



South Staffordshire Viewpoint

What You Told Us and What We've Done in 2007/08

South Staffordshire Viewpoint was formed in early 2005 and consists of around 1000 local residents. The panel is recruited and managed by a specialist company, called BMG Research.

What **you** tell us in our postal surveys helps the Council understand what local issues matter to you.

The results of each survey are analysed and used by the Council to help it decide how it should best spend your money over the next twelve months.

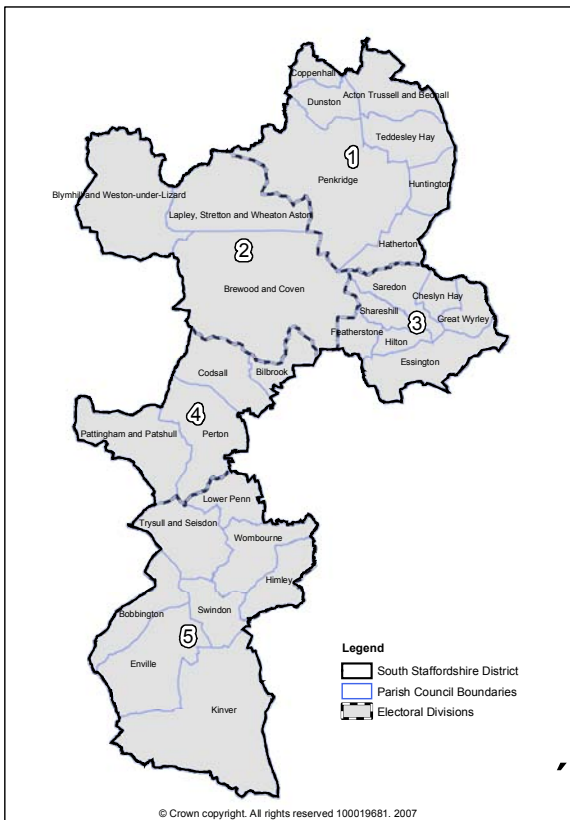
We know that villages up and down the district have different needs, which is why we have divided the district into five 'Localities', to make sure that we can provide different solutions to different problems, for everyone.

Your views are really important to us and I would like to thank you for taking the time to respond to our surveys over the past twelve months.

In this newsletter are just some of the main points you have raised in the surveys, and some of the steps we've taken as a result.

Kind regards,

Councillor Brian Edwards
Leader of South Staffordshire Council



Locality 1	Acton Trussell, Bednall & Teddesley Hay, Dunston with Coppenhall Hatherton Huntington Penkridge
Locality 2	Brewood & Coven Blymhill & Weston under Lizard Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston
Locality 3	Cheslyn Hay Great Wyrley Essington Featherstone Hilton Saredon Shareshill
Locality 4	Codsall Bilbrook Perton Patttingham & Patshull
Locality 5	Bobbington Enville Kinver Lower Penn Himley Swindon Trysull & Seisdon Wombourne

The Environment

Since the summer of 2007, the Viewpoint panel have responded to three postal surveys and some of you may have been involved in a focus group to help the Council prioritise its budget for the next twelve months.

This is what you told us, and what we've done since.



What You Told Us...

Since 2007, 83% of you told us that there is enough open space in your local area and 71% of you also told us that the quality of our open spaces have improved or stayed the same over the last two years.

58% of you also said that improvements to open spaces should be a high priority for South Staffordshire Council.

What We've Done...

A draft Open Space Strategy has been produced with public and stakeholder consultation having taken place in September and October 2008. The finalised Open Space Strategy will be published shortly and will form the basis for improvements to local open spaces over the next ten years.

Last year in Cheslyn Hay for example, the Council helped make improvements to existing open space in the village centre with creation of a new civic space based around the war memorial.

What You Told Us...

The spaces/ facilities most commonly described by you as insufficient or absent were: young people and children's facilities such as play areas, skate parks and multi-use games areas.

What We've Done...

A new Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) has been installed in Perton centre, developed through partnership funding from the Big Lottery, South Staffordshire Council and Perton Parish Council.

The MUGA offers a great place for young people to play safely, and its construction was tied in to the scheduled development work around the lake edge and the planned refurbishment of the adjacent children's play area to minimise disruption.

What You Told Us...

You said that the Council should work to provide Site Interpretation Boards at some of our most visited open spaces.

What We've Done...

New interpretation boards have been installed at Wyrley Essington Canal and Wom Brook Walk as part of a series of improvements to the access to the sites.

A toposcope detailing all major visible landscape features and landmarks has now also been designed and is set to be installed at Shoal Hill Common by the end of March.

The Environment

What You Told Us...

A high proportion of you thought that fixed penalty notes should be given for: dropping chewing gum (85%), and cigarettes (86%) on public land and also to owners who fail to clean up after their dog has fouled on public land.

**get your butt
off our streets!**



**bin it or risk
a fine of £75**

What We've Done...

South Staffordshire Council acknowledges that litter is a concern for the residents in the District because litter can give the appearance of an area being uncared for and run down.

South Staffordshire Council's Environmental Enforcement Team issues £75 fixed penalties for the offence of littering. Litter includes chewing gum, cigarette butts and smoking related litter, which thanks to the comments and views of the Viewpoint Panel, has helped us bring

together an Enforcement Strategy and launch our successful '**Get your butts off our Streets**' cigarette litter campaign. Enforcement action is also taken against people failing to remove dog fouling on public land. A £50 fine is issued to anyone found committing this offence. Between April 2007 and December 2008, twenty fixed penalties have been issued for littering and dog fouling offences. Whenever evidence is obtained regarding a littering or dog fouling offence, the Council investigate the matter fully and takes enforcement action where appropriate.

What You Told Us...

You told us that fast food and crisp/sweet wrappers were two of the largest litter problems. You also thought that the Council should invest in more road sweeper vehicles.



What We've Done...

ENCAMS (Environmental Campaigns Charity) produced a 'local environmental quality report' for 2007/2008 which revealed that confectionary packaging was found at 59% of the locations that they surveyed in South Staffordshire.

This information, as well as the evidence provided by the Viewpoint Panel, has seen the Council invest in a brand new mechanical road sweeping machine to help make our streets cleaner. We have also reviewed some of our litter picking rounds and frequencies to target litter "hotspots" more effectively. We've also invested significantly in new and replacement litterbins.

We shall also continue to run targeted campaigns locally to encourage people not to drop litter.

The Environment

What You Told Us...

A large majority of the Panel told us that increasing the types of material that could be recycled was an important issue, as well as increasing the overall amount we recycle.

What We've Done...

In 2007/08, South Staffordshire residents diverted 22,351 tonnes of waste from landfill, meaning a recycling and composting rate of over 46%. This is the highest amount we've ever recycled and composted and places the Council in the top 10% in the country. All properties in the District now have access to a paper/card recycling scheme whilst over 96% of residents are also able to recycle glass, cans, plastic bottles and garden waste.

The Council are now also collecting Tetra Pak-like cartons from recycling banks at 6 locations across the District.

A trial food waste composting collection is currently taking place in parts of Cheslyn Hay, which allows residents to place cooked and uncooked food waste in their green wheeled bin where it is subsequently collected and treated at a local in-vessel compost facility.



During 2009, existing paper/card communal recycling facilities in blocks of flats for example, will be complemented by the collection of glass, cans and plastic bottles ensuring that by the end of the year, every property in the District will have access to a kerbside collection of at least 4 materials.

Clear Streets

tackling illegal parking

Helping to keep our villages safe and moving

www.staffordshire.gov.uk/parking



Working in Partnership with



What You Told Us...

Overall, most people didn't feel that parking was a major issue across the District. However, there are 'hot-spots' across the District where people parking improperly and inconsiderately is a problem.

What We've Done...

South Staffordshire Council has now signed up to a partnership agreement with Staffordshire County Council to undertake civil parking enforcement in our district. This will relieve the Police from the burden of dealing with parking offences and also help to make our busier village centres safer and less congested. The '**Clear Streets**' enforcement initiative is set to "go live" from March 2009.

The Environment

What You Told Us...

The majority of our residents (79%) have some concerns about climate change, 31% stating it concerned them a **great deal**.

55% of you also stated that it is one of the most significant problems facing future generations.

What We've Done...

South Staffordshire Council started to embrace this challenge in 2006, The Council signed the 'Staffordshire Declaration on Climate Change', and through this a climate change strategy and action plan was launched in March 2008. The actions put in place will not only reduce the Council's own impact on the environment but will also help us to adapt to the inevitable effects that our changing climate will bring. Copies of this strategy are available at www.sstaffs.gov.uk/climatechange.



A study of residents living in Staffordshire, conducted by Staffordshire County Council showed that residents want to take action on climate change but don't know where to start. As a result, a new website about climate change and what we can all do to reduce our impact has been launched. The Our Climate, Our County, Our Choice site (www.staffsoc3.org.uk) was launched in June 2008 and contains everything from no cost energy saving measures to advice on renewable energy schemes.

As part of the Council's aim to communicate climate change and energy saving measures more effectively, a number of advice surgeries, giveaways and talks have been given across the District in the last twelve months. These talks have been successful in promoting schemes such as free insulation measures for residents over 70, and the Council has also negotiated cheaper insulation rates for all of our residents. We hope to build on these achievements in 2009, by helping to create the first Low Carbon Communities for South Staffordshire in Essington and Wombourne.



Community Safety

What You Told Us...

63% of residents said they felt safe outside after dark in their neighbourhoods whilst 24% said they felt unsafe. 92% said they felt safe during the daytime.

The three most common reasons people gave for feeling unsafe (day or night) were: large numbers of young people "hanging about" (73%), absence of Police and street wardens (73%) and the level of crime reported in the local newspaper (38%).



What We've Done...

Youth workers now visit various village centres on a regular basis, working on the streets with young people and helping to build relationships between young and old.

There are also now 15 PCSOs in South Staffordshire who all create a visible police presence and are building a rapport with local communities. We will continue to promote Community Safety through the South Staffordshire Review newspaper whilst also working with the local media to promote new projects and initiatives that we are working on to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

What You Told Us...

When asked about how much of a problem anti-social behaviour was in your neighbourhood (within 15 minutes walk of your home), just over half of you stated that anti-social behaviour is not a problem.

However, people living in Locality 4 were more likely to say that they thought anti-social behaviour was an issue.

What We've Done...

As already mentioned, a new Multi-Use Games area where young people can play a variety of different games including basketball, football and netball in a safe, self-contained area either with youth workers and community development officers leading or on their own in groups.



Weekly boxing sessions for youngsters aged 9-13 and 13+ have also been established at Codsall Leisure Centre whilst Street Dancing Sessions, run by a young person for young people has also proven popular.

A fishing project 'Casts', providing young people with their own fishing kit and certificate of attendance has been launched recently and a Student Fire Fighter Course, offering young people the chance to learn about fire safety and being a fire fighter, started in January.

Leisure and Health

What You Told Us...

Through the budget focus groups, you told us that improving disabled access to our Leisure Centres and refurbishing Codsall Leisure Centre swimming pool should be a priority.

What We've Done...

The replacement of the fitness suite equipment at Penkridge Leisure Centre included modern up-to-date equipment for use by disabled users. This installation brings Penkridge into line with all the other South Staffordshire fitness suites all of which now have similar equipment. The Penkridge project, which also includes a new lift to the first floor, making access available for all to the whole of the Leisure Centre, is currently under construction.



New Disabled changing facilities at Wombourne Leisure Centre have also been installed whilst the swimming pool changing facilities at Penkridge can now be used by those with disabilities.

Funding has now also been identified for the Codsall Swimming Pool project, which is scheduled to start later this summer.

What You Told Us...

Satisfaction levels for all the leisure activities the Council provides remains consistently high. You cited walking as your favourite activity, with 37% having used the healthy walks/walking festival; 34% having used the Staffordshire Railway Walk and 32% having used Baggeridge Country Park.



What We've Done...

We are continuing to extend our Healthy Walks Programme across South Staffordshire which aims to encourage people, particularly those who take little exercise, to do regular short walks in their communities. Short led walks are being developed within local communities which last between 30 minutes and 2hrs. The walks are of particular benefit to people with Heart Disease, older people, and those who generally want to keep fit and healthy.

We have recently added a new walk to our Healthy Walks Programme which takes place in Wombourne every Thursday at 12 noon from Wombourne Civic Centre.

We have provided training and support for volunteer walk leaders and have produced information on established walking groups and independent walking within South Staffordshire. The popular annual Walking Festival will also be back in June 2009.

Leisure and Health

What You Told Us...

You told us that we should continue to offer coaching sessions to children and young people across the District as part of our Leisure Service. You also felt that the Council should continue to provide the Big Summer Event, the annual family fun day at Baggeridge Country Park.



What We've Done...

In partnership with the Staffordshire Children's Fund, over 300 local children came to Baggeridge Country Park in August 2008 for the third consecutive Council-run Big Summer Event. The Event is still completely **FREE**, and offers games and activities full of fun as a finale to their summer holidays.

What You Told Us...

With regards to health, wellbeing and keeping fit, those aged 25-44 said they would be interested in one-to-one support with a health trainer. Those aged 45-64 favoured receiving more information and advice on weight management. Interestingly, both groups said they would be interested in organised walking groups.

What We've Done...

The Council has worked closely with South Staffordshire Primary Care Trust to help develop their new 'health trainer' service. The health trainers are available across the District to support anyone for up to 6 months who would like to make changes to their lifestyle such as quitting smoking, losing weight or just trying to get healthy. We are supporting the service by developing direct referral routes for residents to local health trainers. The Council has now introduced a new Health and Wellbeing Team who are now working closely with the local community and local businesses to deliver targeted health programmes.

Furthermore, we have also been given external funding to deliver a three year "Health Watch Project" to complement the Health Trainers Programme. This will fund two Physical Activity Deliverers who will develop and deliver new and existing physical activities for people of all ages and abilities across District. For further information about the Health Trainer Service and the Health Watch Programme please contact the Health & Wellbeing Team on 01902 696684.

Housing

What You Told Us...

43% of you told us that you were worried about the lack of affordable housing in your village.

What We've Done...

The Council, together with local Housing Association's, have helped deliver 45 new affordable homes in 2007/08.

From April to December 2008 a further 74 have been delivered with the likelihood of this figure being over 100 by March 2009. This represents an increase of around 700% over the last 2 years. These new homes have helped local younger people, families and older people. They have also helped people who need rented homes as well as shared ownership homes before they take their first steps into home ownership.

We will continue to work closely with Housing Associations to deliver more affordable homes, and we are also working to provide affordable Extra Care housing for the elderly to meet the housing and care needs of the District's ageing population.

A well managed Council

What You Told Us...

In the budget setting focus groups, you told us that providing additional telephone lines to support the development of a contact centre should be a priority.



South Staffordshire Council

What We've Done...

The Council's Contact Centre is now up and running and has taken over 83,000 telephone calls since April 2008. We are currently working to extend the scope of calls which can be dealt with by Customer Services staff at first point of contact rather than customers having to be transferred to other departments.



Did You Know?

65% of you are satisfied with the way South Staffordshire Council runs things, whilst only 7% were dissatisfied. This is an improvement from 2005 when 61% were satisfied, and just over 10% were dissatisfied.

What You Told Us...

The most popular means of receiving information about the Council and the services it provides is via the Council's newspaper, The South Staffordshire Review.

What We've Done...

The Council continues to produce the 'Review' newspaper 3-4 times a year. The newspaper is delivered to every household across the District and gives useful information on what's happening within the Council and what services we offer. The Review can now be read online at www.sstaffs.gov.uk.

A well managed Council

What You Told Us...

Just under half of the panel were aware that the Council investigates benefit fraud, whilst only 10% recall

What We've Done...

The Council works hard to ensure that those who deliberately claim for benefits that they know they are not entitled to are caught.

We are continuing to promote the contact details for our Fraud service throughout the district in local post offices, leisure centres and local libraries. Residents can even report suspicions of benefit fraud, anonymously, by our 24-hour hotline number. Residents can also report suspicions online.

In 2007/8 the number of people prosecuted by the Council for benefit fraud doubled, whilst the Council managed to get back over £117,000 worth of money that had been wrongfully claimed.

What You Told Us...

Just over half of you felt well informed as to where you could get information about Council Tax, whilst just 31% of the panel knew how to find information on Housing Benefit.

What We've Done...

The Council's Revenues and Benefits Team produce regular information that can always be found in the Review newspaper. They have also begun to work much closer with other organisations such as Age Concern, the Citizens Advice Bureau and Job Centre Plus to make sure that more and more residents are aware of the Services we provide.

We are also making sure that useful information regarding tax and benefits can be found easily online.

It is also hoped that in 2009, weekly advice surgeries will also be run at various locations across the District.



**Benefit thieves,
someone, somewhere,
could be reporting
you now.**

The benefit fraud hotline 0800 854 440 gets hundreds of calls every day from people reporting benefit thieves.

Call in confidence about any suspected benefit fraud in your area on:

0500 658 008

or email your local council at:
benefitsinvestigation@sstaffs.gov.uk

 South Staffordshire Council

NO IFS, NO BUTS. Benefit fraud is a crime, break the law and you could face a criminal record.

dwp.gov.uk/benefit-thieves **TARGETING**  **BENEFIT THIEVES**