

Residents Survey 2018

Summary of analysis and feedback from residents

Having reviewed the analysis of the data, alongside the verbatim responses, WCC believes this demonstrates in general terms, we are doing a good job for residents, but there are nevertheless a few areas listed below where it was agreed that improvement was needed in 2019/2020.

This list has been reflected in the revision to the Council Plan 2018/19 and the adoption of the following Strategic Priorities:

- **Youth Service Provision** – WCC will look at new ways of engaging with this difficult to reach age group to identify opportunities to provide better support or services.
- **Communication with residents** – Despite the work already done to upgrade the website and use of social media, navigation and content of the website will be improved and our use of social media will be more targeted.
- **Environment/Landscape Maintenance** – This was identified as a very high priority in the WCC Neighbourhood Plan and the Residents' Survey has only reinforced the importance of taking steps to ensure standards are maintained and/or enhanced going forward.
- **Community Support Services** – New opportunities need to be found to encourage the formation of local groups and provide practical support (financial, people) to existing groups providing community services. This could mean directly delivering services through the introduction of community support officers and/or perhaps providing things like transport services for the sick and elderly.
- **Getting more directly involved** – We will place more emphasis on leading the fight on issues of concern to residents.
- **Dog bins** – Although not considered a strategic matter, it is clearly an important matter to some residents. A survey will be carried out to assess needs against current provision.

We would like to express our thanks to everyone who responded to the survey, you provided many specific comments which we continue to consider through the various committees and working groups. Comments relating to areas outside of WCC's responsibility have been shared with our partners including Thames Valley Police, Milton Keynes Council, The Parks Trust and Arriva.

The following comments provide a summary of issues raised and have been collated into key themes:

Dogs

Residents are keen to ensure that there is sufficient provision of dog bins, in the right locations to enable residents to dispose of dog waste effectively. Other issues raised include the wish for a secure dog walking area, to enable dogs to exercise freely in a safe environment, and lastly there were requests for more enforcement against failing to clean up after dogs and unsupervised dogs on the loose.

It is not always possible to locate dog bins where residents wish, this can be due to land ownership along with consideration to local householders etc.

The Operations Committee have plans to install additional bins to mitigate problems of overuse.

Our wardens will continue to monitor and educate regarding disposing of dog waste however, enforcement is extremely difficult as it can only be applied where the offence is witnessed by the officer at the time. Provision of dog wardens is the responsibility of Milton Keynes Council and would not be a viable option for the Community Council.

Landscaping

WCC continues to monitor the status of the landscaping in the area. The MKC budget cuts have affected the service delivered by Serco, one example is the removal of the requirement to spray the weeds except around signposts and street furniture. WCC are continuing to prioritise the landscaping, with projects to look at options to repair verge damage where feasible and also environmental improvements by using The Conservation Volunteers and our own Parish Guardians who do a fantastic job, not forgetting of course the ongoing work of our own Wardens who carry out reactive work to address urgent needs, such as brambles encroaching on footpaths.

One successful project is tackling the overgrown ponds, however, this has to be carried out in stages, only clearing one third of the pond per year, to maintain the biodiversity of the pond. This work is carried out in the winter months and will continue to create more open water for the ponds to thrive.

The brook at Browns Wood Sports Ground will similarly be cleared of overgrown shrubs this winter, once the land has formally transferred to WCC. However, the brook itself is the responsibility of the Inland Drainage Board.

Litter

We received many requests to increase the number of litter bins around the area. There are again several factors which are beyond the Community Council's control which impact this:

All land managed by the Parks Trust, including Caldecotte Lake one of the main areas raised in the survey, is the Trust's responsibility to oversee.

The general day to day waste management, including litter collection on all other Council land is the responsibility of Milton Keynes Council. Over recent years, as with many other services, the emptying of litter bins and street litter picking has been reduced in frequency, therefore there is no opportunity to request additional bins, or increased frequency of collections by Milton Keynes Council.

Whilst the option for WCC to pay for the installation of bins from future precept budgets may be considered, this would also require an ongoing payment for collection on a regular basis.

WCC will continue to promote the Parish Guardians project whilst also promoting to all members of the community to dispose of their rubbish considerately.

Roads and Redways

It will come as no surprise that potholes were a major concern, along with the state of some of the redways. The WCC Wardens regularly monitor the situation across the area, taking measurements and photographs for evidence. Reports are made

direct to MKC and we continue to work with the Highways Officer covering the area to improve all public highways, including footpaths, redways and the roads. The replacement of the directional waymarker signs has proved a long and frustrating project. Following the successful installation of the first phase of signs, we have long awaited the remaining batch of signs and also the replacement of a few signs which were incorrect or wrongly located. Unfortunately, MKC have changed the specification of the signs which has delayed the project. WCC continue to press for the works to be completed, we understand the final specification has now been agreed and the signs are on order.

Similarly, the replacement of the underpass/bridge signs was held up whilst the new specification was agreed. Despite the original intention for the reference to the road above the sign to be included (e.g. H9), the final decision lay with MKC and as this is a citywide 'sign convention' we are unable to change the agreed specification.

Play areas

The play areas across the area are the responsibility of Milton Keynes Council to maintain. However, WCC recognised the importance of play provision and has worked in partnership with MKC to review facilities at a time of reducing budgets. Assessments were made, taking account of consultations carried out over the last few years, alongside the hard facts of budgetary implications. The process looked at play value, location and accessibility, status of current equipment and proximity to other play areas.

A programme of refurbishment has been ongoing to ensure each estate has access to good quality play areas, whilst some smaller sites with only one or two items of equipment were agreed to be removed once they reach the end of life.

The time taken for some projects has also been longer than expected. As the areas are owned and managed by MKC, regardless of whether WCC fund the project, the work has to be carried out by MKC contractors and therefore the schedule is beyond WCC's control.

Until now, the majority of the works have been carried out with match funding from both MKC and WCC, however with MKC grants now having been reduced, future decisions for play area improvements will rely on WCC funding or external grants which we will continue to explore.

The relocation of the play areas at Browns Wood Sports Ground have been delayed due to the planning conditions imposed by MKC for the whole development. We continue to work with the planners to discharge the conditions and will commence work immediately on the play equipment, pump track and outdoor gym once this is achieved.

Communications

Overall, residents generally felt they were able to access information when they needed it. However, we continue to review our engagement and are increasing our online presence. Walton Matters will continue as a hard-copy magazine three times a year along with targeted leaflet drops to promote specific events etc.

Producing a newsletter, whether online or for print is resource intensive, at this time it is not feasible to increase the frequency with the current staff resource. We will continue to promote all news, activities and events via Facebook and Twitter for which we have an ever increasing audience.

WCC meeting agendas are posted on the noticeboards and on the website a minimum of 5 days before the relevant meeting. Public are welcome to attend these

meetings, with a 15 minute opportunity at the start of each meeting for public speaking.

Crime

We are fortunate to live in a relatively low crime area, but WCC work closely in partnership with our local Neighbourhood Police Team to reduce crime and address fear of crime.

The new facility at Browns Wood Sports Ground is being constructed to 'Secured By Design' standards and will incorporate features including external CCTV and lighting to the building and car park, alarm, security shutters along with the management of the facility incorporating regular checks and security measures.

Transport

WCC are operating a community speedwatch scheme, where concerns are raised of speeding within the estates, speedwatch sessions can be organised to assess the situation.

Parking on verges is a big problem in certain areas within the estates, WCC is continuing to work with MKC to assess options to address this in key locations.

Options may include double yellow lines, bollards and/or creation of additional parking but will be different according to the circumstances. The process can take some time to pursue due to legal processes, land ownership and budget.

The land opposite Heronsgate School is owned by Milton Keynes Community Foundation and is designated for community use. The Walton Neighbourhood Plan encourages the provision of shared parking for school drop-off and pick-up time as and when the land is developed.

Partners responsibility

WCC have shared your concerns with the following partners:

Parks Trust:

Request for increased bins and litter clearance at Caldecotte Lake

Better maintenance of Caldecotte brook

Thames Valley Police

More regular patrols

Youths congregating in the underpasses

Youths sitting in cars at Walnut Tree pavilion, Bourton Low along with noise and rubbish

Milton Keynes Council

Potholes

Poor redway surfaces

Excess litter

Overgrown shrubs, particularly on redways, footpaths and around play areas

Dogs running loose

Street lighting not working

Graffiti in the underpass

Broken street name plates

Directional waymarker signs, missing or wrong

Parking enforcement