

# Big Conversation Survey 2016/17

## Summary

### Main Issues Raised



**April 2017**

**Feedback and Insight Team, Commissioning Support, Shropshire Council**

This summary report has been developed to pick out the main issues that were raised within the Big Conversation 2016/17. Many survey respondents provided detailed and well thought out comments for consideration by Shropshire Council. The comments below are not in any particular order and are re-worded to capture the main messages from the feedback. Example comments, and more detailed analysis of the feedback received are both available and displayed in some of the other Big Conversation reports. Visit the website or use the contact details at the end of this report to request copies.

## Resilient Communities

1. Survey respondents requested greater visibility of Elected Members within their communities and a stronger understanding of the work of their elected representative.
2. A large number of comments suggested that survey respondents do not understand the role of Shropshire Council, the services it provides, or the work those employed by the Council are doing in their communities.
3. People suggested that they need more Council communications focused on helping communities understand how the role of the Council is changing and what to expect.
4. A significant number of survey respondents suggested that a barrier to doing more for their communities was a lack of understanding of: what needs doing; how to volunteer; and availability of training, resources and support. Many called on the Council to focus on enabling community activism.
5. People commented that, within their communities, a small number of key people organise events. Feedback suggested that people active in their communities need acknowledgment and support, and that more people should be encouraged to help out.
6. There were concerns raised in relation to differences between urban and rural communities: people commented that activities and services are predominantly provided in towns and that service accessibility is important.

## Healthy People

1. There are very mixed views among survey respondents concerning how closely Shropshire Council should work with health partners. Some people call for greater partnership working, sharing of resources and joint services; others suggest Shropshire Council should do less with health and focus more on its other core services.
2. Face to face conversations highlighted requests for more information. Topics people wanted to learn about included information concerning disabled facilities at leisure / sports centres and more information on healthy eating.

3. Survey respondents asked for more communications explaining Shropshire Council's responsibilities for health.
4. Many people requested investment in, and protection of budgets, for services designed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in our communities.
5. Social isolation is a concern for many people – many explain that changes in services present a risk that social isolation will become a greater social issue in Shropshire. Targeted engagement activity (delivered by the Big Conversation Project partners) highlighted concerns that whilst there are plenty of opportunities to undertake organised physical activities in towns there are not so many activities available in rural areas.
6. Survey respondents commented on needing more opportunities to be active, many listed walking routes, cycle routes, leisure centres and protection of budgets to keep this infrastructure, facilities and services in place.
7. Prevention was an issue highlighted by a number of people, particularly in relation to support for younger generations in order to prevent unhealthy lifestyles.
8. Targeted engagement highlighted concerns around access to GP services (Whitchurch and Market Drayton were mentioned). Appointment waiting times and public transport were described as a barrier and a lack of access causes concerns for personal safety and welfare.
9. Some survey respondents made the link between health provision and economic investment. There were concerns that housing developments in the county and population growth would generate greater demand on GPs, the hospital, schools etc.
10. Within targeted engagement by Big Conversation Project Partners money was seen as an important factor in making it easier to achieve good health e.g. sugary snacks are considered cheaper than healthier options.

## Prosperous Economy

1. Many people raised concerns over any increases in the cost of running businesses. Concerns were not restricted to business rate rises but covered issues such as rises in business property rents.
2. Business support is valued by survey respondents but some feel awareness of the support on offer is still not widespread and that further support focused on business growth would be of benefit.
3. Town centre vibrancy was mentioned in relation to a number of different towns in Shropshire (including Shrewsbury, Market Drayton and Oswestry). Many described empty high streets or an increase in charity shops. People requested efforts to:
  - Promote local buying.
  - Retain local businesses – people commented that local shops and businesses are missed when they close down.
  - Improve the attractiveness of shop frontages
  - Provide facilities for people with disabilities to shop locally.
4. Parking was a very dominant theme within the survey (and also mentioned by some under the themes of resilient communities and healthy people). Many survey respondents believe that increases in parking costs or limited parking spaces may reduce visits to local high streets.

5. Survey respondents called for continued investment in public transport and concerns over loss of services or reduced service frequency. Lack of public transport was seen as a barrier to economic prosperity.
6. Broadband and mobile network access was a common theme highlighted as a barrier. Concerns over broadband were highlighted across many different postcode areas with people living in the SY2, SY4 and WV16 areas mentioning broadband slightly more than people from other locations).
7. Low wages, underemployment and unemployment were concerns many people wrote about within their survey responses. A number of respondents expressed concerns that employment opportunities would be needed to match housing growth or more affordable housing should become a focus.
8. Affordable housing/rental and paying bills is a concern. Face to face discussions also highlighted that more should be done to help rough sleepers – they need more timely support.
9. Attracting investment was another common theme – making Shropshire a good place to do business. This was seen as the main way of securing employment opportunities for local people. Other survey respondents requested that investment be made across the county and not restricted to Shrewsbury.
10. Tourism was a popular theme within the survey. Many commented on Shropshire's assets and how these may be used to boost the economy.
11. The young people engaged in the Big Conversation believe that they will need to leave Shropshire when they are older (for education/jobs/lifestyle/spread their wings).

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## Contact Us

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

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