

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4 DECEMBER 2017

Report of the Scrutiny Consultation Working Group

Reason for Report: At its meeting on 13 February 2017 the Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** that a working group be put in place to consult with the public; the group to comprise of Cllr Mrs C Daw, Cllr Mrs J Roach and Cllr J L Smith.

RECOMMENDATION:

- That the Scrutiny Committee take on board the fact that the overall exercise was welcomed, appreciated and valued by people in all three towns;
- That Members **NOTE** the comments within the report from each town at appendix a,b,c;
- That Members **NOTE** that main concerns reported to the Group were regarding parking, highways, footfall and empty shops and did not relate to those listed in the previous consultation (Cabinet Budget October 2017) which were recycling, parks and open spaces and Environmental Health.
- That Members **NOTE** that this was a non-scientific snapshot asking people how they viewed the Authority and what they liked and didn't like. This was a non-political exercise.
- That the Committee **NOTE** that Members involved were very impressed by the general upbeat atmosphere in Crediton when compared to the other two main towns and **RECOMMEND** that the Economic Development Team and Economy Policy Development Group explore further what might be causing this difference.
- That Members **NOTE** that Working Group Members found that in all three towns car parking costs were high on the agenda. Noticeably in Crediton, where there was considered to be more on offer, people did not object to the charges. It was **RECOMMENDED** that the Economy Policy Development Group consider making parking charges relevant to the offering in the area.

Project Outline

The Consultation Working Group was set up following discussion at a Scrutiny Committee meeting. The rationale was that Members identified a lack of consultation as a key issue for the public. Members considered that it was important to find out if the public were encountering problems and if they were what they were.

Members nominated to carry out the consultation were Cllr Mrs J Roach, Cllr Mrs C P Daw and Cllr J L Smith. Officer support would be given by Alan Ottey (Town and Market Manager).

The aim of the review was to identify what the council was doing well and what the council could do better.

The agreed methodology/approach would be to hold a public consultation in the street and engage with the public. This was to take place for 2 hours in Tiverton Town Centre, Cullompton Town Centre and Crediton Town Centre. The views of people who did not live in the area would not be recorded under this project as it was aimed at the thoughts of residents in the district.

The consultation was carried out on the following dates:

Tiverton – 9th May, 10am to 12 noon (General Market day)

Cullompton – 15th July, 10am to 12 noon

Crediton – 19th August, 10am to 12 noon (Farmers Market day)

Cllrs Mrs J Roach and Cllr C P Daw attended all 3 consultations. Cllr J L Smith attended Tiverton and then was unavailable for the latter two. Chief Executive, Stephen Walford visited the consultations at Tiverton and Cullompton.

Outcome

The results from the three towns were interesting and there certainly were different comments between the three places showing the diversity in peoples' perceptions, views and how they feel about their town.

It also appeared that people spoken to in Crediton seemed happier and more satisfied with what the town offered than people in Tiverton. Cullompton was also more positive than Tiverton. It would appear that there may be a need to explore the reasoning behind Tiverton residents being so disheartened.

There were areas that people commented on which were consistent across the three towns such as car parking, drains etc.

The main issues highlighted by the public in each town are covered below and a list of comments etc. listed in the appropriate appendix.

Tiverton

The consultation took place on Tuesday 9th May in Fore Street with the weather fine and dry.

What was good:-

- Liked the tarmac pavement as it was less dangerous (35% of good comments)
- Miscellaneous such as flowers, canal, trees or just like Tiverton (28% of good comments)
- Miscellaneous council good comments (15.5% of good comments)
- Events in the town and market (12.5%% of good comments)
- Good Council officers (9% of good comments)

The good comments accounted for 26% of all comments.

What was not so good:-

- Lack of shops, empty shops and types of shops (22% of not so good)

- Town environment, state of street furniture etc. (15% of not so good)
- Council services, housing, communications etc. (15% of not so good)
- Car parks, charges etc. (14% of not so good)
- Miscellaneous about town and its facilities (11% of not so good)
- The Council itself (10% of not so good)
- Market (10% of not so good)
- Toilets (3% of not so good)

The not so good comments amounted to 74% of all comments.
Total comments 124

Cullompton

The consultation took place on Saturday 15th July in the town centre (High Street) and the weather was fine and dry.

What was good:-

- Like the town location (52% of good comments)
- Town environment and council (24% of good comments)
- Looking forward to train station (14% of good comments)
- Miscellaneous – skate park, link road (10%) of good comments)

The good comments amounted to 25% of all comments

What was not so good:-

- Traffic related and car parking (34% of not so good comments)
- Low footfall and poor shops (19% of not so good comments)
- Council related issues (16% of not so good comments)
- Miscellaneous very varied (16% of not so good comments)
- Transport and infrastructure (10% of not so good comments)
- Public order (5% of not so good comments)

The not so good accounted for 75% of all comments
Total comments 83

Crediton

The consultation took place on Saturday 19th August in the Square where there was one of the 2 a month farmers markets taking place.

What was good:-

- Market, shops and atmosphere (42% of good comments)
- Miscellaneous such as good recycling, good councillors etc. (42% of good comments)
- Town very good (16% of good comments)

The good accounted for 37% of all comments.

What was not so good:-

- Miscellaneous such as planning, infrastructure, price of community events etc. (38% of all not so good comments)
- Parking and highways (25% of all not so good comments)
- Council (19% of all bad comments)
- Refuse, drains etc. (19% of all bad comments)

The not so good amounted to 63% of all comments.

The total comments were 51.

(A note of interest was actually the number of people who were visiting the area i.e. holidays etc. and thus the figure was low of comments as only people living in the area would be recorded.)

Overall 258 residents were interviewed for their comments of which 72 (28%) thought the council was good whilst 186 (72%) thought things were not so good about the area.

Observations

Firstly, it was commented on by local people on how good it was to see Councillors out and about and talking to them.

The whole idea about carrying on the consultation was to establish a general feeling of how people in the district felt about the Local Authority and the results have proved the importance of doing so.

It did however highlight the problem of having a three tier council system as the public, in general, did not appreciate which council had responsibility for what in their town.

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the perception of the council being not so good against being good was very strong with 72% of all questioned being critical. Many of the issues that were raised were out of the remit of the District Council. This

indicates there is still a lack of understanding as to which council or other authority is responsible for what. It amounts to the perception 'It's the councils fault'.

This makes it obvious there is still a clear lack of communication to all parts of the community and the community actually understanding the different responsibilities of an individual council in a three tier council area.

One of the common comments was that things were reported and not followed up. The members of the Consultation Group had been able to follow up on some issues and get things done that had been outstanding for a long time.

Each town had a different main complaint. Tiverton's main concerns were empty shops and the condition of the streets and the street furniture. Cullompton's main concerns were traffic and similar to Tiverton, lack of shops. With Crediton there was not any particular one issue but there was disappointed at the proposal to close the District Council office. During the time there it was apparent that in general there was a feeling of wellbeing and happiness and the vast majority of people spoken to had positive attitudes and seemed content. This also showed as there were a wide variety of issues and not one or two main issues highlighted.

It is not surprising that each town had different issues but there were the ones that occur in almost every town in the country and that are issues around car parking and charges.

The councillors made every effort to speak to people of a variety of ages so the whole age spectrum was covered although it tended to be the more mature person who spent time talking and raising the variety of issues.

The three towns are all different and have a different profile and demographics and this was apparent during the consultation. Although there are common issues for all three towns the answers may not be the same due to these factors. An understanding of the different areas is apparent to be able to resolve the issues.

This was, certainly, an interesting project and did attract responses in all three towns and that people, especially the older generation, were willing to comment and discuss. It was harder getting the younger generation but this could be due to fact they have known nothing so different whereas the older generation have seen a lot more changes.

The project was very useful, especially as it certainly highlighted the different opinions in each town and how they think about their particular town. As in many towns across the country, there can be a common issue but the answer to that problem may and will be different for each town due to the different demographics, attitudes and social standings of residents.

By carrying out surveys, attitudes can be determined, but if carried out annually they can also be a measure that can be evaluated as to progress made on a year on year basis.

Consideration does also have to be taken into various factors that may influence a person's views such as a recent good/bad contact with the council, the state of the local and national economy and other national influences which cause comment and a feeling of contentment or unrest.

The project did achieve its aims as it did identify a number of issues which probably can be resolved and it did obtain a residents opinion.

The members were of the opinion it would be interesting to see results of other consultation work held in the District in the last year and compare the type of consultation and the level of response.

Appendix 'A' Tiverton Comments

What was 'good'?

Pavements - Like tarmac, Like tarmac, good tarmac, good pavements, pavements good now, pavements much better now, likes tarmac pavements, tarmac on pavements much better, pavements in town better now, like tarmac,

Miscellaneous - new fish and chip shop good, happy with bin collections, everything ok, drop in centre and park, St Andrews St social housing, flower displays, love trees in Phoenix Lane – do not cut, canal ok, I like Tiverton but miss Coop,

Events and council - electric nights, electric nights good, food fest great, food fest, planning and execution of planting in particular, Emma in housing very helpful, Alan doing a great job, Adventure playground (needs funding) more cameras, good to see you are listening, this is a good idea speaking to us, good council.

What was 'not so good'?

Environment - Litter St Andrews St, broken glass Division Bridge picked up by lady), dog mess, potholes, knee high weeds in gutter especially West Exe, repair/replace uneven pavements, pot holes, Division Bridge plants growing on bricks under bridge, broken shards on Division Bridge, town run down over last 20yrs, pavements, multi coloured seats – stain them, dirty fly posters metal Phoenix Lane, seats need painting, state of town litter, clean and paint benches, trip hazards, play park Pathfields needs improvement,

Council services and council - Cove village hall wall collapsing, houses empty for years, being passed from pillar to post – wants to be able to speak to someone who knows what to do, planning dept. useless, Bridewell Court no storage facilities for waste so it blows everywhere industrial bins needed, housing officer didn't respond to request for help/repairs etc., benefits and housing don't communicate (papers left in office but not everyone knows that I have given them in, housing officers not dealing with anti-social behaviour, appointments made and not kept, poor communication, door painted but rotten frame not replaced after 9 months, wrong shrubs causing danger to pedestrians, having to pay for waste collection because company has arranged (private area), building shake reported but no action, housing repairs not telling when they are coming if not in just leave a note, planning practice very poor, urgent evictions of people facing bereavement changes, council tax, you should listen to the people of Tiverton, bloody useless, don't consult with public enough, money spent on parking meters and gorilla wasted, don't do what they say, better communication, don't blow own trumpet enough, need to celebrate success i.e. electric nights, too many staff in polling station at Moorhayes

Toilets - not enough toilets in Tiverton, no toilet for visitors should be one at bus station, public toilets,

Market - market knock it down and start again, more promotion of markets, farmers market, better signage to market, more help for market traders and signage, market needs improvement, better stalls, update market,

Car Parks – the parking charges are excessive, consistency with free half hour parking, parking too expensive causes people to boycott town £1 for half an hour too much, car parking putting reg. no. in and can't remember, car park cost and time of stay, kerb parking, cost of town centre parking, accessibility to shops, parking in St Andrews, free parking look at impact in Gold St, free parking- too expensive for short visit, cars coming through town centre at night, £1 to park in the evenings, not good for New Hall and night events, car park charges too high for workers, parking, car parking costs

Shops – children's shops, men's cloths shops, shops to be open on food fest, reduce business rates to get more shops, not enough food shops, too many takeaways, too many charity shops, workshops, children's and school cloths, music shop, empty shops and unkempt gardens, Iceland, nothing in town to encourage shopping, Iceland, rents on shops, good quality restaurants, shops shut, empty shops drop rates, better shops for older people, shops closing, decent men's shop needed, Iceland better shops, no more charity, less charity shops, need grocers shop in town, children's shop more food shops, nothing to visit Tiverton for

Miscellaneous – bring back the Borough Tiverton for Tiverton, too fast expansion of town has caused loss of heart of town, stop building, complaints about anti-social behaviour, more police in the town, garages are too expensive why? Increase social housing and stability, reduce affordable housing access, care of the elderly needs more attention, more council housing needed, zebra crossing in wrong place in Lowman Green, need crossing in Newport St, not enough for youth to do

Appendix 'B' Cullompton Comments

What was 'good'?

Like the towns location, environment and council – compact, clean and tidy, good selection cafes, independent shops good, friendly people, like parks, library and coffee shop, butchers, art shop, florist, card shop, love the town, I like the people especially older people, like the small town atmosphere, loves charity shops, likes the location handy for the motorway, likes the pubs, recycle, good parking, clean town, MDDC efficient and professional help, MDDC good on the whole, MDDC good.

Miscellaneous – link road good, Christmas decorations and food fest good, Skate Park, need train station x 3.

What was 'not so good'?

Traffic related, parking etc. – parking on High St causing congestion, people parking on the zig zags of zebra crossing holds up traffic and danger to public bad road and death trap, traffic on main street, parking free, traffic, infrastructure and keeping up with development on the whole Cullompton pretty good, cycle path Olympic Way £225 fees should get reduction in tax, too much development and not enough infrastructure, traffic, traffic takes as long to get from motorway to Langlands Rd as it does going from Bridgewater to Cully, traffic bad, traffic congestion long delays delivery lorries, pavements trip hazard, traffic, traffic, too many coffee shops, buses needed more, traffic, traffic problems deter people coming , traffic, parking is a problem, pavements towards Willand, cycle route, no parking on High St, loading

bay time, traffic parking on High St causing congestion especially Sunday mornings and peak times, traffic.

Shops, footfall – more retail and national shops, low footfall, poor footfall, empty shops, shops need to open later, left behind in town to other towns needs shops, put displays in empty shops, shop fronts need improvement, closed shops, empty shops, poor shops, empty shops.

MDDC – St Andrews flats damage to fence, black bag collection weekly and not 2 weekly, more news about Cullompton in MDDC newsletter and Tiverton Rd made one way, cemetery bad, MDDC needs more engagement with local churches and other charities and NGO's to looking after the community, wants a swimming pool, wants a swimming pool, council tax high, leisure centre has changed to young person's gym, cost min age too dear, access for disabled poor at centre in gym, electronic communication emails not acknowledged told it will be followed up, customer service emails only an acknowledge, heavy rain pavements flooding drains inadequate and guttering not maintained, MDDC don't do anything.

Transport and infrastructure – MDDC disparity between Cullompton and other towns are we the poor neighbour, traffic most important expanding without infrastructure, relief road priority before any more developments, town council a shambles, needs infrastructure before housing, not enough buses on Saturday to Tiverton and back, bus timetable electronic doesn't work, all buses 3 hr, not enough buses taxis expensive.

Public order and miscellaneous – men drinking on street corners intimidating, drunks at weekend, town people stay away if closing time, land lords to look after tenants, not enough toilets, (people urinating in passage ways), bike racks needed, grass at back of Clarks Court why not use it for residents, Cullompton 3rd town ugly sister in district, better play area for under 2yrs, pigeon and pigeon droppings, grass back of Clarks Court could be used for residence, cemetery dreadful, paving slabs uneven, St George's Well parking, no opinion x 4.

Appendix 'C' Crediton Comments

What was 'good'?

Market and shops - farmers market, local shops, square friendly, market and town good, market good, town council good, recycle good, local shops, festival in park, very friendly and independent traders, friendly, farmers market, local shops, visitors in town because of local shops, farmers market and friendly people, local shops, market, MDDC are really good, community, market friendly.

Good town – town is very good, square good its centre point, parking good, good feel in town, good town grown to be a nice town.

Miscellaneous – good recycling, I like Crediton, everything ok, everything, good councillors always available, everything ok, talented community, good waste collection happy content MDDC and Age Concern helped me.

What was 'not so good'?

Parking and highways – parking, street parking needed, St Saviours parking too expensive parking affects footfall, free parking, market more days, parking needs sorting, bypass now, surgery in town hall to be better, traffic calming, market square

pedestrianised, better walking routes to town centre, bypass needed, speedway is causing problem, top car park too expensive, Jockey Hill traffic and speed (4 accidents). Council, refuse etc. – closing council offices (x4) CAB reduced hours, MDDC needs more joined up thinking, need office for MDDC in Crediton, refuse collection don't like paying for brown bins, bigger bins, hospital closure, OAP home, no transport to Tiverton to visit patient, no recycling facilities for plastic wrapping, recycling cards when you recycle you should get points, weeds and blocked drains, drain cleaning and street cleaning side streets, issues like blocked drains and weeds reported but nobody takes notice, waiting time on phone to customer services.

Miscellaneous – planning comments are not acknowledged, Pedlars Pool development on a flood plain, steps to memorial dodgy, infrastructure need looking at ref building, Costa not so good, empty shops, teenagers coffee area needed, shops/coffee places after 5, cemetery a disgrace, too many things going on at once, community hub parking access, price for community events, theatre for community, tory domination, stopped supporting home start, Wears foot Dr bad parking waste lorries have difficulty.