

Citizens' Voice

Welcome to the May edition of Citizens' Voice, the newsletter for the Citizens Panel. Thank you for joining the panel, your views will help to shape decision making in the Derbyshire Dales.

Forthcoming Consultation

Focus Groups

Focus Group meetings on Waste Management options will be held in May.

The Council is also hosting two Community Forums around the district during May.

Panel members are welcome to attend at Doveridge Village Club on 10th May and Monyash Village Hall on 17th May.

All Community Forums begin at 7.00pm. Further details are available from Ros Hession on 01629 761302.



Contact

If you have any comments about this newsletter or about the Panel, please contact:

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February 2004 Results

Focus Groups

There has been an excellent response from you to the Focus Groups that have been held in recent months on the subjects of Council Tax setting and community health services (hosted by Chesterfield and North Derbyshire Royal Hospital).

A summary of the results from the three Citizens Panel focus groups together with the feedback received from attendees at the Council's regular Community Forums are summarised on the back of this newsletter.

Help wanted!

The Tourism Section at the Council has recently launched a new joint website with other local authorities in the Peak District.

www.visitpeakdistrict.com

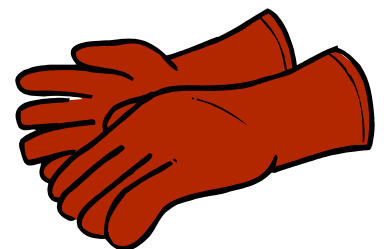
We are looking for volunteers to help us evaluate this website - whether it is easy to use, gives you the information you need, whether it is appealing in layout or not, better or worse than other tourism websites etc.

It will involve attending a session at the Town Hall (probably lasting about one hour). It doesn't matter whether you are used to accessing the internet or not - experienced 'surfers' and complete beginners are welcome!

If anyone would like to help with this exercise, please contact the Tourism Section on 01629 761252

Lost Property

At the focus group meeting held in Matlock at St. Joseph's Church Hall on 4th February a pair of ladies gloves were left behind. If you think they belong to you then please contact Peter Corke on 01629 761211.



Council Tax

The Council Tax focus group presentations informed attendees of the Council's proposals for its 2004/05 budget and the effect this would have on the level of Council Tax across the Derbyshire Dales.

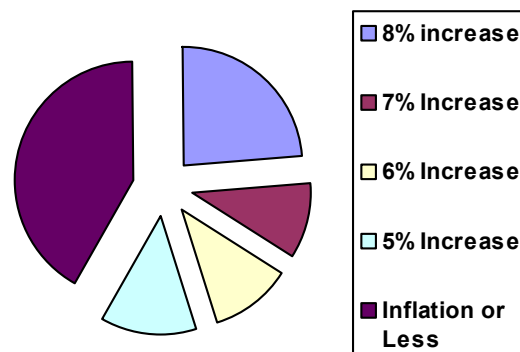
A presentation by the Council's Finance Manager highlighted some of the difficulties the Council were facing.

For example, additional service charges such as liquor licensing and stricter recycling targets.

After the presentation attendees were asked to vote on what level of Derbyshire Dales District Council's Council Tax they would support.

A lively debate ensured that numerous points were raised e.g. tourism. Based on a provisional 8% increase, 24% voted they would support the 8% increase and 58% supported an increase of greater than 5%. 42% said they would wish to see an increase limited to inflation or less.

What level of Council Tax increase would you support?



Council Tax increased this year by 5.9%

Summary of budget proposals:

- 2004/2005 Budget - £8,422,000 i.e. 4.7% increase.
- Main areas of increase include inflation of £149,000 and service growth of £150,000.
- District Council Band D Council Tax - £150.12 (2003/2004 £141.76) an increase of £8.36 i.e. 5.9%. The overall increase, including the County, Police, Fire and Rescue, and the average Parish/Town Council is 4.63%.
- The District Council's increase is equivalent to a rise of about 16p per week.

Car Park Charges

Panel members were asked whether they considered that the Council should increase its car park charges more frequently than every four years. 70% said charges should be increased more frequently. Of these, 69% thought they should be increased every two years, and 31% thought they should be increased every year.

This feedback was taken into account by Derbyshire Dales District Council at its annual meeting on the 4th March 2004 when the District Council's Budget proposals and Council Tax for 2004/2005.

Major Growth Items

Members of the Citizens' Panel Focus Groups were then asked which of the major growth items they would support. The numbers of people indicating support were:

Growth Item	Total
Grant to Derbyshire Dales Council for Voluntary Service	24
Grant to Citizens Advice Bureau towards Money Advice & Finance Officer	41
Contribution to Crime & Disorder Partnership for Crime Analyst & Website Officer	13
Marketing of Leisure Services to increase the number of people, particularly young people, participating in leisure activities	12
Increase grass cutting of roadside verges from five to six cuts per year	12
Additional temporary employee to deal with homeless applications	23
Use of consultants to speed up processing on planning applications	7
Review of the Council's Tourist Information Centres	19

Citizens' Panel—Derbyshire Dales is a partnership between Derbyshire Dales District Council, Derbyshire County Council and Derbyshire Constabulary