to review decisions, policies and performance that affect the Borough. In Viewpoint 27 we asked about your awareness of the Scrutiny process:

- ✓ When respondents were asked if they were aware of the Scrutiny process before receiving this survey, 74.3% were not. Of those respondents that were aware of the Scrutiny process, 56% understood it. Only 12.4% of respondents knew they could contribute to the Scrutiny process at Stockton Council though
- ✓ 81.6% of respondents did not know the Council's Scrutiny Committees can examine the work of other public services providers, for example (Police, health authorities etc.)
- ✓ 30% of respondents said they would like more information on the Scrutiny process.



What we will do

The survey sought to compare levels of public awareness of 'Scrutiny' compared with two years ago. It also allowed us to see if residents wanted more information on the 'Scrutiny' process as we aim to raise awareness of this important part of how the Council works.

Section 5 - Electoral Registration

- ✓ 86.7% of respondents were aware that a new Register of Electors is published every year and 87.8% of respondents were aware that they needed to register every year even if their details were the same.
- ✓ 61.3% of respondents knew they could change their address on the Register at any time during the year, even if their details were the same.
- ✓ When Panel members were asked if they responded to the 'Initial Canvass Form' which was delivered to every household in the Borough in August 2009, 77.9% said 'yes' they did respond, 3.6% said 'no' and 18.5% of respondents couldn't remember whether they responded or not.
- ✓ When respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that the 'Quick Guide to Voter Registration' which was enclosed with the 'Initial Canvass Form' was useful, 57.6% tended to agree or strongly agreed that it was and only 0.7% of respondents strongly or tended to disagree that it was. Additionally, 29.5% of respondents said they didn't know or couldn't remember if it was useful or not.
- ✓ Of those respondents who did not return the initial 'Annual Canvass Form' 50.9% said 'no' they did not remember a Canvasser calling to their home, 18.9% said 'yes' and 30.2% of respondents couldn't remember a Canvasser calling to their home.
- ✓ Of those respondents who did remember a Canvasser from Electoral Registration calling to their home, 84.3% thought the Canvasser was friendly and 78.8% of respondents thought the Canvasser was helpful.
- ✓ When respondents were asked 'did you use the Electoral Registration helpline', only 8.3% of respondents told us they did. Of those that did use the helpline, 83.7% of respondents either tended to or strongly agreed that the helpline staff were friendly. 82.7% of respondents either tended to or strongly agreed that the helpline staff were helpful.
- ✓ Respondents were also asked how they became aware that the annual 'Electoral Canvass' was taking place. The results were as follows:
 1. Form delivered to your home (78.3%)
 2. Stockton News (13.3%)
 3. Posters in Council Buildings (1.8%)
 4. Council Website (1.3%)

What we will do

We will use the results of this survey to monitor levels of customer satisfaction with our services and to identify the areas where we need to improve. The results will also help us identify the areas where we need to raise public awareness of 'Electoral Registration'.

Section 6 - Democratic Services

The Democratic Services section of the Council supports all aspects of the democratic process in Stockton-on-Tees and all of the committees which control the business of the Council. In Viewpoint 27, we asked you to tell us what you knew about Democratic Services.

- ✓ When respondents were asked which democratic information they were aware of, 72.9% said Ward Councillor contact details and Ward Surgery details and 33.7% of respondents said 'Member of Parliament'. Only 5% of respondents said they were aware of 'How to get Topic Alerts and E-mail alerts for Council Agendas and Minutes'.
- ✓ 59% of respondents knew that members of the public can attend meetings of the full Council and its various committees and speak and ask questions.
- ✓ 47.6% of respondents knew that they could influence how monies are spent in their Ward (for example on environmental improvements) via their Ward Councillor.
- ✓ 58.2% of respondents were aware of the opportunities for the public to stand as a Parent Governor, an Education Admissions/Exclusions panel member, an Independent Member of the Council's Standards Committee or a member of Stockton Renaissance (the Stockton Local Strategic Partnership) or its Area Partnership Boards.

What we will do

- ✓ The survey has allowed us to compare public knowledge of democratic information in 2009 with a previous survey two years earlier. It follows an extensive community engagement campaign in the time since the first survey was completed and increased availability of electronic information via the Council's website (<http://www.stockton.gov.uk>)



- ✓ The survey has also allowed us to raise awareness of other democratic opportunities available to the public and to flag up new legislation that has recently been passed which gives the public more power to request the Council to take action in respect of public petitioning.

Outcomes from previous consultations

Markets

The Viewpoint survey results from Viewpoint 25 were discussed at the quarterly Markets Forum meeting. Traders were asked if they would use some of their promotions fund to advertise the markets more widely to new target audiences, as advertising of the markets seemed to be a recurring issue. The results will also be used to inform the planning for the 700th anniversary of Council management of markets in town centres, which is in 2010.



Adult Library Groups

A consultation event with a variety of established adult library user groups was held, involving approximately 170 people. The attendees were asked what benefits they receive from attending activities in libraries and what do they like about attending.

Users said that they find using community libraries a great benefit as it is within easy reach of homes in particular to older people and those without car transport. Many attendees mentioned that they were retired and that attending the groups helped to keep their minds active and gave them time to relax and socialise. When the group was asked what they would like to see offered in their local library, the most popular requests were for author sessions, speakers, cultural visits, meeting other groups, murder mystery evenings and occasional trips.



Results from the consultation identify the group sessions were deemed worthwhile to the local communities and recommendations have been made for all libraries to review and further enhance their own offer in their individual communities.



Hearing Loops

An induction hearing loop system helps deaf people who use a hearing aid or loop listener to hear sounds more clearly because it reduces or cuts out background noise. The arrangements for hearing loops are currently being reviewed in the Council. The Diversity and Customer Services teams are looking to increase the number of hearing loops available for meetings. If you require a hearing loop for any meeting you're attending at the Council, please contact the Diversity Team on 01642 528830 or via Diversity@stockton.gov.uk.

Frequently Asked Questions

Tees Achieve

(previously Stockton Adult Education and Training and Employment Services)

Tees Achieve provides community learning opportunities in over 75 local buildings with over 900 courses to choose from, in many different subject areas including Arts and Crafts; Bridge; Beauty Skills and Holistic Therapies; Computing; Cookery; DIY; Education and Training; ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages); Employability; Family Learning; First Aid Training; Flower Arranging; Health and Fitness; Hospitality; History; Languages and Communication; Music; Skills for Life; and, Sign Language.

You can find out about 'Tees Achieve' courses:

- ◆ **online** -
<https://enrol.stockton.gov.uk/website/onlineservices>
- ◆ **by phone** – Tees Achieve (01642) 527904.
- ◆ **by post or in person at**
Billingham Community Centre,
The Causeway,
Billingham,
Stockton-on-Tees,
TS23 2DA



Tees Achieve is also the largest provider of apprentices in Stockton, working with Council services and local employers to offer Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships in a range of jobs including Administration, Child Care, Health and Social Care, Joinery, Retail and Warehousing and Maintenance Operations. To find out more, call 01642 528262 or 01642 528112.

Tees Achieve offers free information and advice about which courses could suit you; childcare while you study; open learning; your career options; help with CVs; and, interview techniques. It also offers learner support and financial support, helping with payments for courses, examination fees, travel costs, books and equipment. It can also offer advice on financial support for courses against the following criteria. You may be entitled to financial support if you are:

- ◆ Under 19 at the start of the course
- ◆ Unemployed receiving Job Seekers Allowance
- ◆ Receiving income-benefits such as Income Support, or Housing/Council Tax Benefit
- ◆ In receipt of Working Tax Credits (including Disability and Family Tax Credit) and earning less than £15,050 a year
- ◆ An unwaged dependent (as defined by the Benefits Agency) of anyone in receipt of the benefits listed above.
- ◆ In receipt of Invalidity/Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance

Tees Achieve users are valued equally, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, faith or sexual orientation, this means you will always receive equal treatment. Tees Achieve values the diversity of the community we serve and strives to ensure that the service delivered reflects the needs of all people within it.

New Prospectus (including course details) is available in July 2010

Tees Achieve – Enhancing lives through learning

What's on in March, April and May?

14 March 'Three Village Loop' 1 – 4pm	Meet: Outside the Station House Visitor Centre at Wynyard Woodland Park	6.5 mile stroll taking in the villages of Thorpe Thewles, Stillington and Whitton. Tel. 01740 630011
21 March 'Food For Free' 10am – 12 noon	Meet: In the car park behind the Griffin Pub on Bader Avenue, Thornaby	Explore Bassleton Wood local nature reserve and discover a wide range of spring plants you can eat. Tel. 01642 527562
4 April 'Crafty Easter' 10.30am – 12 noon (Please book in advance)	Meet: Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park	Come along to the Woodland Park's Visitor Centre and have a go at making crafty seasonal gifts. All materials are supplied free. Tel. 01642 371633
7 April 'What did you do in the War Gran?' 3pm	Meet: Norton Library	Free talk from Margaret Flick with her wartime experiences in the A.T.S. and Bletchley Park Tel. 01642 528019
13 April 'Beaky Birds and Balancing Bugs' 10.30 am – 12 noon & 1.00pm – 2.30pm (Booking essential)	Meet: Preston Hall Museum, Eaglescliffe	Come and meet Preston Park's resident birds of prey at close quarters, including our Barn Owl, Kestrel and Buzzard, then make a gravity defying craft bug to take home. Tel. 01642 527562
3 May 'Annual Tees Barrage 10k Run'	At Navigation Way	Starting at the Tees Barrage, this 10k run takes place along the scenic banks of the River Tees.
15 May 'Tees Regatta'	At the River Tees	On the River Tees upstream from the Tees Barrage. Tel. 01740 630745

Disability Advisory Group

The Council's Disability Advisory Group is made up of local residents who have experience of living with disability and representatives from some of the local disability groups. The Group works with Council Officers to look at ways of improving access to Council services for disabled people. Meetings are held for Council Officers to come along and consult with the group. The next Disability Advisory Group meeting will be held on Monday 22 March from 12.00 - 3.00pm. If you would like to come along, or would like more information about how to get involved, please contact the Council's Diversity Team on 01642 528830.

Meetings are also planned for May, July, September and December. If you would like to attend a future meeting, please get in touch on the above telephone number.

Communities Together - On Tour!!!

Almost 40 residents were recruited in partnership with Stockton's Residents and Community Groups Associations (SRCGA) and recently participated in bus tours across the Borough that set out to help engage, empower and bring communities together.

Funded by the 'North East Improvement and Efficiency Partnership', the tours visited several neighbourhoods where residents could see examples of how and where regeneration and development had taken place as well as how and where Stockton's four 'Area Partnerships' had influenced some of that work.

Following the tours, two themed meetings were held, where residents who had been involved in the tours and representatives from the Area Partnerships got together to find out more information about areas of interest to them. Information on large-scale regeneration schemes in the Borough was considered at the first meeting and Children and Young People plans and services were considered at the second.

A DVD has been created to capture this work and that of the Area Partnerships. If you would like any further information on the tour or other regeneration and development projects in the Borough, please contact the Council's Partnerships & Engagement Team on 01642 526498 or via renaissance@stockton.gov.uk.



The North East Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (NEIEP) is made up of all 12 North East councils and the four Fire and Rescue Authorities in the region. It was launched in April 2008 to tackle a number of priority areas identified in the 'Regional Improvement and Efficiency Strategy' which was developed in partnership with all North East local authorities in 2008. The NEIEP also manages a number of nationally funded improvement and efficiency projects. For more information please visit: <http://www.northeastiep.gov.uk/information.htm>



Stockton Renaissance is made up of representatives from the voluntary and community sector; local agencies such as Cleveland Police and Stockton-on-Tees Teaching Primary Care Trust; local ward Councillors; local businesses; and, Members of Parliament. Together, these partners promote economic, environmental and social well-being in the Borough. Stockton Renaissance creates and monitors the Sustainable Community Strategy 2008- 2021, which sets out the key priorities and ambitions for the Borough. The four Area Partnership Boards are a key element of Stockton Renaissance. For more information please visit: <http://www.stockton.gov.uk/renaissance/>

Please contact us if...

- ✓ Your details have changed, so we can update our records.
- ✓ You now have an e-mail address and would be happy to be contacted via e-mail and/or receive your surveys electronically.
- ✓ You know of anyone who would be interested in joining the Panel or if you have ideas about improving the way we consult with you.
- ✓ To get more information on anything in the Viewpoint Newsletter, or if you have an idea about what you want us to put on the Frequently Asked Questions Page.

Contact: Viewpoint

Phone: 01642 526090

E-mail: viewpoint@stockton.gov.uk

Post: Viewpoint,
Policy, Performance and Partnerships,
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
FREEPOST NEA5980
Municipal Buildings
STOCKTON-ON-TEES
TS18 1BR



Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL

