

# Your Views Matter

Winter 06



**Thank you** for taking part in Life in Lancashire research. In this issue we would like to tell you about:

- your views on services for older people, childcare provision in Lancashire and our budget for the next financial year; and
- how we are dealing with the things you've told us about over the last few months.



## your views....

### childcare

We sent a questionnaire to those of you who have children in your household about childcare in Lancashire. Almost half of you have used formal childcare in the last year, even more (77%) when you have young children aged three years or younger. Those of you who don't use formal childcare told us it was because you prefer to look after your children yourself, or have a friend or relative look after them. Three-quarters of you use some form of informal childcare, usually a relative.

Your priorities for childcare are safety, the quality of activities, the cost and cleanliness. Although two-fifths of you think that childcare is too expensive.

You prefer to find out about general childcare from your friends, the Education Service and Childcare Information Service. Two in five of you have tried to get childcare information in the last five years, half finding it very useful. However half of you don't feel informed about childcare. Most of you have heard of Sure Start, but only a quarter have heard of the Childcare Information Service.

The majority of you who gave an opinion about the cost of childcare thought that it had become more expensive. Two in five of you think that childcare is too expensive. This is even higher when you have a child under the age of six.



### our budget for the next year

We gave you a list of county council services from which you chose your spending priorities for the county council for the financial year 2006/7. You told us that your highest spending priorities are primary and secondary education, crime prevention and services for older people. Your lowest priorities are museums and galleries, country parks, open spaces and picnic sites, and trading standards.

A quarter of you told us that the council should make no increase in council tax, with the consequence of reducing service levels. However, across all your answers, the average increase in council tax you would be prepared to pay is 3.2%.

The findings were recently presented to county councillors to help them decide what the county council's spending priorities will be for the coming year and to set the level of council tax.

## our actions....



2003-2004  
Supporting the Rural Economy  
2004-2005  
Transforming the School Workforce

## actions for services for older people....

**Over the last few months many of you have been telling us your views on what your needs may be in the future through questionnaires and discussion groups. Here we'd like to tell you about what we found out and what we will be doing with the results...**



We wanted to gather your opinions on what your needs will be in the future to help us write the older people's strategy for Lancashire. This strategy will affect the way the county council and its partners deliver services over the next 20 years so it was very important to get your views.

Almost all of you who are over 65 are retired, and a third of you who are aged 45 to 64 are retired too. Those who are retired are very likely to tell us that you are enjoying your retirement, and those that aren't already retired are looking forward to it. You see retirement as a time for leisure and continuing learning.

You fund, or plan to fund, your retirement from the state pension (nine in ten) followed by a work pension, a personal pension, part-time work or income from property. You think that people generally should be able to work beyond 65, but you were unlikely to want to do so yourselves. Being financially comfortable is most important to



you for a happy old age. You expect living conditions to improve for older people in the future.

As you get older independence becomes more important to you. You said that feeling safe in your neighbourhood will allow you to stay where you live in your old age. And that you don't expect to live with your children when you can no longer cope. Going into a care home is your greatest fear, although sheltered accommodation is seen as a good idea when the time is right.

From a long list of public services, only health is considered important by more than half of you at the moment. However, you think transport and community safety services are important for the future too. Your greatest information needs are for health and healthy living, information on local neighbourhoods and social activities.

The car is your most popular mode of transport: three-quarters of you use it for going shopping, followed by the bus, especially by the over 65s.

This information is already being used by the county council and our partners in Lancashire and will continue to influence services such as health, policing, social care and housing over many years to come.

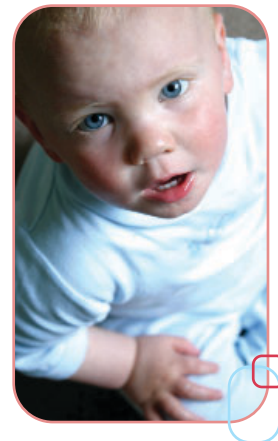
## actions for childcare....

**Towards the end of last year those people who have children in their household told us their views on childcare in Lancashire. The information you have given us is very useful and will greatly assist the service in planning future childcare provision across the county.**

As only a quarter of those who sent a questionnaire back had heard of the Childcare Information Service (CIS) we are looking at ways to raise its profile across the county. This will include some high profile promotional work throughout the coming year. And, because many parents felt that childcare was too expensive we will be promoting how parents can access help with childcare costs.

Parents would prefer more flexibility in the hours

of childcare, so we need to look at the types of childcare that are available to parents. To achieve this we need to do more consultation with parents and childcare providers. Any research we do in the future needs to take into account the county's strategic objectives for the ten year childcare strategy.



# actions for vision....

During the summer of last year some of you took part in a series of discussion groups looking at how the county council communicates with Lancashire residents. The feedback we've had from you has been really useful in deciding how we can improve Vision - the county council's monthly newspaper. Here's what we're doing...

A new design for Vision is being created at the moment to give it a more up-to-date look, one which looks more like a newspaper. The redesign will give Vision a new masthead for the front-cover and new fonts for the headlines and the stories. You told us that this will make you more likely to pick it up from the doorstep. The overall look of Vision will also be improved because a new printing press will be used from April. This will mean that the printing of the colours used in the design will be much better.

You told us that some of the language used in Vision was unclear. We agree, there should be no jargon. Where it isn't possible to completely avoid jargon we will make sure it is properly explained.

You also wanted more general information from Vision, suggesting a special edition making clear the services Lancashire County Council is responsible for, answers to frequently asked questions or a regular page of phone numbers for services. We have taken your suggestions on-board and we are in the process of creating an A to Z of services that will give you important contact details for our services. It will be produced as a four-page pullout so you can take these pages out of Vision and keep them. The A to Z guide will be produced yearly so that the contact details are kept up-to-date. In March we will also be starting a regular question and answer feature. This will give readers the opportunity to have their questions answered by senior county council officers.



## our corporate strategy...

We would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all those people who helped us with our corporate strategy. Our corporate strategy will affect what we - Lancashire County Council - do and how we do it for the next four years. It provides the basis for all we do and for the many other plans and strategies we must produce. It is also used to help shape our budgets. You told us how our corporate priorities will affect you. This helped us to bring our priorities to life so that our corporate strategy is real for the people of Lancashire.

You can now look at our corporate strategy on our website:  
[http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/corporate\\_strategy/](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/corporate_strategy/)





## actions for cabinet question time....



At the Skelmersdale Cabinet Question Time event we got feedback from the people that came along about how we can improve future events and the way we publicise them. Here's what we found out about...

### promoting the event

Most people who went to the event heard about it from one of the invitation letters we sent to the homes of people who live in the area. The events are more popular with people who live locally, nearly everyone travelled less than five miles. For future events we will continue to send personal invitation letters, but concentrate them within a five mile radius from the venue. This means we'll contact even more people who are more likely to want to come to Cabinet Question Time. We'll carry on advertising in the local press to let people who live in the area know when events are happening.

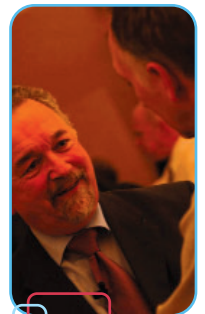
### the event itself

Nearly everyone who came to the event found it worthwhile. Over half told us they would come again. One of the main reasons given for coming was 'to give my views'. And, we managed to meet this need because the part of the event people found most enjoyable was their ability to ask questions and have a say.

Some of the suggestions made for improvements were to:

- hold it in a place that is more accessible and easier to find;
- attract more people to the event; and
- make sure the panel of county councillors have more detailed local knowledge.

We'll continue to ask for the views of everyone who goes to an event because we want to carry on improving them and make sure the changes we make are working. We'll keep you updated in future editions of Your Views Matter.



### coming in the next issue...

In the next issue of Your Views Matter we'll be producing our calendar of events feature for events throughout 2006. This will show where and when you can:

- visit the Lancashire County Council mobile unit where you'll find information on council services and be able to meet your county councillors; and
- go to a Cabinet Question Time event to put your questions directly to county councillors.

## contacting us at Life in Lancashire....

We are always happy to hear from our members. Please remember to give your member number whenever you contact us so that we can find your details easily. You can contact us in any of the following ways.



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