

# Your community - your say

## Summary of findings from Leintwardine

### 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 Leintwardine event, which covers the Mortimer locality, was held at Leintwardine Village Hall and Community Centre on 26 September, was attended by 21 local people the majority of which were over 45, with over half aged between 45 and 64. It was found that just under a third 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 six areas as priorities for residents in the Mortimer locality for making somewhere a good place to live:

- 1. Affordable decent housing**
- 2. The level of crime**
- 3. Refuse collection and disposal**
- 4. Health services**
- 5. Job prospects**
- 6. Education provision**

There was general consensus that the QOL results were generally reflective of priorities for the Mortimer locality, although residents had mixed views about affordable decent housing being the top priority, particularly those from Leintwardine village, along with the high priority attached to refuse collection and disposal.

#### **1. Affordable decent housing**

- Many residents felt that the size of houses on new developments were not suitable for the local area.
- There is a perception that additional affordable decent housing is not required in Leintwardine. There were a few examples offered such as a recent new build where housing was not allocated to local people, while units on the Rosemary Lane social housing development remain unused due to a lack of demand. The size and quality of housing units was also thought to be inadequate by some.
- There is a perceived need for affordable decent housing in some of the smaller villages in the locality.
- The location of affordable decent housing is important and it was felt that it should be near employment opportunities and good local transport links. Residents felt that infrastructure should also be in place to support any housing developments.
- There was some confusion around the term 'affordable decent housing', with some feeling there was a need to clarify what this referred to within this context.
- It was highlighted that local tradesmen and builders were not used for the Leintwardine development and it was suggested that this had caused some bad feeling amongst local people.

#### **2. The level of crime**

- Whilst it was noted that crime levels were low in the area, concerns were expressed about 'rural crime', especially agricultural and forestry.
- Concerns were expressed about young people drinking on the streets in Wigmore.

#### **3. Refuse collection and disposal**

- Participants were surprised that refuse collection and disposal was seen as such a high priority, although there was agreement that this service is valued.

#### **4. Health services**

- Although there is a local GP in Leintwardine, people often have to travel long distances to access other specialist health services, such as to Cheltenham.
- It was felt that ‘first responders’ and the air ambulance service are crucial services in a rural location.
- There was concern around the privatisation of health services and changes to health and social care services, meaning that certain services may become unaffordable for some residents.
- A question was raised about whether Herefordshire Council has an agreement with Shropshire to share the ambulance services operating from Craven Arms.

#### **5. Job prospects**

- There is a need to encourage local businesses to stay or set up in the area. This was linked to the need for faster broadband.
- There was concern expressed around the loss of private and non council services, such as the loss of the local bank and a reduction in post office services.

#### **6. Education provision**

- There was concern expressed about the privatisation of educational services.
- Participants felt that there is little training available for young people and that more courses are needed.
- It was also recognised that better transport links would broaden social and educational experiences for young people.

### **Additional priorities**

#### **7. Youth provision**

- Residents raised concerns over the loss of youth services and provision and the impact this may have in the long term.

#### **8. Broadband**

- See page six for full details.

#### **9. Public transport**

- See page four 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 Mortimer locality felt most needed improving and were of the highest priority:

- 1. Road and pavement repairs**
- 2. Public transport**

- 3. Job prospects**
- 4. Affordable decent housing**
- 5. Wage levels and the cost of living**

There was general consensus that the QOL survey results were generally reflective of the priorities for the Mortimer area. Although in addition, residents felt that road safety and broadband should also form part of this list.

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

- Road and pavement repairs were not seen as a particular issue for Leintwardine, although Dark Lane was mentioned, but concern was particularly expressed about the condition of the road from Lingen to Walford.
- Participants felt that the quality of Amey repairs was unsatisfactory and that more quality control was needed from Herefordshire Council. It was also felt that local people should be given a budget to use local contractors for road repairs and that repairs could be done by the lengthsman. Although an issue was raised about the slow payment of the lengthsman locally.
- Road and pavement repairs were particularly perceived to be an issue in rural areas.
- It was suggested that many rural roads are unsuitable for use by large HGVs and more roads should be signposted as such.
- Winter road gritting is seen as essential and is currently perceived to be inadequate.

### **2. Public transport**

- Residents felt that public transport is reasonably good in Leintwardine but not elsewhere, such as Wigmore where it is particularly poor.
- Community transport schemes were perceived as not fully meeting the transport needs of local people. For example, there are problems with provision for single parents and disabled people. However, although the current service is limited, it is valued. There is also a car sharing scheme operating, which is valued but there are never enough volunteers to really make it work well.
- The only regular bus route via Leintwardine is the Ludlow to Knighton service. There are no buses to Leominster or Hereford.
- There was a suggestion to change some of the bus routes and timings, such as extending both the Builth Wells to Ludlow route via Walford and the bus at school time to Leintwardine, which waits at Adforton.
- Some deemed public transport to be more important than road repairs.
- There is a need for more demand responsive community run transport.
- It was felt that Herefordshire Council could provide small start up grants for community transport schemes, with rural transport being subsidised through increased charges on city buses.
- It was also noted that a different approach to public transport is needed in the light of rising oil prices and peak oil.
- The Local Transport Plan, which was out for consultation at the same time, was seen as too Hereford centric and not applicable to rural areas.

### **3. Job prospects**

- There was a general view that young people look outside of Herefordshire for job opportunities.
- There are currently rooms available for businesses to rent or hire at Leintwardine Village Hall and this was seen as an example of good practice.
- There is spare capacity of local industrial units, such as those in Leintwardine, Brampton Bryan and Leominster, so there needs to be more creative thinking about the best use for them.
- There is a general view that fibre optic broadband is needed and that this may help attract businesses to the area.
- There were concerns expressed about the level of business rates for the garage / shop in Leintwardine, as it is the same level as for Morrison's, which threatens its financial viability.
- It was felt that there is a need to incentivise homeworking.
- There are high levels of micro-businesses and self-employment in the local area and it was felt that these could potentially offer opportunities for apprenticeships.
- There was a consensus that there needs to be more volunteering opportunities for young people.
- A 'wheels to work' moped or scooter loan service for young people is needed to ensure that they can access employment and training opportunities.
- Job opportunities should be made available as locally as possible. For example, priority should be given to local builders for local developments.

### **4. Affordable decent housing**

- The issue of empty homes was raised and it was felt that owners of such properties need to be encouraged to bring their properties into use.
- Residents felt strongly that housing development needed to 'fit' with the local environment.
- It was felt that Leintwardine has sufficient housing provision for first time buyers, although the quality and size of this was questionable. It was also felt that there are sufficient high end properties but insufficient mid range properties.
- There was a call for a review of 'in-fill' and conservation areas by the council's planning department.
- There were issues discussed around the feasibility of potential sites for new housing developments.
- It was felt that good quality sheltered housing is needed to give older people the option of moving to more appropriate accommodation, which may then free up more affordable properties.
- Neighbourhood plans have a key role in the future, but parish councils need to be more transparent and better engaged with communities, if they are to truly reflect local needs.

## **5. Wage levels and the cost of living**

- A question was asked about what the living wage is for Herefordshire.
- There were concerns expressed around low wages leading to poor pension provision, which will cause problems in the future.

## **Additional improvements**

### **6. A greater police presence**

- Participants would like to see greater visibility of local police Community Support Officers around the larger villages.

### **7. Controlling speeding traffic**

- There was a strong feeling that road safety should be a higher priority and needed improving. This is a particular issue in Wigmore, where it is felt a 20mph zone is needed, while Leintwardine needs better signage and improved pavements.
- It was suggested that better speed limit signs are needed as they are too variable and it is not always clear to drivers which speed restriction area they are in.

### **8. Broadband**

- Broadband is seen as a priority which needs improving to make it faster. It was felt that better broadband would help increase job prospects and economic growth and is regarded as an essential part of infrastructure.
- High speed broadband was also seen as essential for everyday life, as it provides access to remote services.
- It was stated that poor broadband access is a particular issue in Lingen.
- It was felt that Herefordshire Council needed to work with and pressurise the telecom suppliers.

### **9. Cultural facilities and services**

- Some participants felt that the subsidies received for cultural and leisure provision has disproportionate benefits for people living in urban areas. For example, Herefordshire Council subsidises The Courtyard, but there is no subsidised cultural provision in rural areas. It was felt that there needs to be better parity of benefits for people living in rural areas.
- There were differing opinions about the importance of cultural facilities and services given the current financial climate.

### **10. Other service related comments**

- The length of time it takes to formally adopt a new right of way was raised and a question was asked about whether the parish council had the powers to address this?
- The provision of a local library was recognised as a volunteering opportunity.

- The issue of the sustainability of small, local community shops was raised, specifically in relation to the high prices they charge, which makes them a less attractive option for residents but also disadvantages those who are reliant on them.
- Residents were confused about the term 'hub village', but felt that resources would be needed to make a village a hub.
- There was a strong feeling that all services would benefit from better joined up thinking and greater working with bordering counties. It was also felt that service provision should not be restricted to county boundaries.
- There was strong support for the council publication Herefordshire Matters to be abolished.
- It was felt that there is a need for a village warden in Leintwardine.
- It was suggested that existing services are all directed into Hereford, even though it is not the natural service centre for many residents in the locality, as many people prefer to use Ludlow.
- It was felt that a bulk buying oil scheme was needed in the local area, but that funding was needed to get local initiatives such as this off the ground.
- It was felt that sand bags should be provided for local residents and that in the future, flooding signs could be put up by the parish council to reduce the costs to Herefordshire Council.
- A request was made for a fire station in Leintwardine.
- If residents are going to be required to do more for themselves, then community development support is needed, including support for volunteers.
- It was felt that there could possibly be a reduction in street lighting, but this was not supported by the young people present because of safety concerns.

## **7. Other general comments**

- Leintwardine is considering completing a parish plan, which would allow them to identify important issues and services within the local area. The results of this could then be used to influence the parish precept.
- There was a general view that council policies are very city focused, with the current Local Transport Plan being offered as an example. There is also an imbalance of urban and rural priorities and costs and a question was raised about how much is spent per capita in different areas?
- It was felt that better publicity was needed for future consultation events and that better use should be made of Mortimer Country Stores and the local high school. It was stated that posters should be given to the parish council clerk for community notice boards.
- A suggestion was made that there should be a liaison officer in Herefordshire Council to track complaints.
- Participants felt that a locality lead, preferably a single named contact, was needed from Amey.

- A question was raised around whether Herefordshire Council is talking to other counties about what they are doing to address their budget deficits and whether they are sharing best practice?

## Questions

Q: Does Herefordshire Council have an agreement with Shropshire County Council to share the ambulance service operating from Craven Arms?

A: West Midlands Ambulance service is now one of 11 Ambulance Trusts across the UK and delivers cover within the West Mercia area, which replicates the footprint area of West Mercia Police.

The trust is currently transforming its services across the area with the intention of delivering a faster and more skilled response. This means that ambulances are moving to larger stations and being replaced with Rapid Response Vehicles (RRVs) in Leominster and Kington in Herefordshire and Ludlow and Craven Arms in Shropshire.

These vehicles are backed up by a considerable number of Community First Responder (CFR) schemes in both counties, which can cross the county border to attend incidents where required.

As such, the council has no direct involvement in the day to day running of the ambulance service, although they will be more linked in the new Public Health England (PHE) setup and Local Health Resilience Partnerships (LHRP) that will have membership from a wide range of multi-agency partners.

Q: What is the living wage for Herefordshire?

A: There is no living wage defined at county level and we don't have enough information about living costs in the county to know whether it might be higher or lower than elsewhere in the UK.

The living wage for the UK is estimated to be £7.45 per hour and £8.55 for London. The average (median<sup>1</sup>) hourly pay rate for all employees in Herefordshire in 2011 was £9.54, although somewhere in the range of 25% to 30% of employees were likely to have earnings below the UK living wage of £7.45.

For more information about the living wage, please visit: <http://www.livingwage.org.uk/> or for information on earnings in Herefordshire, please visit: <http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/factsandfigures/1215.aspx#end>.

(<sup>1</sup> The median is the value, in this case earnings, at which 50% of the population earn less than this and 50% earn more.)

Q: There is an imbalance of urban and rural priorities and costs. How much is spent per capita in different areas?

A: The council continues to budget for delivery across the county as a whole in order to deliver economies of scale with our diminishing resources. We don't budget by area or locality but note that in the future there may be a requirement to do so if the localism agenda is fully implemented by the government.

Q: Is Herefordshire Council talking to other counties about what they are doing and is there sharing of best practice?



A: We have ensured that the researching of best practice across other council areas is a key element of Herefordshire Council's Root and Branch Review process.

The reviews have been divided into three separate phases, each containing four service areas. The first review phases looked at neighbouring and / or demographically similar counties during the early stage of their reviews with one example being the Older People in Herefordshire review which compared residential, nursing and home care across Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire.

The second phase reviews have now commenced and they too will be looking to conduct similar investigations across their service areas, which will help to inform their end decisions.

Q: Why weren't these events better publicised by using parish councils?

A: All of the YCYS events were promoted through Herefordshire's town and parish councils, with the Leintwardine event also being publicised through local schools.

### **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 broad ranging from health services to broadband and the rural nature of Leintwardine was evident in responses, such as the importance placed on public transport, broadband and local delivery of services. In terms of what residents felt we 'could do differently' the main suggestion was that some services, including library and youth services and verge cutting could be delivered at a local level or be run by volunteers.

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. Public transport was most commonly seen as the top priority, along with the availability of broadband and affordable decent housing. Health services, emergency services, including fire, police and ambulance, road safety, community development, libraries and education were also seen as important.

Those services which were most commonly noted as being less of a priority were car parking and public health, although affordable decent housing, Herefordshire Matters, verge and hedge cutting, clean streets, road maintenance, trading standards, planning and public toilets were also seen as less important.

The table shown below on page 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.

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 enjoyed people considering my views and ideas, I also liked the diversity and depth taken when looking through the issues."

"Good structure to deal with complex issues."

"I liked that I could put my opinions across with people listening to what I have to say."

The areas participants commonly said they didn't like, included the DVD, the lack of publicity and the level of attendance.

Other specific comments included:

"Too much focus on front line services, little mention of overheads / management back office."

"Not enough time, not enough people and not advertised enough!"

"Very interesting, but it's a shame it was held in an area where people with no transport couldn't attend."

The things that people said they most wanted to see happen next, included feedback from the event and action to be taken as a result of the consultation.

The comments included:

"I would like to see a very comprehensive feedback from this survey, countywide."

"Next time...Displays made available for viewing before the meetings giving background information to the services."

**Feedback**

<b>Must have</b>	<b>Nice to have</b>	<b>Could do without</b>	<b>Could do differently</b>
<p>Public transport</p> <p>Health services, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GP service</li> <li>• Ambulances</li> <li>• Health visitor</li> <li>• Midwife</li> <li>• Hospitals</li> </ul> <p>Broadband</p> <p>Fire service</p> <p>Sports and leisure activities</p> <p>Activities for teenagers</p> <p>Access to nature, including bridleways</p> <p>Griffiths garage and shop</p>	<p>Cultural facilities such as a library</p> <p>Community development support</p> <p>Affordable decent housing</p> <p>Trading standards</p> <p>Policing and community safety</p> <p>Footpath maintenance</p>	<p>Car parks</p> <p>Bureaucracy and inefficient communication</p> <p>Herefordshire Matters</p> <p>Weekly black bin collection</p>	<p>Youth work could be delivered by volunteers</p> <p>Affordable decent housing options for older people are needed</p> <p>Road verge cutting could be done by lengthsman</p> <p>The library service could be run by volunteers</p> <p>Road and pavement repairs could be managed locally</p> <p>Clean streets could also be managed locally</p>