

Your community - your say

Summary of findings from Kington

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 Kington event, which was held at The Burton Hotel on 10 October, was attended by 52 local people the majority of which were aged between 45 and 74. 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.

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 Kington locality for making somewhere a good place to live:

- 1. Health services**
- 2. The level of crime**
- 3. Affordable decent housing**
- 4. Public transport**

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

1. Health services

- Health services including adult social care were seen as a particularly high priority, specifically the support available to help older people remain independent. An example was given of a local chemist which provides a free home delivery prescription service within a ten mile radius of Kington.
- There were generally good levels of satisfaction with the quality of local health services, although physical access for those without a car was deemed to be a problem. The lack of out of hours GP care and waiting times for a GP appointment were also raised as issues.
- There is no public transport link to the new surgery on the outskirts of town, which leaves some residents reliant on costly alternatives such as taking a taxi which is £8 for a return fare.
- Participants reported difficulties in finding an NHS dentist in the area with many travelling a significant distance for routine treatment. Although it was mentioned that emergency provision is available locally.
- Kington Court Health and Social Care Centre is accessible due to its location and needs to be retained to ensure local emergency cover for minor injuries.
- The funding of health services in Kington needs to be slightly unique, as the town is different to other areas, so what works elsewhere doesn't necessarily work in Kington. There was also a request for transparency over the funding of health services, which prompted specific questions in relation to the new GP surgery. Residents asked how much was spent on the surgery and if this was to the detriment of other services?

2. The level of crime

- There were mixed views about local policing and while some felt that the Community Support Officer (CSO) presence in the town was good, others felt that they needed more of a presence 'out of hours'. It was also felt that CSOs were less visible in the rural areas.
- It was felt that it is important for the CSOs to be local to the town with good personal knowledge of the area.

- It was felt that the fear of crime was out of kilter with actual crime rates locally, which are generally low.
- It was suggested that the town centre, there are problems with young people speeding, drinking on the streets and taking drugs and there was a perceived lack of enforcement to tackle these issues. It was also suggested that traffic calming measures are needed to tackle the issue of speeding.
- Residents linked the above issues around young people with their concerns that the loss of youth services and facilities will lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour and low level crime.
- Rural crime is increasingly becoming an issue such as the theft of agricultural machinery, oil and metal.
- Participants also suggested that as the council's environmental health teams, such as the noise pollution team, operate across the county, they can't always respond quickly to calls. It was felt that this service should be localised.

3. Affordable decent housing

- Residents felt that affordable decent housing is needed for older people as well as families.
- Smaller accommodation is also needed to accommodate people living on their own. There was particular reference made to the need for family homes and bungalows, similar to Market Close, to maintain the independence of older people.
- Housing association accommodation and the provision of properties for joint ownership were thought to be important.
- There is a need to establish the demand for affordable decent housing and the type of accommodation needed, before it is developed.
- There is a perception that housing is often not of a good quality and that more affordable rental properties are needed locally.
- It was noted that there has been a recent influx of people from outside of the county moving to Kington.
- There is a perception that there is not enough planning interest outside of social housing, based on the fact that housing development for owned properties is too complicated.

4. Public transport

- Although many felt that public transport in Kington has improved, particularly the connection with Hereford, it was felt that these services need to be retained. It was felt that there are still a few improvements to be made such as extending the night bus service from Hereford, later buses to and from Leominster and improving links between Kington and Leominster and Hay-on-Wye.
- In the more rural areas, public transport provision was deemed to be poor and suggestions were made around the provision of park and ride in rural areas to link into main bus routes and cycle hubs located next to bus stops.

- A specific issue was raised around public transport to the new GP surgery, as the community were promised suitable transport such as a shuttle bus, to access the surgery as part of the plans to develop the site. It was stated that Herefordshire Council have so far not delivered on this promise and there was strong support for an urgent resolution to this issue.
- The local bus service provided by Sargeants Bros Ltd and the local community transport scheme are highly regarded and many felt that a local car share scheme would also be beneficial.
- An issue was raised concerning not being able to use a bus pass on the Kington dial a ride service.
- Public transport was seen as being a key link with local tourism, specifically the provision of transport on Sundays and bank holidays.

Additional priorities

5. Education provision

- It was felt that the level of education provision locally needs to be retained.

6. Youth services

- There were concerns raised relating to the closure of the youth centre and the reduction in funding to support youth provision. The centre was well used and provided a local meeting point with informal counselling and support for young people.
- It was felt that while there is excellent sports provision locally, there is a need for alternative youth provision.

7. Job prospects

- Please refer to 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 Kington locality felt most needed improving and were of the highest priority:

- 1. Road and pavement repairs**
- 2. Job prospects**
- 3. Affordable decent housing**
- 4. Public transport**
- 5. Health services**
- 6. Wage levels and the cost of living**

There was general consensus that the QOL survey results were generally reflective of the priorities for the Kington area, although the issue of car parking in the town centre was also raised as a priority in need of improvement.

1. Road and pavement repairs

- It was felt that the condition of the roads and pavements were poor and that where repairs had been completed, they were only temporary and didn't last. Residents felt that with devolved budgeting this could be better managed by the town council.

- There was a suggestion that contracts should be given to local businesses or perhaps a local interest company could be set up, rather than been given to large contractors such as Amey. It was felt that this would promote jobs and localism and a better job would be done. In addition, residents felt that the lengthsman scheme could be extended to address some of these issues.
- The white lines need re-painting on several roads with Bridge Street being specifically mentioned.
- There was a feeling that the roads are not safe for cyclists, so there is a need for more cycle routes.

2. Job prospects

- There were concerns raised that the creation of new jobs is focused primarily on Hereford. It was also mentioned that the market towns need to benefit from schemes such as the Enterprise Zone.
- There are a number of empty industrial estates in Kington and support is needed to attract more technical and service led businesses into the area. There is an industrial estate in Presteigne in Wales receiving subsidies, which is diverting business from Kington to Presteigne.
- Residents were against the creation of more business parks.
- There was concern over the lack of jobs and opportunities for graduates and young people in the county.
- It was felt that broadband needs to be improved before new businesses will move to the area.
- There was a feeling that there are many skilled crafts people in the local area and that this was an asset which needs to be maximised, including training young people in these crafts.
- Participants felt it was important to keep young people in the local community and that jobs should be kept local wherever possible.
- The issue of unemployed people having to personally visit the Job Centre in Hereford but not being able to claim back their travel costs was also raised. There was a suggestion that Marches Access Point (MAP) could house a local Job Centre.

3. Affordable decent housing

- Please refer to page three for full details.

4. Public transport

- Please refer to pages three and four for further details.

5. Health services

- Please refer to page two for full details.

6. Wage levels and the cost of local living

- It was felt that it was important to keep the cost of living low in the local area.

Additional improvements

7. Car parking

- The lack of car parking and illegal parking as a result of this was seen as a major issue in Kington, especially in High Street and Church Street. There were a few suggestions to address this issue including pedestrianising High Street, increasing parking enforcement through additional traffic wardens or local volunteers, the provision of shared spaces in town, narrowing the road on Church Street and turning the old cattle market into a car park.
- There is also insufficient disabled parking in Kington and the parking which is provided next to the monument is not properly designated. In addition, there is no enforcement of illegal parking in disabled spaces.
- A number of participants felt that addressing the problem of parking would improve tourism and increase local trade.

8. Other service related comments

- There was a request to retain the local library service.
- There was a feeling that money could be saved by turning off street lighting in the early hours of the morning.
- It was felt that the public toilets could be managed and maintained locally. It was noted that there is currently a small grant to the town council for inspection purposes.
- The recycling services were deemed to be very good, although some felt the green waste scheme was ridiculous, why pay for a green bag if the council simply send it to landfill anyway. It was suggested that the removal of free black bags will impact on vulnerable residents and that there is confusion over the direction recycling is taking.
- There is a desire for local communities to have more control and a greater say on how services are commissioned and run.
- Residents were keen to avoid outsourcing by using local companies as much as possible, which in turn will create local jobs. They saw this as a way of ensuring better value for money, completing jobs quickly and reducing waste.
- It was mentioned that over hanging vegetation is hiding road signs, while local drains need to be cleaned more regularly.

9. Other general comments

- There was a request to keep business rates low to help retain smaller local shops.

Questions

Q: How much money was spent on the new GP surgery and was this to the detriment of other services? Where does the public money which goes into the practice end up? Does this money get reinvested into health services or does it go to the partners of the surgery?

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 as a 'must have' were very broad and ranged from health services to public toilets with car parking being the most commonly recorded area closely followed by youth services.

While there were no services identified as things people 'could do without', there were many suggestions around what we 'could be differently', with a strong focus on using volunteers and an enhanced role for Kington Town Council. The other suggestions included changes to Herefordshire Council's procurement policy to favour local suppliers, using volunteers to maintain public footpaths and a reduction in street lighting.

The table shown below on pages 9 and 10 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 services and public transport were most commonly seen as the top priorities, while other top priorities included car parking, youth services, policing and education.

Street lighting was most commonly noted as being less of a priority, while other commonly recorded areas were Herefordshire Council publications, sports and leisure facilities, access to nature, planning control, licensing and community development support.

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 way the evening was run, very efficient, nice facilitator and good table discussion."

"Good format around tables in small groups."

“I liked the chance to say what I felt.”

The things that people commonly said they didn't like included the feeling that nothing would happen as a result of the consultation and trying to make decisions without access to detailed financial information.

The comments included:

“Not enough explanation about the different ways things could be done to support people to make an informed choice.”

“The lack of information on council expenses.”

Feedback

Must have	Nice to have	Could do without	Could do differently
<p>Public transport</p> <p>Car parking, preferably free of charge</p> <p>Road maintenance</p> <p>Libraries as information hubs</p> <p>Public toilets</p> <p>Schools</p> <p>Youth services</p> <p>Sports and leisure services</p> <p>Footpaths and bridleways</p> <p>Policing</p> <p>Health services</p> <p>Accountability</p> <p>High speed broadband</p> <p>Tourist information centre</p> <p>Economic development</p>	<p>A train service to Kington</p> <p>Public toilets</p> <p>Licensing</p> <p>Planning</p> <p>Street cleaning</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>We could have less street lighting with motion sensors</p> <p>Access to nature and footpaths could be maintained by volunteers</p> <p>Herefordshire Matters should be online only to remove printing costs</p> <p>Refuse and recycling could be done differently with more available recycling hubs and skips</p> <p>Winter gritting</p> <p>We don't need a vehicle for street cleaning just a person</p> <p>There needs to be sustainable planting in public spaces using local plants</p> <p>We need community transport to the new GP surgery</p> <p>We need a more effective town council</p> <p>Car parking should be managed by</p>

<p>A helipad at the GP surgery</p>			<p>the town council</p> <p>The libraries could be run by volunteers</p> <p>We should personalise the individual adult social care budgets, buy local care with official help and have more choice for individuals</p> <p>We need better procurement using local suppliers, with large contracts being more flexible and affordable. There should also be a social value to the community for all contracts</p> <p>We could use more educational mentors and volunteers</p> <p>The sports and leisure centre should be managed differently with extended provision and opening hours</p> <p>Hedge trimming needs to be completed at different times and could be carried out locally</p> <p>Local companies could be responsible for maintaining the roads</p>
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