



South Staffordshire Council

# **SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE VIEWPOINT**



**2006-2007**



# South Staffordshire Viewpoint

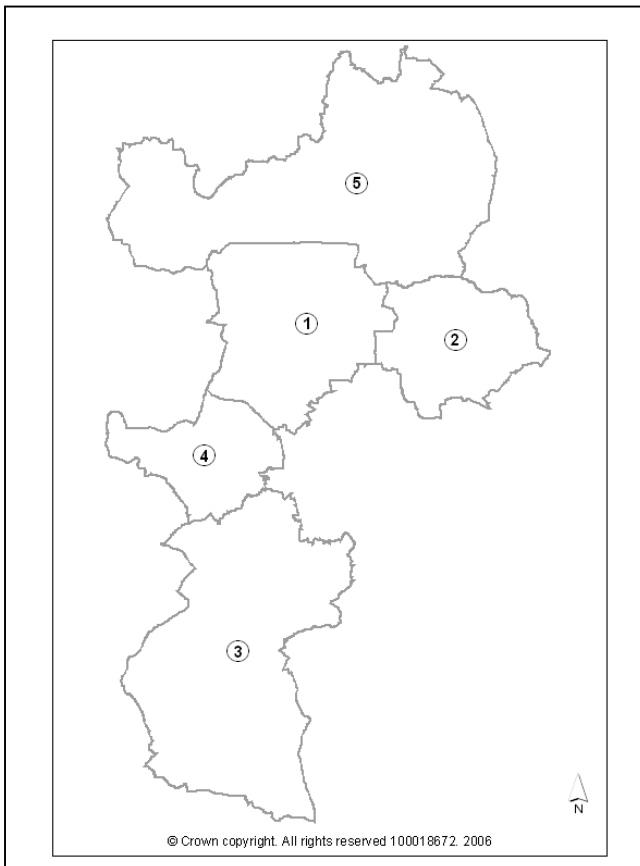
## Results of your Feedback in 2006/07

South Staffordshire's residents panel 'South Staffordshire Viewpoint' was formed in 2005 and consists of between 1000 – 1300\* residents. The panel is managed and recruited by BMG Research, and is representative of the District in relation to a series of measures including age, gender and economic status.

Around one-third of the panel list is refreshed annually to ensure that no individuals are asked to sit on the panel for any longer than three years.

The results of the surveys are compiled into a report then broken down to help the Council target and deliver its services and provisions across the District. The District is grouped into five Environmental Action Groups (EAG's). The diagram below illustrates:

*\*Numbers vary per year.*



<b>EAG 1:</b>	Billbrook, Brewood, Coven and Codsall.
<b>EAG 2:</b>	Cheslyn Hay, Essington, Featherstone and Brinsford, Great Wyrley, Saredon and Shareshill.
<b>EAG 3:</b>	Bobbington, Enville, Himley, Kinver, Lower Penn, Swindon, Trysull and Seisdon and Wombourne.
<b>EAG 4:</b>	Pattingham and Patshull and Perton.
<b>EAG 5:</b>	Acton Trussell, Bednall and Teddersley Hay, Blymhill and Weston Under Lizard, Dunston with Coppenhall, Hatherton, Huntingdon, Lapley, Stretton and Wheaton Aston and Penkridge.

Results from this year's surveys are as follows:

## Priority Challenge 2006/07 – conducted June/July 2006

This followed on from last year's Priority Challenge survey, which ascertained your views on the Council's aims, objectives and key targets. This year's survey was designed to help the Council delve deeper into what you feel should be our main objectives.

Summary of responses	What have we done?
<b>Aim 1: A Council which Celebrates and Improves South Staffordshire's Distinctive Environment.</b>	
<p>You told us that the top two characteristics that made the most contribution to where you lived were: Green spaces around the buildings (68%) and Buildings with a variety of ages (51%).</p>	<p>We consulted residents and young people regarding green spaces and then commissioned an open space audit to identify local needs; current open spaces in the district; their uses and potential uses. This will inform a Green Space Strategy, which will set out how we will improve the appearance, functionality, usage, accessibility and environmental aspects of our green spaces.</p>
<p>Out of a list of potential environmental problems, your top concern was the state of the street scene (98%). 94% of you were concerned about building development/ loss of open space, whilst 87% expressed concern about climate change/ global warming.</p>	<p>We achieved our best ever performance for BV199a (street cleanliness), whilst also achieving efficiency gains and have invested in additional street cleansing capacity for the forthcoming year. <i>(More information with regards to climate change and energy conservation can be found in the 'budget consultation' section)</i></p>
<p>97% of residents think that recycling their own rubbish is important, with 80% stating it to be <u>very</u> important.</p>	<p>We widened the kerbside recycling scheme to include 'hard to reach' properties and commenced a partial provision to flats. 96% of households now receive the full service and 99% are able to recycle paper and cardboard. The recycling rate increased to 44% from 10% before the scheme commenced.</p>

Summary of responses	What have we done?
<p>If given the opportunity, 72% residents said they would like to recycle food/kitchen waste in their green recycling bin.</p>	<p>The trial food waste collection commenced in February 2007 and covers 1,394 properties within the Cheslyn Hay area. Residents are able to place all food wastes (cooked and uncooked, including meats and bones) in the green recycling bin. (**NB - residents are advised to wrap all foodstuffs in paper prior to placing them in the green-wheeled bin.)</p> <p>The trial is confined to one round per fortnight so that results can be compared with other collections on that day. The organic matter (comprising garden and food waste) is taken to an in-vessel composting facility at Shareshill, South Staffordshire. At present this is the only facility within South Staffordshire that is capable of treating this type of material. The food waste trial is scheduled to last for 12 months. Residents' views on the scheme will then be obtained via a questionnaire towards the end of the trial. This will enable us to collate both quantitative and qualitative data on the success or otherwise of the trial.</p>
<b>Aim 2: A Healthy and Safe District in which to live, work and visit.</b>	
<p>The vast majority of residents thought that the Council should introduce a scheme that makes public the level of food safety compliance by local food businesses.</p> <p>Also, 38% of you thought that the Council should be making unannounced visits to local business premises in order to assess compliance with legal requirements, provide advice and where necessary take enforcement action.</p>	<p>In August, South Staffordshire Council launched a new website: <a href="http://www.ratemyplace.org.uk">www.ratemyplace.org.uk</a>, which provides details on how well local food businesses (restaurants, pubs, takeaways and cafes etc) comply with food safety laws. Depending on the level of food law compliance in three key areas during the inspection they will be awarded a star rating of up to 5 stars. This is accompanied with a written report detailing the findings and any remedial course of action required. This is then made visible on the 'Rate my Place' website.</p> <p>Approximately 530 unannounced inspections are carried out annually. These inspections are carried out in accordance with a risk based inspection programme, and range from every 6 months to every 3 years.</p> <p>The 'Safer Food Better Business' initiative offers easy to use practical guidance for small – medium sized catering businesses and retailers. As part of a 17 month project, Food Safety Officers from South Staffordshire Council have been working closely with food traders by offering a series of workshops and one-to-one coaching sessions to promote good hygiene practice.</p>

Summary of responses	What have we done?
<p>With regard to staying safe, respondents aged 44 years and under were more likely to say that groups of people gathering on the streets/ neighbourhood was of concern to them.</p>	<p>In the last 12 months we have increased the number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) to 17, providing reassurance in our villages. The Crime &amp; Disorder Reduction Partnership are also encouraging people to report more incidents to the Police which may then help identify potential hotspots for focussed intervention.</p> <p>Our Leisure Centres have a dynamic programme of activities such as Energise fitness classes, GET SET sports programme, SUSSED holiday programmes and HYPE activities for teenagers.</p> <p>Leisure Services are working with parish councils to support local projects for children and young people. The Crime &amp; Disorder Reduction Partnership has also developed youth councils.</p> <p>Leisure also provides 'outreach' development work in parishes, through Get Set and SUSSED 'out and about' schemes.</p>
<p>92% of those surveyed said that they would take visiting friends/ family, out and about in South Staffordshire, mainly to a restaurant/ pub, an attraction or walking. Information on what to do/ where to go generally came from: the local paper (80%), word of mouth (76%) and posters/ leaflets (59%).</p>	<p>Information on tourism in South Staffordshire can be found in regional and national visitor guides, also a new initiative for this year is the <b>'Passport to South Staffordshire'</b> which is available to all South Staffordshire residents and those living in close proximity to South Staffordshire. A copy can be obtained by visiting the Council Offices, or by ringing the telephone number published in the South Staffordshire Review newspaper.</p> <p>Included in the passport are special offers and discounts to various attractions throughout the district.</p> <p>Leisure Services have also created a series of walks throughout the District, a number of organised walks have trained Walk Leaders heading these events.</p>
<p><b>Aim 3: A Prosperous District with Thriving Communities</b></p>	

<b>Summary of responses</b>	<b>What have we done?</b>
<p>Almost half of the respondents (45%) said that they are worried about the lack of affordable housing in their village.</p>	<p>The Council is currently using consultants to undertake a Housing Market Assessment, which will inform us about housing supply and demand issues for the District in the future. This will include an analysis of affordable housing need and recommendations for future policy. The Council's Interim Affordable Housing Guidance to developers may be amended in light of this study so that we can continue to maximise the contribution of the planning system to deliver more affordable housing.</p> <p>The Council will also be liaising closely with our Housing Association partners to secure additional public funding as part of the Housing Corporation's National Affordable Housing Programme bidding round for 2008 – 11.</p>
<b>Aim 4: A District which Encourages and Promotes Lifelong Learning Opportunities</b>	
<p>With regard to lifelong learning opportunities residents regarded the 3 most important services as being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Community activities for children and young people- provided at local venues e.g. leisure centres, schools, parish halls (96%),</li> <li>(b) Leisure centre provision for children and young people – e.g. sports facilities including fitness suites, swimming pools, sports halls and coaching etc (92%) and</li> <li>(c) (c) Leisure centre provision for adults and older people (92%).</li> </ul>	<p>Leisure Services have a dynamic programme of activities at its leisure centres, country parks, schools and out in the parishes through the Community Development Team.</p> <p>The 'Get Set' Scheme offers regular high quality introductory activities for sport, physical activity, walking and creative arts to 37 of 42 school in the District</p> <p>Leisure services community development team continue to support local clubs and organisations to gain quality accreditations to ensure facilities and opportunities for children and young people are safe, effective and child friendly.</p> <p>Leisure services SUSSED holiday scheme provided additional activities to children and young people, free of charge through the Children's Fund scheme, in addition to the first ever 'BIG Summer Event', a fun day at Baggeridge Country Park.</p> <p>There are also specific sessions dedicated to adults and older people, which have proven to be very popular.</p> <p>Exercise referral continues to develop physical activity levels of those that require trained support to recover through exercise.</p>
<b>Aim 5: A Well Managed Council and Community Leader</b>	
<p>50% of residents considered South Staffordshire Council to be providing average value for money, however 34% thought that the Council provided above average or excellent value for money.</p>	<p>In 2006 the Audit Commission inspected our 'Use of Resources' (which is an assessment of how well we deliver value for money to our residents). Overall we received a score of 3, which means that we are performing well, ('consistently above minimum standards'), against a detailed and exacting national set of standards.</p>

## Budget Consultation – conducted October/November 2006

The consultation was carried out with Focus Groups as opposed to the usual postal surveys. Two focus group sessions took place, (Group 1 – Penkridge and Group 2 – Wombourne). The survey was commissioned to assist South Staffordshire Council in determining where their budget should be spent for the forthcoming year. Both groups were given a list of proposed schemes, discussions then took place to gather the groups' views on these schemes and to ascertain the level of perceived priority attached to each scheme.

Some of the successful schemes that the focus groups agreed with the most were:

Feedback	Outcome
<p align="center"><b>Additional part time staff for the street cleaning team.</b></p> <p>Rewards are available from Central Government for improved performance in areas such as street cleansing. The provision of extra resource would allow the team leader more time identifying areas needing additional work/ improvement.</p>	
<p>This was given a high priority by both groups as it was thought that clean footways and highways helped instil a sense of civic pride in the area. Additional staff could maintain green and open spaces, public bins and verges. The existing service and staff were highly commended.</p>	<p>As well as receiving some Partnership funding to hire an extra mechanical sweeper to help keep the footpaths and roads clean, the Council's budget for street cleansing has been increased by £10K to boost the department's operational capacity to meet the varying demands of the service e.g. dealing with fly-tipping or graffiti incidents etc.</p>
<p align="center"><b>Energy conservation, climate change and enforcement promotion.</b></p> <p>To provide resource to the Energy Officer to promote and raise awareness of initiatives to promote energy conservation and impact on climate change.</p>	
<p>The Council needed to continue promoting the value of recycling and saving energy, however, residents and leaders alike should be responsible for promoting and adopting more sustainable modes of living. An example given was: using energy efficient light bulbs and double-glazing in public buildings. Education was seen as key.</p>	<p>We have appointed an Energy Conservation Officer, commenced work on a Climate Change Strategy and also the delivery of plans to make the Council's operations and infrastructure more environmentally friendly.</p>
<p align="center"><b>Conservation area appraisals</b></p> <p>The Council is required by Central Government to undertake appraisals of all 19 conservation areas in the District. This money allows the production of additional appraisals and management plans.</p>	
<p>Development on gardens or other open spaces was a major concern for residents in Penkridge and Wombourne. The proposed Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans will identify the major characteristics of these areas and ensure that applications for development are assessed against up to date information and guidance on such proposals. This will ensure that the special architectural or historic interest of the conservation areas is preserved and enhanced for future generations</p>	<p>Conservation Area Appraisals have now been completed for both Wombourne and Penkridge. The next stage will be to carry out public consultation.</p>
<p align="center"><b>CCTV Control Room Equipment and Peak time staffing for CCTV</b></p> <p>Replacement of the recording and playback equipment in the CCTV room, upgrading to a full digital system. Also, there are currently 32 CCTV cameras in the district, manned by a single operator at any given time, additional money would give extra coverage at peak times such as Thursday and Friday evenings.</p>	
<p>Participants from both villages saw CCTV cameras as useful deterrents in tackling crime and disorder. The scheme aimed to increase operator coverage at peak times. Residents felt that CCTV cameras could help the police identify and attend to crime and disorder issues more quickly. Participants thought that up to date equipment would provide clearer images of offenders and</p>	<p>Examples of where the use of CCTV cameras have been effective are:  <b>Penkridge</b> – 3 arrests over 2 incidents concerning class A drugs, Police made 1 arrest for fighting in village centre at pub closing time, a known individual wanted by the Police was spotted by CCTV and subsequently arrested.  <b>Wombourne</b> – criminal damage to a Notice</p>

<b>Feedback</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
enable the Police to use CCTV footage more effectively when bringing prosecutions. More up to date equipment should reduce the chances of system failures.	Board by 2 youths resulted in 1 arrest, CCTV operator witnessed an individual smash a planter on the High Street resulting in an arrest.
<b>Health Initiatives</b> To part-fund a post in conjunction with the Primary Care Trust for a South Staffordshire Health Director and associated administrative support. To safeguard and enhance locality work around the public health agenda in South Staffordshire.	
Residents agreed that it was important to create a health promotion post to continue educating and advising on health related initiatives and provide a joined up approach between various organisations. Initiatives seen by the groups as being vital were: health education, exercise, healthy eating etc. Any schemes should be at low or no cost to the public to encourage participation.	A series of road-shows have taken place highlighting the new 'smoke-free' legislation, and raising awareness of the smoking cessation services available. These took place at various locations including a busy market, industrial estate and a local 'truckers' café. The Council supports 5 regular walks around the district, all volunteer walk leaders have attended training delivered by South Staffordshire Council. There is a 'Healthy Families Project' working with children and their families, topics covered include: healthy cooking and physical exercise. These families also have regular contact with a dietician and receive support through the Council's exercise referral scheme.
<b>New Financial Management System</b> The current system is now very old and new patches are not being produced for it. It will also enable the finance team to meet Central Government's tighter reporting timetable.	
Penkridge residents considered up to date financial management systems as a good investment, enabling the Council to run more efficiently and effectively manage taxpayers' money by reducing wastage and overspend. Residents wanted the Council to ensure that similar investment would not be needed for quite some time in the future.	The core modules of the new financial management system went 'Live' on 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2007, including bill payments, invoice raising and accounting. Over the next few weeks and months further modules will be implemented which will improve efficiency in many of the Council's financially based back-office systems. The system is based on the world-renowned Oracle database and, in addition to a robust set of core financial ledgers, incorporates web-based elements to improve efficiency and reduce costs. It was the combination of large customer base, tried and tested system plus active product development that led to this system being chosen.
<b>New microphone and amplification system in the Council Chamber</b> Would enable the public to hear and contribute to Council meetings. Local community groups and organisations also use the Council Chamber.	
Some residents had had first hand experience of the current system and considered it almost inaudible. The scheme would allow the public full access and involvement in public debates. Residents were keen that the Chamber was used by the wider community and not just by Council officials.	The installation of a wireless conference and hearing loop system was completed in January 2007.
<b>Fitness Suite, disabled access and changing room improvement at Penkridge Leisure Centre</b> To extend the fitness suite, replace old fitness equipment, provide disability access to the first floor and refresh changing rooms.	
The Leisure centre is regarded as one of the key facilities in Penkridge, it was used frequently by children and adults alike, but was considered to need some updating. The Leisure Centre has been	An Architect has been appointed to help with the design, calculations and compliance with building regulations. Building work is due to commence in late Spring, 2008.

Feedback	Outcome
a key facility for children's holiday programmes and health referral schemes.	

## Perception Survey – Conducted February/ March 2007

The theme of this survey was the 'Quality of Life' for residents of South Staffordshire.

Theme	Responses
<b>Local Area</b>	<p>78% of respondents defined their local area as 'the village I live in' and felt they 'belonged' there.</p> <p>With regard to length of residency in South Staffordshire, 75% had lived in the district for 10+ years, and 67% said they had no plans to move (people living in Codsall, Bilbrook, Brewood and Coven were the most keen to stay).</p> <p>Residents over 65 years were most likely to remain living in South Staffordshire, (79% had no plans to move at all).</p> <p>However, of those who indicated that they might move out of the district, the most common reason cited was: a new job (28%).</p> <p>43% of residents considered their 'built environment' (new and altered buildings in character and keeping with the local environment): to have stayed the same over the last three years. Residents in the South of the District (EAG3) were most likely to consider it to have worsened.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> <i>Conservation Area Appraisals (CAA's) have now been completed for: Trysull, Seisdon, Wombourne and Kinver, these will now go out to public consultation. Lower Penn's CAA is due to take place sometime between October 2007 – March 2008. Himley and Enville are included in future CAA's scheduled for 2008/09.</i></p> <p>With regard to the 'natural environment' (the green areas and open spaces within the district): 52% said that it had stayed the same.</p>
<b>Council Services</b>	<p>93% of residents said they regularly read the South Staffordshire Review newspaper. The majority of readers say that they find it both interesting and useful. Proposed future features could be: more information/ history relating to local villages, proposed future developments/ planning issues, local events/ places to go and environmental activities/ issues.</p> <p>The most popular means of seeking information were: South Staffordshire Review newspaper (66%), local press (62%), the post office (44%) and the Internet/ Council website (34%).</p> <p>55% of respondents have contacted the Council recently to retrieve information; the most popular method was via the telephone.</p> <p>74% of residents considered Monday – Friday as the most convenient time to contact the Council, however 20% stated Saturday as their preference. *</p> <p><i>*South Staffordshire Solutions, our one-stop-shop for customer service is already open between 9.30am and 1.00pm on Saturdays.</i></p> <p>Overall, we are pleased to report that 48% of you rated the overall service provided by the Council as being Good or Excellent, whilst 42% thought it to be fair.</p>
<b>Local Economy</b>	<p>70% of residents are not aware that the Council owns and manages a number of industrial estates.</p> <p>70% of respondents in employment said they found it easy to travel to work, 83% of these travelled by car.</p> <p>Although the majority of the panel do not undertake any form of voluntary work, 23% said that they did undertake <b>formal*</b> voluntary work and 26% <b>informal**</b> work.</p>
<b>Fear of Crime</b>	<p>59% of respondents consider anti-social behaviour to be a problem in their local area, 36% did not. 75% do not feel well informed about how the Council is tackling anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>Residents believe awareness of anti-social behaviour has increased due to there being</p>

Theme	Responses
	<p>more newspaper articles on it (62%), more television/ radio programmes about it (62%) and people having had personal experience of this issue (61%).</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> <i>South Staffordshire Review newspaper now features a four-page pull out section on Community Safety and Community Pride. It aims to inform residents of the work undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership, offers handy hints and suggests ways of keeping property and vehicles more secure. It lists the contact details for members of the Community Safety Partnership and features articles such as perception versus reality in relation to crime statistics and clarifies what Anti Social Behaviour is.</i></p> <p>57% of the residents thought that their perception of young people might change if more positive statements were used in the media. 51% agreed with young people that they were being unfairly portrayed in the press.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> <i>The Partnership has recognised that young people weren't getting good representation in the press, so have given the District Youth Council a regular column in the South Staffordshire Review newspaper (within the four page pull out).</i></p>
<p><b>Issues in the local area.</b></p>	<p>Drivers' speeding dangerously is seen as a problem by 56% of residents, followed by teenagers hanging around the streets (43%), rubbish/ litter lying around (32%) and vandalism/ graffiti (29%).</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> <i>Speeding remains an issue across the District. Last year the Community Safety Partnership purchased a 'Metro Count', which is a device that stretches across the road and measures the volume and speed of traffic. From this we can identify hotspot locations and recommend traffic calming measures to improve road safety and reduce speeding.</i></p> <p><i>In relation to the other issues, a project is commencing in October in local High Schools throughout the District, featuring "Respect of all Ages".</i></p> <p>Fortunately four fifths of all respondents had <b>not</b> been a 'victim of crime'.</p> <p>Although 71% of residents were aware of neighbourhood watch schemes, only 10% were actively involved in one. 22% thought that membership could be increased by enhanced advertising/ promotion.</p> <p><b>Latest Update:</b> <i>If anyone is interested in becoming a member of Neighbourhood Watch, please contact Ray Jones, Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator on 01785 234427.</i></p>

\* **Formal volunteering:** giving unpaid help through groups, clubs and organisations to benefit other people or the environment.

\*\* **Informal volunteering:** giving unpaid help as an individual to people who are not relatives.