



The Big Conversation Survey

When Shropshire Council needed to make £77m of savings by 2020/21, we launched a 5-year engagement with residents, organisations and partners called our 'Big Conversation'. The aim was simple, to better understand which services residents' value and identify where to prioritise our budget.

Over 2,450 residents and organisations took part in the Big Conversation through a survey, focus groups, workshops and a feedback presentation.

The findings demonstrated that services for vulnerable children and adults, education and transport, were priorities that should be protected from cuts. The feedback also gave us residents views about how we could make savings, increase revenue and improve local involvement to provide services.

Much has happened over the past 12 months. The feedback from our Big Conversation has been used as a basis for our work and in the priorities defined in our 'Corporate Plan', which we are currently finalising.

Thanks to the speed in which we made changes and the team assembled here at Shropshire Council, we are in a better position financially than last year. This is a result of one off funding from our reserves and sale of assets. However, it is important to remember that this only buys us time to explore and find sustainable solutions to provide services to meet the needs of our communities.

The Big Conversation is one of many channels used to seek these solutions and we have set up a survey to gather your thoughts and views; the results of which should ensure that Shropshire remains a great place to live, learn and work.

Please spare some time to take part in this survey. We want to know what you think and your feedback will be used by councillors to inform their decisions about the Council's future budget and which services to provide in the years ahead.

More information about Shropshire's Big Conversation and last years' report can be found at www.shropshire.gov.uk/bigconversation.

If you have any questions about the Big Conversation or the survey, please email BigConversation@shropshire.gov.uk or call the Big Conversation helpline on 0345 678 9028 between the hours of 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

If you would like to complete this survey online, or print additional copies of this questionnaire, you can do so at www.shropshire.gov.uk/bigconversation. Alternatively, you can complete this questionnaire and return it free of charge to **FREEPOST RSXA-YGES-CXCE, Big Conversation, Shropshire Council, Shirehall, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6BR.**

To ensure your views are included please return this questionnaire to us by 31 January 2017.

Your Community

Everyone lives within a community. Some people play an active role as Councillors, volunteering or helping their neighbours. Others keep themselves to themselves. Whatever you prefer to do, we are here to support you and this section details some of the difficulties we have faced, the challenges you set us and how we worked to improve our services.

Our Challenge

- **Shropshire's residents are spread across the County;** we have the same number of residents but are 44 times bigger than Nottinghamshire, this equates to 97 people per square kilometre compared to the average in England of 413 people.
- **Our population is growing;** Shropshire's population grew by 9% between 2001 & 2014.
- **Our population is ageing;** 23% of our population are aged 65 or over compared to 18% nationally.
- **We have higher rates of fuel poverty;** 13% of households live in fuel poverty (17,222 households).

You said

- **Communities need to be enabled to do more:** 61% of Big Conversation survey respondents already volunteer or take part in community activities and 71% agreed with enabling communities to do more for themselves.
- **Support is needed:** Big Conversation workshop participants said it would be easier to be more involved in the community if it were coordinated from a single point, with clear and well communicated information about volunteering.
- **We need to raise income locally:** 56% of survey respondents agreed with introducing fees for some services and 49% agreed council tax should be increased.
- **We should learn from elsewhere and share resources:** You wanted us to look at examples of services being delivered in other areas of the country and at other services we could work more closely with.

What we have already done and what we plan to do:

- **Introduced a new model for youth services,** saving £410,000 per year by localising the commissioning of services through the local joint committees (LJCs).
- **Established a town and parish Council forum** to share ideas, good practice and support the development of joint working and delivery.
- **Saved libraries through community transfer** including Albrighton, Broseley, Shifnal, Craven Arms, Bishop's Castle and Cleobury Mortimer.
- **Working with residents,** to deliver the services you want within the financial restraints we have.

Q1. Based on your experience and the information above, how would you rate our work in communities? (Tick one box only)

- Very good
- Good
- Not very good
- Not at all good
- Can't comment or not applicable
- Other (please state below)

Q2. How active and resourceful do you think your local community is at identifying opportunities to meet its own needs? (Tick one box only)

- Very active and resourceful
- A little active and resourceful
- Not at all active and resourceful
- Don't know

Q3. What are the main things we could do to enable your local community to be more active and resourceful?

Q4. In the last 12 months, have you undertaken any of these activities? (Tick all that apply)

- Financially supported local groups or causes
- Volunteered to support local groups and causes
- Organised social activities and events in your community
- Raised money through sponsored events/activities
- Led a group/ been a member of a committee
- Reported local problems to the relevant organisation/agency
- Picked up litter and looked after the environment
- Been a local councillor
- Provided foster care
- Provided care for someone
- Visited/ befriended or mentored someone
- Provided regular lifts of transport for someone outside of your family
- Voted
- Other (please specify below)

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area (within 15-20 minutes walking distance)? (Tick one box only)

- Definitely agree
- Tend to agree
- Tend to disagree
- Definitely disagree
- Don't know

Q6. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live? (Tick one box only)

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

Healthy People

Shropshire Council plays an enormous role in the health of our county, providing services that directly and indirectly support people to live healthy and independent lives. For instance, our Public Protection Team ensure that businesses are accountable for their customers' safety; more direct support comes from our team of carers who work with those who need help and support. Whatever the help or support someone needs, we will do our best to provide that help and we value your feedback on the services provided.

Our Challenge

- **An ageing population:** The proportion of Shropshire's population aged 65 years and older is significantly above the national average.
- **Health inequalities:** Life expectancy is 5.8 years lower for men and 2.6 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Shropshire than in the least deprived areas.
- **Mental health, including dementia:** In Shropshire, it is thought that just over 7% of people aged 65 years and over have dementia, and this figure is expected to increase to 7.5% for all people aged 65 and over by 2021.
- **Rising obesity:** In Year 6, 15.3% (379) of children are classified as obese, better than the average for England, but addressing this problem early can prevent unhealthy lifestyles from continuing into adulthood.
- **Child poverty:** About 13% (6,200) of children in Shropshire live in low income families. Low household income can cause other challenges that put children at greater risk such as inadequate housing, cold homes and a poor diet.

You said

- **Protect services for vulnerable children:** the most important services are those for vulnerable children; education; and services for older people and vulnerable adults.
- **Prevention reduces long term costs:** you recognised that we spend the majority of our funding on adult social care and that early interventions and prevention to address long-term health could help reduce costs over the coming years.
- **People need ongoing support:** you highlighted the importance of tackling isolation.
- **We could all do more to help:** you noted neighbour support, volunteers and local groups as fundamental in looking after the interests of vulnerable elderly people; and you cited a lack of resources and adequate training as a barrier to supporting older people.
- **Use new technologies:** feedback suggested a better use of IT and digital developments could reduce costs.
- **Work more closely together:** you highlighted the need for partnerships across Shropshire Council and Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to align the delivery of health and social care services.

What we have already done and what we plan to do:

- **Prioritised budgets:** we continue to manage and monitor our budget to protect services for vulnerable people.
- **Improving public information:** we continue to improve the quality of public information. We are also making it easier for people and organisations across the county to access information through various communication channels.
- **Changes in care on leaving hospital:** our adult services and health colleagues are working more closely to improve the care and support for vulnerable people leaving hospital. This will ensure more people are able to return home safely and receive the right support to help them rehabilitate and regain their independence.
- **Investing in community activity:** The Everybody Active Towns community fund project has been designed to help motivate communities to come up with sustainable projects to improve physical activity amongst the less active. The project is now being rolled out across the county.
- **Working in new ways:** We are working with Public Health's Help2Change service to help meet people's needs through social and community led support rather than more costly health interventions.

- **Supporting public partnerships:** we continue work in partnership with health and social care organisations to ensure health and social care services are better aligned and more integrated.

Q7. Based on your experience and the information above, how would you rate our work enabling communities to remain healthy or improve their health? (Tick one box only)

- Very good
- Good
- Not very good
- Not at all good
- Can't comment or not applicable
- Other (please state below)

Q8. Living a healthy lifestyle can prevent problems from developing and stop you from needing to access health and care services. Which of the following describes you? (Tick all that apply)

- I stay active
- I avoid most or all unhealthy habits
- I eat well
- I look after my mental and physical wellbeing
- I manage stress / I have no stress
- I get a good night's sleep
- I support my friends and family with leading a healthy lifestyle
- None of the above

Q9. What are the main things Shropshire Council and local health and care providers can do to maintain or improve your health and the health of your community?

You can find out more about healthy living via the web links below.

One You: www.nhs.uk/oneyou

Healthy Shropshire: www.healthyshropshire.co.uk/

Prosperous Economy

In Shropshire, we are proud that we have really low unemployment. However, we also have low wages and our young people leave to seek opportunities that are not yet well developed locally. We want to work with current businesses to understand what they need to grow, and we want to attract the right businesses to Shropshire to provide new jobs, higher wages, and increase the Council's business rate revenue. Part of this will be making sure we have the necessary skills in Shropshire to help our businesses grow, make the County attractive for firms to invest in their future here, and develop the workforce.

Our Challenges

- **Our businesses are small:** 90% of Shropshire businesses employ less than 10 people.
- **We earn less:** Shropshire workers earn an average of £63 less per week than their national counterparts.
- **We have a slow growth rate:** Shropshire's rate of growth since 2014 is +27% compared to +33% nationally.
- **Our population is aging:** The 65+ population rose by 38% (19,600 people) between 2001 and 2014 (resulting in a shrinking population of traditional working age).
- **We lack digital infrastructure:** 43% of Shropshire has no 4G signal.
- **We have greater distances to travel:** Shropshire is in the Department of Health's top 10 areas with the longest travel times and due to the rural nature of our county, only 25% of bus routes can operate on a commercial basis.

You said

- **Attract more businesses:** promote Shropshire as a place to locate in order to raise more income through business rates.
- **Build new homes:** to increase revenue through council tax.
- **Improve broadband connectivity:** to encourage businesses to locate in Shropshire and improve digital connectivity between people and communities.
- **Develop new partnerships:** Creating better linkages between businesses, other public sector bodies and the University Centre Shrewsbury.
- **Work more closely with local businesses:** Encourage further involvement of business in finding solutions to the challenges Shropshire faces.

What we have already done and what we plan to do:

- **Raised council tax:** from 2016 onwards we raised council tax by 3.99%, the maximum amount that we could.
- **Delivered faster broadband** to more than 55,000 premises through the Connecting Shropshire project. The project continues to drive forward improvements to broadband provision for residents and businesses.
- **Increased energy efficiency:** after fitting solar panels to the roof of Shirehall, we expect to save £16,000 per year in electric bills and pay off the investment in 10 years.
- **Developed a new economic vision:** we are prioritising economic prosperity for Shropshire, and setting the direction for economic growth for years to come.
- **Built stronger partnerships:** We have established the Shropshire Estates Partnership comprising of 16 public sector organisations and been awarded £110,000 to develop and submit plans to the Cabinet Office around utilising assets more effectively.
- **Transferred council-owned cafes:** We have contracted out the running of council-owned cafes and restaurants to private companies including The Boathouse in Ellesmere, The Foundry restaurant at Theatre Severn, Stop.Café at Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery and Community cafe at the Lantern in Sundorne.
- **Increased commercialism:** Commercial companies are now running more services without any subsidy from the Council. This has helped achieve £400,000 in savings over the last two years.

- **Promoting innovation:** we are looking to develop a partnership with the private sector which will offer lower cost energy to Shropshire residents, generate potential income for the council, reduce wastage of energy, reduce fuel poverty and enable renewable energy generation.
- **Developing new apprenticeships:** As part of our Apprentice Levy offer, we want to increase the apprentice level 3 and 4 take up across businesses in the county.
- **Being more ambitious:** Following feedback from the Big Conversation, in our Corporate Plan we are being much more ambitious about how we will grow our economy, develop the housing needed and generate new income streams.

Q10. Based on your experience and the information above, how would you rate our work on making our economy more prosperous? (Tick one box only).

- Very good
- Good
- Not very good
- Not at all good
- Can't comment or not applicable
- Other (please state below)

Q11. What could Shropshire Council do to make the local economy more prosperous?

Q12. We work with local businesses and others to encourage investment in Shropshire. Do you see any barriers or opportunities to improve economic prosperity in Shropshire?

Q13. What would encourage you to support local businesses, services and amenities more than you currently do?

How the council operates

Taking into account the challenges we face as well as the views and suggestions from residents and organisations from our Big Conversation. Shropshire Council will continue to:

- **Be innovative and resourceful**; we want to be as efficient as we can be and identifying and pursuing opportunities to generate income which can be invested into services.
- **Operate in a way that promotes the best use of local resources** - In doing so we will make it possible for people and communities to be less reliant on the state and find solutions and help each other, whilst protecting the vulnerable as a priority. To support this we are putting in place the systems and processes and information and technology that will make it possible for people to serve themselves and allow our staff to work differently, closer to the communities and people who need our services, and freed up from fixed office locations.

Q14. In the last 12 months, have you noticed any changes in the services provided by Shropshire Council? (Tick one box only).

- Yes
 No

Q15. If yes, how have changes to services impacted you? (Tick one box only).

- Changes to services have had a positive impact on my life
 Changes to services have had a negative impact on my life
 Changes to services have had a mixed impact (some negative, some positive) on my life
 There has been no impact on my life but there has been a positive impact to someone I know
 There has been no impact on my life but there has been a negative impact to someone I know
 There has been no impact on my life but there has been a negative impact to someone I know
 Don't know / can't comment

Focus Groups

We will be holding focus groups and workshops early in 2017 to discuss the issues raised in this survey. If you would be willing to take part, please leave your name, day time phone and email address (these will not be used for ANY other purpose and the information will be deleted at the end of this research).

Name:

Phone number:

Email address:

About you

The questions in this section will be used in our analysis of our findings. They will not be used to identify individuals.

Q17. Are you a Shropshire.....? (Tick all that apply).

- Resident
- Business
- Council staff
- Councillor
- Representative for a town or parish council
- Representative for a voluntary or community sector (VCS) group
- Representative for a local interest, community or faith group
- Provider of public services
- Representative for a Local Joint Committees (LJCs)
- Other (please state below)

Q18. Are you? (Tick one box only).

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Prefer not to say

Q19. How old are you? (Tick one box only).

- Under 16 years old
- 16-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75 or older
- Prefer not to say

Q20. What is your postcode?

Q21. Which one of the following best describes your working status? (Tick one box only).

- Employed (employee/self-employed)
- Unemployed
- Student (not working)
- Looking after family/home
- Long term sick or disabled
- Retired
- Not working (e.g. volunteering)
- Prefer not to say

Q22. How would you describe your ethnic background? (Tick one box only).

- White: British
- White: Irish
- White: Gypsy and Traveller
- White: Eastern European
- White: Other
- Black or Black British: African
- Black or Black British: Caribbean
- Black or Black British: Other
- Mixed Race: White and Black African
- Mixed Race: White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed Race: White and Asian
- Mixed Race: Other
- Asian or Asian British: Indian
- Asian or Asian British: Pakistani
- Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi
- Asian or Asian British: Chinese
- Asian or Asian British: Other
- Any other ethnic background
- Prefer not to say

Q23. Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? (Tick one box only).

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Thank you for completing the survey.

Please return it by 31 January 2017 to:
**FREEPOST RSXA-YGES-CXCE, Big Conversation, Shropshire Council, Shirehall,
Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6BR.**

We will publish the results of the Big Conversation on the Shropshire Council Website at
www.shropshire.gov.uk/BigConversation