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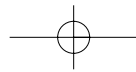
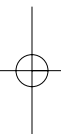
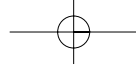
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Voting and Community Participation in Ballymun

Part 8



Comment

Participation is key to success in the new Ballymun. Presently less than 1 out every 2 people vote and 1 out of every 3 are involved in local community activities. Yet it has been the community's spirit, tenacity and dedication in the past that created the foundation for Ballymun's bright future.

It was the community who founded the Irish School, campaigned for the Job Centre, had the vision to set up a local Credit Union, established the Ballymun Neighbourhood Council and Area Forums, lobbied for the regeneration rather than refurbishment, made the case for the Ballymun Partnership, supported the establishment of the Drugs Task Force as well as many other initiatives.

Ballymun needs to re-energise this Spirit and Determination. To this end all local development agencies and community organisations with resources should adopt, as a priority, innovate initiatives that enable and actively encourage the involvement and mobilisation of local people to share their concerns, view, aspirations and dreams. The experience of veteran 'activists' on how to get things done should be tapped. Community Leadership Initiatives should be established to encourage young people to come to the fore, and to shape the Ballymun of the future. Fundamentally, all adults must be persuaded, encouraged and motivated to value the democratic process and use their vote. Imagine a Ballymun where the turnout at elections was 80% – that alone would transform how Ballymun is viewed and valued by the powers that be within a relatively short space of time. History in Ballymun would suggest that the 'spirit is willing' the challenge to local development is to harness that force in the interest of all.

To those who have been involved over the years tirelessly and in many cases without recognition – Thank You - your contribution has made Ballymun a better place and improved the lives of others. Those of you who have not yet got involved - You Can Make a Difference!

Peter Davitt, Chairperson Ballymun Neighbourhood Council.

Introduction to the facts and figures

To gather the key data for this Fact File, Ballymun Partnership commissioned a company called Vision 21 to conduct a survey with ten percent of Ballymun residents, over the Christmas period 2002.

Addresses were randomly selected from a database which we constructed using information from Dublin City Council Regional Office, from Ballymun Post Office and Ballymun Regeneration Limited. The target sample size was 485 households, which was 10% of the total number of households, 4,850, in Ballymun at the time of the survey. The survey results tell us that out of these 485 households, there were 1,516 members. If we multiply this figure by 10 we can estimate that the total population for Ballymun is 15,160 people. On average there are 3.14 persons per household.

When reading the facts that follow you can refer to the total household number 4,850, and the total population number, 15,160, where relevant, in order to get a real understanding of the actual numbers of people from the percentages given.

The facts and figures

Voting

When asked, did you vote in the most recent general election (2002), 56.1% of respondents aged 18 and over indicated that they had voted, this compares to the official turn-out recorded at the six Ballymun polling stations of 45.4% (Source: Dublin City returning Officer). This discrepancy may be due to over-reporting on the self-report questionnaire. Of those who didn't vote the reasons are outlined on page 4. The questions about reasons for not voting, not being on the electoral register, and participation in voluntary groups are comparable to questions asked in the National Quarterly Household Survey Participation Module, the results of which are yet to be published.

Respondents were asked to identify their preferred method of receiving information about Ballymun. The results are shown in the table below.

Table 5 Preferred method of receiving information

Methods	%
Newsletters	53.5
Local newspaper	34.4
Personal visits	15.5
By telephone	4.6
Websites	1.4
Email	1.2
Other	8.1

“Nearly nine out of ten (88.6%) felt the local community should be more involved in running Ballymun, 55.3% would like to participate in a neighbourhood council”

Table 1 present the reasons given for not voting.

Table 1 Reason for not voting

Reasons	%
Not interested in politics	26.8
Disillusioned with politics	16.0
No time	14.9
Away from home	8.8
Not registered to vote	8.2
No polling card	5.7
My vote would not make a difference	5.7
Do not understand issues/ could not make choice/ too little information	5.2
Illness/disability	3.6
Lack of transport	1.0

Three quarters of respondents (75.3%) old enough to vote reported that they were recorded on the electoral register.

Those who were not on the electoral register were asked why not, the responses can be seen below.

Table 2 Reason for not being registered to vote

Reason	%
Never got round to registering	25.5
Recently moved – not registered at new address	8.5
Thought registration was automatic	8.5
Don't know how to register	6.4
Name disappeared off register	2.1
Other reasons	31.9
Don't know	17.0

Community Participation

All respondents were asked whether or not, over the past few years, they had been active in any way in a voluntary group or organisation (e.g. charity, sports club, local community group, political or religious group/organisation). Table 3 shows that three in ten people (31.1%) are either somewhat active or very active, and a further 4.1% are members but are not active.

Table 3 Active in voluntary group/organisation

<i>Extent</i>	<i>%</i>
Very active	17.0
Somewhat active	14.1
Member but not active	4.1
Do not belong to group/organisation	64.5
Don't know	0.2

Of those who are active, 13.2% are paid for their involvement, most likely through their participation on Community Employment Programmes.

Governance

Over half of all respondents (52.1%) had attended a public meeting in Ballymun at sometime. And nearly nine out of ten (88.6%) felt the local community should be more involved in running Ballymun, 55.3% would like to participate in a neighbourhood council.

Information

Respondents were shown a list of possible sources of information about Ballymun, and were asked to indicate where they got most of their information about Ballymun. As is shown in table 4 friends/family/neighbours and local newspapers were the most cited sources of information. The Regeneration company has become the main point of information regarding the housing programme specifically and Ballymun Partnership and Local Area Forums were considered one-stop-sources for general information about what was going on in the overall area and in the relevant neighbourhoods respectively.

Table 4 Percentage of people who access information from various sources

<i>Sources</i>	<i>%</i>
Friends/family/neighbours	77.3
Local newspaper	70.7
Ballymun Regeneration Ltd	21.2
Ballymun Partnership	19.8
Local Area Forum	8.5
Library	7.7
Housing Task Force	6.4
Local residents group	6.3
Drugs Task Force	5.8
CAP	4.4
Parish Team	3.7
Women's Resource Centre	3.3
Welfare Rights	2.9
Local Authority Officer	2.5
Welfare Officer	2.1
Linx Centre	1.9
Citizens Advice	1.9
Police Station	1.5
Men's Network/ Resource Centre	1.2