Local Government Association

Involving and Informing the Community Effectively

Chris Lawrence-Pietroni
Director of Campaigns
Local Government Association

promoting better local government

Informing, involving and politics

Local Government Association

Summary

Local Government Association

1. Informing – the LGA Reputation Campaign

2. Involving – Participatory Budgeting

Reputation

Local Government Association

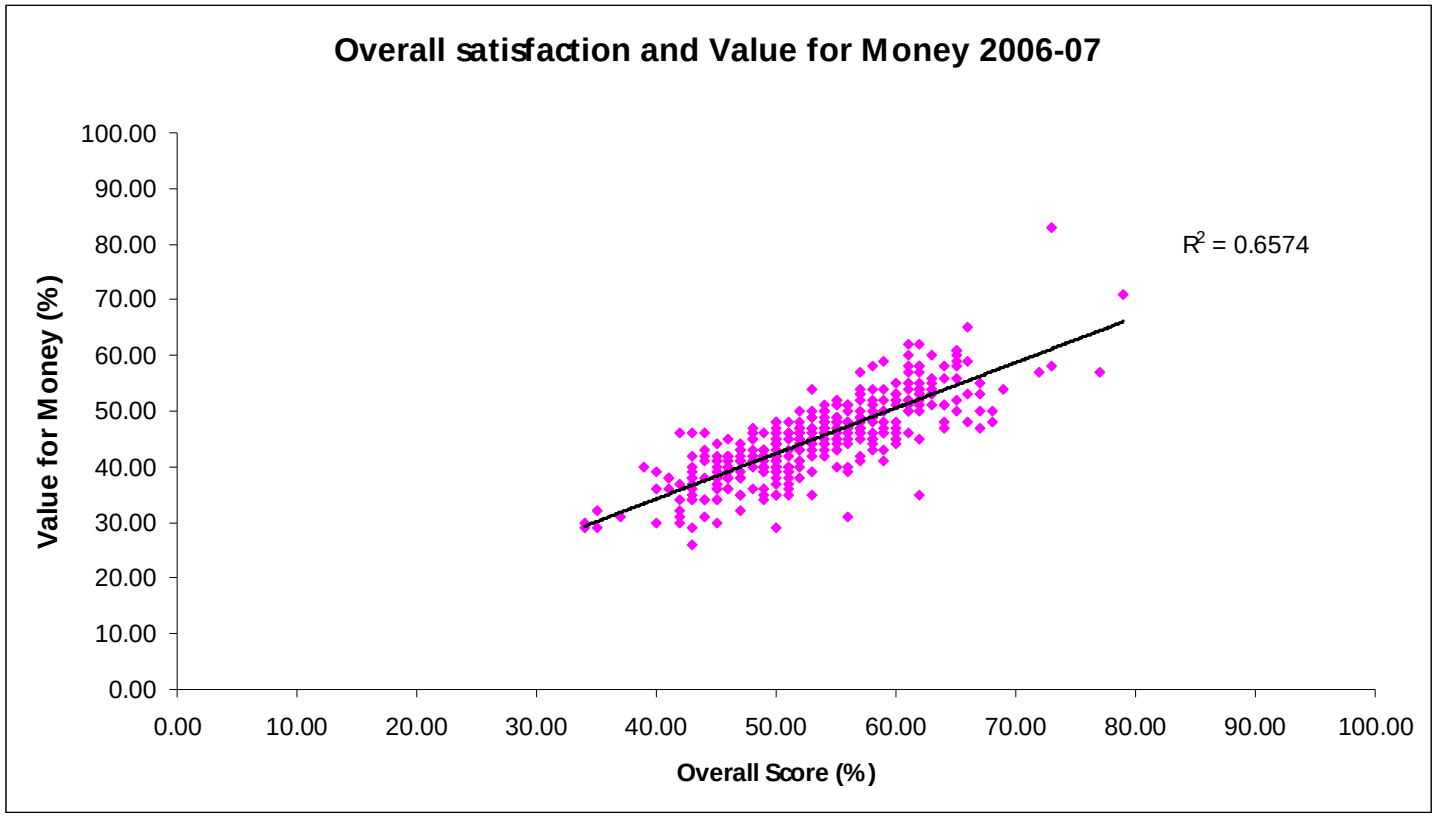
- For most, satisfaction with services is rising.
- For most, satisfaction with the council is falling.

2007 number crunch…

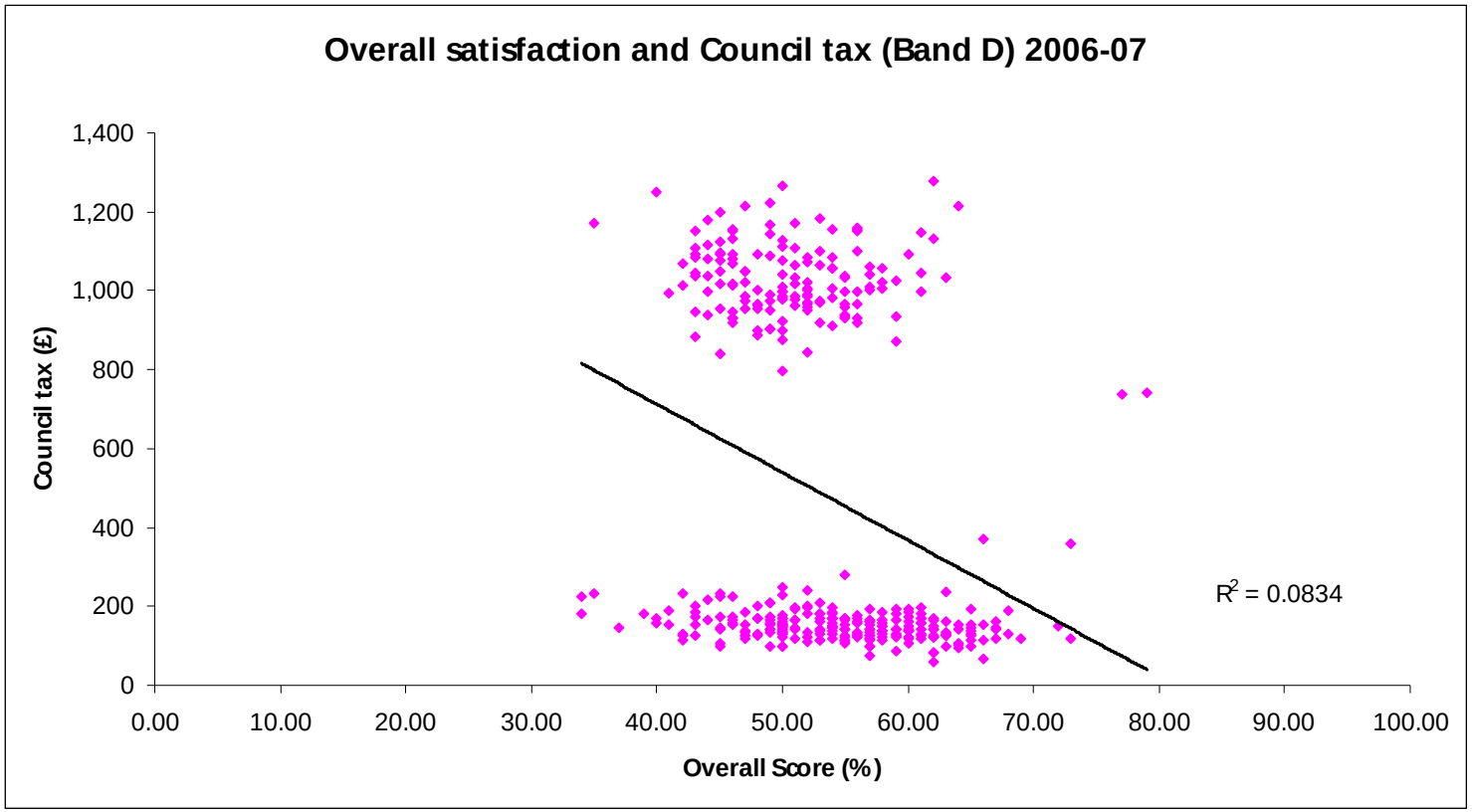
Local Government Association

Reputation and Perceived VFM (0.66)

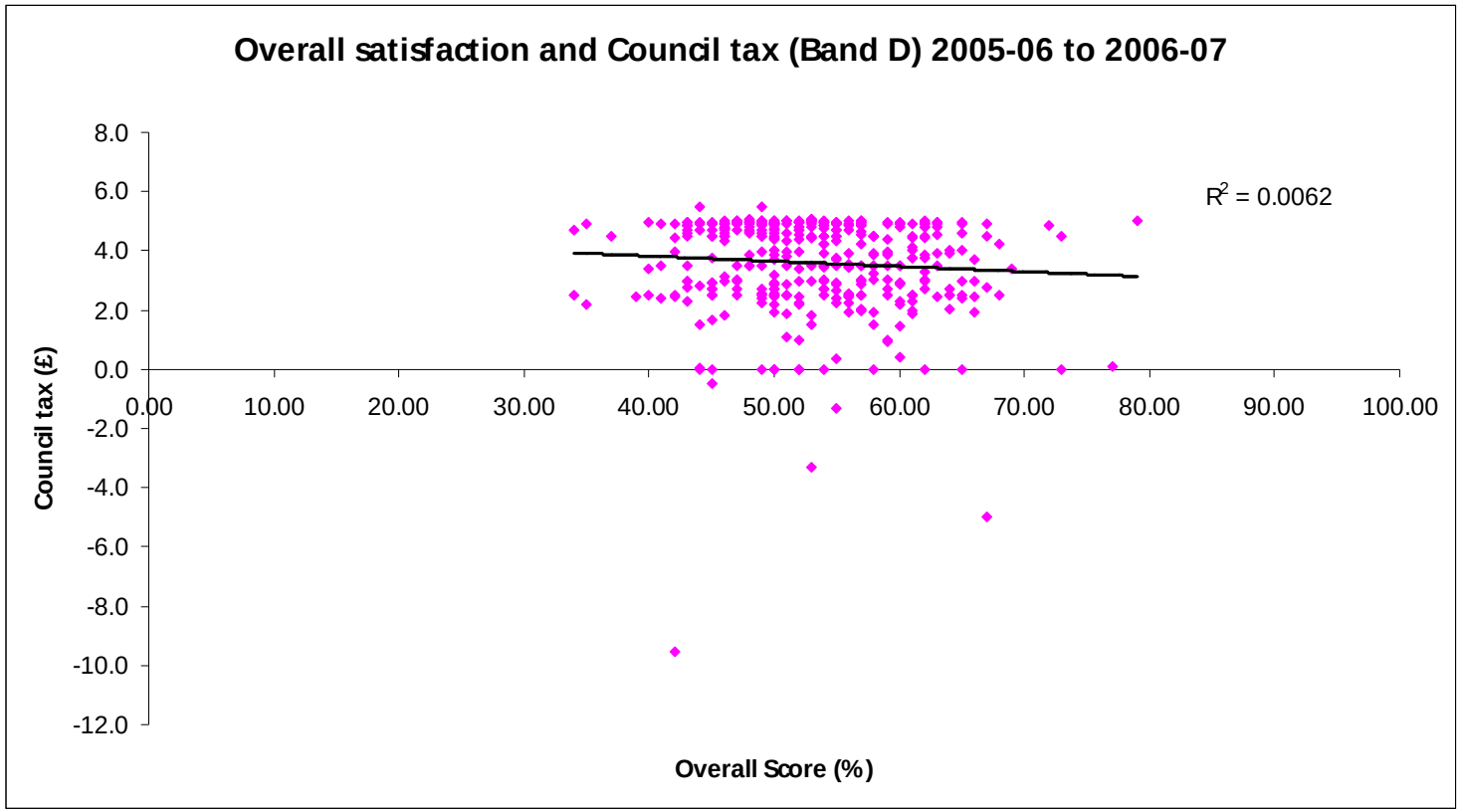
Local Government Association



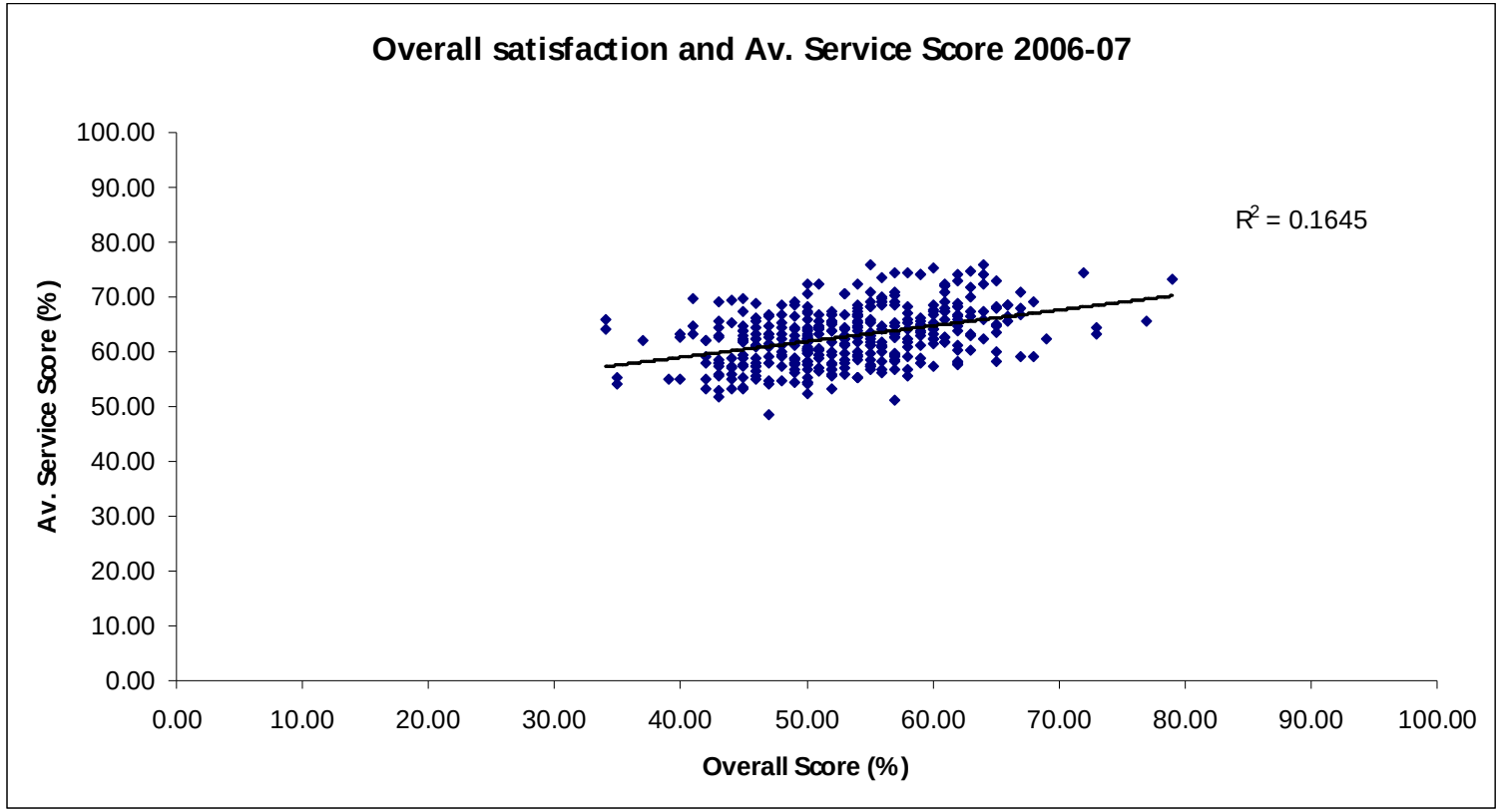
Reputation and Council tax levels (0.08)



Reputation and Council tax rises (0.01)

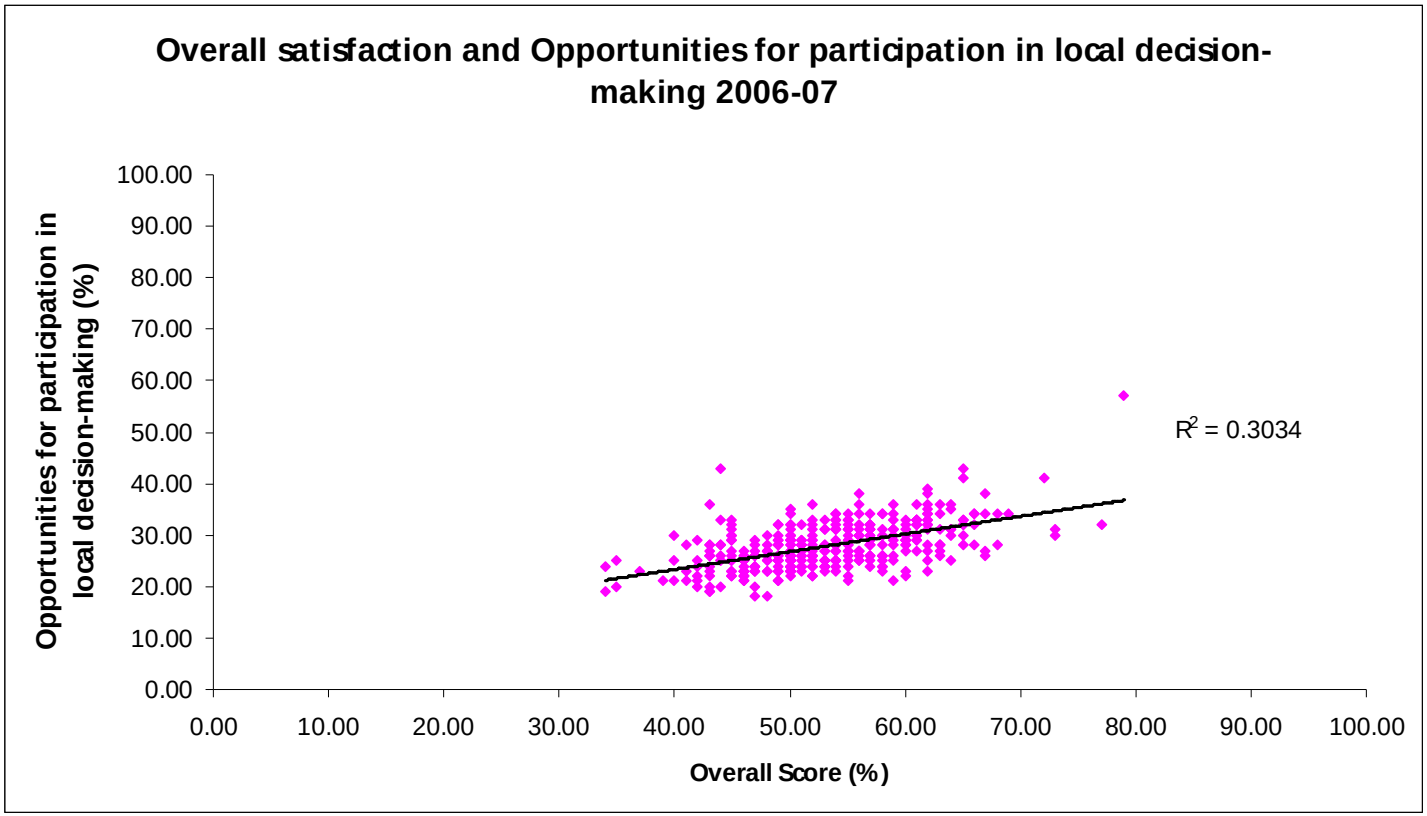


Reputation and Service levels (0.16)

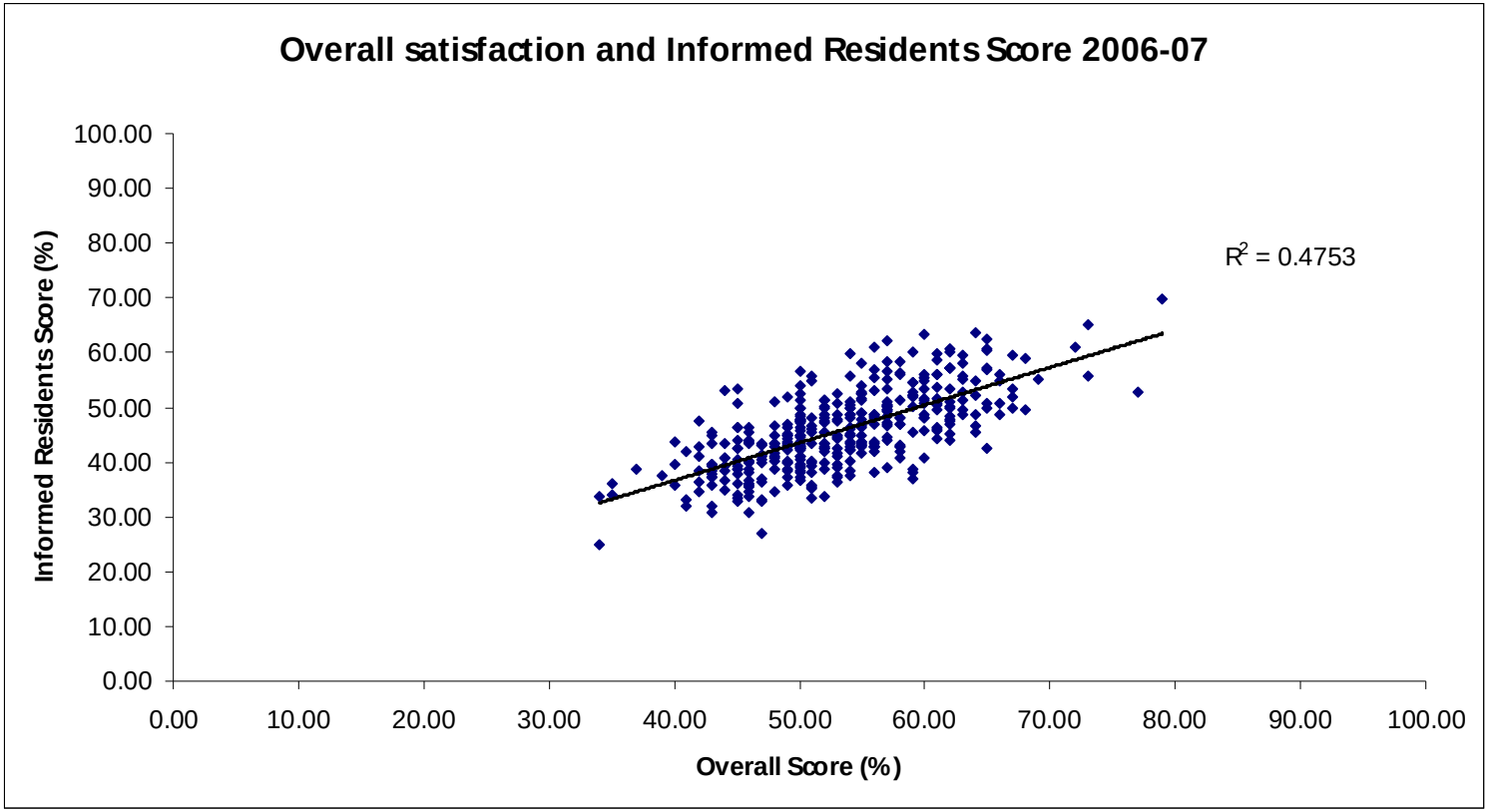


Reputation and Participation (0.30)

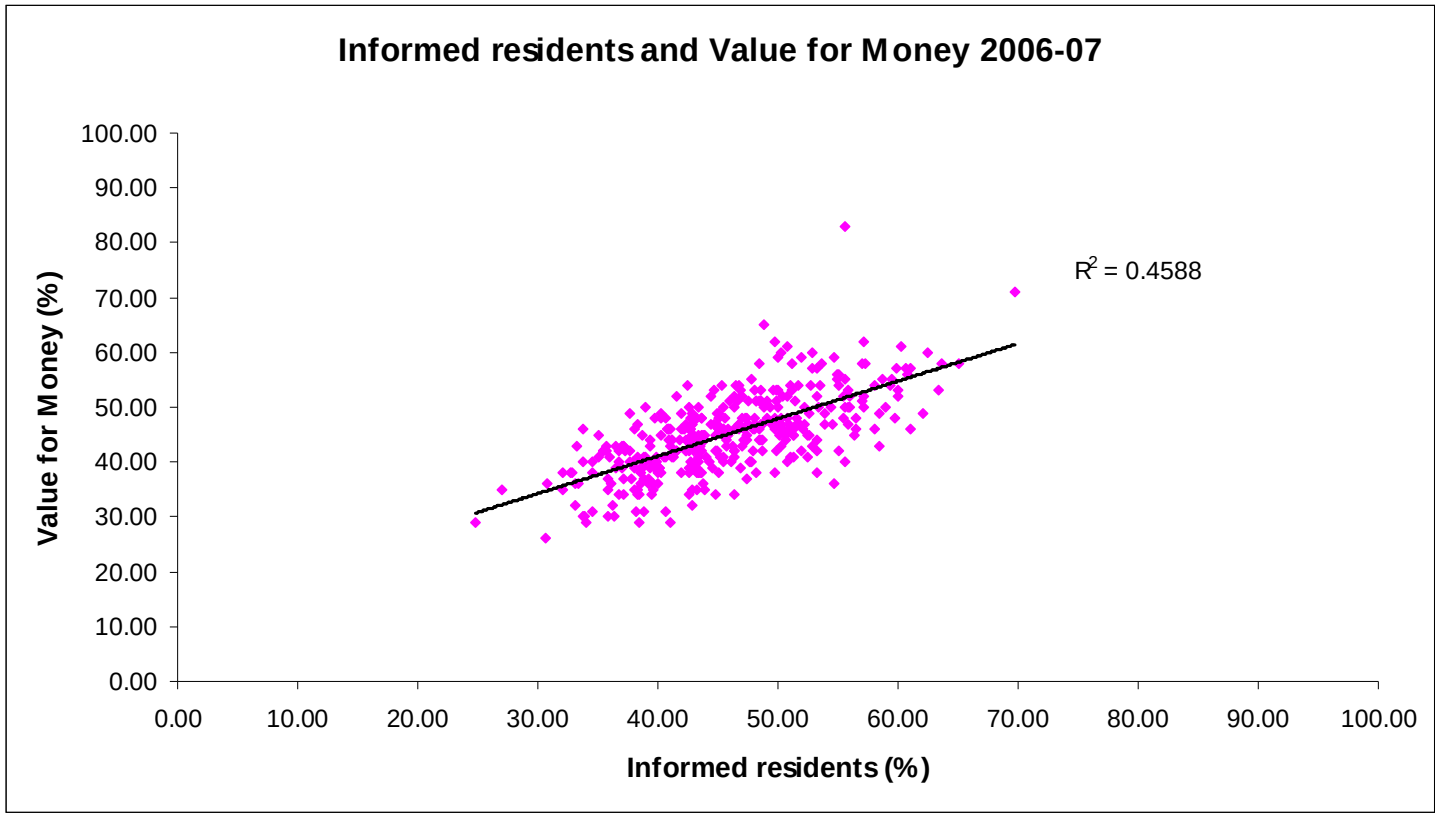
Local Government Association



Reputation and informing residents (0.47)



Comms v VFM (0.46)



What does this mean?

Local Government Association

- Perceived value for money is key
- Council tax bills, services and participation – not important for reputation

Holy Grail…

Local Government Association

What does matter is informing residents…

the Holy Grail for overall satisfaction, value for mon efficiency and better plac live.

Core Comms actions

Local Government Association

- Effective media management
- Deliver an annual A-Z guide of council services to the door
- Publish a regular council magazine/newspaper
- Branding - effective and consistent linkage of council brand to services
- Good internal communications

Comms with real people

Local Government Association

Participatory Budgeting

Local Government Association

- Allows the citizen to participate in the allocation of part of the local Council's available financial resources.
- The aim is to increase transparency, accountability, understanding and social inclusion on government affairs
- Applies to a varying amount of the local Council's budget and the process is developed to suit local circumstances.

In Your Hands - Morecambe

Local Government Association

- Poulton Neighbourhood Management and Poulton community organised an event to distribute £20,000 on cleaner and greener projects
- Education, health & wellbeing, crime, jobs and training, environment, neighbourliness.

Stronger Communities IN YOUR HANDS

LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL
Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

The voting day

Local Government Association

- Each presenter was given a 3 minute slot to pitch their application.
- Members of the community came along heard the bids and voted for the ones they wanted to put into practice.

Results

Local Government Association

- 26 Groups applied and 13 were funded through the process. Individual scores were not published so as not to identify groups with the lowest scores.
- 90% of those who attended felt they had contributed to an improvement in their neighbourhood.
- 97% discovered new groups
- 92% would take part again
- 86% found it entertaining.

UDecide - Newcastle

Local Government Association

- The project aimed to give young people who were most likely to benefit from the fund the chance to have a say in the allocation of £3.81m to improve the lives of their peers.
- It sought to demonstrate that participative approaches can be reconciled with complex decision making processes.

Udecide Participatory Budgeting

Newcastle City Council

The project

Local Government Association

- The children and young people were asked to evaluate the bids against a set of criteria at a special Children's Fund Conference.
- Each child had to complete 3 preparatory sessions in order to attend the final conference, these sessions allowed the children to build up their knowledge incrementally so by the time of the event they felt comfortable casting their vote.

Results

Local Government Association

- Through the UDecide pilots children and young people have allocated £115k Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and helped shape £1.4m Big Lottery funding.
- 93% of the children involved said they enjoyed the event.
- Five out of the six projects chosen by the children were successful with their bids.

Highways – East Salford

Local Government Association

- The aim of the project was to increase the number of people involved in the allocation of a devolved highways budget.
- The funding aimed to address the community priorities regarding highways and transport issues and was open to consideration of a wide range of proposals from road safety to walkway improvements.

Salford City Council

The project

Local Government Association

- The idea of participatory budgeting was taken to the East Salford Community Committee, made up of local people, elected members and officials.
- The community were invited to put forward proposals for consideration.
- All eligible schemes were looked at by a highways engineer and a rough scheme was developed with approximate costs.

Results

Local Government Association

- Events held across East Salford and each proposal was scored and voted on
- The top schemes are now being developed by the highways engineers and being prepared for implementation.

Conclusions

Local Government Association

- PB can help to
  - build public support
  - prioritise scarce resources
  - access ‘expert’ knowledge
- PB is not in competition with formal democratic process
- PB needs to be member-led

Final thougts

Local Government Association

"PB can be perceived by some as a threat whereas actually it helps them make sure that what they do has public support and that the projects supported have real 'value' for their community."

"I had some concerns that it would become competitive and it could almost set one group against another, one age group against another or one locality against another. The evidence that we have doesn't support that at all. In fact quite the opposite."

Local Government Association

chris.lawrence-pietroni@lga.gov.uk

www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk