

Residents' Survey Results

Summer 2018



You will recall that back in May, Ashington Town Council wrote to you inviting your household to take part in the town-wide residents' survey. At the same time, smaller scale surveys were taking place with local businesses and retail traders. Back in 2012, the Town Council

carried out the first ever full residents' survey in the town. Over 2,300 residents took part in the survey at that time providing a wealth of wide-ranging information about what they thought of and wanted for Ashington.

Although the town is changing and a number of improvements and developments have taken place since 2012/13 or are underway, it was clear to us that there is much to still be completed and improved in both structural and regeneration work and also in areas of service delivery. As a Town Council, it is particularly important that to us that all residents get a real chance and opportunity to have a direct say and to put forward views about how they would like to see Ashington improve and move forward.

The clear aim of the 2018 survey was to again seek to establish and capture an overall residents picture of life in Ashington at this time as well as to see how residents thought things had changed over the 5-year period since the initial survey.

A survey form with 20 questions was sent to you asking for your views and comments across a number of important matters relating to Ashington. We received an excellent response with almost 3,000 residents completing and returning a survey an increase of almost 25% on 2012. On behalf of Ashington Town Council

I would like to thank you for taking the time to return the survey, clearly there were many things you wanted to tell us. The results of the survey are very important and will help the Town Council to understand and assess your priorities in both planning for the delivery of local services and also seeking to influence all future developments that affect Ashington.

At the time of sending out the survey, we gave a guarantee that a summary of the results would be published in a newsletter to all residents. The attached pages set out the summary of what you told us in the survey and highlight the key findings. I hope you will find the results very informative and interesting. Certainly the survey results are challenging and paint a very clear picture of where you would like to see improvements made town-wide and what you feel the Town Centre requires. Please be assured that, wherever and whenever it can, the Town Council will be looking to act upon what you have said in trying to make Ashington a better town to live, work and visit.

Cllr. Mark Purvis
Business Chair of Ashington Town Council

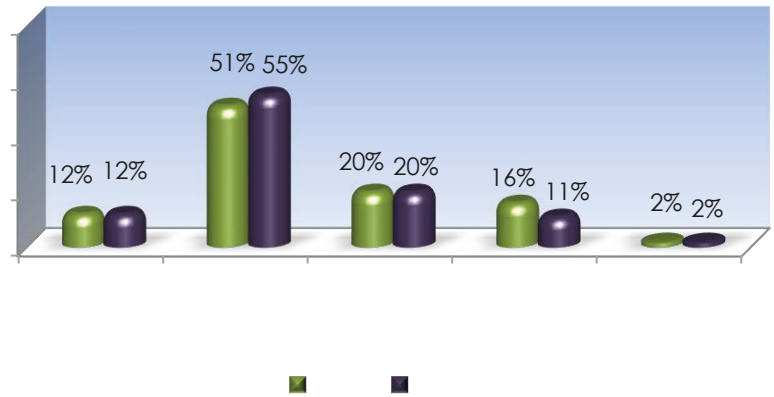
A big **thank you** to everyone who participated in the survey.

Here are the results which we promised we would promptly give you...

Increased satisfaction

An increasing percentage of residents (rising from 63% to 67%) are now satisfied with their local neighbourhood.

This is an encouraging result, showing that progress *is* being made.



What Residents feel are KEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PRIORITIES



Your top priorities >>>

Residents identified THREE key neighbourhood priorities:

Road & pavement repairs 58%

Cleaning the streets of litter 53%

Cleaning the streets of dog fouling 53%

These priorities remain the top residents' suggestions to improve local neighbourhoods. However, fewer residents now identify these as priorities, when compared to 2012.

Feelings of safety have also improved in the town. 84% of residents now feel safe during the day in the town (rising from 81% in 2012). However, there is still work to be done improving feelings of safety after dark – when fewer than 40% of residents say they feel safe. Residents in the wards of Hirst, Ashington Central and College are least likely to feel safe after dark.

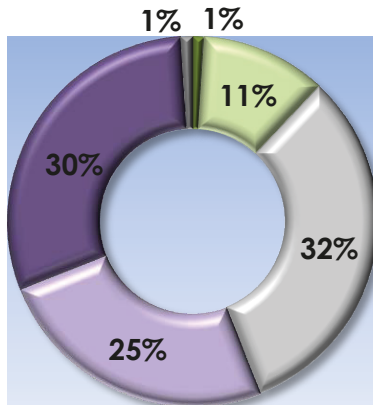


The Town Centre & Market

Few residents feel that the Town Centre is a good place to visit. Just 12% in fact. And although we know that more residents are doing their shopping in the Town Centre compared to 2012, there are a number of issues which residents highlight.



Rating Ashington Town Centre



- Very good
- Fairly good
- Mixed feelings
- Fairly poor
- Very poor
- Unsure

Town Centre Issues

The survey highlighted concerns about parking and traffic congestion in and around the Town Centre, but the main issue identified was with current shopping facilities.

How Residents Would Like to See the Current Shopping Offer Improved...

- Reduce the number of 'low-end' shops
- Attract more shops, selling a wider range of goods
- Attract better quality shops
- Improve the quality of market stalls

The town's shops tend to be used most frequently by the youngest and oldest residents.

In contrast, many residents travel elsewhere to shop – often including Cramlington and Morpeth, Newcastle and the Metro Centre.

Further Improvement Needed...

The percentage of residents who requested *a lot* of Town Centre improvement has **decreased** since 2012, falling from 78% to 55% currently. Similarly, the percentage of residents requesting *a lot* of improvement to the weekly market has decreased, falling from 56% to 41%. However, there are clearly still improvements needed, both in terms of the Town Centre and the market.



Developing

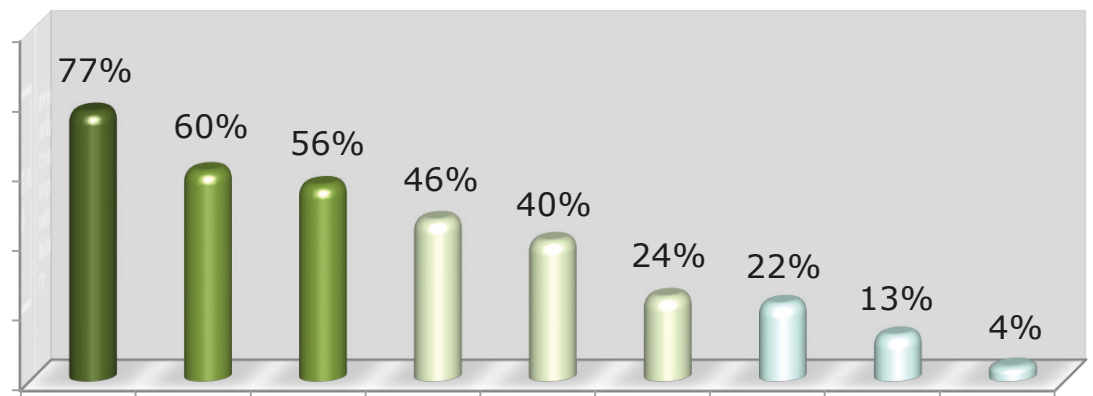
Portland Park...

We also asked residents what they would like to see developed on the current Portland Park site. Residents were able to choose up to 5 options or suggest alternatives.



Clear preferences from the town's residents >>>

Linked to what was said about the Town Centre, the most popular option for Portland Park identified by residents was for **more shops and a wider range of goods**. Over three-quarters of all residents opted for this, making it the number one choice for Portland Park. However, two other options also attracted a large amount of resident support. A **greater choice of places to eat and drink** (60%) and a **cinema or theatre** (56%) are the second and third most popular options for the site.



Considering how preferences for Portland Park vary by the age of residents reveals that *across every age category* there is a consistent top three request for more shops and a wider range of goods. The top choices for younger age categories (up to 59) all prefer this, together with a greater choice of places to eat and drink and the provision of a cinema or theatre. Among older residents, the provision of public toilets and a bus station with enclosed facilities also proved popular.

We also received the views of a small selection of local businesses and visitors to the town

An increasing percentage of businesses told us that their trade has increased over the last three years – a finding which reflects the fact that residents are now doing more shopping in the town.

However, businesses would also like to see improvements in the town – specifically mentioning a need for a broader range of shops, together with increased quality, diversity and attractiveness, measures to tackle Town Centre dog fouling and littering and measures to ease traffic congestion and increase parking availability.

Visitors to the town are often of the same opinion as residents, noting some recent improvements to the town including the leisure centre, library, Station Road area and revamped market but again requesting *continued* improvement.



Where We Go from Here...

Now looking at the survey findings in detail and will be taking the key findings into full consideration in making early decisions about service provision that is the direct responsibility of the Town Council. In particular we will be looking at the key overall neighbourhood environmental priorities identified by residents, including litter, weed-killing and street cleansing, in developing our future Neighbourhood Services Partnerships with Northumberland County Council and other partners.

There is a wealth of important information in the survey findings across a wide range of subject and service areas. We specifically asked questions in the survey about your views, preferences and priorities for the Town Centre, the Market and the current “Portland Park” site. The Town Council and residents have a right to fully expect that other responsible bodies including Northumberland County Council and Arch will be clearly guided by the survey findings and residents views in determining future development work and regeneration planning. We look forward to positively working with both organisations and all other agencies and bodies in seeking to deliver the best outcomes for Ashington.

2018 and beyond are critical years in the regeneration, growth and development of the Town. It is important therefore that residents have and take every opportunity to make their views known in a constructive way. We will also be seeking to regularly update you with progress news and information in due course. Thank you again for your participation in this survey and for the excellent response achieved.

A full copy of the 2018 Residents' Survey can be viewed and downloaded from the Town Council website at: www.ashingtontowncouncil.gov.uk

Cllr. Stephen Fenwick
Leader of Ashington Town Council



A message from
Stephen Fenwick,
Leader of
Ashington Town Council

