

Somerton Town Council

2023 Community Review Overview of Findings

Introduction

Introduction

Following on from the 2018 – 2023 Community Action Plan, Somerton has increased in size with over 500 new builds so subsequently over the last 5 years the population has also increased by about 1,000 to nearly 6,000.

Somerton Town Council opted to work with Smart Communities to write a new Community Review to reflect the needs of this increased population and review and update the previous Community Plan 2018 – 2023.

A Steering Group Committee was formed from Councillors and Residents to first design a survey and produce a Report based on the results, then an Executive Summary and Action Plan which will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. It will be reviewed by the Town Council, and it will be accessible to the public online at the Town Council website with a hard copy available in the library. Any developments will be publicised in the Viaduct and by social media.

The online survey was chosen with opportunities for those with no access to be helped by volunteers in the library on 4 afternoon sessions. The survey ran from 28th February to 24th March 2023. It was publicised in the Parish Magazine, the "Viaduct", the electronic notice boards in the town and on the Town Council website and local Facebook pages. Local organisations and the local primary school, King Ina Academy, were also used to publicise it to their members and parents. 457 valid responses were received which accounts for 10 – 12 % of the adult population.

town and on the Town Council website and local Facebook pages. Local organisations and the local primary school, King Ina Academy, were also used to publicise it to their members and parents.

A summary of the main findings follows:

Demographics

The overall response rate was about 11 % of the adult population which is considered a good one for this type of survey. The respondents are heavily weighted towards the older age groups with 80% being over 40 years of age.

Of the people who responded to this survey over half have lived in Somerton for more than 10 years, and 2 % have lived in Somerton for less than 4 years. There have been five new housing estates have/are being built in the town during the last four years.

Of the 457 people who answered questions on transport 374 have 1 or 2 vehicles, 17 people do not have a car.

349 of those who responded from (457) used gas to heat their homes with possibly another fuel source as well. Evidencing our dependence on fossil fuel.

Climate Emergency/Environmental Issues

Many of the 453 who responded to reducing their own carbon footprint felt more 'energy efficiency in new and current housing stock' was necessary (200), next was 'local solar projects' (183) followed by more 'Guidance on funding to make my home more energy efficient' (173), next was 'green community transport' (172), and (97) people would like more 'allotments'. Only 40 responded that they felt reducing their own carbon footprint would not make any difference. 452 people answered the question on future climate change with the favoured actions 'planting more trees' (424), more 'recycling and reusing services / facilities' (374) and more 'cycle paths and pedestrian walkways' (364).

Of the 452 who responded 239 they felt the public open spaces in Somerton were well maintained to enable a healthy habitat for nature and the environment.

What next:

-Somerton Town Council with volunteers to map local footpaths and trees.

Housing

451 responded and over a half of those 'own home mortgage free' (266), with those 'owning homes with a mortgage' (110) followed by those 'living in rented accommodation' (49).

When asked which type of housing was most needed in Somerton in the next 10 years 268 out of 443 people identified 'affordable housing' followed by 'starter homes' (190) and 'low carbon/eco-friendly' (162), also were chosen.

Open Spaces on new builds



What next:

-For Somerton Town Council to write a Neighbourhood Plan (Cost £20,000 for consultant) which has more power over Developers.

Young People and Children

The question asked residents to identify all the facilities in Somerton which were thought to be used by young people, 422 replied cited 'The playgrounds' (339), 'skate/bike park' (331) and 'youth club' (203) were the highest to be selected. 'The library' (192), 'village hall activities' (191) and 'team sports' (190) came next.

Facilities children and young people access not available in Somerton selected were 'swimming pool' (343), 'sports centre' (230), 'cinema and theatre' (331) as well as 'music' (164), 'dance' (159) were ticked by 402 people.

When asked which facilities youngsters would use if they were to be provided in Somerton, Woodland adventure area (249) and indoor meeting place (235) were most popular with computer/games club (224), cycle/running track (187) and senior youth club (184) coming next.

What next:

-To explore the option of a volunteer led group to organise a computer/games club.

-To contact Somerton Recreation Group Committee or King Ina School supported by Somerton Town Council to see if cycle /running track could be allocated space.

-Other ideas would need much more consideration and funding e.g., Lottery/Somerset Council.

Community Facilities and Services

When asked which local groups the residents were involved with, 241 people skipped this question with 217 replying to it. Of those who responded, 'clubs for older people' (105) followed by 'festivals/fun days and sport days' (75) came next. Around 47 other groups were identified in the "other" section.

Of the resources identified as used by those who responded, 'footpaths' were chosen most (297 out of 349) with the 'Edgar Hall' (153) and 'places of worship' (72) selected next.

When asked which facilities they would use if provided in Somerton, the 'post office' (361 out of 418) came first with 'swimming pool' (248) and then 'cinema' (216).

When asked if they would be willing to help start up a new initiative in the town 164 responded positively while 294 skipped the question, therefore a good portion of the community would like to get more involved in the community.

The question about three main factors for a thriving community, 'a safe environment for all' received the highest responses (319 out of 430) next was 'facilities such as church, community hall, shops, open spaces, schools etc' (315) then 'accessible well maintained open spaces' (183), 'safe play facilities for children' (177) and the 'community working together to solve problems' (175).

A question asked if Somerton Recreation Trust found funding for a new pavilion would the residents use it – over half supported the initiative (242 out of 430).

Coronation Fayre attended by Lord Lieutenant of Somerset



What next:

- To do survey of Green Spaces in town to identify poorly maintained areas and then contact owners re improvement- See reference to Neighbourhood Plan.
- Contact volunteer group who ran cinema in Somerton before covid and see if another group of volunteers would be prepared to organise it again.
- See if a Community Shed could be developed with the support of a volunteer group supported by Somerton Town Council and outside funders.

Business

The business environment has changed over the last couple of years because of covid but it is hoped that these results will help encourage a thriving business community in Somerton.

200 people responded to distance travelled to work and 113 of the respondents worked within 10 miles of Somerton, with 258 skipping the question reflecting the demographics of those completing this survey.

198 responded to possible improvements for those who worked from home, choosing 'better broadband' (151), and 'improved postal service' (94).

Most respondents used 'local amenities' (264) and 'tradespeople' (232) out of 328 responses.

Of 361 people who answered questions around business development 172 cited 'apprenticeships', 162 'education for young adults' and 156 'education for adults needs improvement'.

Additional spaces for the future in the town were identified as for 'leisure' (232), 'retail' (181), 'restaurants' (168) and 'business incubation units' (111).

What next:

- Somerton Town Council to contact Post Office re possible new site or at least an outreach one. This can be further justified by the increase in population of Somerton.
- Organise publicity re Training and Start-ups. (Somerton Business and Trade Association)

Traffic, Travel and Transport

Of the 413 people who responded the main choices were by their 'own vehicle' (392), 'walking' (278), 'bus' (147) and 'bicycle' (121). Only 25 out of 413 chose 'electric vehicles'.

The main concerns about local traffic in the town were 'speed' (200), 'access to trains' (156), 'frequency of bus routes' (142) and 'pedestrian crossing points' (128).

When asked what would encourage you to use public transport more often 318 people responded with 'Services running more frequently' (263), 'Services running at the weekends' (163) and 'Services running earlier and/or later' (138)

When asked what prevents you from easily reaching your destination 230 people responded with? 'Too far to walk' (87), 'Cost of petrol/diesel' (85) and 'No available bus services' (80).

When asked for ways to improve some of these issues 'improved pavements' received 207 out of 353 people reported, 'improved footpaths' (137), 'restricting parking on West Street' (121) and 'cycle paths' (106) were chosen.

When asked about the provision of a train station near Somerton, 325 from 407 people who responded felt it would improve transport issues although worries of increased traffic, its links and frequency were raised.

Panda Crossing on Langport Road



What next:

- To contact Bus Services and local network regarding bus frequencies.
- Somerton Town Council/Somerton Business and Trade Association to support work with Somerset Council and Government regarding lack of funding for Rural Communities.
- Residents and Somerton Town Council to pressure Bovis Homes re putting back up lamp for Langport Rd Crossing.
- Somerton Town Council to allocate a member to join Langport Transport Group regarding station developments.
- Consultation with residents and Somerset Council re more footpaths and cycle paths.

Health and Well Being

Over half of those who replied used the Buttercross Health Centre 230 out of 406 people with Langport (134) next.

309 people who replied to which facilities could be offered to improve health with 149 skipping the question. The majority (183) felt that a 'wider range of clubs and leisure activities including sports'

would make a difference as well as 'improved public transport' (127), 'community exercise' (123) and 'social prescribing' (102) came next.

When asked what would improve access to care the main 4 choices were 'availability of face-to-face GP appointments' (257 out of 379 people), 'availability of GP appointments' (248) 'NHS Dentistry' (245), and extended opening hours for the 'GP surgeries', 'dentists' and 'pharmacies' (109, 58, 58 respectively). More 'mental health support' (73) was also highlighted.

Men's/Community Sheds had 129 out of 174 who responded stating they would use one if available and 127 people who said they'd support- through different means, organising such a facility.

Memory Cafe



What next:

- Much of these problems are out of our hands – NHS and Government.
- See if a volunteer group could initiate a Community Shed as Good Neighbours have a Memory Cafe and St Cleers Chapel, the Library and West St Church have with Warm Hubs. Somerton Town Council have supported with grants.

UPDATE

1 So far Somerton Cinema Society has been formed with a Grant from STC of £500 and had first film “Alleluia” on 9th Sept with 94 tickets sold.

2 There has been interest sorted about starting a new Cricket Club.

3 A Committee will have its first meeting to form a manshed - titled Somerton Cary Community Shed – which will be based at Brian Kent’s Wild Meadow Farm. It is now registered with the Manshed Association.

The Committee have received a grant of £3,000 from STC and will be seeking further grants from other organisations. It has opened a bank account and developed a constitution as well as seeking Insurance. CRS have offered to support with a discount account and Chameleon have offered to let us have old kitchen/bedroom fittings when they fit. new ones.

4 As of yet no volunteers have come forward to form a Green Somerton Group.