



Spennymoor Town Council

# COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

A report on the opinions and priorities of the community in Spennymoor

BRENNAN H.C.

[19/10/2015]

## Contents

Contents .....	1
List of Figures .....	2
List of Tables .....	2
1.0 Introduction .....	3
1.1 Purpose of Consultation.....	3
1.2 Scope of the Consultation .....	3
1.3 Methodology and Sources .....	4
1.4 Descriptive Data .....	5
2.0 Summary of Findings.....	8
3.0 Recommendations .....	9
4.0 Discussion and Findings .....	10
4.1.1 Ratings of services.....	10
4.1.2 Priority for Funding .....	13
4.2.1 Heritage Trail.....	16
4.2.2 Newsletter .....	18
4.3.1 Supplementary Questions.....	19
5.0 Conclusion.....	21

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Where does the Respondent live? .....	5
Figure 2: Respondent's Age Group.....	6
Figure 3: Respondent's Employment Status .....	7
Figure 4: Percentage of Respondents Who Use the Services.....	12
Figure 5: Respondent's Opinion on the Introduction of a Heritage Trail .....	16
Figure 6: Respondent's Opinion on the Introduction of a Town Council Quarterly Newsletter.....	18
Figure 7: Responses to Supplementary Questions.....	19

## List of Tables

Table 1: List of Overall Ratings .....	10
Table 2: Rating of Services by Area .....	11
Table 3: Priorities for Funding.....	13
Table 4: Priorities for Funding by Area.....	13

## **1.0 Introduction**

Spennymoor Town Council foresees cuts to its funding over the coming years and because of this have decided to consult the local community on its priorities and the services they use. The Council has used a number of techniques: questionnaires, focus groups and community surgeries, to gather data from a range of people in the community. The survey included the town itself and surrounding villages of Byers Green, Middlestone Moor, Kirk Merrington and Tudhoe.

Spennymoor Town Council provides ten services: Allotments, Cemeteries, Children Play Areas, Community Centres, Cow Plantation Nature Reserve, Football Fields, Open Spaces such as Jubilee Park, Sport Changing Facilities, Town Events, and the Town Hall. The Council's budget is allocated between these services.

### **1.1 Purpose of Consultation**

The aim of this consultation was to understand which services the public use and which they would prioritise in the light of the reduction in funding. The Council would like

- Feedback from the local population on their satisfaction with the services currently provided
- A ranking of these from highest to lowest priority, as a means of allowing the Council to measure its current and future performance against community needs
- From this feedback Key Point Indicators can be created so that Council can measure future satisfaction with the services
- Suggestions on improving communication with the general public
- Recommendations on areas to improve services

### **1.2 Scope of the Consultation**

This consultation asked the public:

- How they currently rate the services provided by the council
- How they would priorities the funding to these services
- Their opinion of the Heritage Trail idea and knowledge of the history of Spennymoor
- Three ways they would change Spennymoor

This will provide Spennymoor Town Council with comprehensive knowledge of the views of the local population and the level of prioritisation they give services. It also provides an opportunity for the local population to give feedback to the Council on the areas they want to see improved.

The picture is complicated by some of the services in Spennymoor being provided by Durham County Council. Spennymoor Town Council are therefore unable to act directly upon the queries or complaints about these services. They are however able to raise these issues with the County Council and could lobby for change over time.

### **1.3 Methodology and Sources**

Data was collected utilising a number of different techniques. The bulk of the data was collected using a questionnaire sent out in the local fortnightly paper, "Spennynnews". The questionnaire was pre designed and agreed by the Council members.

Community surgeries were held at each village location in community centres for a single period of 2 hours on one day. These were designed to enable the local community to come and discuss any issues they wanted to bring to Council's attention. Discussion was based around the questionnaire.

The last technique was a focus group with the sixth form students as the local school Whitworth Park School and Sixth Form College. This sector of the community is frequently overlooked, so using the focus group meant that their opinions and queries would be included in the data.

Combining all of these techniques, and using open and closed questions, enabled the collection of quantitative and qualitative information. Closed questions produce measurable statistical data, making the data easier to analyse, but not allowing the respondents to give an opinions. For this reason it is important to also include open questions as then the respondent is able to give their opinion freely and without constraint, and this adds depth and clarity to the statistical data.

Basing the community surgeries and the focus groups around the questionnaire allowed the respondent to ask relevant questions and enabled the interviewer to keep the respondent focused on the issues, and to help the respondents with explanations. The interviewer was also able to probe the respondent further, and ask them supplementary questions to develop their answers.

Care was taken not to manipulate the respondents into giving particular views. At all times the interviewer maintained a neutral presence.

#### 1.4 Descriptive Data

424 responses to the questionnaire were collated and processed by IBM SPSS statistical analysis software and Microsoft Excel to generate the conclusions.

Figure 1 below shows the numbers of respondents by area. The chart compares the proportion of respondents by area, the most responses coming from Spennymoor town itself. This is to be expected as this is the area of highest population at 20,000. There is however a higher level of response proportionately from the villages when compared to Spennymoor town, in particular from Byers Green which has a population of 672, Kirk Merrington with a population of 739, and Tudhoe with its population of 2500. Separate population figures were not available for Middlestone Moor. It is clear therefore that although the numbers of respondents are necessarily smaller from the outlying village communities, this survey has captured the views of the outlying areas of the Spennymoor district in at least a proportionate way.

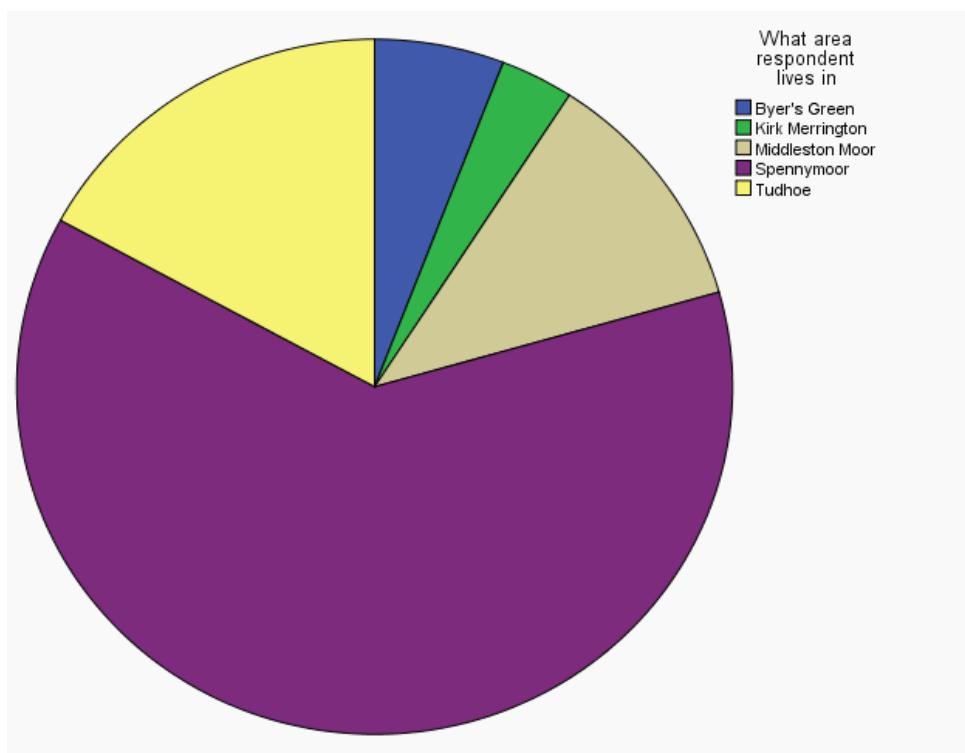


FIGURE 1: WHERE DOES THE RESPONDENT LIVE?

Figure 2 illustrates the proportion of respondents by age group. The majority (60%) of respondents are over 50 years of age, and over half are over 60. The participation of the 10 to 19 year old age group is largely as a result of the school based focus group. A very small proportion of the 20 to 29 age group is represented, with increasing representation of the 30 to 39 age group and then increasing again in representation of the 40 to 49 years age group.

The age pyramid produced by the Spennymoor Area Action Plan (AAP) 2012 shows the population of Spennymoor as a profile is predominantly aged 30 to 50 and at the extremes to be slightly weighted to the younger age groups. This suggests the respondent rate using these techniques is over representative of the over 60 age group, and under representative of the working age population and those in education.

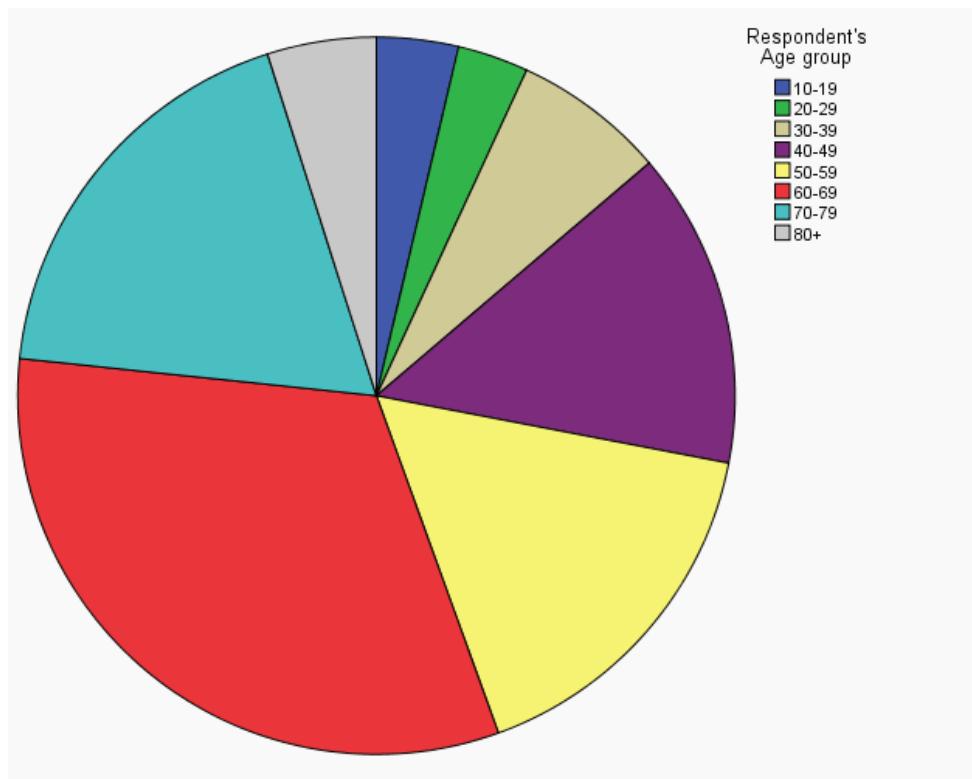
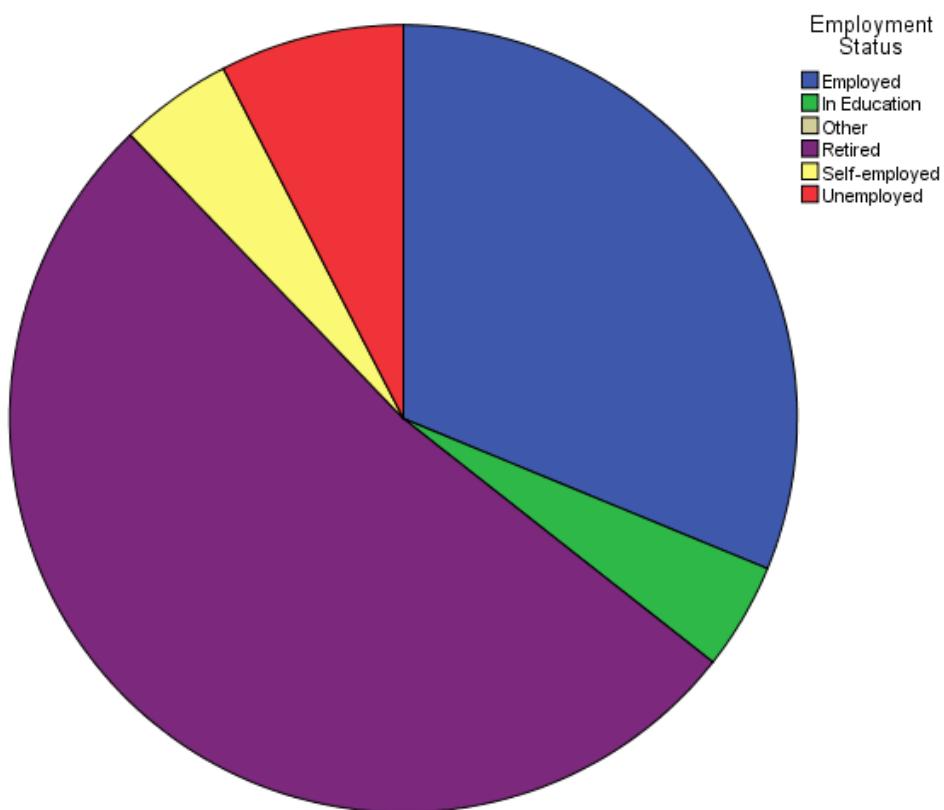


FIGURE 2: RESPONDENT'S AGE GROUP

Figure 3 shows the respondents employment statuses. The majority are retired, which corresponds with the majority of respondents being aged 60-69. This does not reflect the general population as indicated in the AAP 2012.

As the employed are the greatest proportion of the population, they are underrepresented in this consultation.



**FIGURE 3: RESPONDENT'S EMPLOYMENT STATUS**

## 2.0 Summary of Findings

From the survey fifteen conclusions can be drawn:

1. Majority of respondents are from Spennymoor, are retired and aged 60-69
2. There is a consequent underrepresentation of the working age population and those in education.
3. There is adequate if not over representation of village opinions because of their high survey return rate.
4. The level of satisfaction with the services overall is high, with all services being rated as good or very good with the exception of the Sports Changing Facilities which were rated as average.
5. The services are rated as followed:
  - a. Allotments-Good
  - b. Cemeteries-Very Good
  - c. Children's Play areas-Good
  - d. Community Centres-Good
  - e. Cow Plantation-Good
  - f. Football Field-Good
  - g. Open Spaces-Good
  - h. Sport Changing Facilities- Average
  - i. Town Events- Very Good
  - j. Town Halls- Very Good
6. The community prioritised the children play areas for funding, with the sport changing facilities having the least priority.
7. It may be possible to meet the community's desire for increased childrens' provision and support their other priorities by making the open spaces more child friendly and investing in Cow Plantation Nature Reserve as a childrens' resource.
8. The most used service is the Town Events, with 75% of respondents using them. The least used are the Sport Changing Facilities, with only 18% of respondents using them.
9. Sports Changing Facilities, and Cow Plantation Nature Reserve need greater publicity. A majority of respondents did not know that Cow Plantation Nature Reserve and the Sport Changing Facilities even existed.
10. Almost 50% of respondents want to see an improvement in the shopping areas of the town centre, especially the precinct and the Festival Walk
11. Activities for young people at weekends, holidays and evenings were the second most featured improvement request.
12. Many respondents from the community surgeries want the Council to have more of an online presence. With more information about upcoming events, future planning notices for new houses, the Council budgeting priorities and how to use and hire the facilities, including Community Centre booking systems. They also would like the Council to be more communicative and to respond to queries more quickly.
13. Those respondents living in the surrounding villages would like better services in their local area, such as improved bus routes and villages shops.
14. 58% of respondents think the idea of newsletter from the Council is a good idea. Some of them thought including it in "Spennynews" would be better as it would save costs.
15. A majority of respondents would support a heritage trail, but would like it to focus more widely than Norman Cornish, to include Byers Green and a scientific flavour.

### **3.0 Recommendations**

From the points highlighted above, these are the recommendations:

1. To help with communication with the public, publicity of all services including the Sports Changing Facilities and the Cow Plantation Nature Reserve, booking of venues and future consultations an up-to-date website and a social media presence would be highly beneficial to provide information to the public. This would also provide a platform for discussion between members of the public and the Council. It could provide information to the public about any future plans or events
2. Future consultations should make greater efforts to include the working age population, potentially by an online resource.
3. The school focus group should be maintained as it is the only significant means to obtain in depth views from that age group.
4. Funding should be maintained to the Town Events and Town Hall, which are highly regarded, well used and highly prioritised by the respondents
5. Funding should be maintained to the Children's Play areas, and/or open spaces and the nature reserve should be promoted as child friendly facilities.
6. There should be greater publicity for the unrecognised services, online and in the town to promote usage.
7. There is a pressing need to establish communication and develop lobbying strategies regarding Durham County Council primarily over the precinct and Festival Walk, the most common compliant from the respondents, but also other issues beyond the Town Council's control, including planning, development and youth activities.
8. There is significant support for a widely based Heritage Trail, particularly if developed in association with town centre improvements, particularly the establishing of a barista style coffee outlet.
9. The satisfaction levels with the services offered by the Town Council are extremely high overall. This research provides a baseline to measure future performance against in terms of resident satisfaction. It may however be challenging in an era of reduced resources to maintain these satisfaction levels and the Town Council may want to manage resident expectations against this.
10. Suggested KPIs could include
  - Creation of an online presence by an agreed deadline
  - Maintain use of the Town Hall by 66% of the population
  - Maintain use of the Town events by 75% of the population
  - Maintain current satisfaction levels with the services provided
  - Increase usage of the Cow Plantation Nature reserve by 10%
  - Increase usage of the Sports Changing facilities by 7%
  - Creation of the Heritage Trail by 2017
  - Development of a lobbying/ communication Strategy with Durham County Council by April 2016

## 4.0 Discussion and Findings

This consultation has been commissioned so that Spennymoor Town Council are aware of public wants and priorities for funding. This section will be split into three parts:

- Ratings of services and which services they would prioritise.
- Respondents' opinion on The Heritage tour and introduction of a Newsletter from the Town Council.
- Supplementary Questions

### 4.1.1 Ratings of services

Respondents were asked if they used a particular service and then to rate the services on a 5 point scale from Poor to Excellent.

The overall ratings of the services are displayed below in the table. These were calculated by taking the mean of the respondents score and combines respondent's answers from all areas.

Service	Rating
Allotments	Good
Cemeteries	Very Good
Children's Play Area	Good
Community Centres	Good
Cow Plantation	Good
Football Fields	Good
Open Spaces	Good
Sport Changing Facilities	Average
Town Events	Very Good
Town Hall	Very Good

TABLE 1: LIST OF OVERALL RATINGS

Spennymoor Town Council can be reassured that on average the public are satisfied with the level of services provided, all areas except changing rooms maintenance scoring above average, and no service being rated poor or very poor.

More detailed understanding can be obtained from examining the responses from respondents in the different areas. The results change slightly. The table below states the ratings for each service in the different areas. The ratings in italics are those that differ from the Overall Ratings.

	<b>Byer's Green</b>	<b>Kirk Merrington</b>	<b>Middleston Moor</b>	<b>Spennymoor</b>	<b>Tudhoe</b>
<b>Allotments</b>	Good	<i>Average</i>	Good	Good	Good
<b>Cemeteries</b>	Very Good	<i>Excellent</i>	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
<b>Children's Play Areas</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Community Centres</b>	Good	<i>Very Good</i>	<i>Average</i>	Good	Good
<b>Cow Plantation</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Football Fields</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Open Spaces</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Sport Changing Facilities</b>	Average	Average	Average	<i>Good</i>	Average
<b>Town Events</b>	Very Good	<i>Good</i>	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
<b>Town Hall</b>	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good

TABLE 2: RATING OF SERVICES BY AREA

Again the level of satisfaction is high. Six of the services however have different ratings, although Byers Green and Tudhoe agree with the overall scoring throughout.

The respondents from Middlestone Moor are less satisfied with the condition of their Community Centre than other areas, whereas Kirk Merrington respondents are more satisfied. This would suggest that any investment directed into Community Centres would be best placed in Middlestone Moor if the aim is to maintain high levels of public satisfaction.

Allotments are accessed centrally and so the comments could be said to be applicable across the board. Kirk Merrington does not have allotments in the locality, nor a cemetery so it is difficult to use this information to plan which allotments the respondents there would see as requiring improvements, or which Cemetery they see as outstanding. Kirk Merrington respondents were less happy with Town events, but were less likely to use them, and comments suggest they see themselves as more of a separate community, and informal comments suggested they were particularly disappointed in last year's Christmas tree. The levels of satisfaction do not dip or improve more than one scale point and if the Town Council so chooses further clarification of these points could be obtained by further surveying the population of Kirk Merrington.

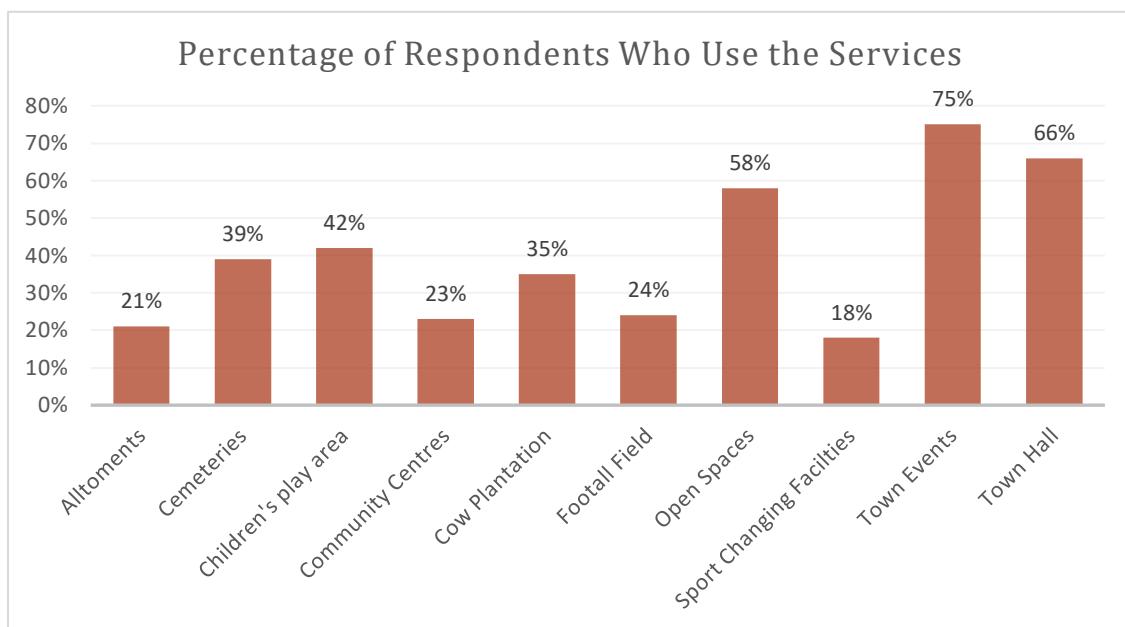
Spennymoor's "Good" rating of the Sports Changing Facilities may reflect the fact that all of these are located in Spennymoor. It would seem likely that Spennymoor residents use these more heavily and are less likely therefore to be non-committal. Where the respondent has limited, or no knowledge at all of a service there is a natural inclination to score this in a non-committal way as average.

Sport Changing Facilities were used by the least number of respondents, 18%, probably reflective of the skewed age profile of the respondents relative to the population as a whole.

78% of respondents did not use the allotments, although where an allotment was in the family respondents commented that a greater number of wider family members including young people helped with these. Allotments are also a limited resource, naturally reducing the numbers able to hold one. This needs to be taken into account when comparing usage results.

Respondent satisfaction with allotments was high, even among those who did not hold one directly. The main criticism voiced was that some were not well maintained, but this was outweighed by the number of respondents who were not allotment holders but who benefitted from allotment produce.

A major feedback point from the questionnaires and the community surgeries was that many respondents were not aware of some services at all. Figure 4 shows the current usage levels.



**FIGURE 4: PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO USE THE SERVICES**

Service usage could be increased by making the population more aware of their existence. Many respondents wrote on the questionnaire that they were unaware of Cow Plantation and the Sports Changing Facilities. Feedback from the Community Surgeries indicated there is a lack of information on hiring the Community Centres. Overall there was a lack of information regarding all services. A solution to this would be using an online platform, such as website, online booking system, or a Facebook page.

This online platform would be a central point for the population to access information without having to wait for employees of the council to respond to their queries. The platform would need to be maintained and updated regularly to maintain accuracy and effectiveness. It would not be a resource neutral option, but would immediately improve publicity, and arguably increase access by the largest, younger demographic groups of the population who were underrepresented in the survey. This online presence would also potentially improve these groups' access to the council's current communication strategies. A team would be required to respond to public questions and update the website or Page regularly to prevent it becoming outdated and thereby causing increased public frustration and dissatisfaction.

#### 4.1.2 Priority for Funding

Table 3 shows Community prioritisation for the funding of services provided, taking the Spennymoor area as a whole.

Ranking	Service
1	Children Play Areas
2	Town Events
3	Open Spaces
4	Town Hall
5	Community Centres
6	Cemeteries
7	Football Fields
8	Cow Plantation
9	Allotments
10	Sport Changing Facilities

TABLE 3: PRIORITIES FOR FUNDING

Table 4 shows how the different communities prioritises the funding. There are some differences from the overall list, mainly in the smaller communities who are underrepresented.

	Byer's Green	Kirk Merrington	Middlestone Moor	Spennymoor	Tudhoe
1	Community Centres	Community Centres	Children's Play Area	Children's Play Areas	Children's Play Area
2	Play Areas	Open Spaces	Open Spaces	Town events	Open Spaces
3	Open Spaces	Town Events	Town Events	Town Hall	Town Hall
4	Cow Plantation	Play Areas	Community Centres	Open Spaces	Cemeteries
5	Allotments	Town Hall	Town Hall	Cemeteries	Town Events/ Community Centres
6	Town Hall	Cow Plantation	Football Fields	Community Centres	—
7	Town Events	Football Fields	Cemeteries	Cow Plantation	Cow Plantation
8	Football Fields	Sport Changing Facilities	Cow Plantation	Football Fields	Football Fields/ Sport Changing Facilities
9	Cemeteries	Allotments	Sport Changing Facilities	Allotments	—
10	Sport Changing Facilities	Cemeteries	Allotments	Sport Changing Facilities	Allotments

TABLE 4: PRIORITIES FOR FUNDING BY AREA

It is important to break down the results by area to then understand what is important for each community, to prevent the outlying communities being marginalised. Because of the higher return rate per head of population, response rates in the villages more accurately represent the residents'

views than the survey results from Spennymoor town, and suggests a higher rate of engagement with the process.

The respondent mode (the most highly represented) age group is 60-69, with 60% of the respondents, and the mode employment group is retired. Therefore these results reflect their priorities more than any other age group.

The younger age groups are underrepresented, therefore their priorities are not fully presented in this data.

Despite these discrepancies there remains a consensus across all areas that the highest priority is the children's play areas. For this to be so significantly represented suggests that the need is recognised by the retired population as well as the younger age groups, who are most likely to have young families. From this the council should regard this as one of their highest priorities, focusing on maintaining the high level of satisfaction.

Open spaces also feature highly. Cow Plantation Nature Reserve is not highly placed in priority but this was the service most consistently unknown to residents. For it to have featured so highly at all therefore is surprising. It may be that these priorities could be linked by improving children's facilities by making the open spaces more child friendly, and by promoting the nature reserve as a child friendly environment.

Community Centres were considered a high priority especially in the Byers Green and Kirk Merrington areas, although centrally located areas also valued these, despite the numbers using them being relatively low overall.

Town Events and the Town Hall were also highly valued. Taken across the whole this suggests that the respondents value venues and events which facilitate community cohesion, and the ability to hire good quality, cost effective venues in their own communities for their celebrations and activities.

High levels of satisfaction already exist with the community centres by the numbers who use them, with the exception of Middlestone Moor where the respondents felt the venue could be improved. Investment should be focused on maintaining current levels of service. An online, or otherwise clear booking process and promotional web pages were identified as a need by respondents to improve usage.

Investment should be increased or maintained in the Town Hall and the Town Events, to maintain if not improve the quality. These services were the most used by the respondents, had a high level of satisfaction and were highly prioritised.

Allotments and cemeteries were scored highly by the respondents in terms of satisfaction but allotments were not used by high numbers. Both areas were prioritised at a lower level than everything else except the sports changing facilities. This suggests that these areas may not require investment at the current levels if funding is reduced, in order to retain public support.

Sports changing facilities were not widely used except by the sixth form students, and along with Cow Plantation were the least known service by the respondents. They were also least prioritised by the largely older respondent group. There should be greater publicity of these facilities to boost public recognition, but it is difficult to argue for greater investment unless the Town Council specifically want to promote services for young people, a suggestion by the public for improvements.

For future consultations, it is important to increase the number of respondents from the younger age groups and those that are employed. This could be achieved by using more online resources as these ages groups are more active online and would perhaps prefer to fill out an online questionnaire.

This would be less time consuming for both the respondents and the researcher as the data will already be in electronic form so would be easier to input and analyse. Whereas the paper questionnaires remain useful for the older generation, online questionnaires would reach more people and would also allow multiple responses from each household.

The focus group and the community surgery consultations remain useful as the focus group ensures input by the school aged group, but most of all both of these allowed for discussion with the respondents and the collection of additional data, which formed themes not covered in the questionnaire itself. It may be possible to rationalise resources by conducting focus groups in the community centres instead of an open surgery.

#### 4.2.1 Heritage Trail

When asked about their knowledge of the history of Spennymoor, the majority of respondents said they had average knowledge about the history. The question asked was:

*How would you describe your knowledge of the local history/heritage of Spennymoor?*

The respondent then chose one of the following: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Average or Poor. Here it is down to the respondent to analyse their own knowledge and some may not truly honest, others may think their knowledge level is good, when in reality it may not be.

For the focus Group a pre prepared heritage quiz with sweets for prizes was used as a fun way of rating the knowledge more objectively, undertaken in teams and scored out of 21 marks.

A number of questions about the heritage of the Spennymoor could be incorporated in the questionnaire. Each question will be scored and then the total will be indicative of the level of respondents' knowledge. A separate heritage on line quiz may be helpful.

It is useful to incorporate an element of fun as the respondent may not wish to answer too many questions, may become bored and disinterested and not finish the questionnaire. Due to time constraints with the original questionnaire, questions of this nature were not included. For future consultations, questions like this would provide a more accurate picture of the respondents' knowledge on the heritage.

Figure 5 shows that the majority of respondents thought a Trail was a Good or Excellent idea. However, many of the respondents thought the introduction of a Heritage Trail around Spennymoor would be a waste of time while the town centre is in its current state. Some respondents who stated that it was a Poor idea gave this reason, otherwise they would have stated it was a good idea.

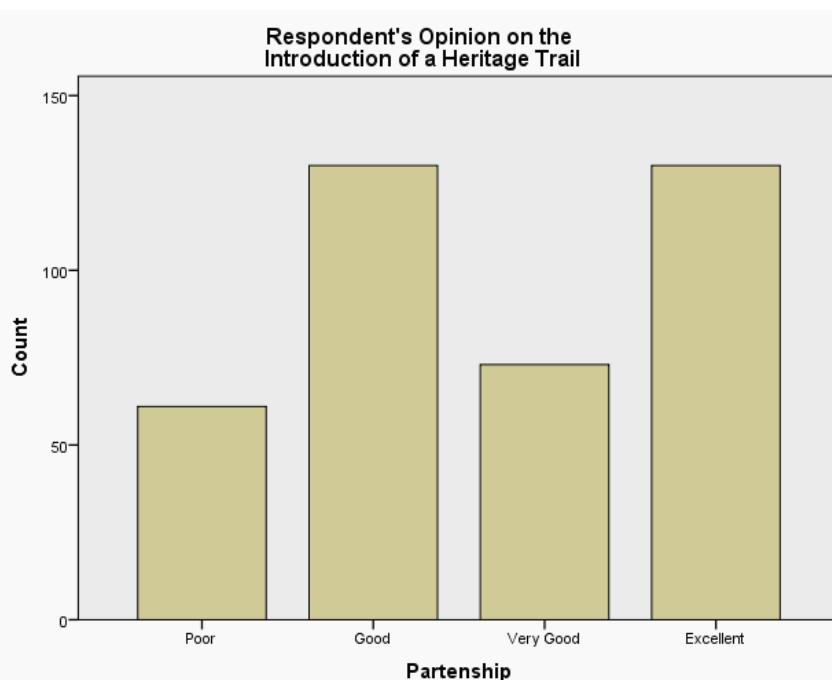


FIGURE 5: RESPONDENT'S OPINION ON THE INTRODUCTION OF A HERITAGE TRAIL

There is currently nothing to keep those who visit Spennymoor either in Spennymoor or revisiting. Improvement to the town centre would encourage visitors to stay and, possibly, visit again. The key improvement cited was to offer a coffee shop of the type offered from a chain such as Starbucks or Costa or a high quality independent. Opening other retail outlets in the town centre in empty properties would also be helpful.

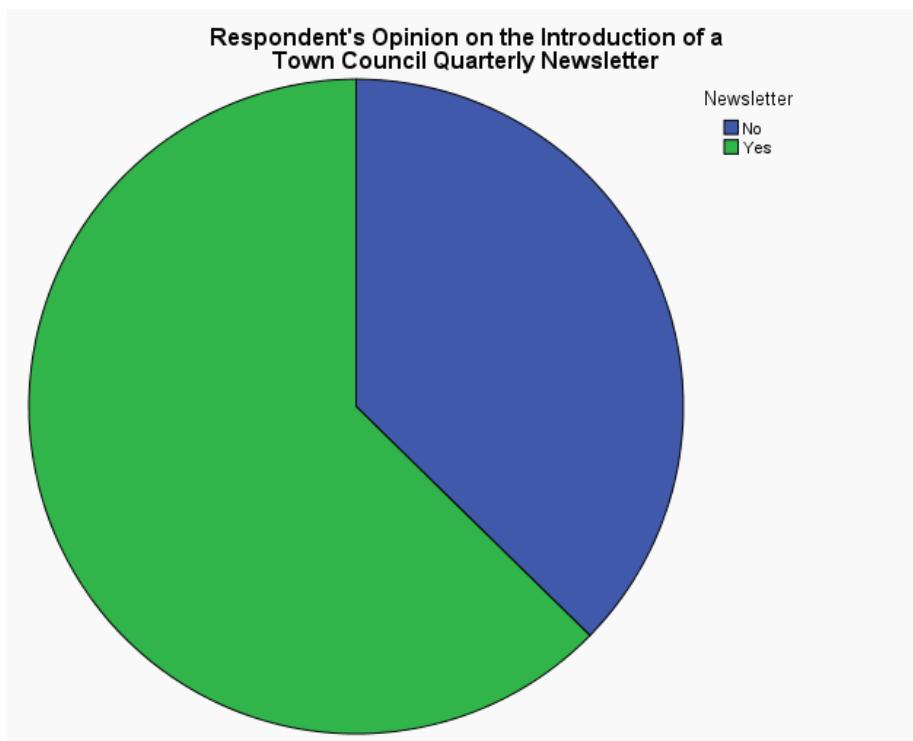
Some respondents suggested a trail should be widened to include other historical figures and artists, not basing it on Norman Cornish solely, but including figures like Robert Shafto and Thomas Wright. This would attract a wider range of visitors, beyond those interested in art. There were a minority of comments that Spennymoor should ‘stop living in past’ and should develop and move forward facing image. While recognising the unique contribution Norman Cornish makes to the heritage of the town, his images could be perceived as outdated and reinforcing a stereotype. This could be counteracted by the trail focusing also on the scientific achievements of Thomas Wright, giving the scientific context to his discovery, and this would also spread the benefits of the trail to Byers Green, which also produced Harold Orton, the distinguished linguist who could also be represented.

The town council could also explore the possibility of a partnership with Northumbria University who hold the rights to Norman Cornish’s work and hold changing exhibitions in the Town Hall to link with the trail.

The Town Council would be justified in pursuing the option of a heritage trail in the town because of the level of public support.

#### 4.2.2 Newsletter

Overall, there was a positive response to the idea of a quarterly Newsletter from the Council. 55% of respondents thought it would be a good idea in order to make Council decisions more transparent and keep the local population up to date with Town Council plans and meetings.



**FIGURE 6: RESPONDENT'S OPINION ON THE INTRODUCTION OF A TOWN COUNCIL QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER**

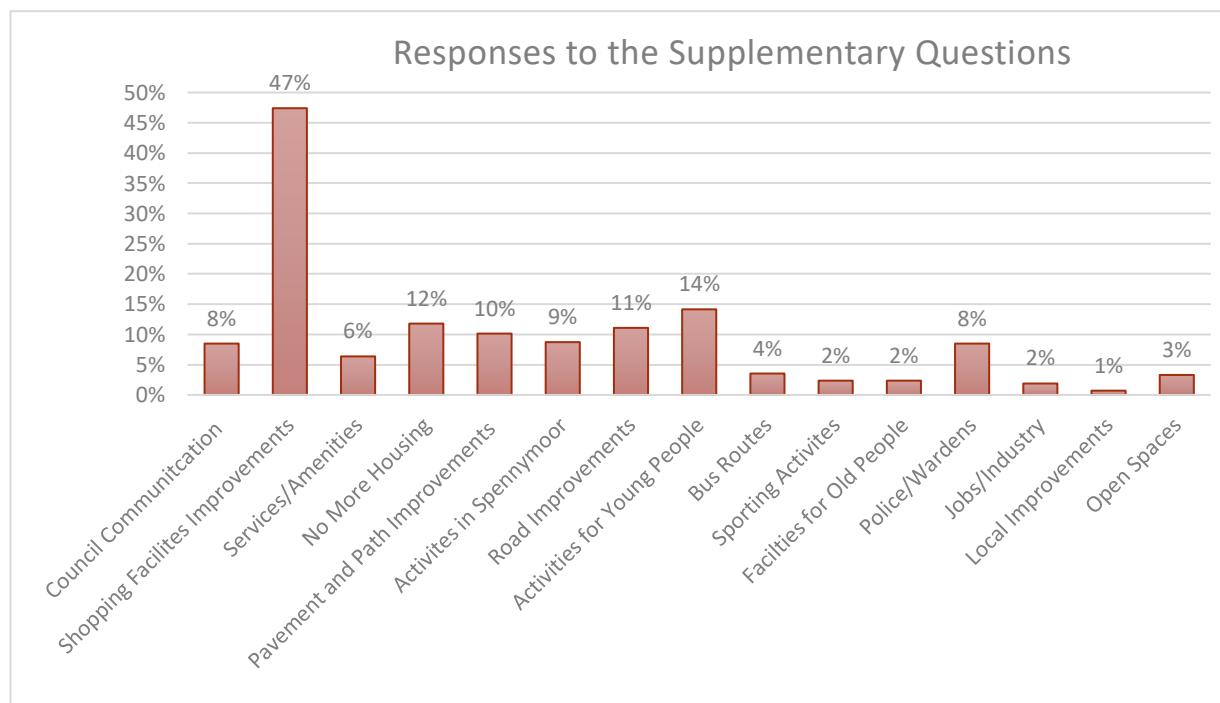
A significant minority of the respondents stated that the “Spennynews” was sufficient and were concerned about the cost. In a time of budget cuts, they did not see the introduction of a quarterly newsletter as a good investment. Some of the respondents who supported the idea suggested having the newsletter in “Spennynews” to save on costs, potentially a good solution.

#### 4.3.1 Supplementary Questions

At the end of the questionnaire the respondent was asked to state three changes they would like to make in their local community. There were a wide range of responses to these questions. To make it easier to analyse the responses, I have put these into fifteen categories. These are listed below:

- Council Improvements
- Improvement to Shopping Facilities and Town Centre
- Increased services and amenities
- No more new Housing
- Improvements to Pavements and Paths
- Activities In Spennymoor e.g. more events
- Road Improvements
- Activities for Young People
- Improved Bus Routes
- Sporting Activities
- Facilities for Young People
- Increased Police or Street Wardens
- Increased Jobs or Opportunities
- Local Improvements
- Saving Open Spaces

Figure 7 shows the percentage of responses for each category.



**FIGURE 7: RESPONSES TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS**

Easily the most represented response is the current state of the shopping facilities and Festival Walk. 47% of respondents wanted to see a major improvement in the town centre, some even suggested the demolition of Festival Walk. The next closest response suggesting activities for young people was at 14%. This indicates that the town council need to lobby strongly and effectively with the Durham

County Council, and landlords to effect change in this area. Concerns about this undermines support potentially ground breaking ideas such as the Heritage Trail, limiting the progress of the town.

14% of the respondents want an increase in activities for young people during school holidays and on an evening, the argument being that with more activities for the young people to do, the less likely they are to be hanging around the streets. This ties in with some comments for more activities and events in the communities, not just in Spennymoor, but also in the surrounding villages. Although from the consultation, sports facilities emerge as a low priority, investment may address this issue, as would wider use of the community centres, especially as not all young people are sporty.

There emerged a view that too much housing is being built in the area, on the open spaces, with it being the third most cited concern. 12% of responses highlighted this issue as something they would change. There has not been an increase in local services or amenities, such as primary school places or doctors surgeries. 6% of responses state that they want more of these services and amenities before more new housing is built. Again lobbying the Durham County Council for action is an important course of action for the Town Council.

Improvements in the cleanliness of pavements and paths especially with reference to dog fouling was the fourth area of concern, and this again links to lobbying of the County Council, for the provision of specialist bins and warden patrols.

There were some complaints about the transparency of the Town Council. 9% of respondents would like there to be more communication between the Council and the community about proposed plans. This may be solved by an input into "Spennynews". Respondents also would like queries and questions to be answered more quickly and more comprehensively. It must be remembered that these concerns were raised by only 9% of respondents but many of the comments about the council were negative and suggested an atmosphere of mistrust between respondents and the council. An online system for providing information and responding to queries would assist with this.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

The response rate over all was 424 respondents, 2% of the population. Efforts are required to increase the number of participants and widen the age range participating to create a more representative sample.

All services were rated highly, priorities and areas for improvements being detailed in the Summary of Findings and Recommendations section of the report.

An online presence able to address multiple purposes, (publicity, query response, and a consultation mechanism) support for the Heritage Trail, the need for a communication strategy with Durham County Council, and prioritising of town events and childrens' facilities are the key messages to take forward.