

MD'S COLUMN MERCURY – JULY 2009

In mid-summer and the holiday season it seems almost surreal to be thinking about flu - something which most of us associate with winter.

But we all know only too well that Swine Flu is a reality and that local people have been among those who have caught the virus.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure everyone living in the borough that we have been planning since early May to ensure that our services to you are not affected if the outbreak should escalate.

Key services will continue to operate even if our own personnel are taken ill. We have a contingency plan which will see staff redeployed to areas such as housing and benefits so that these departments can continue to operate.

We are in regular contact with other agencies and local authorities and if necessary we will share staff to keep all essential services running.

A visit to our website www.great-yarmouth.gov.uk gives links to NHS advice on these subjects; it includes a helpline to call if you do develop flu-like symptoms.

A recent survey has looked at the public's perception of the place they live in and the services they receive from us and our partner organisations, such as the health service, social services and the police.

The Government has stated that the Place Survey has to be carried out biennially by all local authorities. The actual survey is conducted by an independent body, Ipsos MORI - one of the country's best-known market research companies.

The Place Survey looks at many aspects of being a resident in the area, such as concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour, fair treatment by local services, aspects of healthcare and just how people feel about living here.

It was heartening to see that the majority of the residents who took part in the survey, feel that Great Yarmouth is a good and safe place to live, and that they have strong feeling of belonging in their neighbourhood.

One not so heartening aspect was that national figures show that satisfaction with how local authority's run things was down -10 per cent. In Great Yarmouth that figure was -4 per cent. Although that means we performed much better than many other local authorities it is something we need to look at and will.

We work with many other agencies throughout the county to bring services to you which are also judged and they seemed to show that in many instances you are happy with the way things are done,

Examples of this include the awareness of civil protection arrangements (things such as flooding) put Great Yarmouth first in the national table, the extent older people are supported to live independent lives put the county third, and other examples of high scoring for our part of the world include the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality and fair treatment by social services.

It was also felt by the majority of people that they had been treated with respect and consideration by ourselves and our partners. As good customer service is something we strive to deliver, I am glad this is the case.

In my column I have often spoken about the excellent work of SeaChange Art to bring high quality entertainment to the Borough.

Please can I ask you to keep you eyes and ears open so that you don't miss all that is going on in the next few months from the Out There festival in October to the exciting programme of concerts recently announced that will be taking place at the Hippodrome, bring performers from Poland, Russia and Europe to our town.