

Big Conversation Survey 2016/17

Theme Analysis

Resilient Communities



April 2017

Feedback and Insight Team, Commissioning Support, Shropshire Council

This paper summarises the Big Conversation 2016/17 results for the theme: Your Community (also referred to as resilient communities).

The work undertaken on the Big Conversation 2016/17 is reflected in a number of different reports. The reports include a full report of all the survey feedback, reports on the work undertaken to engage with specific groups and communities of interest (those who were not as well engaged in 2015/16) and a short summary of the main issues raised. Please use the website and contact details at the end to find out more.

Your Community

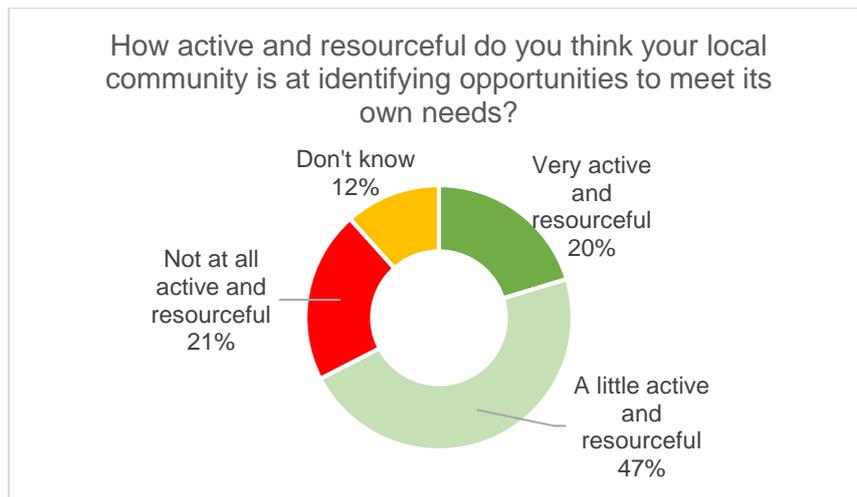
In total 276 respondents completed the survey and their responses to the Your Community theme are shown below. The section 'Targeted Engagement by Project Partners' on page 4 highlights the feedback gathered through the more targeted engagement activity undertaken in early 2017.

Based on your experience and the information above, how would you rate our work in communities?

- 43% of survey respondents rated Shropshire Council's work in communities as good or very good and 33% as not very good or not at all good. However the comments made within this section of the survey suggest that people do not feel aware of what Shropshire Council is doing in communities.
- The answers to this 'other' option were varied but issues mentioned by more than one respondent included:
 - The need for Shropshire Council to undertake more communication with members of the public.
 - A lack of visibility of the work Shropshire Council undertakes in communities.
 - Concerns that cuts are too severe.
 - Concerns about the quality and sustainability of youth service provision.

How active and resourceful do you think your local community is at identifying opportunities to meet its own needs?

- 20% of survey respondents consider their community to be very active and resourceful with a further 47% perceiving their community as a little active and resourceful. 21% do not feel their community is active and resourceful and some of the comments received include possible barriers to activism.



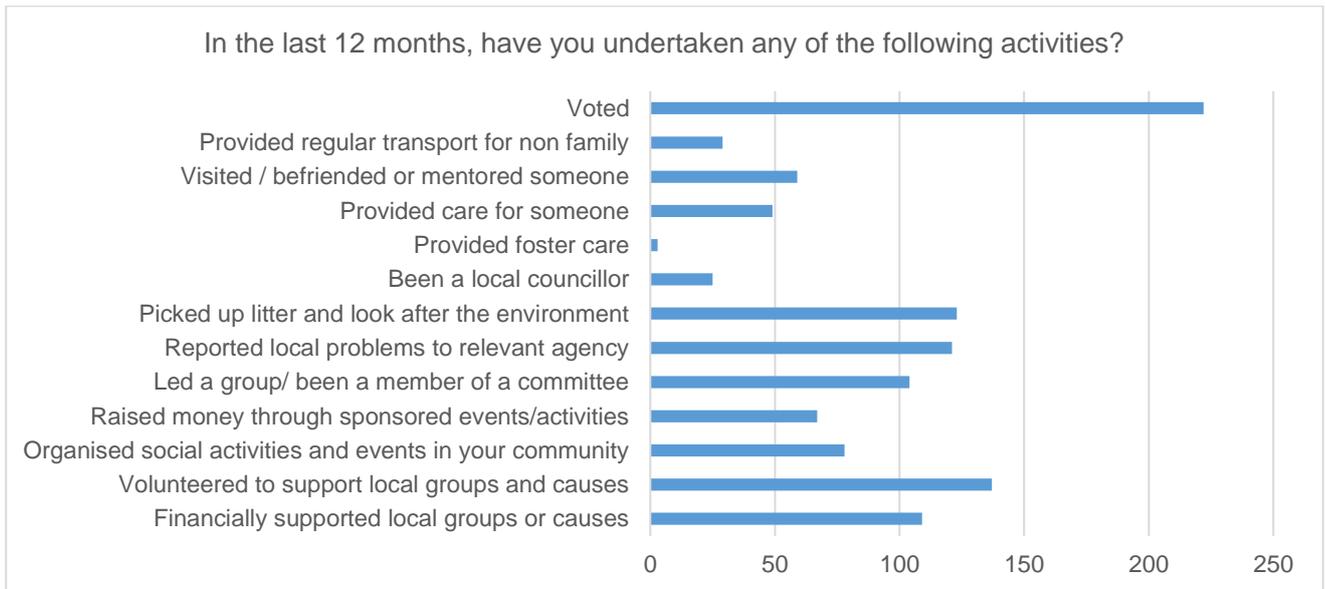
What are the main things we could do to enable your local community to be more active and resourceful?

The common issues raised with the comments were:

- Public transport (maintain or re-instate).
- Better communication from the Council so that communities understand how the role of the Council is changing and what to expect.
- More public information about community activity and more information and support to allow people to volunteer. Many people commented that they wouldn't know where to go to volunteer.
- Robust local consultation and time to allow for community responses.
- More support for community groups trying to take on more responsibilities.
 - Funding and start-up funding
 - Resources
 - Training
 - Mentoring/ networks between communities
 - Central resource library – tools, documents etc.
- Listen and respond to suggestions and proposals promptly.
- Improved local planning so people know what is planned, what to expect, what the issues are.
- Longer term planning.
- All elected representatives (MPs, Councillors, Parish Councillors etc. all mentioned) need to be seen as doing more, and communicating more, outside of election periods. Provision of leadership.
- Shropshire Council has made the situation worse by not increasing council tax.
- Teach people skills they need for resilience through schools, work etc. (basic first aid used as one example to reduce pressure on response services).
- Concerns that inequality will be generated because communities are more likely to take action in more affluent areas.

In the last 12 months, have you undertaken any other type of community activity? (Other comments in addition to tick box answers).

- Of the 276 survey respondents, 222 had voted, over 100 volunteered, picked up litter/cared for the environment, reported local issues/problem, financially supported local groups/causes and had been a member of a committee/ led a group. This suggests a high degree of community involvement by those who took the time to respond to the survey.



- There were a range of different community roles and activities mentioned by survey respondents. Examples included, setting up a local group, managing a community website, gritting the roads, fundraising, looking after footpaths, supporting neighbours, and fulfilling the role of a school governor etc. Those mentioned by more than one respondents included:
 - Involvement in the work of local Parish Council
 - Attended meetings and/or participated in debates

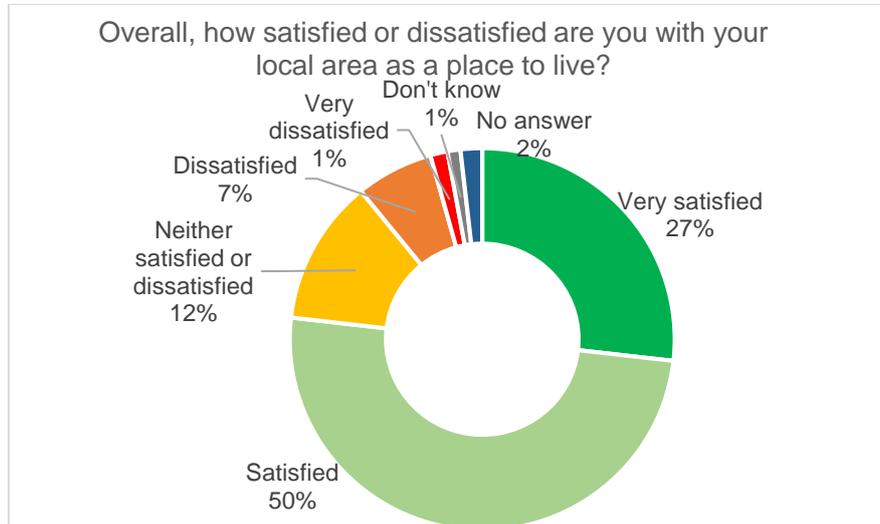
To what extent do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area (within 15-20 minutes walking distance)?

- 50% of survey respondents don't feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area and 40% of people do feel they can influence. These figures suggest that perhaps people don't feel quite as engaged in the decisions impacting on their local community as they could be/ want to be.
- In 2008 this question was asked within the Place Survey undertaken nationally by Ipsos MORI. The results for Shropshire within the 2008/09 Shropshire Place Survey Report were that 29% felt they could influence decisions in their local area. In 2006/07 the result was 36%. It is difficult to compare surveys to a degree because the Big Conversation Survey was a smaller sample and possibly less representative of the whole population, but the results suggest no significant change in feeling able to influence between 2006/07 and 2016/17.



Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?

- The Big Conversation survey respondents are generally satisfied with the area in which they live. Overall 77% are either satisfied or very satisfied living in their local area. 8% are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.



- The Big Conversation survey question was used to allow comparison with the Place Survey carried out in 2007/08. In 2007/08 87% of people surveyed in Shropshire were satisfied with their local area and a place to live and in 2016/07 the result was 84%. Although levels of satisfaction have fallen by 10% since 2007/08 the results are not hugely dissimilar and it should be noted that the Big Conversation survey covered a much smaller sample.

Targeted Engagement by Project Partners

In addition to the survey, targeted engagement took place in early 2017 with the following groups:

- Children and young people under the age of 25.
- Carers and people using services likely to be most impacted by future changes (including those over the age of 75).
- People who either do not have the skills and equipment to complete online surveys or choose not to engage online.
- People with a disability that make the completion of online surveys and engagement more difficult.
- People on lower incomes likely to find the self-funding of services difficult.

The targeted engagement work was undertaken by:

- Carers Trust 4All (Carers)
- Shropshire Housing Support Group with Shropshire Council's Adult Social Care (People on lower incomes, those who would find self-funding services and people who find online surveys difficult).
- Taking Part (People with a disability or find the completion of online surveys difficult).
- Shropshire Council's Community Enablement Team and Business Design Team (Young people aged under 25).

722 participated in the targeted engagement work and for the Your Community theme and they commented:

Positive Feedback

- Shropshire is a good place to live generally.
- Young people are very active in their local area, taking part in 2 or 3 different clubs (gardening to martial arts) on average.
- Local facilities such as skate parks, sports clubs, swimming pools, libraries, churches and youth centres are important to young people.
- Young people value spending time with friends, expressing themselves and learning new skills.
- Young people value local festivals recognising the cultural and financial value they bring to the market towns.
- People with disabilities are active volunteers within the community (shops, coffee shop, library, Fordhall Farm, local council meeting).
- People with disabilities actively raise money to support their own group – sponsored row, fairs, raffles, donations. They have also set up their own schemes to replace those that are no longer available
- The majority of carers say they take part in some sort of community or health activity from flower arranging to walking, from yoga to volunteering. However a number of carers did say they have no time for themselves or that there's nothing for them locally. The person they care for is always their priority.
- Green space is acknowledged as an asset to the country.

Areas of concern

- People commented that a small number of key people organise events in their communities and that those people need acknowledgment and support, as well as more people being encouraged to help out.
- People with disabilities are very concerned about a lack of public transport (particularly in the North and South of the county) and believe this has a negative impact on a range of issues:
 - being able to meet up with friends or network with others
 - ability to access basic health services
 - being able to access sporting activities
 - being able to access courses and training.
 - being able to get somewhere on time
 - wheelchair users find buses are not always wheelchair accessible.
- People on lower incomes are very concerned about the risk to library services. They find libraries important as sources of information about what's going on, for accessing online services and keeping in touch.
- People with a disability said that communication and information are important and that the Council needs to make it easier for them get information, and not rely on online resources.
- People believe that it would be helpful if there were more opportunities to use green spaces and gave examples of green gyms and more local communities events.

Please read the full Big Conversation Project Partner reports for more detail. The full reports help to highlight the different issues of each target group and provide a better understanding of local perceptions.

Summary of main issues: Your Community

- Provide information to enable community involvement (concerns that people are not sure how to contribute to their communities).
- Improve communication with communities and ensure greater visibility of Shropshire Council.
- Concerns that changes in service provision will lead to greater inequality between communities.

- Concerns that isolated rural communities are not a focus and that provision of services in towns forms a main priority.
- Concerns over the severity of cuts.
- The importance of the role of Shropshire Council's Elected Members and local councillors (particularly in relation to local public engagement).
- A need to invest in community infrastructure.

Example Comments

"Demonstrate how being more active and resourceful actually makes a difference".

"People can only be 'active and resourceful' if there is a structure of good support in place, that means staff, facilities and equipment".

"Be serious about promoting a vision about how Shropshire Council, other organisations (voluntary, private and public) and citizens can work together to improve the lives of citizens and communities throughout the County. Put Council financial, staff and physical assets and resources into backing up and following through on the type of vision outlined above".

"Work in communities does not reach isolated villages and concerns remain about the vulnerability of people in these communities as health and social care services are reduced and restricted because of Government cuts and the austerity policy".

"Local communities will do more if the right expertise and seed capital is available in the beginning, just like a business. But SCC takes too long to reach decisions and then implement them. This leads to frustration and cynicism. Like a business, you need to be swifter, sharper and smarter".

"Does Shropshire Council do anything in local communities really? How would anyone know/find out? Shropshire Council is too far removed from our local community to be of any use. Enable, or work with, the town and parish councils to work with their communities - stop replicating work and concentrate on the core jobs of the council".

"I think the council is in a no win situation given the severity of cuts. You are asking us to choose between cutbacks to service A or service B, whereas all public services are important. It's all very well expecting people to 'do more' themselves, this depends on having resources to be able to do so. I think the council should do more to defend our public services in general".

"A major failure in Shrewsbury is the apparently unrestricted continued house building with no infrastructure such as schools, increased GP and hospital services, social care, leisure facilities and roads to meet the rapidly growing population - which will place an impossible strain on already reducing public services."

"Efforts to save our library, leisure centre and pool has come from local residents, often in the teeth of SCC apparent disregard of local opinions. If my perception is wrong, perhaps this points to the failure of SCC to articulate their local support to local people".

"Publicity needs to be pointed and obvious".

"Engage with people at a local level, in particular through local councillors".

Contact Us

For more information concerning the Big Conversation results please contact Shropshire Council's Commissioning Support Unit.

🌐 **Website:** <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/big-conversation/>

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