

# Your community - your say

## Summary of findings from Dorstone

### 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)<sup>1</sup> 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 Dorstone event, which was held at Dorstone Village Hall on 27 September, was attended by 18 local people the majority of which were aged between 45 and 74. It was found that just over half had never participated in a Herefordshire Council consultation.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

### **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 Golden Valley locality for making somewhere a good place to live:

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

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

#### **1. The level of crime**

- There is a perception that crime is more of an issue in Peterchurch than Dorstone, particularly between the hours of 10pm and 6am. It was stated that as the police come across from Hereford, they don't know the area and sometimes emergency services need directions from local people. There were also concerns raised over Peterchurch police station closing, although it was recognised that it is more important to have police active in the community than in a station.
- There is an issue with anti social behaviour at the recreation ground.
- The ambulance rapid response unit is based at the police station and is a valued service.

#### **2. Health services**

- The issue of reduced opening hours at Peterchurch GP surgery was raised. Residents are sometimes referred to Ewyas Harold for appointments and tests, which is a long distance to travel for those without a car, although blood tests can be done at Peterchurch. Some Dorstone residents also travel to Hay-on-Wye and Staunton for their GP.
- Social care for older people was felt to be a particular priority and issues were raised about current care being fragmented due to the costs and privatisation of some services.
- Care in the home to ensure greater independence for older people was also seen as a priority, but people recognised that with budget constraints this may need to be delivered differently, such as taking a local approach like the Red Cross Village Warden scheme.
- There was a perception that there is a need to relieve pressure on acute services.

#### **3. Public transport**

- Some participants felt that public transport should be the top priority for the locality.
- Poor public transport is a real issue in the area, particularly because many people do not have access to a car or are unable to drive. It was reported that buses are sporadic and don't go at convenient times.

- There were specific issues raised around buses running late and students missing their connection from Hereford to Holme Lacy College, resulting in a two hour wait, drivers not stopping even when there is space on the bus, young people not being able to catch a bus back from Hereford in the evening and elderly people finding it difficult to visit people in hospital due to the restricted timetable.
- The issue about the lack of coordination between different bus companies was raised particularly in relation to bus pass restrictions. For example, student bus passes can only be used on Stagecoach buses and on specific times and routes which means there is no flexibility to take an alternative route if needed.
- Dore Community Transport is a valued service, but more volunteers and funding are needed to further improve the service.
- It was felt that bus and rail times need to be more coordinated.
- Residents felt that buses are too expensive for those on minimum wage and that it is cheaper to car share.
- There was a sense that poor public transport prevents people from taking up work opportunities. This could be overcome if more local employment was available.
- Participants perceived the need for local smaller shuttle buses which could link up with the main services, as these would be cheaper to run and could continue into the evening.

#### **4. Education provision**

- Fairfield School is highly regarded locally with many people moving to the area because of the school's good reputation and residents are keen to retain the current school provision.
- There were concerns expressed about the long term viability of rural schools, if fewer young families are able to afford to live in the area.

### **Additional priorities**

#### **5. Job Prospects**

- See pages five and six for full details.

#### **6. Broadband**

- Broadband provision is felt to be very important for individuals and communities.
- Mobile phone reception is also important, especially with smart phone technology.

#### **7. Affordable decent housing**

- See page five for full details.

## 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 Golden Valley locality felt most needed improving and were of the highest priority:

- 1. Road and pavement repairs**
- 2. Public transport**
- 3. Affordable decent housing**
- 4. Job prospects**
- 5. Facilities for young children**

There was general consensus that the QOL survey results were generally reflective of the priorities for the Golden Valley area. However, similar to the feedback from the other Golden Valley event at Ewyas Harold, there was surprise expressed that facilities for young children, rather than young people, was listed as a priority.

### **1. Road and pavement repairs**

- The roads are patched and not properly maintained with many hardly used due to their poor condition. There needs to be a rolling programme to ensure roads are resurfaced every few years.
- There was general dissatisfaction expressed regarding the quality of repairs carried out by Amey.
- There is currently an overlap between the lengthsman service and Amey. For example, the lengthsman cuts the verges with Amey then doing the exact same job a few days later. The decision to extend the lengthsman service was seen to be a good idea.
- Parish councillors and ward councillors need to be aware that the current system for road maintenance is not working.
- Road repairs were felt to be more of an issue in the Dorstone area although specific pavement examples were given for Peterchurch (see below). It was perceived that the repairs undertaken are generally not those of greatest local need. There was also a call for local people to be involved in determining the priorities for attention.
- The road into Fairfield is in a poor state, largely due to the heavy coaches that use it.
- The pavements are a particular issue in Peterchurch, with several specific issues raised including, the steep and uneven surfaces at Crossways and the need for a safety path from Fairfield School to the main road due to the narrowness of the road combined with heavy car and coach use. Street lighting on this stretch of road was also raised, as it is deemed to be poor and is dangerous for young people walking home in the dark.
- There is an issue regarding the placement of grit bins in Peterchurch, as it is felt they are not in the right places, which means locals have to transport grit to where it is needed. There was a request to talk to local people about where grit bins should be located.

### **2. Public transport**

- See pages two and three for full details.

### **3. Affordable decent housing**

- Affordable decent housing is seen as important, especially in Clehonger and Kingstone. There was also a perception that housing is more affordable in Peterchurch than in Dorstone.
- There was a perceived need for social housing in Peterchurch but not Dorstone.
- Affordable homes, both private and social, are needed for families, while there is also a need for good quality sheltered accommodation to enable older people the option of moving house, but being able to remain living independently.
- The lack of affordable housing affects everything including the viability of schools and other local services.
- There are local examples of affordable decent housing being built, but remaining empty because people are unable to obtain a mortgage.
- It was felt that more affordable rental properties are needed in the area for those who can't afford to buy.
- There is an issue around farm workers, who are unable to afford to live locally.
- The allocation of social housing needs to prioritise local people.
- There was a request for empty homes and shops to be put back into use before new housing was built.
- There was a feeling that the Community Right to Build could offer alternative solutions to affordable decent housing.

### **4. Job prospects**

- Some participants felt that job prospects should be higher placed than fourth in the QOL survey list.
- Job prospects are deemed to be poor, particularly for young people and there aren't enough training and apprenticeship opportunities. Although there are some jobs for artisans, people need a high level of craft expertise. It was stated that local jobs are often not advertised and instead are spread by word of mouth.
- It is very difficult for school leavers to access work without a car, especially if the bus times don't fit with work patterns.
- It is easier for people to get to Hay-on-Wye than to Hereford, but due to the bus times people can't work more than a six hour day. However, there are examples of businesses in Hay-on-Wye accommodating staff travel needs.
- The industrial estate in Peterchurch has no broadband and limited mobile network coverage, which limits prospects for attracting new businesses. It currently has six empty units.
- There is a perception that the priority for job creation and business development is all focused in Hereford, such as at Rotherwas, where jobs are inaccessible for those living in the Golden Valley who rely on public transport. It was felt that jobs should be generated in the countryside and not just focused in the towns.

- A suggestion was made around the need to develop a mentoring service to help people into work.

## **5. Facilities for young children**

- It was perceived that this was not a very high priority in the Golden Valley.
- It was stated that St Peters Church is not able to accommodate Surestart activities, due to it only having one toilet.
- There are facilities available, such as a playgroup in Peterchurch, but the feeling was that more people would attend if these sessions were free.

## **Additional improvements**

### **6. Facilities for young people**

- There is a perceived lack of youth provision in the locality, although it was felt that an audit of local youth provision would be useful. It was noted that Dorstone has an active young farmers group.
- It was observed that several youth services have recently stopped including the youth club which has moved to Madley and the youth bus which is no longer running.
- It was felt that better connections could be made with Fairfield School, particularly in relation to out of school youth provision.
- It was stated that any youth provision needs to be affordable.

### **7. Broadband**

- Broadband was seen as being vital in relation to economic development, as highlighted in the job prospects section on pages five and six.

### **8. Measures to address flooding**

- There was a request for flood alleviation / run-off from the fields to be assessed and prioritised. A question was also raised about whether there was a Flood Risk Management Team at Herefordshire Council and whose responsibility it was to address flooding problems.

### **9. Other service related comments**

- It was felt that more services could be delivered by parish councils, but that there are challenges associated with this and people need to be realistic about what they can take on. It was also felt that this needed to be supported by greater levels of community engagement.

### **10. Other general comments**

- Several participants felt that Fairfax School should be opened up as a community hub, although there was some perceived resistance to this.
- It was stated that as Dorstone is a smaller community, it is more connected with a mixture of age groups and newcomers who are very active. Whereas, Peterchurch is less integrated, as it has a larger population which is separated into different housing

estates. Although, Peterchurch does have a community centre, it is not used by the whole village.

- The services offered by Dorstone Front Room are incredibly valued and it was felt that more services like this are needed in communities.

## Questions

Q: Is there a Flood Risk Management Team at Herefordshire Council and whose responsibility is it to address flooding problems?

A: Herefordshire Council is the lead local flood authority for the county and any flooding issues or queries should be addressed to Steve Hodges in the first instance at [StHodges@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:StHodges@herefordshire.gov.uk). Councillor Russell B Hamilton is the Cabinet member with responsibility for flooding issues and hopes to have the opportunity to visit key flood sites throughout the county in early 2013, in order to understand the issues that communities face.

These visits will offer an opportunity to discuss issues with local ward councillors and local representatives. For additional information on flooding, please visit: [http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/policing/accidents\\_emergencies\\_safety/3068.asp](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/policing/accidents_emergencies_safety/3068.asp).

## 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 to the 'must have' category are very broad, ranging from affordable decent housing to street lighting with health services coming out as the most commonly recorded service.

Inefficiencies within Herefordshire Council were most commonly cited in terms of things people 'could do without'. There were many suggestions around what we 'could do differently', with a particular focus on an enhanced role for community volunteers and doing more at a local level.

The table shown below on pages nine and ten 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 social care related services were most commonly seen as the top priority, closely followed by affordable decent housing, public transport and education. A significant number of residents were unable to identify any services as less of a priority, however amongst those that did the areas which were most commonly noted included parks and open spaces, youth services and Herefordshire Council flagship projects, particularly the Edgar Street Grid.

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, while the element residents stated they didn't like was the location of the event, as it wasn't in the most populated village.

The element that participants said they wanted to see happen the most was change.



**Feedback**

<b>Must have</b>	<b>Nice to have</b>	<b>Could do without</b>	<b>Could do differently</b>
<p>Health services</p> <p>Public transport, including subsidies for teenagers</p> <p>Road repairs</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Environmental services</p> <p>Affordable decent housing</p> <p>Waste collection with a weekly service</p> <p>Clean streets, although this could be delivered by volunteers</p> <p>Job creation</p> <p>Children's services</p> <p>Support for vulnerable adults</p> <p>Cultural services</p> <p>Youth services</p> <p>Tourism</p>	<p>Community transport</p>	<p>Council overheads, cut back on corporate costs</p> <p>We shouldn't offer free bus passes to those who can afford to pay</p> <p>Licensing, couldn't this be done by someone else?</p> <p>Weekly waste collections, we should move to a fortnightly service</p> <p>Public toilets</p>	<p>Parks, open spaces and youth services could be run by the community. For example, Dorstone Village Green already maintain themselves</p> <p>Bus companies to provide shared arrangements, so people can travel on any bus and offer students £1 off the fee and allow them to travel anywhere</p> <p>Do more at a local community level to release funds for other services, such as youth clubs</p> <p>Community development</p> <p>Public transport, we could own the local bus services</p> <p>Waste collections don't need to be weekly</p> <p>Mowing verges and hedges could be delivered at a local level</p>

Sports and leisure services			
Street lighting on Crossways and Peterchurch main road			