

# FEED BACK



Results from our 2014  
residents' viewpoint questionnaire  
and our responses



**East Devon – an outstanding place**



**INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE** | Gold



Tending parks and gardens is just one of the many services we deliver

To request this information in an alternative format or language please phone 01395 517569 or email [communications@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:communications@eastdevon.gov.uk)

**We wanted to find out what residents think about East Devon District Council and the services we provide so that we can monitor and improve the standards of our services.**



We sent out a questionnaire to 3,000 randomly selected addresses across the district. We received 774 responses. A similar questionnaire was sent out in 2013, with a similar response rate.

This booklet is a summary of this questionnaire and outlines what we are doing about popular concerns people raised.

**Where the percentages don't add up to 100 per cent this is because some people didn't express a view either way.**

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**SYMBOLS USED IN THIS BOOKLET**



**YOUR COMMENTS**  
Where there was a text box to freely write comments



**YOUR ANSWERS**  
Where there was a tick box to agree or disagree with something

# THE HEADLINES

**71 PER CENT**

✓ Satisfied overall with the way the council runs things (13 per cent dissatisfied)

**44 PER CENT**

✓ Would speak positively about the council (17 per cent negatively)

**88 PER CENT**

✓ Satisfied with their household waste and blue food caddy collections and 84 per cent happy with green box recycling

**66 PER CENT**

✓ Feel that the council provides value for money (14 per cent do not)

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## About the council overall

✓ **79 per cent feel that they are kept informed** (21 per cent did not). There has been a significant negative change since 2013 – 5 per cent fewer people now feel they are kept informed and 6 per cent more people don't feel informed.

✓ **53 per cent say the council acts on what residents say** (47 per cent disagree).

✓ **56 per cent feel that the council acts quickly** (12 per cent disagree). There has been a significant positive change in the percentage of people that agree we respond quickly when asked for help (a 7 per cent increase).

# KEY POINT: ACTING ON WHAT PEOPLE SAY

47 per cent think the council doesn't act on what local people say, mainly due to planning issues.

## **The facts: our response**

We always consult extensively with communities on planning issues and look at their responses in detail. However, we can only refuse applications where there is material harm in planning terms to things like road safety, landscape or amenities. Even where potential material harm is identified this has to be backed up by evidence. No council is allowed to turn down a planning application simply because it is unpopular, so in many cases our hands are tied.

We will start to monitor the proportion of planning decisions that go against the town or parish councils' view. Where decisions are consistently going against local opinion we'll meet with the town or parish council to discuss their concerns.

We prepare a report for every application that includes a summary of local people's views. These reports are published on our website. We'll look at how this information can be made more accessible to help communities understand the reasons behind the decisions.

# SECTION 1 SERVICES

## ✓ 79 PER CENT

Are satisfied with parks, public gardens, play areas and open spaces.

## ✓ 87 PER CENT

Are satisfied with the food hygiene service feeling confident about eating in cafes and restaurants.

## ✓ 55 PER CENT

Are satisfied with off-street car parking. Key issues with dissatisfied people were around the cost of parking and the need for more parking spaces.

## ✓ 50 PER CENT

Are satisfied with housing services.

## ✓ 53 PER CENT

Are satisfied with housing benefit and council tax services. Satisfaction has risen 7 per cent since 2013 and dissatisfaction has fallen by the same amount.

## ✓ 42 PER CENT

Are satisfied with planning (25 per cent dissatisfied).

As in 2013, comments show that residents are keen to be able to recycle more with many expressing that they want to be able to recycle cardboard and mixed plastics earlier than 2016. As in 2013, people also want a garden waste service.



# Collecting cardboard

## YOUR COMMENTS

**216** / 774

216 out of 774 respondents to the general residents' survey say we should collect cardboard with the weekly recycling collection. 146 out of 774 commented that we need to collect mixed plastics.

### **Our response**

We have a contract with SITA, who collect your household waste and recycling on our behalf. This contract runs out in April 2016. We did look at bringing in doorstep cardboard and mixed plastics recycling before the end of this contract but it wasn't possible for legal reasons and would have been very expensive to add it on at such a late stage.

Our aim is that when the new contract begins after April 2016 you will be able to recycle cardboard and mixed plastics as part of your doorstep collection.

# Waste collections

## YOUR COMMENTS

26 / 774

Said that the waste collectors throw the containers around and break them.

16 / 774

Said that the waste collectors don't return containers to the correct houses.

19 / 774

Said that the waste collectors leave the roads and pavements messy with food and paper.

### **Our response**

We have a contract with SITA who collect your household waste and recycling on our behalf. The SITA staff are instructed to place containers neatly back where they found them and pick up any litter that they spill. When we receive complaints about the contractors throwing containers or spilling litter we report this to SITA – this has led to their staff being disciplined and dismissed. Your complaints are taken seriously. If you would like to report issues with any SITA staff please contact us on 01395 571515 or [csc@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:csc@eastdevon.gov.uk).

We recently asked SITA to do some refresher training for their staff on littering and placing boxes back in a tidy way. We have also discussed with SITA that we may fine their staff if they are seen littering.

The way that SITA crews now empty your recycling boxes means they don't need to take your recycling boxes away from the kerbside. This means your recycling box should stay where you left it.



# Garden waste

## YOUR COMMENTS

76 / 774

Commented unprompted that garden waste needs to be collected door to door as well. This is similar to last year's result.

### **Our response**

We are investigating the viability of a chargeable garden waste collection as part of the new recycling and waste contract which will begin in April 2016.

# Car parks

## YOUR ANSWERS

20%

Are dissatisfied with off-street council car parks.

## YOUR COMMENTS

65 / 774

Want cheaper or free parking in off-street car parks.

### **Our response**

We do understand that nobody actually enjoys paying to park their car. However we do work closely with chambers of commerce and local traders and we believe that our parking charges are fair and reasonable. Not only are we proud that we are not increasing our

**Continued ►**

## 1 SERVICES

basic hourly charge of only £1 per hour for the fifth year in a row, but we are also continuing to develop special offers and initiatives offering cheaper parking options helping to stimulate our town centre economies.

There is sometimes confusion over what we do with the money we earn from our car parks. The small amount of money that we get from penalty charges (from those people who get a parking fine, usually either for not paying at all or for staying longer than they have paid for) must be spent on car park management and enforcement and we comply with that legal requirement. The vast majority of the income we get is from our customers who choose to park in our car parks (rather than parking on the street or in a private car park) and that money does have to be used responsibly but does not have to be spent on any specific service. This money continues to play an important role in balancing the council's budget each year.

We have given the 'free parking' scenario some thought and if we were to introduce free car parking across East Devon, we have calculated that our share of the council tax would need to increase by 40 per cent just to replace that lost revenue. This would also leave us with no effective means of managing our car parks and with the limited availability of car parking in our towns, demand inevitably exceeds supply and experience elsewhere tells us that at key times free car parks quickly fill up with residents and workers in the town, effectively preventing the turnover of spaces upon which local town centre businesses rely.

**We are proud that we aren't increasing our basic hourly charge of £1 an hour for the fifth year in a row and we develop special offers and initiatives**

**if we were to introduce free car parking across East Devon, our share of the council tax would need to increase by 40 per cent just to replace that lost revenue**

# Affordable housing

## YOUR ANSWERS



Feel we are poor at enabling new affordable housing as they feel more affordable housing is needed, particularly for local people.



Feel we are good at enabling new affordable housing.

### **Our response**

Affordable housing means council housing, housing association (social landlord) housing and shared ownership properties. Shared ownership is where you rent part of the property from a social housing provider and have a mortgage on the other part. Priority for affordable housing is given to local people or people with local connections.

During 2012/13 we delivered 311 new affordable homes working with registered social housing partners and developers. We are on track for a similar number this financial year. This far exceeds our target of 100 new homes per year and is helping to reduce waiting list numbers and homelessness in the district. We have no control over the prices of housing for sale on the open market.

# SECTION 2

# COUNCIL

# PRIORITIES

## ✓ 68 PER CENT

Agree the council are capitalising on the district's natural landscape and countryside to attract visitors.

## ✓ 49 PER CENT

Agree that the council is doing well on town regeneration. This has fallen 9 per cent since 2013.

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## ✓ 47 PER CENT

Agree the council is doing well in delivering jobs in the west of the district.

As in 2013, concerns were around the need to retain the distinctiveness of the district's towns and improve the quality of retail on offer, to try to deliver more jobs across the whole district and to protect the AONB and greenfield sites from development. The main concern around planning is the same as in 2013 which is that people feel more weight should be given to local views.

# Job opportunities and business

## YOUR ANSWERS



Agree we are increasing job opportunities in the west of the district by encouraging new businesses to base themselves near Cranbrook, whilst 24 per cent disagree. Several disagree as they believe there is too much focus on the west of the district for job opportunities.

### **Our response**

The west of the district is near Exeter which offers many opportunities for new, high quality jobs. It's important to us that our residents have the opportunity to take up these jobs in and near Exeter. That means that they need the right skills as well as transport accessibility. We are working with other organisations to press for improved train services between Exeter and Axminster and stations in between.

Our draft Local Plan sets out a plan for the future of land within East Devon. It proposes to create jobs on a number of sites across the district. We are working hard with partners to make sure that the district is fully covered by super fast broadband which will encourage new business development across the district.

These are still tough times for employers but East Devon has a large number of diverse small to medium sized businesses and we continue to offer business advice services and council-run workspace.

# Regeneration

## YOUR ANSWERS



Disagree with the statement that the council is doing well in making towns better places to live by regenerating them. This is 7 per cent more people than in 2013. People comment that they want more quality shops and less charity shops and cafes. They also want other towns such as Sidmouth, Axminster and Honiton to be regenerated.

### Our response

We are delivering on our promise to regenerate key locations in the district for the benefit of our residents, visitors and business community. We have invested hard cash and assets in delivering visible change for the better including the Seaton Jurassic Visitor Centre, grant approval for a new Sea Cadets Exmouth HQ and a new hotel and new facilities on Exmouth seafront.

If we can bring more visitors and capture more local resident spending in our town centres then we will see better quality businesses starting up on our high streets and town centres. Exmouth's Strand (area of public open space) is now the location of choice for the big events in the town and local businesses around it thrive. Seaton has an increasingly buoyant business community in a place that has a resurgent reputation and attraction helped in no small part by our hard work in delivering the Axe Wetlands, Seaton Jurassic and support to town centre business.

**Seaton**

**Exmouth**

**Exmouth**

**Seaton**

There are limits to the degree that a local council can influence the mix of shops that exist on our high streets and that is especially true of the issue of charity shops. If turnover and footfall can increase then new, more varied and better quality businesses will move in.

Regeneration and redevelopment take time and we often hear from people that we need to get on with the job. There are also those for whom change can be a concern and others who are directly affected by redevelopment such as neighbours during construction work and existing business tenants.

We have limited resources with which to change and improve areas but we are committed to a continued focus on regeneration and growth across our communities.

In Honiton we continue to support the renowned attraction that is the Thelma Hulbert Gallery and we have invested significant funding and land in the town's newest asset, the Beehive Community Centre.

**Honiton**

In Axminster we have pressed and supported the landowners to make progress on the Webster's garage site and will look for new opportunities to promote renewal in the town centre.

**Axminster**

Sidmouth will benefit significantly from the developer contributions to come from the Fortfield (Sanditon) development and the town council has already been asking people for their views on how this should be spent. In the future we will work with the town council on a masterplan for renewal at Port Royal.

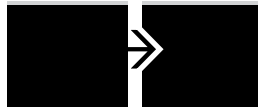
**Sidmouth**

# SECTION 3

# SAFETY

## ✓ 96 PER CENT

Feel safe in the daytime and 77 per cent after dark (although this is a fall from 84 per cent in 2013). Those who don't say they would feel safer with a greater police presence and if there were more street lights.



96%  
**2013**

96%  
**2014**



84%  
**2013**

77%  
**2014**

## ✗ 19 PER CENT

Say levels of pollution are a very or fairly big problem (for example, traffic fumes, noise, bathing water) when asked, compared with 13 per cent in 2013.



13%  
**2013**

19%  
**2014**

## ✗ 23 PER CENT

Say that litter, rubbish, vandalism or graffiti are a very or fairly big problem when asked, compared with 11 per cent in 2013.



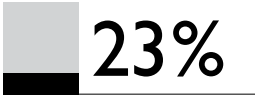
11%  
**2013**

23%  
**2014**



# Rubbish and vandalism

YOUR ANSWERS



Feel that there is a problem with litter, rubbish, vandalism or graffiti.

**Our response** Our council plan outlines our ambition to keep East Devon an outstanding place to live. We generally get very good feedback about our streets and the majority of our residents feel these are safe, clean and green. We only have limited resources so every one of East Devon's residents is asked to help by using bins provided or taking their litter home.

# Feeling safe

YOUR ANSWERS



Feel safe to go out after dark. What would make people feel safer is more of a police presence, more speed restrictions and more overnight street lighting.

**Our response** These are principally matters for the police in terms of crime and the county council regarding street lighting. We will make sure we tell them about your concerns.

East Devon has very low rates of crime for household burglaries, vehicle crimes and violent crimes. It also has the lowest total number of offences for every 1,000 people of all the districts in Devon, making East Devon one of the safest districts to live in, in one of the safest counties to live.

# FOR MORE INFORMATION

To find out more results from this questionnaire  
please contact:

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Community Engagement and Funding Officer

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Email [jbuckley@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:jbuckley@eastdevon.gov.uk)

Post Communications team  
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Knowle, Sidmouth, EX10 8HL

You can also find out more on our website:

[eastdevon.gov.uk/  
consultation-and-surveys/  
viewpoint-surveys/  
residents-survey](http://eastdevon.gov.uk/consultation-and-surveys/viewpoint-surveys/residents-survey)

# OTHER VIEWPOINT QUESTIONNAIRES

We carried out several different types of viewpoint surveys in 2014. They needed to be done in different ways to make sure we got the views of a wide variety of people. These were:

## **Town and parish councils viewpoint questionnaire**

We sent a questionnaire to all 66 town and parish councils in East Devon.

👤 38 RESPONSES

📄 [eastdevon.gov.uk/consultation-and-surveys/viewpoint-surveys/town-and-parish-councils](http://eastdevon.gov.uk/consultation-and-surveys/viewpoint-surveys/town-and-parish-councils)

## **Viewpoint questionnaire for children and young people**

We sent a questionnaire to all the schools in East Devon and asked them to pass it to their pupils.

👤 110 RESPONSES

📄 [eastdevon.gov.uk/consultation-and-surveys/viewpoint-surveys/children-and-young-people](http://eastdevon.gov.uk/consultation-and-surveys/viewpoint-surveys/children-and-young-people)

## **Equalities viewpoint questionnaire**

We sent a questionnaire to 26 organisations that represent people with protected equalities characteristics (such as disability groups and minority ethnic groups) and asked them to send it to their members.

👤 48 RESPONSES

## **Equalities viewpoint workshop**

We commissioned an organisation that works regularly with people with protected equalities characteristics to run a workshop with their members.

👤 EIGHT PEOPLE ATTENDED

📄 [eastdevon.gov.uk/consultation-and-surveys/viewpoint-surveys/equalities-groups](http://eastdevon.gov.uk/consultation-and-surveys/viewpoint-surveys/equalities-groups)



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