

# Feedb@ck

**Ribble Valley Winter 2007  
Citizens' Panel Survey  
Full Report**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### *Methodology*

A paper survey was sent to all panel members. Additionally, panelists could also respond via our website, and an email invitation providing a hyperlink for the online survey was sent to those for whom we had email addresses.

### *Response Rates*

There was an overall response rate of 52.5%. This can be broken down into 96.6% paper responses, and 3.4% email responses. This response rate is comparatively low compared to previous surveys, however, this can be accounted for due to the large number of panel members who have only recently been added to the Ribble Valley citizens' panel following the General Household Satisfaction Survey in 2006. Although these new members volunteered to be a part of the panel, they may not have realized what sort of questions would be asked, or may have found the survey too long. We also asked panel members to contribute to the Local Development Framework survey and this may have had an impact on responses.

### *Profile of respondents*

The majority of respondents were female – 51.4% - with 46.5% of respondents being male. The largest response, by age, was from the 55-64 year old age group, with the smallest response coming from the 16-24 year old age group.

The most well represented area (by postcode) was that with the 'PR3 3' code, covering residents in Chipping, Derby and Thornley. The most poorly represented area was that with the 'BD23 3' code, which covers respondents from Gisburn and Rimington.

In accordance with local statistics, by far the majority of respondents were white – 96.9% - with an additional 0.8% white Irish, and 0.3% representing 'other' ethnicities.

When looking at respondents according to economic activity, the largest response was from those who are retired – 41.0% - with the smallest response being from those who are unemployed and available for work, just 0.3% of respondents.

## KEY ISSUES

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### *Financial Reporting*

- Almost a fifth of respondents had viewed the Council's Statement of Accounts, or its summary, with over three-quarters of these stating that it was published in the best format for their needs
- Over two-thirds of respondents found the Statement of Accounts interesting to read, and three-quarters found it easy to understand
- A tenth of respondents felt that financial documents were difficult to access
- Almost two-thirds of panel members felt that the Council should produce an Annual Report

# BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

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## *Background*

The East Lancashire authorities that make up 'Feedb@ck' have agreed to carry out at least two East Lancashire-wide surveys each year and to also individually carry out two surveys every year.

Each authority ran its own survey during November 2007. Ribble Valley Borough Council has decided to theme its individual surveys around the Council's priorities and core values.

Suggestions were asked for, from service managers, regarding the themes and individual questions that were to be asked.

Several responses were received and it became clear that four key areas could be developed, these being equality and diversity, citizenship, financial reporting and issues around the shopping experience provided at Clitheroe Market.

## *Aims and Objectives of Research*

The research has several important strategic applications within our organization. Responses from the survey will be used to gather information to help us develop the following priorities, ambitions and core values for the borough:

- To match the supply of homes in our area with the identified housing needs
- To protect and enhance the existing environmental quality of our area
- To ensure that access to services is available to all
- To treat everyone equally

The results from the survey also assisted with an audit of Clitheroe Market.

## *Methodology*

The Corporate Services section developed a questionnaire, covering the different issues. A previous survey conducted by another East Lancashire authority was used as the starting point for the survey questions. The Corporate Management Team signed off the final draft of the survey prior to its distribution to panel members. The survey was sent via post to all panel members, along with a covering letter explaining why the different issues were being consulted upon.

The first questionnaires, together with the covering letter, were dispatched to all panelists (734 in total) on 2 November 2007. Initially, three weeks were allowed for completion of the survey, with one reminder being sent out to increase the response rate. The reminder letter was sent on 28 November 2007 to all panelists who had not returned the first questionnaire issued to them.

Panelists could also respond via our website, and a hyperlink was provided for the online survey for those whom we had email addresses for.

SNAP survey software was used to produce the survey and to analyse responses. A 'Z-test' was carried out to highlight issues that were statistically important or significant. Only these issues have been included in the report when comparing answers based on gender, age, disability etc. Due to the poor response rates from BME panel members analysis cannot be carried out on this basis. Also due to

a poor response rate from 16-24 year olds, respondents in this age category have been combined with 25-34 year olds to make age comparisons more robust.

### ***Response Rates***

Overall the response rate for the survey was 52.5%, which is good for a mainly postal questionnaire with no incentive. When broken down this showed that 95.6% responded by paper and 4.4% responded by e-mail.

### ***The Feedback Panel***

This survey is the fourth survey of the Ribble Valley Feedback Citizens' Panel. It is a panel of (currently) 734 volunteers drawn from across the district, roughly representing a cross-section of the local community. Panel members do not receive any incentive for participation, other than inclusion into a £100 prize draw for East Lancashire-wide surveys.

### ***Profile of respondents***

This section examines the characteristics of the respondents to the survey, in terms of their demographic profile.

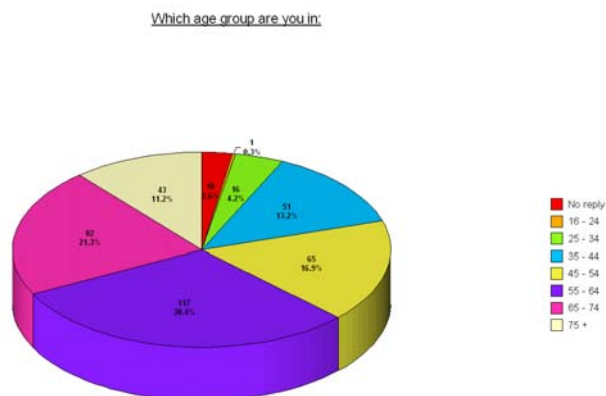
### ***Age and Gender***

Figure: 1.1 Gender profile

Are you:	Number	Percentage
Male	179	46.5%
Female	198	51.4%

Source: Ribble Valley 2007 Winter Survey

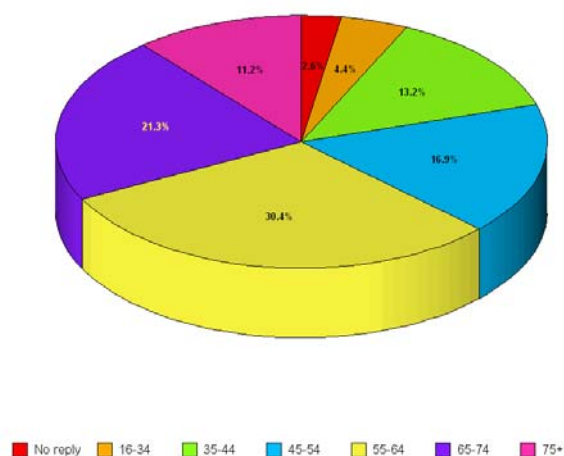
Figure: 1.2 Age profile (before combination of lower age bands)



Source: Ribble Valley 2007 Winter Survey

Figure: 1.3 Age profile (after combination of lower age bands)

Age profile of respondents (lower age bands combined)



Source: Ribble Valley 2007 Winter Survey

### Postcode area

Figure: 1.4 Postcode profile

Post	Ward area	Number	Percentage
BB7 1	Littlemoor, Wiswell & Pendleton, Salthill, Primrose	55	14.3%
BB7 2	St Mary's, Salthill, Primrose, Edisford and Lowmoor	47	12.2%
BB7 3	Waddington and West Bradford, Aughton, Bailey & Chaigley, Bowland, Newton and Slaidburn	15	3.9%
BB7 4	Chatburn, Waddington and West Bradford, Gisburn & Rimington, Bowland, Newton and Slaidburn	27	7.0%
BB6 8	Langho, Ribchester	27	7.0%
PR3 2	Dilworth, Alston and Hothersall, Ribchester, Aughton, Bailey & Chaigley	12	3.1%
PR3 3	Chipping, Derby and Thornley	66	17.1%
BB7 9	Aughton, Bailey & Chaigley, Whalley, Billington & Old Langho, Sabden, Wiswell & Pendleton	48	12.5%
BB12 7	Wilpshire, Clayton-le-Dale with Ramsgreave	22	5.7%
BB1 9	Mellor	43	11.2%
BB2 7	Read and Simonstone	24	6.2%
BD23 3	Gisburn & Rimington	0	0%
BD23 4	Gisburn & Rimington	1	0.3%
TOTAL		385	

Source: Ribble Valley 2007 Winter Survey

## Ethnicity

Figure: 1.5 Ethnicity profile

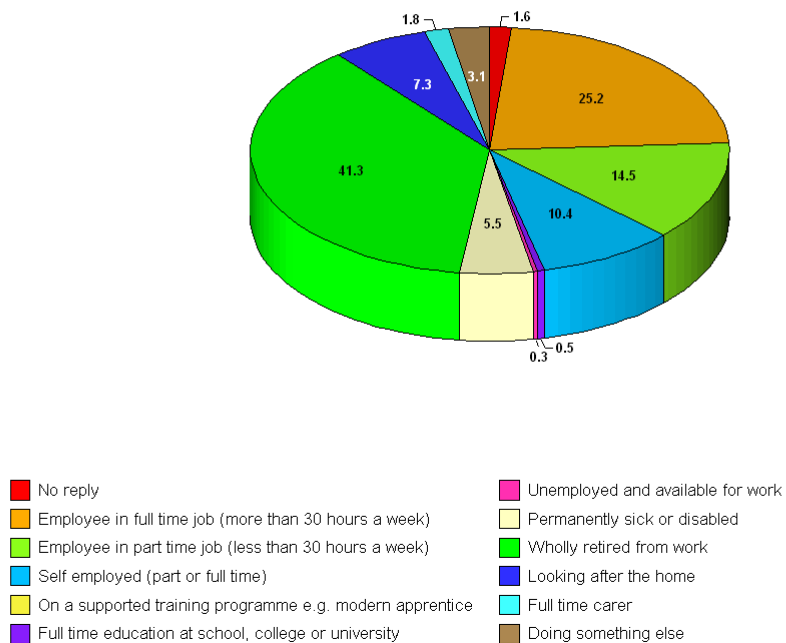
What is your ethnic origin?	Number	Percentage	Actual Percentage (Census data)
White	373	96.9%	98.4%
White Irish	3	0.8%	
Mixed Race	0	0%	0.4%
Asian	0	0%	0.8%
Black/Black British	0	0%	0.1%
Chinese or other ethnic group	1	0.3%	0.3%

Source: Ribble Valley 2007 Winter Survey

## Activity

Figure: 1.6 Activity profile

Which of these activities best describes what you are doing at present?



Source: Ribble Valley 2007 Winter Survey

## DETAILED ANALYSIS

### FINANCIAL REPORTING

The third section of the questionnaire asked a number of questions around financial reporting, primarily regarding the Council's Statement of Accounts.

The majority of respondents had not viewed the Council's statement of accounts, and so were automatically re-directed to the final question in this section which asks about the Annual Report. Those who answered 'yes' continued with the remaining questions about the Statement of Accounts.

Figure: 4.1 Statement of accounts – all

Have you viewed the Council's statement of accounts or summary?	
Base	385
No reply	2.9%
Yes	18.7%
No	78.4%

Source: Ribble Valley 2007 Winter Survey

More male respondents than females had viewed the Council's Statement of Accounts – 23.1% compared with 14.9%. Generally the older the respondent the more likely they are to have read the Statement of Accounts.

Figure: 4.2 Statement of accounts – age split

Have you viewed the Council's statement of accounts or summary?	No reply	16-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Yes	10.0%	11.8%	11.8%	12.3%	20.5%	22.0%	30.2%
No	70.0%	82.4%	84.3%	86.2%	78.6%	76.8%	62.8%

Source: Ribble Valley 2007 Winter Survey

The vast majority of respondents felt that the Statement of Accounts was published in the best format for their needs, however, over a tenth were unsure.

Figure: 4.3 Best format – all

Do you think that the full statement of accounts is published in the best format for your needs?	
Base	72
No reply	4.2%
Yes	76.4%
No	6.9%
Don't know	12.5%

Source: Ribble Valley 2007 Winter Survey

The 6.9% of respondents who stated that the full Statement of Accounts was not published in the best format for their needs were asked what format they would prefer to receive them. 40% of these suggested alternatives. The alternatives suggested were 'written' and to provide a document written in 'plain English'. All comments made are listed at *Appendix F*.

The following question asked if these documents should be available in other formats. The large percentage of respondents who were unsure suggests that the question was poorly worded, and so



participants were unsure what was being asked of them. However, most respondents felt that these documents do not need to be available in other formats.

Figure: 4.4 Other formats – all

<b>Do you think that these documents should be made available in other formats?</b>	
Base	72
No reply	8.3%
Yes	18.1%
No	30.6%
Don't know	43.1%

Source: Ribble Valley 2007 Winter Survey

Looking at responses according to age, 16-34 year olds were most likely to think that these documents should be available in other formats, whereas 35-44 year olds and 65-74 year olds were most satisfied with the documents in the current formats that are available. Slightly more people who class themselves as mentally or physically disabled think that these documents should be available in other formats (25% versus 18.8%).

The respondents who stated that these documents *should* be available in other formats were asked to suggest alternatives. Of the 18.1% who stated 'yes' to the previous question, 77% gave suggestions for alternative formats. The only common suggestion was that these documents should be available online. All the comments made can be viewed at *Appendix G*.

Over two-thirds of respondents to the next question agreed that the Statement of Accounts was interesting to read. However, as these respondents had actively sought out a copy of the Statement of Accounts for their own personal interest, one would expect that they would find this type of document interesting to read.

Figure: 4.5 Interesting to read – all

<b>Do you find the Statement of Accounts interesting to read?</b>	
Base	72
No reply	5.60%
Yes	66.70%
No	27.80%

Source: Ribble Valley 2007 Winter Survey

The following question asked about ease of understanding the information presented in the Statement of Accounts document. Almost three-quarters of respondents felt that the document was easy to understand.

Figure: 4.6 Easy to understand – all

<b>Do you find the statement of accounts easy to understand?</b>	
Base	72
No reply	6.9%
Yes	73.6%
No	19.4%

Source: Ribble Valley 2007 Winter Survey

The following question asked about the adequacy of the information provided in this document. Almost three-quarters of respondents stated that this information was sufficient.

Figure: 4.7 Sufficient information – all

<b>Do you think that the summary of accounts provides sufficient information for your needs?</b>	
Base	72
No reply	5.6%
Yes	72.2%
No	11.1%
Don't know	11.1%

Source: Ribble Valley 2007 Winter Survey

55-64 year olds and 75+ year olds were least likely to agree that the Summary of Accounts provides sufficient information for their needs.

When asked about ease of accessing these documents, the majority of respondents felt that they were easily accessible. However, a tenth of respondents had difficulties when trying to access these documents.

Figure: 4.8 Easy to access – all

<b>Do you think that these documents are easy to access?</b>	
Base	72
No reply	4.2%
Yes	70.8%
No	9.7%
Don't know	15.3%

Source: Ribble Valley 2007 Winter Survey

The final question in this section was asked of all panel members regardless of whether they had answered the previous questions on financial reporting or not. Overall, almost two-thirds of respondents felt that the Council should produce an Annual Report, with just over a fifth being unsure. 65-74 year olds felt most strongly about this.

Figure: 4.9 Annual Report – all

<b>Do you think the Council should produce an Annual Report?</b>	
Base	385
No reply	6.2%
Yes	64.2%
No	8.3%
Don't know	21.3%

Source: Ribble Valley 2007 Winter Survey

If people answered yes, we asked them what format(s) should be used. The table below summarises the literal responses given. Being made available electronically was by far the most popular response.

Figure: 4.10 Annual Report – format

What format(s) should be used?	% (base number 133)
Made available electronically (emailed/website/internet)	34.6%
Printed/Paper copies	21.8%
Presented clearly/simple/use plain English	18.0%
More information on finance should be made available	4.5%
Information should be made available via a leaflet (perhaps with Council Tax Bills)	9.8%
A summary in Ribble Valley News	1.5%
A summary in the local newspaper/an article telling people where to find information	13.5%
More charts and graphs provided	1.5%
The information should be made available on request for those who want it (either emailed or posted paper copy)	8.3%
Should be made available a community points (Doctor's waiting room, library etc..)	6.8%
Posted to everyone	10.5%
As now	0.8%
Through RV Forum	0.8%

Source: Ribble Valley 2007 Winter Survey

## FINAL COMMENT

At the end of each questionnaire, panel members are invited to give any other comments that they wish to make. Almost a quarter of respondents (23.6%) did so. The most common response, accounting for 29% of the comments made, was expressing thanks to be able to take part, and encouraging the team to continue with the work being done. Furthermore, 14% of comments received expressed a hope that the responses would be put to good use. A further 14% of respondents stated that they were confused about what services Ribble Valley Borough Council is responsible for – this confusion was reinforced by a number of comments that were made requesting action be taken on numerous issues that the Council is not responsible for, including street lighting, highways repairs and a reduction in speed limits. Here are some of the comments that were received (all comments are listed at Appendix P):

- “Keep up the good work. You are generally giving a good service, and you compare very favourably when compared to surrounding local authorities. Thank you”
- “I hope these surveys are used to make improvements”
- “Could you do 'Idiots Open Day - Guide to Local Councils'? I have absolutely no idea what you do”
- “I hope my comments and views will be carefully considered. Thank you”
- “Given the wealth/diversity/beauty of the Ribble Valley I am disappointed that it is such a boring place to bring up my children - any change towards more vibrancy and ethical/sustainable living would be great”
- “I think that the new bin system (red, blue and green) is a great idea. We are recycling for fun - before it was difficult, but no excuses now, and should be installed in EVERY household”
- “At last, RVBC seem to be taking more interest (including financial) in Longridge”
- “Clitheroe is a great place to live. If I won the lottery I would not move out of the Ribble Valley.”

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