

# Community Centre Review

## Appendix A

### Consultation Overview v1.2

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<b>Version</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.0 Draft	Daryl Jedowski	20/11/19
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## Background

Stage one of the Community Centre Review centred on several key recommendations that were to be carried on into stage two of the Community Centre Review. These were:

- The undertaking of a wider **Community Consultation** to highlight the needs of Stevenage residents.
- The implementation of a **Co-operative Compact Agreement** to form a partnership working group with Community Associations to get their opinion on next steps.

In order to achieve these objectives, consultation activities were undertaken to answer two main questions, which form the basis of the information contained in this document. Both the Focus Groups and the Survey Consultation aim to address these questions in either a qualitative or quantitative fashion. The two core questions are:

- What are the current **pros** and **cons** of community centre delivery?
- What additional things would you like to see community centres do in the **future**?

The consultation activities were designed to gather as broad a range of opinions as possible. This is consistent with a Co-operative way of working which promotes agency and representation for all key stakeholders. The main components of this consultation were:

- **Focus Groups** – Of Community Centre users and general Stevenage Residents. Four User and Resident Focus Groups plus an additional Focus Group with the Stevenage Youth Council.
- **In-Person Consultation** – Launching at Stevenage Day on June 9th 2019. Further delivered through members of the Communities & Neighbourhoods team, through their roles interacting with local residents.
- **Digital Consultation** – Promoted using Stevenage Borough Council website and social media throughout September 2019.

All of these activities represent a hugely important part of the work of the community centre review. This data directly impacts and informs many of the recommendations made in the review, especially the development themes that highlight specific areas for improvement.

## Key Findings

- Community Centres are very good at meeting the needs of their current users. However, the barriers to entry for new users, especially working age adults and young people are significant, and not addressed by the current model. A central benefit of the adoption of the Hub & Spoke model is that it will allow greater diversity in offering and can be designed to break down these barriers.
- Stevenage residents feel part of their local community, recognising and appreciating the social value that community centres bring to the town. Even those who do not often interact with community centres believe that they have a role to play in the town wide ecosystem.
- The council are well placed to add value outside of the traditional funding role, by enhancing the relationship between community associations and the Communities and Neighbourhoods team. The current role of the council and community associations is not well understood by users or group organisers.

## Focus Groups

### Background

The Focus Group work has come out of a key recommendation of the Stage one Community Centre Review. It is impossible to capture a nuanced understanding through the use of surveys alone. This qualitative data is crucial in highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses of current delivery for feedback and recommendations as the second part of the review.

The main purpose of the focus group was to answer two overarching questions:

- What are the current **pros** and **cons** of current community centre delivery?
- What are the main **future considerations** going forward?

In order to facilitate these goals, the sessions comprised of four exercises, splitting the focus group into smaller groups to discuss before feeding back to the whole group. These exercises were designed to make the session engaging in order to encourage widespread feedback. The exercises were as follows:

1. What are the **pros** of your experience with community centres?
2. What are the **cons** of your experience with community centres?
3. Write down **five** future considerations you believe are important to community centres.
4. Swap papers with another group and rank their **five** future considerations from most important to least important.

The Focus Group part of the consultation had 42 total participants, over 5 groups, involving a wide range of ages, backgrounds and engagement with community use. The overarching points have been drawn together in order to create a list of key findings for each section.

### Positives

- Community Centres provide local agency and involvement.
  - Gets users involved in the community.
  - CCs positioned as the heart of the community.
  - CC staff are friendly and approachable.
- CCs are good at engaging with their user base. Participants often use more than one community centre for several classes multiple times a week.
- CCs are numerous enough that travel beyond your local centre is possible if there is something of specific interest.
  - There are a number of centres of different sizes throughout the town, offering room sizes and facilities to fit many purposes.
- CCs provide an affordable source of leisure and community activities.
- Supplementary services such as community cafe diversify the offering appealing to a broader subset of people than traditional CC activities.
- CCs are clean with good interior fixtures and fittings.

### Negatives

- Barriers to entry for working people.

- Limited activities during the evening or weekend.
- Especially challenging to involve younger working adults.
- No centralised timetable information for those short on time.
- Community centre staff are primarily community minded, so it can be difficult to adapt to the ever increasing business demands.
  - Some may require help accessing funding streams.
  - Some may require assistance with wider governance.
- Uncertainty regarding the relationship between SBC and CAs. Many believed that SBC operate the CCs.
- Group organisers often feel like customers, rather than business partners.
  - No tapered pricing structure for start-up groups
  - Managers could work with the community to proactively form groups, rather than relying on people coming to them.
- Part time staffing constraints result in a very different feel for centres at different times of the day.

## Future

- It is important that SBC maintenance support continues in order to allow CAs to operate.
- Community does not mean the same thing as it did 50 years ago. Community Centres need to adapt to meet this.
- Inclusivity is important going forward. Appealing to a larger subsection of the population by delivering a wider spectrum of activities could unlock potential.
  - Broader range of activities.
  - Activities on offer at more diverse days and times.
- Opportunities to improve the council website to allow for centralised visibility.
- Opportunities for the council to provide support beyond just the traditional funding that has been provided.
  - Links to skills development.
  - Arranging external speakers.
  - Added value from a strong relationship with Community Development Officers and other members of the Communities and Neighbourhoods Team.
- Integration of volunteers, either through the community or from specific volunteering organisations could help with challenging staffing costs.

## Youth Consultation

The youth consultation tasked the youth council with highlighting whether they use community centres, citing the reasons for their answers. Thereafter the consultation asked participants what there is to do in their area and throughout the town, before asking them to create their ideal location.

### Do you currently interact with community centres?

- Most members of the youth council indicated that they rarely if ever interacted with Community Centres.
- Those that did interact attended specific organised groups at the centre, either now or in the past. This included things such as dance classes or cubs, brownies or scouts.
  - They often travelled with their parents to these classes, so distance was a smaller issue.

### What do you do in your free time?

- Most members cited that outside of specific clubs, they tried to find places close to them where they could socialise with friends without any specific objective or motivation.

- They specified that for general recreation activities they found it difficult to travel large distances as they would have to walk, cycle or use public transport.
- Most did not venture too far from their homes and instead focused on what was available in the immediate vicinity.

#### What is there to do in your area?

- Recreation space is primarily open spaces such as parks, shopping centres, or the main areas of the town such as the town centre or the old town.
- These spaces often line up closely with where they go to school, as they are familiar with the area and parents are often more willing to let them go to these areas.
- There is a lack of dispersed youth provision in Stevenage, with many finding it difficult to travel into the town centre outside of specific group activity.

#### What is your ideal 'Local Hub'?

- Some hugely creative ideas were expressed. Each group had a large sheet on which they illustrated their ideal hub concept.
- The primary desire from almost all participants was the need for a social hangout space that was accessible throughout the town.
- Things such as free Wi-Fi, comfortable seating, table tennis/pool tables, audio visual and gaming hardware proved to be popular suggestions.
  - Most did not want these things to be organised activities, but part of an inclusive space that would allow them to meet friends in a safe environment.

## Survey

### Background

The survey activities of the consultation were split into two main parts, with both an In-person and digital consultation being conducted. The consultation was delivered using the Qualtrics platform, allowing for data analysis tools to be utilised. Eleven questions were asked, in order to prevent disengagement issues resulting from a longer, more time consuming survey.

The consultation started on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July at the Stevenage Day event. During this event over **50** people took part in the consultation, giving a good base for the rest of the survey. Throughout the following months, until the 30<sup>th</sup> September when all consultation activities were closed, both in-person and digital consultations were undertaken. The remaining **150** responses have been gathered between July 9<sup>th</sup> and September 30<sup>th</sup> through both in-person consultation and sharing with different community groups engaged with the Communities and Neighbourhoods team. Throughout September 2019, the consultation was shared on Stevenage Borough Council social media platforms gathering around **140** responses.

This totalled **342** total responses collected during the consultation period.

### Key Findings

- Respondents throughout the town showed an even distribution. With the higher number of responses correlating with the larger population centres throughout the town. There is a slight bias towards those users that may travel to the town centre, due to the ease of gathering responses in this area.
- Generally people are very fond of their communities, acknowledging the part that community centres have to play in this.

- People struggle to identify what is on in community centres, especially if they do not already interact with them. This is a significant barrier to entry that has been highlighted as one of the key areas that would increase interaction from new users if addressed.
- Diversification of offering including timing and delivery is important to people. This is obviously more of a focus for those individuals who do not currently interact with community centres.
- There is a significant number of young families in Stevenage, resulting in less of an ageing population than is seen throughout the country as a whole. Activities targeted at a diverse range of ages would help to reduce the barriers to entry for this group.
- Whilst many people would be prepared to volunteer in community centres, the amount of time that people are able to give is limited. This means that volunteering opportunities in the community may be best focused on event or project delivery, rather than operational activities.

#### Question One:

What area of Stevenage do you live in?

Question 1	Count	Percentage
Bandley Hill	21	6.14%
Bedwell	30	8.77%
Chells	27	7.89%
Longmeadow	20	5.85%
Manor	21	6.14%
Martins Wood	25	7.31%
Old Town	34	9.94%
Pin Green	26	7.60%
Roebuck	24	7.02%
Shephall	24	7.02%
St Nicholas	27	7.89%
Symonds Green	25	7.31%
Woodfield	24	7.02%
Other	14	4.09%
Total	342	100.00%

There was a good distribution of responses provided throughout the town, with high correlation between the number of responses and the towns larger population centres. Bedwell and the Old Town are the largest wards by population, with Bedwell also being the location of the Town Centre where many of the responses were collected.

### Question Two:

What is your nearest community centre?

Question 2	Count	Percentage
Bedwell CC	34	9.94%
Chells Manor CC	19	5.56%
Douglas Drive	0	0.00%
Hampson Park CC	31	9.06%
Shephall CC	43	12.57%
I don't know.	62	18.13%
Springfield House	29	8.48%
St Nicholas CC	35	10.23%
Symonds Green CC	33	9.65%
The Oval CC	31	9.06%
Timebridge CC	25	7.31%
Total	342	100.00%

We can see that there is a good spread of responses from each community centre, with the exception of 'Douglas Drive' and the 'I don't know' categories. This is not surprising, as most people would not see Douglas Drive as a Community Centre due to its more specific purpose. Moreover, due to the nature of the survey, we would expect 'I don't know' to be the largest category throughout the town.

### Question Three:

In the average week, which of the following activities are important to you?

Question 3	Count	Percentage
Arts/Culture Activities	139	14.93%
Sport/Leisure Activities	145	15.68%
Activities for Children	152	16.33%
Activities for Young People	142	15.25%
Cafés, Bars & Restaurants	152	16.33%
Community Groups	73	7.84%
Shopping & Retail	123	13.21%
Other	4	0.43%
Total	931	100.00%
Average	2.72	

This question had a very even distribution of responses between the highest five categories. Community Groups has the lowest representation of outside of the 'Other' category. However, there is likely a high degree of overlap between this category and some of the more populous answers. There is significant demand for activities for young people and children, which are currently difficult to meet in the current model.

**Question Five:**

How many hours a week do you spend using your local community centre?

Question 5	Count	Percentage
None	198	57.89%
0-2 Hours	77	22.51%
2-4 Hours	48	14.04%
4-6 Hours	11	3.22%
6-8 Hours	4	1.17%
8+ Hours	4	1.17%
Total	342	100.00%

We can see that a majority of the responses to this question do not regularly interact with community centres. 42.11% of respondents indicated that they used community centres compared to 57.89% who do not. This is not surprising given the mostly random sampling combined with those that use community centres

**Question Six:**

I feel part of my local community.

Question 6	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	22	6.45%
Somewhat Disagree	56	16.42%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	75	21.99%
Somewhat Agree	129	37.83%
Strongly Agree	59	17.30%
Total	341	100.00%

Overwhelmingly people responded positively to this question, with 55.13% of respondents somewhat or strongly agreeing, this is compared to only 22.87% who strongly or somewhat disagree.

**Question Seven:**

I feel like community centres provide services for me and people like me.

Question 7	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	52	15.20%
Somewhat Disagree	77	22.51%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	83	24.27%
Somewhat Agree	91	26.61%
Strongly Agree	39	11.40%
Total	342	100.00%

This was a slightly more mixed response, with 38.01% in agreement with the question and 37.71% disagreeing. Whilst this is a mixed bag, when we consider that 57.89% of respondents state they do not use community centres (as per question five) on a weekly basis we can see why some would not be as engaged.



**Question Eight:**

I know what is offered at my local community centre.

Question 8	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	89	26.02%
Somewhat Disagree	99	28.95%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	68	19.88%
Somewhat Agree	57	16.67%
Strongly Agree	29	8.48%
<b>Total</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

This response again demonstrates one of the main threads of the consultation process. Outside of the activities that individuals currently interact with, a majority seem to have difficulty finding out what else is going on in centres. This may be due to a lack of web presence, or a lack of time to research the options either in person or online. We can see that only 25.15% of respondents agree or strongly agree with this question.

**Question Nine:**

What are the current barriers preventing you from interacting with community centres more?

Question 9	Count	Percentage
I am unable to travel the distance.	44	6.51%
I don't know whats on.	183	27.07%
I have other family commitments.	109	16.12%
They don't provide value for money.	5	0.74%
I am not interested in the activities.	105	15.53%
I don't have the free time.	66	9.76%
I use other leisure facilities.	136	20.12%
Other.	28	4.14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>676</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>1.98</b>	

Again the most populous answer to this question is linked to a lack of visibility, and tied in heavily with the previous question. We can also see that many respondents have other family commitments and use other leisure facilities, something that could be tackled by a diversification of provision. However, very few people are concerned with the distance they are required to travel and even fewer feel they do not provide value for money.

**Question Ten:**

Which of the following would be most likely to increase your interaction with community centres?

Question 10	Count	Percentage
Affordability.	18	2.03%
More activities at different days/times.	161	18.15%
More diverse activities.	140	15.78%
More unique activities or events.	141	15.90%
More activities for children/teens.	112	12.63%
Increased visibility of activities.	173	19.50%
Opportunities to meet with new people.	125	14.09%
Other.	17	1.92%
<b>Total</b>	<b>887</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>2.59</b>	

Again following a similar trend, we see that increased visibility of activities is the highest response to this question. Despite this, there is a much more even distribution of responses, with people highlighting a desire for more activities at different days/times, more diverse and unique activities. This highlights areas that have been taken into account as part of the recommendations.

**Question Eleven:**

How many hours a week do you spend volunteering in the community?

Question 11	Count	Percentage
None	281	82.16%
0-2 Hours	42	12.28%
2-4 Hours	6	1.75%
4-6 Hours	9	2.63%
6-8 Hours	0	0.00%
8+ Hours	4	1.17%
Total	342	100.00%

The final two questions revolve around volunteering, as this is one of the main areas that Community Associations have struggled with in recent times. We see that only 17.83% respondents do any kind of volunteering activities, with even fewer being able to give up significant amounts of time. This is not surprising as whilst people are often open to the prospect of volunteering weekly commitment is a different prospect.

**Question Twelve:**

I would be interested in volunteering at my local community centre.

Question 12	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	67	19.65%
Somewhat Disagree	98	28.74%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	76	22.29%
Somewhat Agree	84	24.63%
Strongly Agree	16	4.69%
Total	341	100.00%

There is some interest in being involved with volunteering opportunities in community centres. Community Associations would need to access how this is best used. Small scale time limited projects is one area that may not encroach significantly on people's time and provide a creative or social outlet for people.