



## **Community Survey 2018**

Lowestoft Town Council was created in 2017. Its sole purpose is to manage its assets and services to benefit local people and the Lowestoft parish. Some of the assets that were transferred to the Council are quite run down. An essential part of determining the future financing and care of these assets and our services is knowing the views of local people. We are looking at the budget at our Full Council and Finance and Governance Committee meetings for the remainder of the year (details on our website). To help make these budget decisions, the Council issued a survey which was made available in hard copy, online and was advertised in the local press. We will publish the full results.

We would like to thank all of those people who took the time to respond. Not only did we receive clear indications of the direction we should be taking in relation to the questions we asked, but also a large number of helpful detailed and broader ideas and suggestions. This shows the value of collecting views from people across the town to help inform the Council's decisions.

Of the 407 responses, there was a reasonable spread of responses, geographically across the town and across age groups (about 68% in the range 21-64 and about 29% 65 and over). The Council recognises that it needs to consider special steps to engage with young people where appropriate.

The following is a summary of the responses:

### **Town Hall**

**Are you in favour of restoring the Town Hall for future use for the benefit of Lowestoft?**

**Do you have any ideas for the future use of the Town Hall?**

Nearly 85% of respondents were in favour of restoration to benefit Lowestoft. The Council is acting now to take forward restoration and beneficial use. This is a significant undertaking. We have started by applying for funding for emergency repairs and we are working with an initiative known as Heritage Action Zone so that we can try and lever in the expertise and funding we need to deliver this ambition for you. We will be considering all of your ideas and over coming years, we will endeavour to make progress on this long-term and exciting project. Please continue to contribute your ideas through each stage.

### **Marina Theatre**

**How many times have you and your family visited the Marina Theatre during the past year?**

**Are you in favour of Lowestoft Town Council continuing to offer financial support to the Marina Theatre?**

Over half of respondents had visited the Theatre 1 to 4 times during the past year and over 14% had visited 5 or more times. About a third had not visited the Theatre during the past year. The Council has made the Marina Theatre Trust aware of these findings and we will promote the Theatre's exciting programme to the public. Not only was the Council pleased to see that so many people were

visiting the Theatre but it also welcomed the fact that about 86% of respondents were positive about the Town Council continuing to support the Theatre financially. The Council is currently reviewing its budget for 2019-20 and will continue to care for the building, to secure an agreement to support theatre services, and will work with the Marina Theatre Trust about its future business planning for that site. The Council is already working closely with the Marina Theatre Trust, its Board and its new Chief Executive. The Council has also supported the future of the Theatre by purchasing the neighbouring building which houses the Box Office and the café. We were delighted that the public supported this purchase and appreciated the one-off nature of this opportunity and the urgent need for a decision in a tight timescale.

## **Public conveniences**

### **Do you value the toilets provided by the Town Council?**

#### **Where else in the Town do you think toilets should be provided?**

Nearly three quarters value the toilets. We will make it clear which toilets are owned by us and we will look into ways of making the availability of the toilets more widely known. We are developing a strategy for the provision of toilets which will be reviewed in light of the results of this survey. The strategy will include upgrades and modernisation, applying for external funding where possible. Many suggestions were made for locations of new toilets, including more along the seafront. Toilets are expensive to build and maintain so careful consideration will be given to whether any renovations or new facilities are possible. We will advise Waveney District Council of the findings of the survey as they are the other provider of public conveniences in the town and are the other major landowner of public space where requests have been made for further facilities.

## **Sporting facilities (Denes Oval Tennis, Cricket and Putting Green; Kensington Gardens Tennis and Bowls; Normanston Park Cricket, Football and Tennis; Sparrows Nest Bowls)**

### **The Town Council, in partnership with local sports clubs, recently decided to make all these facilities free to use for a trial period. Has this encouraged you to use them?**

About 16% of respondents were already using the facilities and there were some indications that others liked to attend and watch others play and others still were unaware of the trial but supported the principle. About 52% in total supported the free use of facilities and this will be fed into our review of the trial. As a result of this survey, we will also make more information available about our leisure facilities, including through social media. We are delighted that some clubs have used this free trial period to increase use, provide coaching or improve facilities. As part of the budget assessment for 19-20, we will consider a form of continuation of this policy or increased use of grants to support clubs and residents to ensure increased use of our leisure facilities.

## **Community Halls (Gunton Estate Community Meeting Hall, Kirkley Sports and Social Club, Uplands Community Centre and Whitton Residents' Hall)**

### **Do you value the provision of these facilities?**

Just over 60% of respondents said they value the halls, although it is appreciated that they are more accessible to some depending on where people live. We will continue to make these halls available for community groups and help promote their use. We will also on an ongoing basis explore options for making more community space available to residents.

## **Allotments (South of Kirkley Fen Park, North of St Margaret's Road, South West of Yarmouth Road, South of Saxon Road, off Prospect Place, North of Stradbroke Road, West of Kirkley Park Road, North West of London Road South, South of Church Road, North West of Blackheath Road)**

### **Do you have an allotment or are you interested in having one?**

Nearly 80% respondents were not interested in allotments but about 18% would like an allotment if one were available. We recognise that allotment provision generally serves a small number of

people and that there are a limited number of spaces. We will review our open spaces needs assessment and work with the Lowestoft and District Allotments Association to assess the current provision and explore whether external funding for further plots, community orchards and gardens and other community open space can be made available.

### **Triangle Market**

#### **Would you support a market at this location?**

#### **Views on market provision in the town and types of stalls?**

There was strong demand for a market among those responding with about 83% supporting a market in the Triangle with about 9% against. The Town Council will put together proposals for consideration for a market at this location and we are grateful for the many views on the type of stalls that would be welcome, which will be considered as part of the proposal and decision. The Town Council will also consider making budgetary provision for a trial period for a market in 2019-20, potentially for one or two days per week and for any staff, stalls and promotional material needed.

### **Parks and Open Spaces**

#### **How many times have you used the parks in the last year?**

#### **What are your suggestions for improvements?**

It is clear from the responses that some of the main parks (which include toilet and good play facilities) are used relatively well. We will make sure that we make it clear which parks we own and improve signage and public information. We are already investing in some of the parks and you will see more improvement in due course. We are pleased to have received your many detailed suggestions, which include requests for wi-fi and more bins and we will consider them within our review of improvements and budgets for the parks and open spaces. We understand from you that your expectation is that there is investment in improvements.

### **CCTV**

#### **What CCTV provision do you think there should be within the town?**

#### **Are there additional measures you would like to suggest to make the town a safer place?**

About 19% of responses were in favour of maintaining CCTV as it is, whereas over 40% indicated that the Town Council should either increase the CCTV coverage or that we should replace the system with a modern, vandal-proof efficient system (about 60%). Respondents could tick more than one option. The desire for a modern CCTV system and increased security in the town was clear and we will review the many considered responses that you provided and liaise with Suffolk Police and others as needed. This will include emphasising to the Police the number of responses in favour of an increased visible Police presence on the streets. The Council will be exploring an increased budget of at least £25k for investment in the CCTV system and will be looking at the broader question of security in the town.

### **Environmental improvements**

#### **Do you agree with Lowestoft Town Council spending money to support environmental changes such as improvements to the North Denes area, more litter bins, tree planting and increased biodiversity?**

There was a strong response and a clear message with nearly 90% being positive about improvements. We will be looking at various measures to create improvements and will budget and seek funding accordingly. For example, we will consider community orchards, a sensory garden and more trees and we will put in place a suitable strategy for delivering this. We will also work with others to achieve projects and we will be major stakeholders in the development of our land,

including to ensure the 'East of England Park' and Heritage Action Zone initiatives are a success and bring significant benefits to local people.

### **Cycle paths and cycle parking**

#### **Would you like to see more cycle paths and provision for cycle parking?**

Nearly 71% indicated that they would like to see more provision for parking. We will do what we can to influence relevant authorities when they make decisions about cycling facilities. We will incorporate positive views about cycling provision in our Neighbourhood Plan and we will influence planning applications where appropriate. We will communicate your views to Suffolk County Council Highways and to Waveney District Council as the planning authority. We will press for clearly defined cycle paths. We will encourage Greater Anglia Railway and others to make their cycle hire known – including the 'Bike & Go' system at the railway station. We will consider more cycle parking facilities at our key parks where use is high.

### **Healthy and Active Lifestyles**

#### **The Town Council are trying to encourage healthy and active lifestyles. What other facilities should we be considering?**

We are grateful for the range of suggestions provided and will look at options for outdoor adult gyms, water fountains and other measures which might increase use of open spaces. We will also review our existing play equipment provision when it comes up for replacement or improvement. We have already invested in play areas and we will build on this success. We want to adopt the best options for modern and desirable facilities and will examine our budget and explore funding opportunities to try and achieve this.

#### **What is good about Lowestoft?**

The big plusses (liked by over 50% of respondents) were the beaches, heritage, the most-easterly point, the parks and public transport. We will make the most we can of those areas within our control and will influence others to do likewise. We will promote Lowestoft to visitors and others. We were pleased to see how positive people were about a range of Lowestoft assets and we will contribute where we can to increasing the pride in Lowestoft. We will consider these views as part of the development of our neighbourhood plan.

#### **What is bad about Lowestoft?**

The big negatives (disliked by over 50%) were the crime rate, lack of employment opportunities, the shops and traffic flow. Where we reasonably can, we will help reduce these problems, including through working with others who are well-positioned to make a direct difference.

#### **What could be better about Lowestoft?**

Over 50% of respondents wanted the following issues to be better: employment opportunities, litter, fly-tipping and waste disposal, the range of shops and restaurants, transport planning and use of the waterfronts (coast and harbour). As with the previous two questions, we will do what we reasonable can to help make improvements and influence others to do likewise.