

Your community - your say

Summary of findings from Bromyard

Introduction

Your community - your say (YCYS) was commissioned by Herefordshire Council in order to start the process of engaging Herefordshire residents in meaningful conversations about the future of public services in the county. The consultation process was set within the context of significant financial cuts resulting in major changes in the way that public services are commissioned and delivered. The YCYS consultation was the community engagement element of the 'Root and Branch Review Programme', an in-depth internal review of all services provided by and on behalf of the council, to help inform strategic and service planning and set future priorities for public services.

To ensure that any decisions made as a result of this review were informed by up to date views from local residents, participants were provided with a range of opportunities to have their say. The focus of this consultation was to collect information of a high standard from residents to help the council understand and explore:

- Whether we are focusing on the right priorities
- Whether we are providing the services people believe are needed
- Which services matter most to the residents of Herefordshire and which are less important
- How services could be delivered differently

YCYS was also used as an opportunity to test the statistical findings of the 2012 Quality of Life survey (QOL)¹ and to gain greater insight into the responses of this survey.

Between September and November 2012, 14 Your community - your say locality events were undertaken. These covered the county's nine locality areas with additional events being held in the areas of Hereford, Golden Valley and Mortimer in order to increase the reach of the events. In addition targeted consultation was undertaken with young people, disabled people and minority ethnic groups, with community and young researchers being trained to undertake consultation with their peers. Support was also enlisted from local voluntary and community sector organisations working with seldom heard groups and virtual consultation was encouraged through the use of Twitter, Facebook and an online discussion forum.

The Bromyard event, which was held at The Falcon Hotel on 9 October, was attended by over 43 local people the majority of which were over 45. It was found that just over a third had never participated in a Herefordshire Council consultation.

¹ The Herefordshire Quality of Life survey is a survey of residents' views within the county. The 2012 survey was posted to 4,125 households across Herefordshire and was based on the 2008 Place Survey with some changes to support the needs of ongoing service review and budgeting. 1,346 responses were received, giving an overall response rate of 33%.

For these events a World Café style approach was adopted which sees people being invited to take part in small group discussions based around a series of key questions. They were also asked to participate in a prioritisation exercise. The following is a summary of the participants' responses to these questions and the prioritisation exercises.

Please note: This report also includes comments from the consultation held with Ocle Pychard Parish Council at Burley Gate Village Hall on 23 October.

Which public services do you feel are priorities for the county and your local area?

The Quality of Life survey identified the following four areas as priorities for residents in the Bromyard locality for making somewhere a good place to live:

- 1. Health services**
- 2. The level of crime**
- 3. Education provision**

There was general consensus that the QOL results were generally reflective of priorities for the Bromyard area.

1. Health services

- While residents felt health services were important they recognised that different age groups would have different ideas about which health services were most important.
- Adult social care was also seen to be a high priority.
- There were generally high levels of satisfaction with the health service, specifically GP provision and the ambulance service, although physical access for those without transport was deemed to be an issue. The issue of never seeing the same GP twice was also raised as a problem.
- The capacity of GP surgeries needs to be increased to deal with the growing number of older people, especially for home visits. A few general concerns were also raised about the ageing population and the additional burden this will place on services and how this was being effectively planned for.
- Residents stated that the lack of access to local GPs during the weekend and out of hours was an issue, although a service is provided by Primecare. There was a view that people would prefer to see their own GP, as locums lack historical patient knowledge.
- There was a concern that GP commissioning may impact on the speed of referrals to specialist care and treatment.
- There is a problem with the administering of repeat prescriptions at the surgery on Pump Street, as people can't always collect them when they're at the doctors, if it is a few days before the repeat prescription is due to be issued. This means a subsequent phone call by the patient a few days later and then an additional trip into Bromyard to collect the prescription.
- The issue was raised around the difficulty in finding an NHS dentist in the area. The NHS patient lists are full in Bromyard, which forces patients to go out of county.
- The cottage hospital is highly valued, although there is a need for local and county hospitals to work closely together to look at where efficiencies and savings can be made.

- The impact of the loss of a ward in Bromyard Community Hospital was raised, as this has resulted in local people being placed in other hospitals across the county, as there is no longer sufficient capacity in Bromyard.
- Residents felt that the car parking charges at Hereford County Hospital are too high.
- Residents need more information to know how to efficiently use the hospital and emergency services, such as the local paramedic service.
- There was a request for service users to be consulted about changes to health services.
- There were concerns around the privatisation of health services and children's services, such as the hospital in Devon which has been taken over by Virgin. Residents felt that because the private sector is driven by profit, services may suffer as a result.
- Some felt that more funding should be put into preventative health services to save the NHS money in the longer term.
- The possibility of paying for certain health services was raised, however it was felt that this would require a separate debate.
- There was concern about cuts in support for family carers and a request was made for family carers to be seen as partners rather than service users.

2. The level of crime

- It was felt that it was the fear of crime rather than actual crime that had resulted in this being such a high priority.
- There is a perception that rural crime is increasingly becoming an issue, particularly the theft of agricultural machinery, oil and metal.
- There was a general consensus that relationships with the police were generally good and that there is good Community Support Officer (CSO) presence in the town, although they are less visible in the rural areas. The police response to emergency calls was felt to be good.
- It is widely known that CSOs have no powers to arrest and finish at 10:00pm, which some feel is taken advantage of.
- An issue was raised about police being called to respond to crime in other areas which leaves Bromyard without sufficient police cover. In addition, it was felt that the police station needs to remain open for longer.
- There were concerns raised that the loss of youth services will lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour and low level crime. There needs to be more work carried out by the police and local people to prevent this occurring.
- Speeding at night by young people is perceived to be an issue in the town and the surrounding areas, while there is also a problem with cars being broken into.
- Drug use amongst young people is perceived to be an issue in the town and there is a perception that there is a lack of enforcement.

- Residents perceived that problem tenants from other areas were being relocated into Bromyard and as a result crime rates had risen in one area of town.

3. Education provision

- There was mixed perception about the quality of education provision in the locality, with some stating that it is very good while others reported that parents were opting not to send their children to local schools.
- There is a strong feeling that rural schools are very important and help to keep rural areas sustainable.
- The lack of local sixth form provision was raised as an issue, with young people currently travelling to Hereford to access higher education.
- There needs to be better further and higher education across the county, including a university, to prevent the migration of young people.

Additional priorities

4. Youth provision

- Please refer to page seven for further details.

5. Community spirit and self sufficiency

- Participants referred to the high levels of local community activity and a culture of self sufficiency, which they felt made Bromyard a good place to live.
- It was felt that self sufficiency helps to support Bromyard's local economy.

6. Economic development

- It was felt that there needs to be more promotion of the town through the Chamber of Commerce.
- The issue was raised around the lack of industrial land to build on and many felt that North of Bromyard, where they are looking to build residential properties, would be better suited to industrial development.
- It was felt that there needs to be a rethink of the plan for Bromyard, especially in relation to roads and transport.
- It was felt that support for a vibrant, sustainable town centre was a priority with support for local independent shops, the introduction of a Sunday market and investment to encourage more tourism.

7. Public transport

- Please refer to pages five and six for details.

8. Tourism

- The point was raised that Bromyard has a number of tourist attractions and festivals which bring much needed money into the area. However, it was felt that they would benefit from more coordinated marketing and there was a suggestion that young people could be enlisted to help utilise social media. It was suggested that help from

Herefordshire Council, both as a catalyst to start this and for advice on how to make this successful would be useful.

- Residents felt that the lack of parking in Bromyard could deter tourists from visiting the town centre.

What do we need to improve and how can we do things differently to improve services?

The Quality of Life survey identified the following as the areas that residents in the Bromyard locality felt most needed improving and were of the highest priority:

- 1. Public transport**
- 2. Affordable decent housing**
- 3. Job prospects**

There was general consensus that the QOL survey results were generally reflective of priorities for the Bromyard locality, although other additional areas were raised including youth provision, broadband and road and pavement repairs.

1. Public transport

- It was felt that there was a need to consider transport as a whole rather than just looking at it in isolation.
- There were mixed views around the necessity of Herefordshire Council funding public transport and residents recognised the challenges for making this sustainable based on the fact that people want to travel where they want, when they want. There was a general feeling that investment should be made in demand responsive travel rather than additional bus routes.
- Community transport needs to be joined up with other transport services, which will feed a transport hub to the main lines and it needs to be affordable.
- It was felt that Herefordshire Council had a role to play in helping community transport schemes to be set up, such as arranging the necessary licences.
- It was felt that there is a need to make better use of community owned minibuses.
- The example of a volunteer car scheme was provided as a good initiative which could be replicated in other areas.
- There is a perception that there is no provision or strategy for the replacement of bus services.
- There is a perception that existing services seem to cater mainly for the retired population, but it should be refocused on getting people to work.
- Public transport provision is felt to be particularly poor for young people who want to travel into Hereford in the evening and at the weekends.
- Public transport provision on the following routes was felt to be particularly inadequate: Hereford to Birmingham, Bromyard to Worcester and Bromyard to Tenbury. It was also felt that buses from Bromyard to Hereford have a poor and unreliable timetable.

- There is a perception that other market towns have better connections to Hereford and neighbouring market towns and that Bromyard's bus services are not scheduled at the right times.
- There was a feeling that competition between bus companies has resulted in a poorer service overall.
- There was a feeling that poor public transport restricts industry growth.
- The issue of making school transport affordable was raised, currently this can cost up to £180 per term, as it was felt that it is too much.
- Local parking charges were perceived to be expensive.
- There was a suggestion that Bromyard could be used to pilot new transport schemes.

2. Affordable decent housing

- There is a concern that the need for affordable decent housing is not always matched by demand. There was a view that housing should be available to everyone not just those on low incomes.
- Residents felt that the elderly need to be a priority for housing with sheltered schemes available to let them live locally and remain independent, using their existing support networks.
- There is a perception that young people can't afford to buy property in the more rural areas of the locality.
- There is a perceived need for more affordable rental property across the locality, because in the current economic climate people can't afford to buy unless they have a 20% or more deposit. It was also felt that there is a particular shortage of three bedroom rental properties.
- Residents felt that social housing allocation should prioritise people with a local connection to the area.
- It was felt that infrastructure needs improving if there is to be significant new development, as much of the locality is not connected to mains water and there are also issues relating to poor drainage in the town.
- There is a limited electricity supply in the town and it was felt that it wouldn't be able to sustain a large influx of new housing.
- It was felt that the any housing development needs to be focused on where there is employment.
- It is perceived that there is a lack of suitable land for development in the area and parish councils have a potential role in identifying land for development.
- An issue was raised around the need to retain industrial land for business development and not for housing. It was felt that the plan for new housing to the North of the town is not the correct location and that this could be better suited as industrial land.

- Participants were supportive of the idea of empty properties being brought back into use before new housing is built.
- There was a feeling that planning laws need to be relaxed to take into account the needs and variations in different areas.
- In the past, developers have been put off developing locally due to issues relating to drainage. For example, there is a half built estate which was abandoned because service costs, including drainage were too high.
- There are a high proportion of listed buildings in area which means maintenance costs can be expensive.

3. Job prospects

- There was a strong feeling that those within Herefordshire Council don't understand the economic base of Bromyard and that there is a need for an economic development strategy to be developed specifically for Bromyard.
- Manufacturing in Bromyard is very important and should be encouraged both in terms of support for existing smaller local industries and attracting new companies to the area.
- Residents felt that there needs to be a balance between growth and conservation and that new development should be in keeping with the local character of the area.
- There was a strong feeling that poor broadband holds back economic development in the area and prevents home working in many locations.
- The issue around unemployed people signing on in Hereford was raised, this applies to 95 people in Bromyard and it was felt that this service should be provided locally.
- It was felt that there was a need to improve the skills base, provide apprenticeships and encourage entrepreneurialism amongst young people.
- The Rotherwas Enterprise Zone was seen as a positive thing, but residents felt it also needs to have clear benefits for Bromyard and the other market towns, such as better transport links.

Additional improvements

4. Youth provision

- The loss of youth provision and funding to support services and activities for young people was a real concern and felt to be a priority. An example was provided of the closure of the youth club at the Queen Elizabeth Humanities College.
- While there are a number of activities for younger people in Bromyard, it was felt with more funding and coordination these could be more efficient and encourage increased attendance and better use of volunteers.
- It was suggested that by using younger people to identify and take ownership of youth projects, more would ultimately become involved.

5. Broadband

- Broadband speeds were deemed to be slow and variable both in the town and the rural surrounding areas.
- The prioritisation of faster broadband was seen as vital for economic development and for accessing remote services.
- While satellite broadband is an option, many felt that rural areas should not have to pay more for provision than those living in urban areas.

6. Road and pavement repairs

- Road and pavement repairs were perceived to be an issue across the locality in both rural areas and the town centre.
- There is a need for a rolling programme of road maintenance as opposed to roads being patched up on a temporary basis. This was perceived to be an area where the principle of 'invest to save' made sense.
- The quality of road maintenance work undertaken by Amey was regarded as poor.
- There were mixed views about Amey response times with some reporting long delays in repairs being completed, while others reported swift action after using the Streetscene website. However, feedback on the website was that it was not very user friendly, due to the lack of grid references.
- Tower Hill and the link road to the industrial estate were both mentioned as being in a particularly poor state of repair.
- Residents felt that there was a lack of pavements, while the ones provided are in a poor state of repair. This was deemed to be dangerous especially for wheelchair users and pushchairs.
- The footpath on Tenbury Road was seen as a problem as it runs out, while there is also a lack of street lighting in Tenbury. This means that residents don't use this as a convenient walk way.
- Residents reported that the storm drains near the bypass are blocked and there was a request for these to be checked monthly.
- It was felt that there was an opportunity for the contract with Amey to be reviewed with alternative options being considered. There was also a suggestion that better use could be made of the lengthsman scheme.

7. Other service related comments

- Participants raised concerns about services moving out of the market towns into Hereford.
- It was felt that measures need to be taken to alleviate flooding in the town, which residents believe is linked to the drainage issues.
- Dog fouling is an issue in the town and it was reported that the dog warden is never seen in the local area. Some felt this issue could be addressed at a local level if they were allocated the necessary resources.

- Residents felt that the locality is well catered for in terms of sports clubs and leisure facilities and while they would like a swimming pool, it was acknowledged that this was unlikely to happen unless one of the local schools build one.
- Several residents reported that the state of the leisure centre has deteriorated and is in need of repair.
- There are a number of open spaces and walks in the area, but these should be developed further to promote walking routes and encourage tourism.
- There were concerns raised in relation to the threat of closure of local primary schools, specifically around how those without access to a car would get to school if the local ones closed.
- Support for carers in the area was felt to be poor and improvements and recognition for the work they undertake are needed. A question was raised about whether there is there a trustworthy list or website for those who need to find independent local care.
- Refuse collection and recycling services were said to be good and very valued.
- Tree cutting could be completed by local community volunteers.
- Verges could be treated as wildflower meadows and developed into wild areas to promote biodiversity and save on the cost of maintenance.
- There was a request for Welsh Water to take more responsibility for their actions.
- It was felt that getting local town councils and volunteers to deliver services has some benefits to the community, but that it may be unsustainable.
- It was suggested that Bromyard could be more coherent for service users, with one radical suggestion being to swap some venues around, so the town council office would become the GP surgery, which would offer easier access and parking.
- There is a perception that the residents living on the other side of Bromyard currently don't use the town centre, partly because there is no public transport from this area. There was a request for action to be taken to encourage these residents to use the town centre, with one suggestion being to use the minibuses from the Queen Elizabeth Humanities College to transport people into town for a nominal fee of 50p.

8. Other general comments

- It was felt that communication with Herefordshire Council needs to be improved, particularly in relation to the speed of responses and the need for better explanations as to why actions have or have not been undertaken.
- Some felt that the council's Herefordshire Matters magazine was a waste of money, ineffective and too political.
- There were concerns that cuts will not be apportioned fairly and that market towns and rural areas will lose out to Hereford.
- Residents recognised that the cost of delivering services in rural areas is higher than in urban areas, which will always be challenging.

- There was agreement that Herefordshire Council pays its chief officers too much and a perception that some jobs appear to be unnecessary.
- There was a perception that key services are paid for by all residents, but that Hereford residents benefit most from them.
- Rural isolation is seen to be a big problem particularly for carers and young people without access to their own transport.
- There were comments made around migrant communities being separate and isolated.
- It was felt that Herefordshire needs a stronger identity and has to be proud of what it produces.
- It was felt that better use could be made of the existing council offices.

Questions

Q: Is there a trustworthy list or website for those who need to find independent local care?

A: There is currently no local website or list, however we recommend that people use the Care Quality Commission website (www.cqc.org.uk) when searching for local providers. There are also agencies available who offer independent advice for people considering residential care, such as My Care, My Home (www.mycaremyhome.co.uk). The council is also working on improving its website to make it easier to source advice and information.

Q: Why can't disabled blue badges be administered in Bromyard instead of travelling to Hereford?

A: For those wishing to apply for a blue badge, they can take their application into the Bromyard Centre and a member of staff will check that all relevant documents have been supplied. The application and supporting documents will then be forwarded to Hereford for processing on behalf of the applicant. An assessment can also be arranged in Bromyard if necessary. An online application form is available on the council's website at: <https://beta.herefordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-highways/parking/disabled-people-parking-permits-blue-badge/>.

Q: How is the council planning for the additional burdens an ageing population will place on services?

A: Herefordshire Council undertakes forecasting of need arising from population changes. We use national information to help create data which is published in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, this shows that the population of older people is set to increase, while the population of 18 to 64 year olds will reduce. To help ensure that services are available for this increasing demand, there are a number of initiatives underway including the provision of preventative services to maintain people's independence. We also share our information with suppliers to help plan for the future, while seeking efficiencies in other areas to make funds available for older people's services. There are immediate and longer term projects to reduce or divert demand as well as ensuring we constantly review value for money from the services we commission.

Prioritisation feedback

As a group, participants were asked to allocate services according to whether they perceived them to be 'must have', 'nice to have', 'could do without' or 'could do differently'.

This exercise built on earlier discussions and was used to encourage people to think about the comparative value they placed on different services, whilst exploring alternative ways services could be delivered.

The services allocated as 'must have' were very broad, ranging from health services to public toilets with health services and education coming out as the most commonly recorded services. The importance of promoting tourism and strengthening the economic base of Bromyard was also evident in the responses.

Herefordshire Matters was most commonly cited in terms of things people 'could do without'.

There were many suggestions around what we 'could do differently', although there was a strong focus on an enhanced role for Bromyard Town Council and the local community.

The table shown below on pages 13 and 14 gives the full range of responses. However, please note that it was not necessary for each table to reach a consensus on the importance of a service, therefore some services appear in more than one column.

Participants were also asked to note down their top three priority services and three services which they perceived as less important. These were recorded on individual cards and not shared with the group. Health and health related services were most commonly seen as the top priority, along with education, adult social care, affordable decent housing, public transport and maintenance of roads and pavements. The other services which were seen as priorities included broadband, economic planning, youth services and storm and foul drains maintenance and capacity extension by Welsh Water.

Those services which were most commonly noted as being less of a priority, included traffic wardens, public transport, Herefordshire Matters, parks and open spaces, libraries, additional leisure facilities and street lighting.

The findings from both of these exercises and the group discussions, provide Herefordshire Council with an indication of where people's priorities lie and how people feel that services could be delivered differently. Information from across all the YCYS events is being collated and analysed to provide a countywide perspective in addition to locality specific views. All of this information will be considered alongside the findings from the Quality of Life survey and the council's Root and Branch Reviews to inform future decision making.

Event evaluation

At the end of each event, participants were asked to record what they liked and didn't like about the event and the way the consultation had been run. They were also asked what they would like to see happen as a result of the consultation. We received a number of positive comments about the event format, the facilitation and the level of discussion.

Some of the comments included:

"It was a good event, well listened to by the facilitator."

"Lively discussion well facilitated."

The things that people commonly said they didn't like were the noise levels and the feeling that their views will not be listened to or acted upon.

Some of the other comments included:

“Will any of our ideas be listened to?”

“Give us more power to get on and do it for ourselves.”

The things that people said they most wanted to see happen next was feedback on what had come out of the consultation and devolution of budgets to a local level.

A few of the comments made included:

“Give local people a budget so they can allocate resources to services.”

“An article in the Hereford Times reporting the ways in which the council is implementing the recommendations from this consultation.”

Feedback

Must have	Nice to have	Could do without	Could do differently
<p>Health services, including an NHS dentist, GP surgery and ambulance service</p> <p>Policing</p> <p>Public transport</p> <p>Public toilets</p> <p>Sport and leisure</p> <p>Car parks</p> <p>Affordable decent housing</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Post office</p> <p>Planning services</p> <p>Better rural broadband</p> <p>Social services</p> <p>Road and pavement repairs</p> <p>Children's services with support for the Hope Family Centre</p>	<p>Tourist information service</p> <p>Cultural facilities</p> <p>A minor injuries unit in Bromyard</p> <p>Public toilets</p> <p>Road and pavement repairs</p>	<p>Traffic wardens</p> <p>Regulation in general, such as planning</p> <p>Herefordshire Matters, although the information is often important, this method of dissemination is ineffective</p> <p>Herefordshire Council consultations</p> <p>Street lighting</p> <p>The mayoral car</p> <p>Meals for councillors</p> <p>High salaries for council officers</p>	<p>Create an online university to keep more people in the area</p> <p>Rather than spending money on the Hereford relief road, it could be spent on better transport during the school term</p> <p>Sustainable planting of verges rather than the bedding plants currently used, which could be maintained by the community</p> <p>We could turn the street lights off between 12pm and 5am</p> <p>There could be community solutions to public transport</p> <p>More local control over planning such as a Neighbourhood Plan</p> <p>The Community Land Trust could be developed as a way of providing affordable decent housing</p> <p>Job centre staff should come to Bromyard to help those who are unemployed to sign on and to</p>

			<p>promote job opportunities</p> <p>The drains and sewage needs prioritising before more houses are built</p> <p>We need clean streets and perhaps we could adopt a system used in Germany, where local residents are responsible for their patch. The town council could be responsible for this</p> <p>The town council could run the local car parks</p>
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