

# Your community - your say

## Summary of findings from Ledbury

### 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 Ledbury event, which was held at St Katherine's Hall on 24 September, was attended by 60 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 Ledbury locality for making somewhere a good place to live:

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

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

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

- The local Police Community Support Officer (CSO) is well regarded and because he knows young people and vice versa this helps to keep youth crime levels down.
- There were mixed views about the visibility of CSOs, who were felt to be less visible in rural areas.
- There are strong and active communities with active neighbourhood watch groups in the area, which help to keep the levels of crime down.
- There would be concerns about the crime level rising, if CSOs were cut or reduced.
- Rural crime is more of an issue, such as theft in rural areas.
- Low level crime is an issue such as anti-social behaviour and nuisance. There are also problems of noise / disturbances at the recreation ground and bikes being ridden on the pavements can be a problem.
- It is perceived that crime is worse than it is.
- It is felt that community payback could be used more locally such as litter picking.
- There are concerns about the police station closing and the need to retain blue light services locally.
- There was a call to bring back the Partners And Communities Together (PACT) meetings.

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

- There were regarded as very important and generally seen as good, although there were some issues around accessing health services in rural areas.
- The 24 Hour minor injuries unit in Ledbury is really valued and is seen as a must have for the area as the nearest A&E / hospital is in Hereford.

- People value the ease of getting a GP appointment, pleasant staff, welcoming environment and good communication.
- There is a lack of NHS dentists locally and people have to travel to Hereford or Malvern, although emergency provision is provided which is valued.
- A question was raised about how well the area is served in terms of mental health provision.
- The ambulance rapid response which is based at the police station is valued and seen as satisfactory. The loss of the ambulance station caused some concern, although generally people feel that the ambulance service is more important than an actual ambulance station. If closing stations saves money and makes the service better, it was thought that this should happen.

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

- People felt there was a need for more mixed housing development locally.
- It was felt that we must offer priority allocation to young families to keep them in rural areas and market towns, in order to ensure that they are sustainable. This will also help to improve school waiting lists.
- Residents want to ensure that housing is available for young people to keep them in the area and to help them look after the older generation.
- Housing allocation should be prioritised towards local people.
- There needs to be a re-allocation of housing which reflects changing needs in the community.
- The provision of affordable decent housing needs to be based on the needs of the demographic groups in our communities.
- Publically owned affordable rental accommodation is needed.
- New services should be balanced by new housing as we can't have one without the other.
- New services should include larger shopping facilities.
- It was felt that environmental concerns should to be taken into consideration when developing new housing. This should be a compulsory part of planning regulations, particularly in light of peak oil issues.
- Empty homes need to be brought back into use.
- There is a need to identify suitable building sites.
- There is a need for more shared ownership schemes, which need to be funded.
- There is a need for more nursing home places, to allow older people to stay in their local community.

#### **4. Clean streets**

- Although some people felt this was a trivial issue in comparison to some of the other services, as Ledbury is a tourist town, clean streets were felt to be particularly important. It was felt that litter picking and dog mess could be targeted in particular areas such as fast food outlets, but this is something community volunteers / shopkeepers could do themselves.
- The bins should be emptied more regularly and as they're emptied by both Herefordshire Council and Ledbury Town Council, this could be taken over by the town council.
- The routine maintenance of public areas could be taken over by a local contractor, which could provide more local jobs. Amey are not highly regarded and there is a perception that they are a big faceless corporate organisation with little pride in their work.
- Residents would like to see more wildlife planting. This requires less maintenance and it's good for the environment.
- It was felt that there were too many posters and flyers on display, making Ledbury look untidy.
- The town trail is affected by litter.

#### **Additional priorities**

#### **5. Facilities and activities for young people**

- The current youth centre is underused and expensive to run, but is seen to be an important facility for young people. It needs to be retained but improved as it is the only dedicated facility for young people in Ledbury town centre. It was suggested that perhaps the centre could be taken over by the community while a drop-in or multi-purpose centre for 12 - 17 year olds could be developed.
- People felt that youth provision could be run and facilitated locally by volunteers, but they would need training and resources. A suggestion to set up a local youth foundation was made.
- Recent local youth initiatives such as the youth café have not been successful and it was felt that this was because young people were not asked what they wanted. It was identified that better consultation with young people is needed.
- There is no youth council in the area, only a church led 'Young Life' organisation.
- There was a suggestion that the town council could do a stocktake of youth and sports provision in the area.

#### **6. Roads and transport**

- The condition of local roads is deteriorating with more potholes developing. There needs to be a pro-active rolling programme of road maintenance to address this issue with repairs being completed properly. It was felt that more partnership working is needed to resolve this problem including better co-ordination of repairs and the digging up of roads between organisations.

- It was suggested that farmers should take more responsibility for the state of the roads.
- Residents raised the issue of the poor reinstatement of roads after utilities work has been completed.
- Temporary road closures have increased the traffic coming through Ledbury.

## 7. Tourism

- Tourism is seen as being very important to the town and surrounding area and concerns were raised about the loss of the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) and the need to replace it. They have looked at Leominster's new TIC but there was little community support to replicate something similar. This was an area where they felt they needed help and support from Herefordshire Council.
- There was a suggestion to set up a town trust to manage local asset transfers using up front funding from Herefordshire Council.
- People felt there was a need for a local tourism strategy with greater support for festivals and events, which will encourage tourists to visit the town.
- There was a perception amongst some that past projects such as the archaeological dig and the Masters House had been poorly managed and a waste of money.

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

1. **Job prospects**
2. **Affordable decent housing**
3. **Shopping facilities**
4. **Public transport**

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

#### 1. Job prospects

- People felt there were very few job prospects in Ledbury itself, particularly for young people. They also believe there is a link to affordability of housing (see page three).
- It was felt that there is not enough support for new businesses starting up. A suggestion was made that Herefordshire Council could provide premises for new businesses in under used buildings.
- A food enterprise centre was suggested such as the one near Ludlow in Shropshire, which would act as a hub for local food production and processing along with an enterprise zone / science park to attract businesses to the area.
- Residents felt there was a need to encourage business investment in Ledbury, as the current focus appears to be in Hereford only. This would also reduce the need for people to commute to work.
- It was felt that there was a need to encourage public involvement in promoting local industry.

- The Hereford Enterprise Zone needs to include benefits for Ledbury.
- Residents felt there was a need to make current business parks more accessible.
- Most of all it was felt that Ledbury needs a vision which involves both the community and businesses to promote business growth. This must be co-ordinated locally.

## **2. Affordable decent housing**

- See page three for full details.

## **3. Shopping facilities**

- There were mixed views about the need for a larger supermarket, an issue which divides the town. If there was to be one, it was felt it would have to enhance the town. This was also linked to the need for more housing to generate demand for another supermarket. The need for a larger supermarket is specifically linked to increasing the affordability of food and clothes.
- Residents want to retain independent shops as they felt they were important for tourism in the town.
- The area has lost several farm shops recently and it was felt that there was a need for outlets to sell local produce along with a market being held. It was suggested that High Street could be closed for one day a week to host a market or perhaps the one currently held in St Katherine's Hall on Friday could be developed.
- There was concern about the potential closure of the post office in Burley Gate.
- There was concern that High Street is adversely impacted when events are taking place and that any new housing developments will only make the situation worse.
- There were suggestions for an internet based shopping solution which would allow people to buy from individual retailers.
- It was stated that the public toilets are important for the town for both shoppers and tourists and these could be provided by the town council rather than Herefordshire Council.
- The increase in car parking charges is perceived to be bad for Ledbury, as it will have a detrimental impact on local shops and consequently the local economy. It was felt that car parking should be managed by the town council.
- Residents felt that rates on commercial properties needed to be kept low.

## **4. Public transport**

- There was a perception that buses to larger towns were adequate but that evening services were inadequate.
- People want to retain current levels of transport provision but recognise the need for a range of transport facilities such as more demand led services and community buses like the Newent community bus. This needs to be better integrated and coordinated with core services.

- People felt that smaller mini buses would be better, as many larger buses run almost empty.
- The need to research the demand for public transport was identified, including what and where.
- Transport links from Ledbury are generally good due to location of the train station, which is highly valued and helps support commuting. However, parking at the station is insufficient and causes problems.
- It was acknowledged that bus services in rural areas are subsidised, but it was felt that this was an essential service for residents, especially the elderly and / or those without a car.
- An issue was raised about elderly people not being able to get to bus stops, as it is too far for them so they need picking up closer to home. A suggestion about developing a ring and ride scheme in Ledbury was made.

## **5. Other service related comments**

- There was a strong sense that the town council could play a greater role in delivering services, but there was also concern about the capacity of local councillors to take this on given their volunteer status.
- There was support for communities to take on some aspects of service delivery, but recognition that all community initiatives need resourcing and that this should not be seen as a free alternative.
- An issue was raised about currently having to go to Hereford to register births and deaths and people felt this was something that could be done locally.
- There is a need for more life long learning opportunities locally.
- There is a concern that cultural and heritage facilities are under threat.
- Libraries were also seen as being important, especially in terms of information provision in rural areas.
- The local countryside and open spaces are valued and people want to retain playing fields, as residents were concerned that they may be at risk.

## **6. Other general comments**

- It was felt that Herefordshire Council is too Hereford centric and that they need to listen to local people in rural areas more.
- People felt there was a need for greater transparency and accountability from Herefordshire Council.
- Some residents felt that the town plan consultation process lacked breadth and inclusivity.
- People felt they could make better decisions about ideas for cuts and savings if better information was made available.

- Ledbury epitomises what life used to be like and people want to keep it that way.
- A suggestion was made around setting up community oil buying schemes, like those in Shropshire or other renewable energy projects such as the Woolhope wood project which is run by a community owned trust or the Leominster energy project which is run by the local community.

## Questions

Q: How well is the local area served in terms of mental health provision?

A: There is extensive coverage of mental health services in Ledbury. Mental health services in Herefordshire have a number of teams who provide a countywide service and see individuals in their own home in the Ledbury area or in Rose Cottage in Ledbury.

We also have a number of catchment area or locality teams, who work with working age adults and older adults.

To find out more please visit: <http://www.2gether.nhs.uk/herefordshire-locations>.

## 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.

Those services allocated to the 'must have' category are very broad and range from health services to public toilets. Health services were recorded as the most commonly used service closely followed by libraries, although these are not necessarily run by Herefordshire Council, followed by education provision and public toilets.

Trading standards and a reduction in Herefordshire Council staff and wages were commonly cited in terms of the things people 'could do without'. There were also a number of suggestions on what we 'could do differently' and, in particular there was a strong focus on an enhanced role for Ledbury Town Council.

The importance of continuing to promote tourism for the town was very evident across these responses.

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 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 housing and community transport. The other areas which were seen to be top priorities included public toilets, leisure facilities, libraries and employment.



The areas which people felt were less important, included parks, access to nature, free public toilets, planning control, licensing and a weekly black bin collection.

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:

"Very interesting and good to have a say and be heard."

"Very informative discussions, giving the community a choice about what is needed in the area."

"Gaining a better understanding of Herefordshire Council services."

The things that people said they didn't like included the DVD of Cllr Jarvis, the noise level and being asked to make decisions without access to detailed financial information.

Some of the other comments included:

"The belief that the services provided have to be cut, it's the cost that has to be cut and wages are a big part of that cut."

"Really needed some pre meeting reference material and homework."

The things that people said they most wanted to see happen next were positive action as a result of the consultation, feedback including the opportunity for further consultation and integration into the town plan and less jargon in the future in relation to financial information.

## Feedback

Must have	Nice to have	Could do without	Could do differently
<p>Community development support should be centrally provided</p> <p>Libraries as information hubs</p> <p>A central library which services smaller community libraries, facilitated but not necessarily run by the council</p> <p>The council needs to maintain ownership of Hereford reference and archive material</p> <p>Local needs must be recognised when planning with a more integrated bottom up approach</p> <p>We need non coin operated public toilets as we're a tourist town, although</p> <p>Street lighting which takes into account rural and town differences</p> <p>A cohesive plan for this area to be kept for community facilities and services</p>	<p>Economic Development at a county level</p> <p>Libraries with a role as an information centre which shares its facilities with other organisations</p> <p>Parks and open spaces with access to nature</p> <p>Verge cutting on the outskirts of town</p> <p>Public toilets</p> <p>Sustained central and local public transport</p> <p>Business and employment services</p> <p>A combined preventative health service and public health services to save money</p> <p>Road repairs</p> <p>Cultural services</p>	<p>Remove any 'non jobs' at the council to cut waste and give the money to those actually doing the work</p> <p>Trading standards</p> <p>Free public toilets</p> <p>Expensive housing</p> <p>A theatre</p> <p>Anything we are not required to do</p>	<p>Public toilets could be delivered differently through shops</p> <p>Parks and open spaces should be locally managed by town and parish councils, with funding also being transferred</p> <p>Footpath maintenance could be managed locally by local people and farmers</p> <p>The council should not be responsible for car parking, it should be run by the town council</p> <p>Reduce council bureaucracy and cap salaries at £50k and remove layers of management</p> <p>Weekly refuse collection, but only if there are viable alternatives</p> <p>Reduce and localise planning bureaucracy</p> <p>Clean streets could be a communities responsibility</p>

<p>Support for people with disabilities</p> <p>Reduce waste collection by increasing recycling facilities</p> <p>Museums are important in Ledbury and need to be transferred from Herefordshire Council</p> <p>Police and ambulance service</p> <p>Health services</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Sports and leisure facilities including a swimming pool</p> <p>Children's and youth services</p> <p>Affordable social housing with a good housing mix</p> <p>Economic development to improve job prospects</p>			<p>Support for carers</p> <p>Licensing</p> <p>Environmental services</p> <p>Trading standards / licensing with a lighter touch and less paperwork</p> <p>Grass cutting</p> <p>Street lighting could have a timing mechanism or be motion sensed when someone walks past</p> <p>Rights of way could be done by volunteers</p> <p>We don't need a large police station in Ledbury, this could be based at The Master's House</p>
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