

The Highland Council

29 October 2015

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Results from the Citizens' Panel 2015 Performance and Attitudes Survey

Report by the Chief Executive

Summary

The survey results from the Citizens' Panel show generally positive trends and satisfaction with most services surveyed and positive perceptions of community life in the Highlands. A number of actions have been identified which should help sustain or improve public perception of the Council in the future.

1. Background

- 1.1 Each year we survey our Citizens' Panel on their views on performance and attitudes and the 2015 results are now provided for members' consideration. The survey represents a set of questions the core of which has now been sustained over a 10+ year period. The results from the 2015 survey show generally positive trends.
- 1.2 In keeping with previous survey analysis, we have considered if there are any differences in view among different groups in our community, namely by age, gender and disability. We also introduced new questions on Highland's creativity for this year.
- 1.3 This year we received 1021 responses from our Citizen's Panel of just over 2,346 adults, including 480 electronically, providing a 43.5% response rate. This number of responses along with the sampling method used provides good validity in the results; a 95% confidence level is achieved with a confidence interval of +or- 3.1%. In other words where this level of responses was received, we can be 95% confident that the response we would get if we surveyed all adults in Highland would be within + or – 3.1% of the results from the survey¹.
- 1.4 A recent report by Audit Scotland on our public performance reporting highlighted our approach to the annual survey as good practice. The report commented that we make effective use of customer satisfaction information; that we report clearly on a range of customer feedback including how this has influenced our services.

2. Key findings

- 2.1 The full survey report, provided by the UHI Centre for Remote and Rural Studies, can be accessed on the performance pages of the website (http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/15412/annual_survey_of_performance_and_attitudes_2015). This provides further details on trends over time and graphics including tables and pie charts. As this is a long report, running to 132 pages, a summary of overall results is provided as appendix 1 with highlights and areas for improvement provided below.

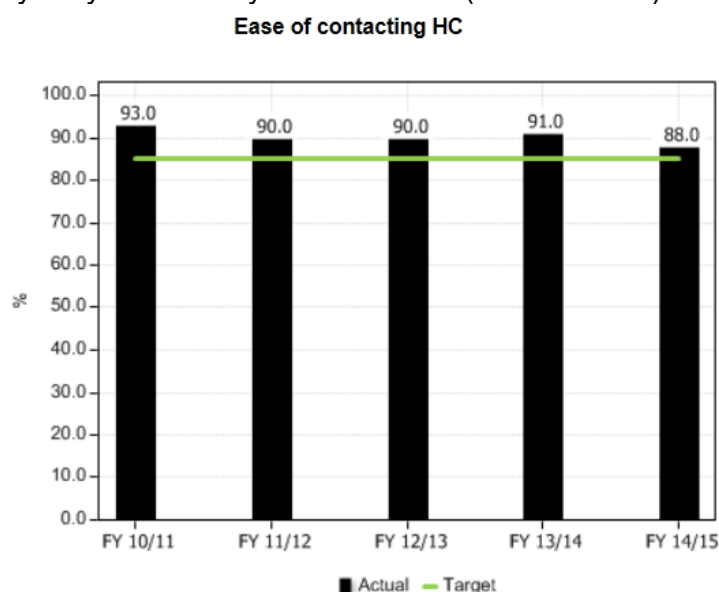
¹ While this is a very small margin of error, not all respondents answered every question, especially when the questions were about using specific services, so results need to be treated accordingly.

2.2 Overall the survey provides a positive picture and the Council continues to deliver quality services which are valued by the public. This is within the context of the current period of fiscal austerity which has seen annual reductions in the Council's revenue budget. Going forward there are further significant challenges facing the Council with continuing reductions in revenue budgets over the next 3-5 years. It will therefore be particularly challenging in future years to continue to maintain positive public perceptions on the quality of services delivered.

2.3 Key results and trends in performance and attitudes include:

Contact with the Council

a) 88% say they find it easy to contact us (91% in 2014).



- b) 60% felt their request was dealt with by the first person they contacted (for 2014/15 89.6% of calls to the Service Centre were resolved at First Point of Contact).
- c) Top 3 methods of contact show changing trends between 2011 and 2015: by telephone 33% (58% in 2011), personal visit to Service Point or Council Office 31% (40% in 2011) and on-line 30% (19% in 2011).
- d) Top 3 reasons for contact are: to make a payment (53%), make and enquiry (23%) and report a problem (12%).
- e) Reductions in satisfaction were found for waiting time for personal visits to council offices 56% thought this was 'good' compared to 62% in 2014. For telephone contact 49% were satisfied with the ease of getting through to someone who could help compared to 54% in 2014.

Council Website

f) Almost all aspects of satisfaction with Council website have improved including 53% of respondents rating the homepage as 'good' compared to 39% in 2014.

% satisfied with elements of website

Council's website www.highland.gov.uk	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Home page content	53	39	46	46	44
General content	52	36	45	46	45
Ease of use: A to Z	43	31	42	38	35
Navigation	36	23	34	31	30
Search	37	24	32	30	30
Links on Homepage	39	27	35	36	32
Webcasting Council meetings	34	35	46	40	44
Social Networking e.g. Facebook, Twitter	26	24	36	49	41

Satisfaction with Council services

- g) Of the 46 service areas surveyed, there were more positive views than negative views for 43 of them. Highest positive scores are found for Service Points (83%), walking routes (83%), payment of Council Tax (83%), refuse/bin collection (78%) and parks and open spaces (78%).
- h) Roads repairs and potholes, winter maintenance and services to reduce offending have more dissatisfaction than satisfaction. There are relatively small numbers of respondents using services to reduce offending with 11 responses and this must be taken account of when considering the results.
- i) Overall there are 9 services with net satisfaction of 75% or above, more than in any previous year.

Number of Services in the Various Net Satisfaction Rate Bands

Net Satisfaction Rate Bands (%)	Number of Services in Each Year				
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
75 to 100	9	6	7	3	7
50 to 74	12	16	12	16	13
25 to 49	10	12	16	11	14
0 to 24	12	11	9	12	3
Lower than 0	3	1	1	3	3
Total Number of Services	46	46	45	45	41

- j) The top four most important services for the public are also the top four used by most people; road repairs and potholes, winter road maintenance, refuse/bin collection and recycling facilities. High satisfaction continues to be found with refuse (78%) and recycling services (76%).

Council Qualities

Our values are: listening; being open; valuing; improving; supporting; partnering and delivering. Many of the qualities positively scored by respondents are reflective of our values. Including:

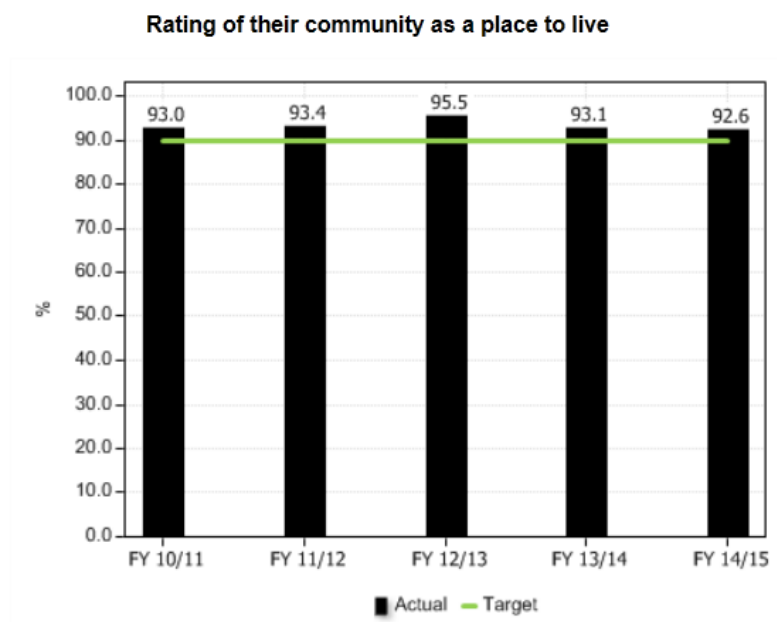
- k) 69% of the panel believe the Council meets or exceeds their general expectations, down from 78%.
- l) There are 4 qualities where over half the panel agree with the statements that the Council 'maintains good quality local services' (59% agree), 'is approachable' (58%), 'is helpful' (54%) and 'is environmentally friendly' (53%). On balance, the Council is viewed positively in demonstrating all of these.
- m) In being asked to rank qualities in order of importance, maintains good quality services is ranked 1st.

Qualities as Ranked in Order of Importance by Respondents in 2015 Survey	Respondents Mentioning Quality in Their Top 5 (2015) %	Respondents Mentioning Quality in Their Top 5 (2014) %	Respondents Mentioning Quality in Their Top 5 (2013) %
1. Maintains good quality local services	68	69	71
2. Listens to local people	62	58	59
3. Provides value for money	54	51	56
4. Is efficient	38	38	36
5. Treats all residents fairly	36	38	32
6. Is aware of people's needs	35	40	39

7. Involves people in how it spends its money	35	35	35
8. Tells local people what it is doing	29	32	28
9. Is environmentally friendly	27	28	29
10. Is approachable	22	20	17
11. Is helpful	21	21	21
12. Represents your views	19	22	19
13. Is a fair employer	14	10	13

Community Life

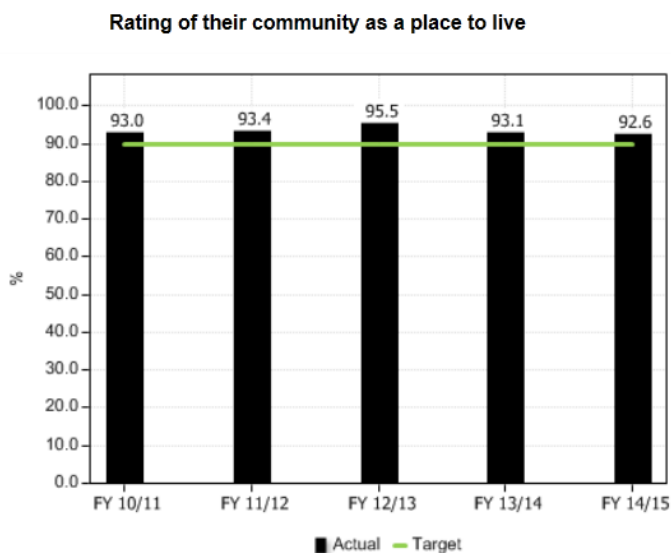
n) 92.6% say they rate the neighbourhood or community they live in as very or fairly good;



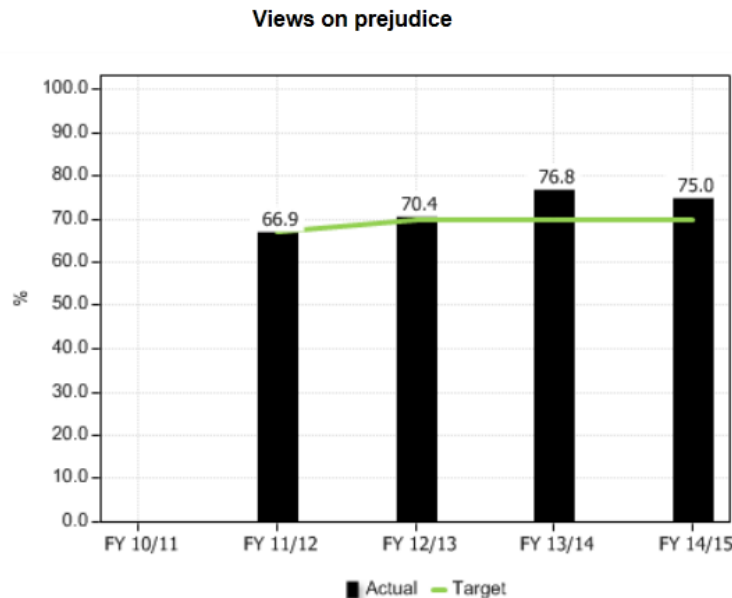
o) 76% feel we have strengthened the profile of the Gaelic language to a great or some extent (78% in 2013/14).

p) Rating of a range of services in communities revealed the top 3 positive scores as local schools (72%), local health services (77%) and leisure facilities/events (62%)

q) Community safety - 96.8% of respondents consider the area within 15 minutes' walk of their home to be 'very' or 'fairly' safe.



- r) When asked about the extent of concern about anyone (including themselves) being subjected to a hate incident or a hate crime 58% said this was not a concern.
- s) When asked about awareness of the impact that hate incidents or crimes had on people in Highland, 73.4% said they were aware.
- t) Equalities - 75% agree that Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all types of prejudice.



- u) When asked if people would rather live in a place with lots of different kinds of people or where most people are similar to you. 57.6% of respondents answered with lots of different people (52.5% in 2014).
- v) Respondents were asked the extent to which they feel their communities are accepting of people coming from outside the Highlands to live with 86.5% believing their communities are accepting of such people to a great or some extent (86.2% in 2014).

Volunteering and Highlands Creativity

- w) Volunteering – results show that volunteering levels remain high with 39% saying they volunteer in some capacity and 51% of them say they do this at least every week. Highland is significantly above the most recent national benchmark figure of 28% (update due October 2015).²
- x) The top three creative activities were reading for pleasure (71%), visiting places of historical/archaeological interest (53%) and watching films at the cinema (51%).
- y) 48% were engaged in activities at least weekly and 71% at least monthly.

2.4 Areas for improvement

Services with higher levels of respondents and low satisfaction score where improvement actions are in place or planned are:

a) Roads

In 2014/15 the Council set aside funding to be used in identifying and testing better ways to achieve a shift towards more potholes being repaired permanently rather than temporarily and also to identify cost effective and sustainable recycling techniques for more substantial repairs to road construction.

² Source – Scottish Household Survey, Scottish Government

b) Winter Maintenance

In the context of 6 fewer gritters deployed in 2015/16 and 6 fewer in 2016/17, as a result of savings agreed by the Council in 2014, the Council is undertaking a further review its winter maintenance services, to investigate areas for innovation and improvement. The service has been benchmarked against that provided by other geographically similar councils and the results will be incorporated in the review. The policy will be made clearer in terms of what can be delivered and how that may deviate from the Code of Practice for Well Maintained Highways. The action planning and control process is under review with the objective that better consistency of service is achieved. The winter resilience support for communities is once again being promoted with Community Councils.

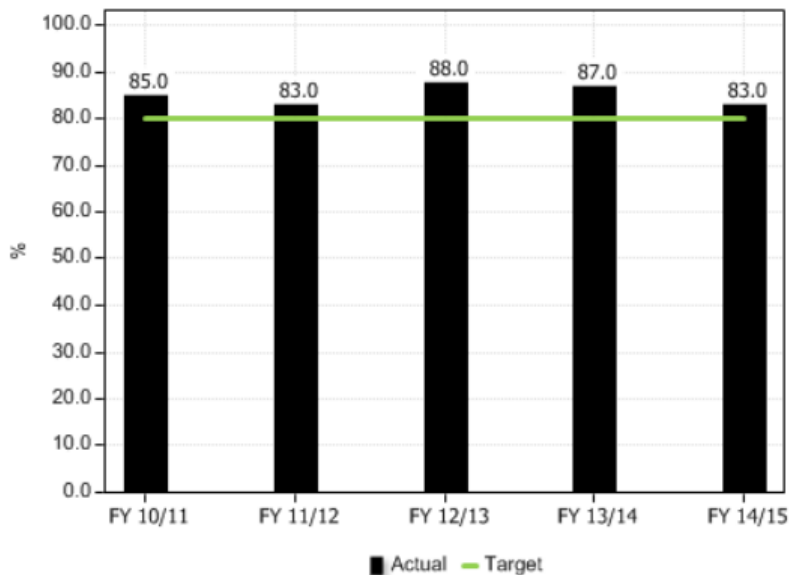
c) Customer Services

The Council is actively seeking to increase the number of services which are offered on line and by phone. This is so that customers have more choice as to how they chose to interact with the Council at a time which suits them, and to reduce telephony and face to face waiting times. This includes web forms to notify the Council of issues, applying for services/licences on line and paying either on line or via an automated payment process.

2.5 Overall satisfaction with Council services

83% of the panel say they were satisfied overall with Council services in 2013/14. Year on year overall satisfaction remains consistently above 80% target.

Overall satisfaction with Council services 80% or higher



3. **Follow up actions**

3.1 The results will be fed back to:

- Staff through 'In Brief', management briefings and service briefings;
- Citizens' Panel members to thank them for taking part in the survey, advising them of the key results and our follow up action;
- The general public when we feedback our performance results through our performance and press webpages.

4. **Continuously improving the survey process**

4.1 Each year we ask panel members how they find being a member. This year 68% said they felt their views have been listened to; 87% said they found it useful to be a panel member and 88% said they found it worthwhile. 37% said they found it time consuming.

4.2 We refresh a third of the Citizens' Panel membership each year and ensure the overall panel membership is representative of the adult population profile (based on Census 2011). Panel membership stands at 2,346.

4.3 Further analysis and reporting

We will analysis and feedback in more detail on a number of sections of the survey to strategic committees and working group meetings including to:

CPE Committee:

- Community Safety

Community Services Committee:

- Roads and winter maintenance

Resources Committee

- Satisfaction with contacting the Council (customer services)

Highland Culture Board

- Highlands Creativity

5. **Implications**

5.1 Resource implications

There are no new resource implications arising from this report. The recommendations for further action will be contained within current budgets. The survey costs around £15,000 in research fees, printing and postage.

5.2 Legal implications

There are no legal implications arising from this report, but using the information for understanding how our performance is perceived and being open about that, helps us to comply with our legal duties on public performance reporting.

5.3 Risk implications

There is a risk that our performance is judged solely on public perception. Credible performance reporting should also take into account performance information from other sources as well and ideally combining results from a range of sources. This includes our statutory and local performance indicators, describing our performance against our Programme commitments, professional opinion gathered through self-evaluation and external scrutiny bodies as well as feedback to members from constituents.

5.4 Equalities implications

The report includes questions on public attitudes to diversity and equality which generally appear to show improving tolerance and acceptance of diversity in our community since 2011. Additionally, the Community Safety section includes questions on awareness of, and understanding of, the impact of hate incidents and crimes, i.e. those motivated by malice and ill-will towards a social group on the basis of disability, sexual orientation, race, religion or faith. The trends shown in this information are used to inform and measure a number of the Council's equality outcomes and SOA outcomes. Monitoring information on the breakdown of the panel by age, gender, disability and ethnicity is available. While, the sample size is too small to provide statistical confidence that it is representative of all views this information can, however, provide a useful indication of area where further investigation is needed.

5.5 Climate Change/Carbon Clever implications

Several questions in the survey will help us to understand how we are perceived on a range of environmental services. We will use this information to help us set a base-line and targets for improvement for the new Carbon

Clever Highland initiative.

5.6 Rural Implications

The survey collects data at Ward level but the sample sizes of returns are too small to have statistical confidence they are representative of the Ward as a whole. Additional work has been commissioned to analyse the results of the survey from a rural perspective and the findings will be used to inform service and policy direction.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Members are asked to consider the key findings of the feedback from the Citizens' Panel from this year's survey, noting overall a set of positive results and the actions being taken to address areas for improvement.

6.2 Members are asked to approve the follow up action to communicate the results and to approve the specific actions set out in paragraphs 3.2.

Date: 18.09.15

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Summary of main findings – Annual Performance and Attitudes Survey 2014

A. Contact with the Council

- 88% say they find it easy to contact us.
- 60% felt their request was dealt with by the first person they contacted.
- Top 3 methods of contact show changing trends between 2011 and 2015: by telephone 33% (58% in 2011), personal visit to Service Point or Council Office 31% (40% in 2011) and on-line 30% (19% in 2011).
- Top 3 preferred options to make contact are: a personal visit (to Service Point or office) (32%), on-line (29%) and telephone (Service Centre or council office) (20%). Older residents and council tenants are more likely to prefer personal contact with an officer.
- Top 3 reasons for contact are: to make a payment (53%), make an enquiry (23%) and report a problem (12%).
- All aspects of satisfaction with Council website have improved including 53% of respondents rating the homepage as 'good' compared to 39% in 2014.
- 55% of respondents said they were aware they could access information through social media (Facebook, Twitter) up from 39% in 2014.
- Overall satisfaction with all types of contact was 70% compared to 63% in 2014.
- In making contact 73% of respondents considered the helpfulness of staff to be 'good' compared to 70% in 2014.
- 82% of all respondents thought for personal visits facilities for disabled people were 'good' compared to 71% the previous year. However, disabled people are less likely to rate this as 'good' (59%).
- For waiting time for personal visits to council offices 56% thought this was 'good' compared to 62% in 2014.
- For telephone contact 49% were satisfied with the ease of getting through to someone who could help compared to 54% in 2014.
- All aspects of satisfaction with Council website have improved including 53% of respondents rating the homepage as 'good' compared to 39% in 2014.

B. Satisfaction with Council services

- 83% of the panel say they were satisfied overall with Council services in 2014/15. Satisfaction remains consistently above 80%.
- Of the 46 service areas surveyed, there were more positive views than negative views for 43 of them.
- Roads repairs and potholes, winter maintenance and services to reduce offending have more dissatisfaction than satisfaction. These having net satisfaction scores of (-65), (-8) and (-7) respectively. There are relatively small numbers of respondents using services to reduce offending with 11 responses and this must be taken account of when considering the results.
- Overall there are 9 services with net satisfaction of 75% or above, more than in any previous year.
- The top four most important services for the public are also the top four used by most people; road repairs and potholes, winter road maintenance, refuse/bin collection and recycling facilities. High satisfaction continues to be found with refuse and recycling services.
- There are 4 qualities where over half the panel strongly agree or agree with the statements that the Council 'maintains good quality local services' (59% agree), 'is approachable' (58%), 'is helpful' (54%) and 'is environmentally friendly' (53% agree). On balance, the Council is viewed positively in demonstrating all of these.

- The most significant swing in opinion is on views the Council is efficient where more people now disagree than agree (28% compared to 26%).
- On balance more people disagree than agree that we involve people in how we spend money (39% disagree compared to 22% who agree) or that we represent their views (30% compared to 25%).
- In terms of the top 4 most important qualities the panel views these to be maintains good quality services, listens to local people, provides value for money and is efficient.
- 69% of the panel believe the Council meets or exceeds their general expectations (78% in 2014).

C. Community Life

- 70.7% of respondents believe the area where they live provides them with a sense of belonging to a community;
- 76% feel we have strengthened the profile of the Gaelic language to a great or some extent (78% in 2013/14).
- Rating of a range of services in communities revealed net satisfaction ratings (% dissatisfied deducted from % satisfied) were as follows:
 - Top 3 positive scores were local schools (64%), local health services (62%) and leisure facilities/events (45%);
 - Lowest 3 scores were availability of housing (-16%), services to help people into employment (-10%) and access to energy saving advice (15%).
- 92.6% say they rate the neighbourhood or community they live in as very or fairly good;
- 22.4% believed they had some influence in local decisions compared to 17.8% in 2013/14.
- Community safety - the top 3 areas of concern are road safety (78%), alcohol abuse (69%) and drug misuse (58%).
- The top 3 actions people take because of possible worries about crime are 'make sure their home is adequately secured (89%) make sure their vehicle is adequately secured (88%) and carry a mobile phone (69%).
- 96.8% of respondents consider the area within 15 minutes' walk of their home to be 'very' or 'fairly' safe.
- When asked about the extent of concern about anyone (including themselves) being subjected to a hate incident or a hate crime 58% said this was not a concern. Of those that expressed a concern, 31% did so on the grounds of mental health, 29% on learning disability, 28% on race or ethnic origin, 26% on physical disability, 22% on religion or belief (including non-belief), 20% sexual orientation and 16% on gender identity.
- When asked about awareness of the impact that hate incidents or crimes on people in Highland 73.4% said they were aware with 26.6% saying they were not aware.
- Equalities – 75.0% agree that Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all types of prejudice compared to 77% in 2013/14.
- When asked if people would rather live in a place with lots of different kinds of people or where most people are similar to you. 57.6% of respondents answered with lots of different people (52.5% in 2014).
- Respondents were asked the extent to which they feel their communities are accepting of people coming from outside the Highlands to live with 86.5% believing their communities are accepting of such people to a great or some extent with 11.3% feel the community was not really accepting and 2.5% not at all.

D. Volunteering

- Volunteering levels remain high with 39% saying they volunteer in some capacity (39% in 2013/14).
- 23% are involved in three or more voluntary activities.
- 50% of respondents also say they volunteer this at least once a week.

E. Highland's Creativity

- The top three creative activities were reading for pleasure (71%), visiting places of historical/archaeological interest (53%) and watching films at the cinema (51%).
- The top three benefits identified from participating in creative activities were learning something new (72%), helps me relax (62%) and makes me feel good (54%).
- 48% were engaged in activities at least weekly and 71% at least monthly.

Differences in views between groups and geographies within the Citizen's panel

This year we received 1021 responses from our Citizen's Panel of just over 2,346 adults, including 480 electronically, providing a 43.5% response rate. This number of responses along with the sampling method used provides good validity in the results; a 95% confidence level is achieved with a confidence interval of +or- 3.1%. In other words where this level of responses was received, we can be 95% confident that the response we would get if we surveyed all adults in Highland would be within + or – 3.1% of the results from the survey.

This also means that for sub-levels of information we cannot have the same confidence the results are representative of the Highland population. However at Ward level and between groups with the Citizen's Panel there are useful indications of differing views to consider. For example:

- It is notable that generally disabled people tend to have less positive feedback, although generally still positive overall rather than negative
- Older people, people with school age children and people living here for less than five years tend to view us more positively. While those aged 25-44 were more satisfied overall with Council Services (86%).
- There are a number of areas where 16-24 year old satisfaction was lower including public transport and believing the Council treats all residents fairly.
- Older people are more likely to volunteer (47% of those aged 65+) compared to younger people (28% of those aged 25-44).
- While overall disabled people appear less likely to engage in creative activities, some 47% of respondents identifying as disabled noted that involvement in creative activities "improves my health" as a personal benefit compared with 33% of those without a disability.

Monitoring information on the breakdown of the panel by age, gender, disability and ethnicity is available. Responses to the questions in the survey are analysed by most of these protected characteristics (as defined in the Equality Act 2010) to identify whether there are varying views from different groups and any specific issues to be addressed. While, the sample size is too small to provide statistical confidence that it is representative of all views this information can, however, provide a useful indication of area where further investigation is needed.