

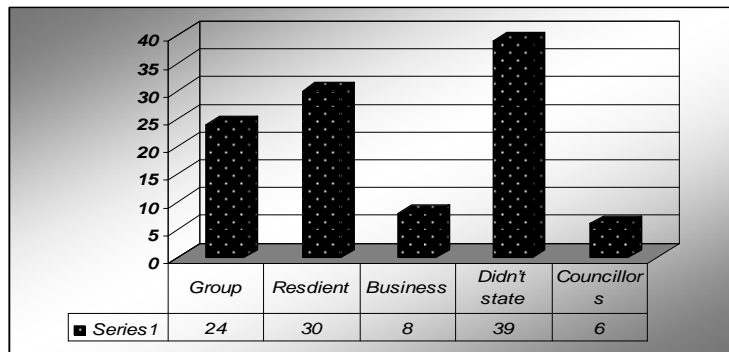
You and Your Town Community Forum Feedback

9 February 2013

REPORT



ATTENDANCE RECORDED 107 who registered
130 Counted at any one time in the venue



OVERVIEW

The first Community Forum took place at the Leighton Buzzard Theatre on Saturday 9 February 2013. The venue was open to the public from 0930 hours for a virtual tour of the town displaying images of various parts of the town and the Portas Pilot bid video. Andrew Selous MP opened the meeting at 1000 hours by explaining the format of the forum and introducing Councillor Cotter and Councillor Hopkin. Mr Selous gave a brief overview on Government plans regarding localism and encouraging communities to come together. He also introduced the topic tables which included: **Access, Parking & Transport, Leisure & Events, Tourism & Heritage, Shopping & Market and Environment, Litter and Cleaning.**

Councillor Hopkin provided an overview on the Partnership Committee and the Community Forum, followed by Councillor Cotter providing information on projects relating to the town including the Market Charter, Signage Strategy, Town Team, Summer Sundays and longer term plans.

The format started with attendees sitting at a table of their choice to have an open discussion about a specific topic, each table being facilitated, and notes taken on a flip chart. Initially it was planned that each person should visit two tables and then provide additional feedback on 'post it' notes thereafter. However, the attendees were happy to move around the tables throughout the hour. A member from each table was then invited to present the notes from the flip charts.

Andrew Selous and Councillor Cotter and Hopkin then took the floor to answer a number of questions from the attendees. These discussions were mainly specific to the objection for the Grovebury Road retail development planning applications which were being considered by CBC on 13 February. The meeting closed at 1200 hours with Andrew thanking people for attending and asking them to complete feedback forms and feedback would be provided in due course.

EVALUATION

The feedback process was extended through a press release and online which gave people the chance to submit feedback after the event.

Overall, it is estimated that there was a footfall in the region of 150 people. With 130 being head counted at any one time. Unfortunately, not everyone utilised the registration form available, however, we did manage to get 107 registered. Expected attendances was more than double expectations and unfortunately, with the over success of the event, it resulted in a lack of space in the theatre with this being the main negative feedback.

We received a total of 35 feedback forms from the community and continuing to request more feedback through press release and online. From the 35 who did provide feedback 86% thought the meeting was effective and were happy with the format, with 71% feeling they were able to contribute to the discussions and have their say - which was considerably high considering the lack of space and the noise within the room. The location was good for people to get to however it is recommended that in future events, promotion of the free car park service provided by CBC should be publicised. With the Theatre being a good location, the size did let us down however the footfall of the event was much higher than expected and this can be reviewed for the next Community Forum.

The majority of attendees did not state if they were resident/business or group member, in which we can only assume they were residents - 8 businesses were registered. The possibility of it being a Saturday morning meant businesses, retail and market holders were all working and not able to attend. A suggestion by a number of people was to have more than one Forum available so the retail owners could attend. However 30 out of 35 people preferred the Saturday morning session.

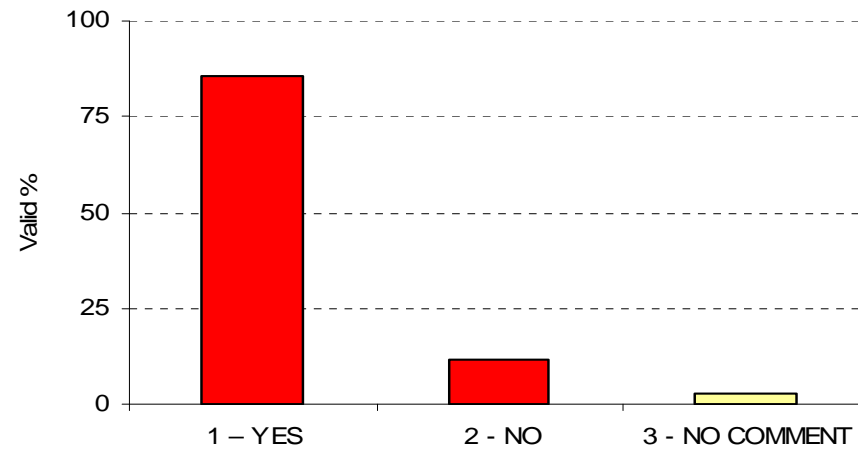
There were a number of suggestions for future topics for these meetings with future development taking nearly 20% of the recommendation with transport, cycling, road safety, parking and pathways and roads taking 15%. It is clear from residents that they want to be informed of future plans and growth and 11% want more amenities for our growing population including medical centres which came out on top. Others were happy to keep the same topics however we must ensure that the feedback is addressed to save on duplication.

With good overall feedback from the event, we can confirm, apart from the lack of space, that this was a successful event. Fair Trade products must be served at future Forums. We will endeavour to take on board the thoughts and suggestions of local people and will consider all the suggested future topics for the next event. The Community Forum planning group will get together again to discuss the feedback collated and this will also be fed back to the Partnership Committee. We will strive to make the next Forum in the summer as successful.

STATISTICS

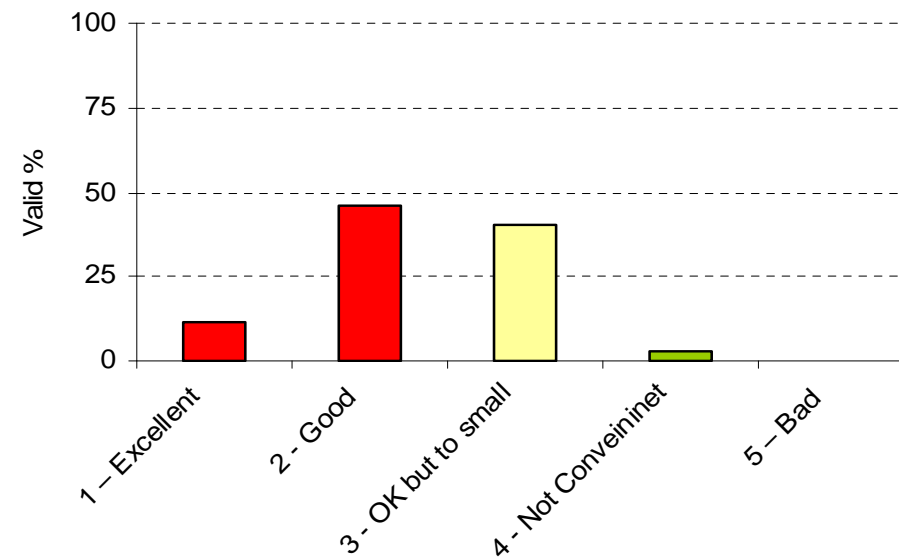
Question 1- Do you think the format of the meeting was effective?

	Count	%
1 – YES	30	86
2 - NO	4	11
3 - NO COMMENT	1	3
Total	35	100
Total	35	100

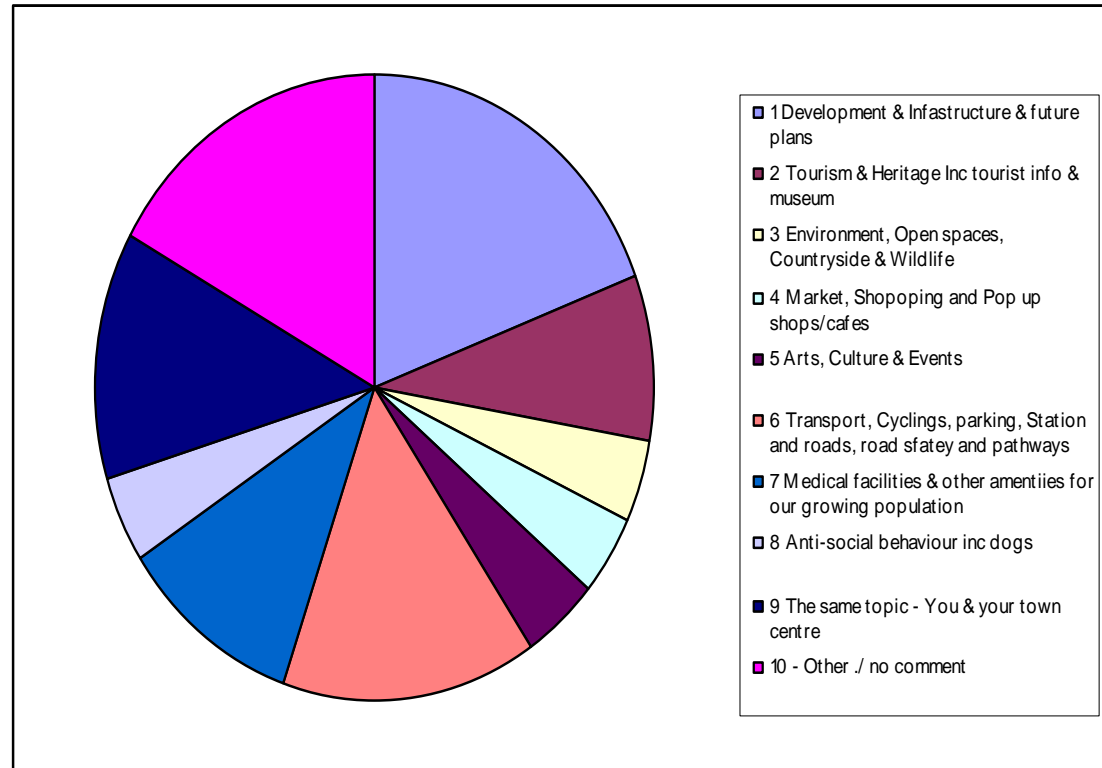


Question 2 - What are your views on the time and venue?

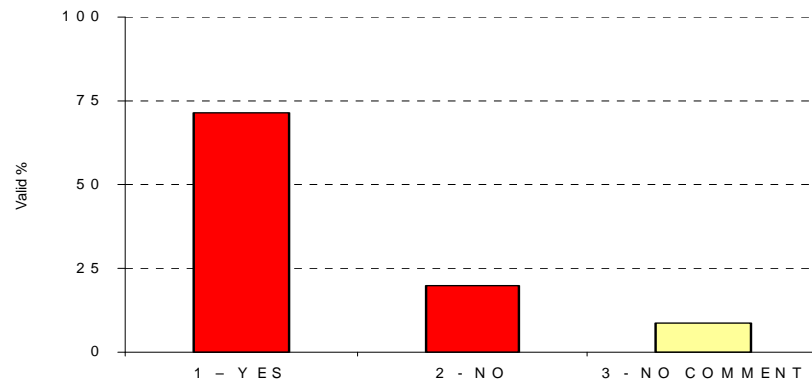
	Count	%
1 – Excellent	4	11
2 – Good	16	46
3 - OK but too small	14	40
4 - Not Convenient	1	3
5 – Bad	0	0
Total	35	100
Total	35	100



Question 3 - What other topics would you like form future community forums?		
	Count	%
1 Development, infrastructure and future plans	9	19
2 Tourism and heritage including tourist info and museum	4	9
3 Environment, open spaces, countryside and wildlife	2	4
4 Market, shopping and Pop up shops/cafes	2	4
5 Arts, Culture and Events	2	4
6 Transport, cycling, parking, station and roads, road safety and pathways	7	15
7 Medical facilities and other amenities for our growing population	5	11
8 Anti-social behaviour inc. dogs	2	4
9 The same topic - You and your Town Centre	6	13
10 - Other ./ no comment	8	17
Total	47	100



Question 4 - Do you feel you were able to contribute to table discussions and feedback on other topics?		
	Count	%
1 - YES	25	71
2 - NO	7	20
3 - NO COMMENT	3	9
Total	35	100
Total	35	100



Other Comments.....

Good meeting, should have been sooner
Still need convincing Councillors really understand our needs
Keep in touch - we would like to attend next forum
Fair Trade tea and coffee should have been used
Thank you/well-done great event
Town Centre is the only subject that matters
More tables and chairs needed / venue too small
Better then expected / would come again
Keep questions in order to reduce rambling - provide roving mic.
Went towards development towards end of meeting
CBC Pre-submission 'Draft Strategy' is unfound. LL has more housing to come.
Good intent - poor execution
Would like to know what action is being initiated / wants feedback
Invite London Midland and James Gleave
Repeated examples of more distant and powerful interests ignoring local recommendations without explanation.

Flip chart comments.....

ENVIRONMENT, LITTER & CLEANING

TOPIC	DISCUSSION
SIGNAGE	To many 'cheap' vinyl signs & housing development signs
	To much fly posting & temporary signs
	Out of date permanent signs
	A need for unified approach to signage.
	Less is more approach wanted
	Positioning of signs to be addresses
	More Brown historic tourist signs needed in our historic town
	Display boards on pavements are not permitted by law - but are still causing obstruction
WEATHER FACILITIES	Not enough paths or car parks being cleared of snows
	More gritting bins required
LIGHTING	Town Centre bright and in style with the town
PIGEONS	Need to restrict the population of pigeons
ZEBRA CROSSINGS	Some are poorly located and need updating
STREET CLEANING	Some parts are lacking and need to raise the standards locally
SHOPS	Shop owners initiatives needed to keep the pavements outside their shops cleaner 'best kept Shop Initiative'
	More planning requirements for shop frontage to retain historic character
LITTER	Hotspots - Tow Path
parking	Stop parking on green verges - especially Soulbury road 'Station parking'
VOLUNTEERS	More volunteers needed to implement clear ups of eye sores and maintenance work
Flowers Beds	Always in great condition in our town
	Suggest a 5p levy be charged by shop keepers for carrier bags and funds used for improvements and community schemes - voted only by community.
	More provision and maintenance needed of our green spaces

TOURISM & HERITAGE

TOPIC	DISCUSSION
SIGNAGE	CANAL RIVER - Much more could be done to make canal/river area more accessible from/to town centre/ It brings people into the town, with landscaping/meadows and pathways.
	Need more support from Tesco
	FROM BYPASS & STATION- Promoting points of interest in the town.
	INTERPRETATION BOARDS - Detailing local history & landmarks
ACCOMMODATION	Lack of it to hosts events and visitors
CO-ORDINATION	Need a Tourism Planning Forum to plan and organise key events i.e. 2012 outbreak of WW1
EVENTS	Literary Festivals
	WW1 Marking the occasion
2012 WORLD WAR 1	LL Vimey Road is famous for making the bombers
	Morgan 3 Wheeler
	Role of Woman
HERITAGE CENTRE / MUSEUM	Possible location could be included in Master planning South of the High Street. Or move school and occupy the building or move Lloyds/TSB Banks.
MASTER PLANNING	More information needed - permanent display

SHOPPING & MARKET

TOPIC	DISCUSSION
SHOPS	Rates to high for shop owners - shops owners not being heard. Retailers fighting for their own cause with no help or consultation. Invest in the independents.
	To many Charity shops in the town
	Extend shop opening times so people can get to the town before shops close
	Concerned the wrong signals are being given to local retailers and businesses
POP UPS	Shorter leases. Incentives for new businesses. More information needed and location.
GROVESBURY ROAD DEVELOPMENT	Over concerns of this development ruining the town centre shops. Need to encourage people to still use the town shops - what is going to be done
	Consultations needed with retailers
	Concerns of town having empty shops in future
	Local retailers want the chance to compete with the new shops -- they want a chance so bring the bigger shops into he town centre.
MARKET	More promotions of our market.
	Continue markets and bring new market ideas to the town and promote
	National market day - no event done
	Do not want the 'Market Town' taken away
	Market traders packing up early.
SUNDAY	More Sunday opening of the shops
EATERIES	Lack of places to go for food/café or to socialise
	Encourage coffee shops to open longer to keep people in the town. Only Costa open until 4 on a Sunday.
PUBLIC HOUSES	Top Bell and other public houses attracting wrong clientele
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES	More local employment opportunities needed
LOCAL BUSINESSES	Independent traders to get together to showcase what the town offers - possibly through a website
	More communication wanted with shop owners and businesses. Consult and listen to them - create a database
	More interesting and initiative ideas for developments instead of using them for retail.
	Retail Forum wanted directly with councillors and chambers of commerce
SIGNAGE	Mews signage to be updated
	The town should encourage quality decent shops and help and support offered to small independents. Similar to Tring Town.
LOCAL ECONOMY	Start using what we have available locally

ACCESS, PARKING & TRANSPORT

TOPIC	DISCUSSION
PARKING	Overflow using the free supermarket parking
	Free Parking on mornings or on market days
	Free parking at specific times and or weekends
	More 'Pay on Exit' parking needed
	Church Ave constantly blocked by school run. Advise them to use Duncombe Drive car park.
	Suggested Fire Station to be moved for better access – possibly replace fire station with a multi-storey car park and provide better access in and out
BUSES	Lack of buses to get to the town on Sundays to to events. Taxi's charge double at these times. Would like more buses available on Sundays and to concerts and events.
	Lack of cover by bus route - Miles Avenue mentioned. The route needs to cover more roads and streets.
	Suggested 'once a month' free bus services to encourage families to go into the town.
	Community Bus required for the elderly. No Buzzer bus on a Sunday. Cant afford Taxi's
TAXI	Excessive number of taxi's parked by Market Cross Taxi Rank
LOADING BAYS	These are under used within the high street, cars continually getting parking tickets here.
FUN FAIR RIDES	Very expensive rides at town events
ALLEYS	Widen 'Bell Alley' for buggies
TRAIN STATION	Passenger numbers at station reaching 1.5m in 2011 (mostly from rush hour) - future growth of the town will generate future pressure on the station including congestion in town, over crowded trains. 2nd river road crossing needed.
	Southern Parkway Rail station needed - possibly expand Cheddington?)
	Excessive parking charges at the station causing a problem on surrounding roads and streets. Parking restrictions coming in and higher station parking charges.
PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS	In some cases are to close to junctions
	Suggested widened pavements in Bideford Green etc.
ROADS	Wing road commute problems - changes AM to PM. Parking issues leave only single lane for moving traffic. Parking becoming dangerous. Suggest make one side double yellow lines.
CYCLING	Continued investment to promote and encourage cycling in the town
	Proper Bike Tracks needed
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:	Elderly without cars feel cut off from getting to Dunstable Hospital or Luton station especially from Vandyke/Atterbury area.
	More Investment needed in cycle facilities, routes and parking encourage our cycle town.

LEISURE & EVENTS

TOPIC	DISCUSSION
TOURISM	Tourist Centre needed to promote events and guide visitors
POP UP	Involve local groups to run pop up shops/cafes Pop Up Cafe at Splash & Play during peak times and on band Sundays
EVENTS IN TOWN CENTRE	Use all parts of the town not just high street Events on a Saturday to encourage more shoppers to market & shops
PROMOTING EVENTS	Display local events involving schools, young people & Clubs in events Little Opportunities for those with learning difficulties to be involved in events - possibly future involvement with POP UP Shop/café/business etc (Macintyre in MK run coffee shop & bakery) More effective publicity needed - especially to other towns to bring new visitors Targeted publicity through schools, groups, sports groups etc needed Increase on external and internal publicity required Publicity around children's trail is poor Signage marketing of events need to be bigger including roadside signs and promoted further afield
SUGGESTED EVENTS	Antique Fairs on a Sunday Fund Raising Days for town for local need not national Arts & Cultural events needed - visiting theatre groups, writers, authors, musicians, lecturers etc
COFFEE SHOPS	Why close library coffee shop? Groups want somewhere to meet socially Make use of empty retail spaces
VENUES / PREMISES	Utilise school theatres for regular events More use of Theatre? Library for social events. OXJAM Festival - Council need more involvement with this organisation Greater use of Canal for events - pleasure boats etc Community use of Bossard Hall - a number of people have suggested this Not enough venues for clubs, mother & toddlers, seniors etc to meet Venue needed for an Arts Centre to allow artists to gather (in the style of Madcap in Wolverton) Using Cedars and other schools for regular events and promoting it
TEA DANCES	Older residents would like more of these - with better facilities, easy to get to. More investment needed. Possibly at theatre? Council advise no money for tea dances.?
TOILET FACILITIES	Urgently required at Tiddenfoot Country Park
CINEMAS	Cinema Complex wanted in the town More Up to date films available to watch Day time cinema
SPORTS & LEISURE	Swimming pool needs more hours and availability for swimming More sports facilities needed for growing population - Bowling Alley, Athletic tracks etc another swimming pool More focus on mental and physical wellbeing to be emphasised Tiddenfoot does not have adequate parking More people going to Aylesbury and Bedford for leisure pool facilities when they would rather stay here - but Tiddenfoot timetable not suitable Apart from Splash & Play nothing else to do in the town