

# Your community - your say

## Summary of findings from Ewyas Harold

### 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 Ewyas Harold event, which was held at Ewyas Harold Memorial Hall 25 September, was attended by 24 local people the majority of which were over 45. It was found that just under 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 the priorities for the Golden Valley area.

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

- There is a perceived reduction in police and community support presence.
- There has been a recent spate of domestic burglaries in the area but crime levels are generally very low. However, crime rates have risen in the Golden Valley area.
- A neighbourhood watch scheme has been set up in Longtown but has had little effect so far.
- People enjoyed the sense of being a close community with neighbours looking out for each other.
- People reported that rural crime was prevalent in the area.
- People raised concerns about the speed of response to emergency calls and that emergency services are moving further away.

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

- The GP surgery and dental access centre were seen as very important locally.
- GP access is a particular issue at weekends and out of hours and some people felt that this could be addressed through a review of GPs contracts.
- Emergency dental services are provided at a local dentist practice but most people have to travel to Hereford. It was felt there was a need for a local NHS dentist.
- The fact that the GP surgery is also a dispensing practice was particularly valued due to the rural locality of the area.
- As there is an ageing population in this area, many health services are difficult to access without a car. It was felt that a more integrated transport plan could resolve some of these issues.
- It was noted that 'first responders' are needed locally.

- The 'village warden' scheme is highly valued and needs to be maintained and better publicised.
- The hearing aid clinic could be delivered more locally.
- Accessing specialist health services outside of the county is problematic for some people, such as cancer treatments which are only available in Cheltenham.

### **3. Public transport**

- Public transport provision is considered generally poor in Ewyas Harold and Pontrilas and very poor in more outlying areas, for example Longtown only has one bus per week. Public transport serves both Hereford and Abergavenny.
- The bus service is particularly poor in the evenings, particularly to and from Hereford, with the last bus back from Hereford at 6:05pm.
- There is some door to door community transport schemes run by volunteers, which is really good and valued, but there is an issue about recruiting and retaining volunteers. It was noted that Longtown Parish Council puts money into community transport.
- There was a feeling that demand for certain services needs to be mapped to avoid running empty buses.
- Lack of public transport is particularly an issue for younger and older people.
- Some mini buses are difficult to access for those with mobility problems.
- Transport teams need to work more closely with parish councils to determine transport solutions.
- It was felt that Herefordshire Council needs to 'invest to save' in public transport in order to improve the service.
- There was a suggestion that the parish council could potentially subsidise a bus service, similar to the Fownhope 'shopper' bus to Ross-on-Wye.
- It was felt that a 'park and ride' into Hereford and Abergavenny was needed.
- There was a call for Pontrilas train station to be re-opened and for train and bus times to be better integrated.

### **4. Education provision**

- The Ewyas Harold community is proud to have both a pre school and primary school, which are doing well with pupil numbers rising. However, it was noted that pupil numbers in St Weonards and Garway are falling.
- Fairfield High School has the best results in the county despite experiencing funding cuts.
- People raised concerns that if local schools close, travel and transport will become an additional problem.
- There is a need for Herefordshire College of Technology to respond positively to higher education opportunities.

- There was a perception that Hoople Ltd are paid to deliver education services, when they should be provided by the Herefordshire College of Technology. There were questions raised in relation to this, such as 'is Hoople Ltd duplicating the role of Herefordshire College of Technology and is the Robert Owen Group also duplicating'?
- There was a feeling that the Holme Lacy Agricultural College should be better supported.
- It was felt that access to higher and further education is difficult due to the lack of public transport.

### **Additional priorities**

#### **5. Affordable decent housing**

- See pages five and six for full details.

#### **6. Job prospects**

- See page six for full details.

#### **7. Car parking**

- Car parking is a big issue in Ewyas Harold and it was noted that an application was submitted for an extension to the medical centre car park, but it was turned down by the council's planning department.
- The lack of a car park means people travel to Pontrilas to shop rather than Ewyas Harold, which is having an impact on the local economy.
- Concerns were raised that the parking situation is potentially dangerous as access is often blocked in some areas, which means houses would not be accessible by emergency vehicles.

### **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 priorities for the Golden Valley area, although people perceived that facilities and services for young people would have been more in need of improvement than those for young children.

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

- It is perceived that the current approach to road repairs is very ad hoc and that a rolling programme of maintenance is required. Some residents raised the issue of improvements that have been promised but not delivered.

- There was general dissatisfaction with the quality of service provided by Amey, such as temporary pot hole repairs. It was felt that this could be delivered better locally.
- There was a suggestion that greater investment in the lengthsman scheme could resolve some of these problems.

## **2. Public transport**

- It was felt that the different bus companies need to be better synchronised in order for connections to be made.
- There was discussion over the community running its own transport scheme, providing shared cars and the provision of local bus routes.
- A local, friendly bus service was seen as something the community would welcome. An example was given of a community in Derbyshire who pay a small annual fee to cover the running of a mini bus which connects the local villages.
- For children of high school age (13 - 16) there is no local transport to enable them to get involved in cultural or sports activities.

## **3. Affordable decent housing**

- It was felt that there is a need for more affordable decent housing, as the Golden Valley has the highest demand for such property in the county, but there is also a perception that planning impose more than people want or need.
- There is also a perception that the number of empty houses is growing.
- It was mentioned that new houses are planned in Kingstone, but that new services are not being provided. There is a perception that housing seems to come before infrastructure.
- There was a feeling that once the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) policy is in place, it could help support local needs.
- There is a need to make sure criteria for social housing allocation prioritises local people.
- Farming practises are changing and therefore there is a need for additional farm housing.
- People felt that agricultural ties on farming properties should be lifted, to make it easier for development and use of these properties.
- There was a concern that new build houses were not affordable by young people.
- There was a call for all new build houses to be eco-friendly and energy efficient.
- It was noted that schemes which allow easier rental of private rooms would be welcomed.
- It was felt that the possible re-development of the Catholic church site could provide more affordable housing in Ewyas Harold.

- It was felt that local people need more control over what is built and where and that neighbourhood planning may result in possible improvements, which will give communities more influence over planning decisions.

#### **4. Job prospects**

- It was noted that there are no job prospects locally.
- Residents felt that transport would need to be much more effective in order to enable people to access work, particularly for those working shifts. At present it was felt that work was only accessible if someone can drive.
- There was a view that there was not enough income to keep young people farming in the area.
- It was felt that broadband was very important, the lack of which greatly hinders business development, such as farmers completing forms online. It also means that businesses don't want to move to Herefordshire.
- There is a view that more opportunities in higher and further education for young people are needed.

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

- People were surprised to see this priority on the list, as the perception is that there is adequate provision for young children. There was general consensus that the higher priority is a lack of provision for young people (see below).

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

- There was a view that most young people are not interested in going to the local youth club.
- It was noted that Longtown no longer has a youth club.
- Residents liked the idea of a mobile youth facility that could visit different villages, taking activities directly to young people.
- It was felt that youth provision could be taken on by volunteers, but they would need support and training. Herefordshire Council could help by providing CRB checks and facilitating more open spaces for young people.

### **Additional improvements**

#### **7. Road safety**

- Road safety is a real issue locally, particularly the need for a crossing over the A465 as currently it is very dangerous for young and older people trying to cross. It was felt that signage warning people to slow down would also help.
- A crossing has been requested but it has been turned down.

#### **8. Flood prevention**

- Flooding is a real issue in Ewyas Harold and needs to be addressed.

- There were a number of questions raised in relation to the issue of flooding, including ‘what has happened to flood ditches at the side of the road, could forests be planted on higher land to absorb water, can we bring back the lengthsman (someone who looks after a certain stretch of road) and can water storage be improved or increased’?

## 9. Broadband

- Broadband was seen as particularly important for business development and also in terms of accessing remote service delivery, which was seen to be more cost effective and accessible.

## 10. Other service related comments

- Residents would like to see greater involvement of local people in the design and delivery of locally responsive schemes.
- If volunteers are to become increasingly involved in running services, there needs to be investment in a programme of volunteering and recruitment of younger volunteers. It was stated that usually it’s the same people who volunteer, so this base needs to be widened.
- Parish councils need support in order to help them implement the localism agenda.
- There is too much checking and bureaucracy which deters volunteers, such as CRB checks. There was a suggestion that Herefordshire Council could help to remove some of these barriers for volunteers.

## 11. Other general comments

- The western bypass is seen as critical for the future of Hereford and would stop people opting to travel to Abergavenny.
- There were concerns raised about the impact the Edgar Street Grid will have on the older part of Hereford city centre, specifically that it will divide the town.
- It was felt that Herefordshire Council should encourage retail in the older part of Hereford by offering low rates to encourage more independent shops to the area, such as the Portsmouth Unicorn scheme.

## Questions

Q: Is Hoople Ltd and the Robert Owen Group duplicating the role of Herefordshire College of Technology?

A: Hoople's range of training provision includes a combination of activity previously delivered by Herefordshire Council and NHS Herefordshire. Hoople is working closely with the Herefordshire College of Technology to ensure its respective offers are complementary. There may be limited areas where the two organisations have similar offers, but it is felt that this will continue to drive up standards in Herefordshire.

Q: What has happened to the flood ditches at the side of the road?

A: There is Information on the council’s website regarding who is responsible for the county’s ditches. Please visit: <https://beta.herefordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-highways/maintenance/roads-maintenance/who-is-responsible-for-ditches-and-culverts-within-the-highway>.

Q: Could forests be planted on higher land to absorb water?

A: In some parts of the UK, there is a growing imbalance between water demand and supply, leading to potential water shortages. Climate change could put additional pressure on water supplies and river flows, which will be further exacerbated by demographic change. In general, trees and forests use more water than shorter vegetation types and therefore new planting in these areas could further reduce water yield and low flows, exacerbating water shortages.

However, the amount of water used varies between forest type and species and in some situations woodland water use, particularly for broadleaved species, may be less than other land covers. The ability of trees to protect the soil and increase water infiltration may also offset their higher water use. The following three websites will give more grants and woodland information:

Forestry Commission	<a href="http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-6dccn">http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-6dccn</a>
Small Woods	<a href="http://smallwoods.org.uk/">http://smallwoods.org.uk/</a>
Woodland Trust	<a href="http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk">http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk</a>

Q: Can we bring back the lengthsman who looks after a certain stretch of road?

A: Ewyas Harold Parish Council is in the lengthsman scheme and therefore has a lengthsman. Parishes can join the scheme if they wish and are given payment for any work carried out.

An overview of the scheme is available on the council website at: <https://beta.herefordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-highways/maintenance/lengthsman-scheme/>.

Q: Can water storage be improved or increased?

A: We will respond to this question shortly.

### **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 fairly broad with health services and car parking, which is a particular issue in Ewyas Harold, most commonly recorded. There was also a suggestion that Ewyas Harold residents should be able to access Welsh health services, due to their proximity to the Welsh border.

There was no single service which commonly came up as something people 'could do without', but there were many suggestions about what we 'could do differently', with a strong focus on an enhanced role for volunteers and parish councils. Residents also expressed an opinion during the event that many rural areas do not receive a full range of services from Herefordshire Council.

The table shown below on pages 10 and 11 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 asked to record 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, such as dentistry, were most commonly seen as the top priority, along with education, adult social care, community transport, the police and fire service. There were other services which were seen as a top priority including car parking for Ewyas Harold, business and employment related services such as high speed broadband, road maintenance, public transport and support for carers.

Those services which were most commonly noted as being less of a priority included parks and access to nature, footpath maintenance, cultural facilities, all night street lighting, licensing with reduced bureaucracy and public toilets. Affordable decent housing also appeared several times in both of these lists, indicating that it is a conflicting issue for the area.

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:

"I liked the format and the opportunity to give our opinions."

"The open discussion was well run, great idea. I hope something good comes from it."

"Good atmosphere, friendly, purposeful."

The majority of attendees said there was nothing they didn't like about the event, while other comments referred to the difficult prioritisation exercise questions and a lack of prior information about the style of the event.

The areas which residents said they most wanted to see happen next were positive action as a result of the consultation, feedback and the opportunity for further consultation.

The comments included:

"More of the same at a future date."

"Feedback, let us know what happened as a result."

## Feedback

Must have	Nice to have	Could do without	Could do differently
<p>The county / Hereford needs a swimming pool</p> <p>Road and pavement maintenance and repair</p> <p>Increased car parking in Ewyas Harold, making better use of existing land</p> <p>Shopping facilities need to be accessible with full car parking</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Preventative health and public health</p> <p>Services for people with disabilities</p> <p>Social services</p> <p>Public transport</p> <p>Health services should be able to use Welsh services</p> <p>Police</p>	<p>Maintenance of footpaths and bridleways</p> <p>A theatre such as The Courtyard in Hereford and cultural facilities</p> <p>Sports and leisure facilities, although the cost effectiveness of this was questioned in terms of the positive health benefits that may be lost as a result of fewer sport facilities</p> <p>Toilets</p> <p>Dog waste bins</p>	<p>Affordable housing in the short term</p> <p>Road sweeping, which has been cancelled in Pontrilas and could be done by local people</p> <p>Street lighting, which was a rural issue, could be turned off late at night</p> <p>The Edgar Street Grid, as it was felt that this will split Hereford city centre</p> <p>Services which support cultural diversity</p>	<p>A coordinated licensing service is needed</p> <p>Access to nature could be delivered locally by volunteers</p> <p>Libraries delivered locally such as through the parish council</p> <p>Cultural and sports services could be delivered by the local community</p> <p>Planning and licensing services should be redefined</p> <p>Youth clubs should be transferred to the local community such as in Ross-on-Wye</p> <p>Activities for teenagers could be delivered locally by the parish council</p> <p>Town council's could manage the car parks in the market towns</p> <p>Halo leisure facilities should be self-financing</p> <p>The Catholic church site in Ewyas Harold should be re-developed</p>

			<p>Street lighting</p> <p>There is a need for a local community facilitator</p> <p>A rural bus service run by local people</p> <p>Use skills available in the local community to develop local tourism such as walking and cycling</p> <p>A parish lengthsman could do small road repairs with training</p>
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