

PCP MEETING - POINTS TO NOTE

1. **Town Survey:** copy attached. As previously mentioned at the Liaison Meeting between PTC and PCP, the Partnership is keen to work in partnership with the Town Council on the need for improvements to town centre highlighted in the report and suggested a Joint Working Group be established. **ACTION:** If we wish to progress this then Sarah could discuss this with George Hepburn

2. **Prudhoe Youth Initiative:** On Thursday, 22nd November, eight volunteers will meet to discuss forming a Shadow Trustee Group. At that meeting the suggestion that both PTC and PDC nominate two representatives for the Shadow Board will be discussed and then PTC will be asked to nominate two representatives.

3. **Purple Tuesday:** The Access sub group was responsible for organising this event which was very successful with extensive media cover. 23 businesses decorated their windows in purple and others displayed posters. As well as raising awareness some businesses have made disabled friendly changes. The next step for this group is to consider "Making Prudhoe Dementia Friendly".

4. **Spetchells Centre:** External painting of centre to take place in Spring 2019. An Accountant is renting accommodation at the Centre in the New Year.

For discussion at trustees meeting on Tuesday 20th November

Proposed responses to the recommendations in town survey

The recommendations have been reviewed by the sub group (Margaret, Caroline and George) . Some are beyond our remit to tackle and we suggest 'referring on'. Others need prioritising given our limited resources and we envisage the actions being implemented within a three year work plan. Our responses are in italics inserted into the conclusions of the survey for discussion and decision by trustees.

1) Conclusion and Priorities

Overall, the survey gave a very positive picture of Prudhoe as a community with:

- 91% of respondents rating the town as a 3* place to live and 60% rating it at 4* or more
- 66% of respondents rating the town as a 3* place to work and 30% rating it at 4* or more
- 33% of respondents were interested in staying involved in supporting their community through becoming members of Prudhoe Community Partnership and /or taking on a range of voluntary roles.

Many respondents to the survey took the time not only to answer the straight forward questions, but also to provide a huge range of detailed comments, providing a wealth of insights and ideas about the issues that are important to the local community. Based on the analysis of these comments, a number of priorities have emerged under each of the 6 themes covered, which will be invaluable in supporting PCP to develop its business plan for the next 3 to 5 years. These are listed below. However, these should be seen as a starting point only. In deciding what actions to take forward it will be essential to take a number of other factors into consideration:

- Some of the highest priorities brought forward may be complex to implement, will require partnership working and acquisition of significant funding and could take considerable time to implement. Conversely there may be issues raised that are of lower priority but that can be addressed relatively easily and inexpensively. It may be desirable to identify a range of short-term, medium term and long-term actions that can be taken to ensure that local people see immediate outcomes from the survey whilst awaiting progress on some of the bigger issues.
- There may also be cases where the desired outcome identified by respondents to the survey may not prove possible in practice (for instance it is unlikely that the decision to close the local police station can be reversed). However, other approaches may be identified that can achieve progress towards addressing the underlying issue.
- Progress may have been made on some of the issues since sending out the survey.
- This report is based on the views of a fairly small percentage of local residents and some groups may be under-represented (for instance young people). It may be necessary to undertake further consultation focussed on particular issues and/ or tailored to reach particular groups of beneficiaries before committing time and resources to taking some of the ideas forward.

It may be useful to form working groups to look at each of the 6 themes in more detail and to take actions forward. These could be comprised of PCP trustees, representatives of other partners who could contribute to achieving desired outcomes, and respondents to the survey who have expressed an interest in continuing to be involved in the PCP and voluntary activities.

Some thoughts on how these factors may affect implementation are made alongside the themes below

a) Services

i) Maintenance of roads and pavements / street cleaning.

Responsibility for road maintenance lies primarily with the county council and budgetary considerations may affect how quickly issues can be addressed. Some work has already been carried out over the Summer period. The PCP's role may include gathering more detailed information about locations that are of concern, liaising with the local county councillor, highways department and town council to prioritise work and keep local people informed about progress

The situation has improved since the winter's pot holes were filled by the County Council. Road maintenance is their responsibility and we propose informing the County Council of local concerns and asking for a progress report in six months time.

ii) Location of the Police Station at the Spetchells Centre

The decision to close the Police station was made because the way services are delivered has changed over the years, with the implementation of technological support, meaning fewer support staff were located in local police station which was largely empty and expensive to run. The police report that there have been advantages in moving into the Spetchells over and above budgetary considerations – eg, people feel more comfortable speaking to the police in this less formal environment and being co-located with and other community organisations facilitates collaborative approaches. Contrary to the perception expressed in the survey, there has been no change in opening hours associated with the move. PCP's role may be in facilitating better communication with the public about the impact of the move, disseminating information about how to access the service, and exploring the possibility of providing better access to space for confidential conversations.

We have informed the Police of this perception, which we suspect has diminished over time. We can continue to look for opportunities for publicising the beneficial effects of the Police's move to Spetchells Centre.

iii) Antisocial Behaviour

Crime figures for Prudhoe published on <https://crime-statistics.co.uk/postcode/ne42%205dl> confirm that anti-social behaviour is one of the most prevalent crimes in the area with for instance 18 incidents recorded in July 2018. However, compared with other parts of the county, and the country these rates are relatively low. Given current budgetary constraints faced by the police it is unlikely that these levels are sufficient to justify higher levels of policing. The PCPs role may be to liaise with the police and NCC's Community Safety Team, support local people in understanding how to report issues, and exploring community approaches such as developing Neighbourhood Watch schemes, or helping to engage young people in positive activities. Advice on how to report anti-social behaviour and contact details for the Community Safety Team are available at <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Protection/Neighbourhood.aspx>

We have passed this information on to the Police as well and feel there is little else we can do.

iv) Youth Services

Improving Youth Services for children aged 10 and over emerged as a high priority both to improve the life of young people, and as a way of addressing antisocial behaviour issues. However, there was little consensus about the best actions to take, and the response rates from young people were very low. The NCC is currently embarking on a review of formal youth services in the area which may provide an opportunity to have an impact in this area.

It is recommended that further consultation should be carried out with young people themselves working in partnership with other organisations such as schools, the local youth service, and other VCS organisations working with young people. Details of Northumberland Youth Service are available at <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Children/Young/Northumberland-Youth-Services/Northumberland-youth-service.aspx#northumberlandyouthservice>

CAN may be able to provide information regarding good practice in consulting young people.

We agree that services for young people need improving and expanding and working to set up a Prudhoe Youth Initiative that could over time bring in more funds for activities for young people.

v) Services for people with Dementia

Services for older and disabled people in general did not emerge as a major concern. However, a small number of people expressed a need for more support for people with dementia and their carers was raised. PCP could work in partnership with organisations such as NCC, The Town Council, The Alzheimer's Society and other VCS organisations. It may also be worth finding out more about the Dementia Friendly Communities Initiative: <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-involved/dementia-friendly-communities>

We are hoping to work with others to make Prudhoe dementia friendly, starting in early 2019.

b) Amenities

i) Arts Venues

There was significant interest in developing venues for arts activities including a theatre, cinema, venue for live music, exhibition space and artists studios. However, views were divided as to whether these should be provided by improving existing facilities, making better use of the Fuse Centre, or developing a dedicated building in the town centre.

PCP may consider undertaking a feasibility study to develop a new venue, working in partnership with existing venues and arts activities to promote awareness and co-ordinate a plan to develop facilities. Measures to improve transport around the town may also have an impact here, particularly in improving access to the Fuse.

We suggest setting up a sub group during 2019 to look at increasing cultural activities in Prudhoe and look at the feasibility of an Arts Centre, though acknowledging this would be ambitious and expensive.

ii) Sports Facilities

Interest in developing sports facilities was somewhat lower than the interest in arts venues, but there was still an area of significant concern. Again, views were divided as to whether to develop a new venue, or whether needs could be met by improving existing provision. It may be difficult to access funding for a new building given the existence of Waterworld in an area relatively well serviced by buses, and it may be better to look at whether the issues raised about this facility can be addressed. Active Northumberland are currently reviewing their service provision and looking at ways to ensure that Waterworld is inclusive to as many people as possible, although difficult in the times of cuts to public services.

PCP may consider co-ordinating a partnership with Waterworld / Active Northumberland, local parks, school facilities and a variety of local sports clubs, to develop existing facilities and promote awareness of what is available. A significant issue is the cost of activities, and PCP may want to campaign on this particular issue.

We have informed Waterworld of these findings, are aware of other initiatives to increase the number of sports clubs and do not think this is a priority for the Partnership.

iii) Community Centre / large meeting space

Several people addressed a need for this, but once again views were divided as to whether a new building was required, or an existing one could be developed. PCP may want to explore this further in partnership with the Town Council and the other venues mentioned.

The need would need to be explored in more detail and the idea is also ambitious. It may come within the remit of an arts centre under point (bi) above.

c) Shops & Town Centre

i) Improving shop fronts

There was a strong demand for improved shopfronts. PCP may wish to work in partnership with the Town Council, Northumberland County Council and the local business community to explore options.

NCC has recently created new posts whose role is to work with Towns which may provide a real opportunity (contact details not yet published). Measures worth considering include providing grants or other incentives to shop holders, running 'best shop front' competitions, encouraging pop-up shops or community activities in any vacant premises, or allowing community organisations to use empty shop fronts to display information.

ii) Creating a more welcoming Town Centre.

Ideas varied from improving existing areas such as the Glade with flower displays, trees, seating and creating a space for outside meetings, to creating a more extensive pedestrianised area. There was no strong consensus as to whether the latter would be desirable or feasible. If PCP wish explore the pedestrianisation idea it may be worth considering undertaking a neighbourhood plan for the town as a first step. Some shorter-term measures may be possible.

The Partnership did have money for this purpose a few years ago from the Portas Initiative but felt it was only partly successful in improving the appearance of the Town Centre. Pedestrianisation is probably not practical.

iii) Improved range of shops

There was a strong demand for a better range of shops – especially a second supermarket, a range of small food shops and clothing and shoe shops, and also attracting more well-known high street chains. The planned development on the Bypass may address this issue to some extent. PCP may want to work in partnership with the Town Council, County Council and business community and landlords of commercial premises to identify measures which could be taken to attract shops to the area.

It is suggested that the Partnership set up a working party with the Town Council to look at the general issues of improving the town centre.

iv) Access for Wheelchairs and Pushchairs

There is a significant problem in accessing many shops and cafes due to stepped entrances, narrow doorways and a lack of space inside. Some of these issues are difficult to address as many buildings are old and difficult to adapt. However, there are steps that could be taken, such as encouraging shops to have portable ramps that can be deployed on request, providing seating inside shops for older people with mobility issues, offering shop-owners training to understand the needs of disabled people such as those with dementia. PCP might wish to consider working with the town council, business community and disability organisations to identify a way forward. It may be possible to offer access audits to shops to help identify possible steps that can be taken. Gateshead Access Panel is able to carry out such audits, or train local people to carry out audits themselves, see <http://www.access-gateshead.org.uk/>.

There are also access issues in the outside environment which could be relatively easily addressed such as removing street furniture and improving pavements.

The Partnership already has a subgroup working on accessibility and which has promoted "Purple Tuesday" and hopes to continue with other initiatives such as "Dementia Friendly Prudhoe".

d) Employment

i) Creating Job Opportunities

There was a strong feeling that more should be done to create employment opportunities within Prudhoe, but no strong consensus on the best measures to take.

PCP may want to explore the issue further and could consider doing this in partnership with / consulting the business community (to identify measures that would support businesses to set up in the town), Hexham and Blaydon Job Centre (to identify level and type of need amongst unemployed people), training organisations, such as NEAS/ the Fuse Centre, Northumberland College and VCs organisations that deliver employability services.

The Partnership can pass on this concern but does not feel there is anything specifically that it can do to improve employment opportunities.

ii) Support/ Advice for Job seekers

There was a small demand for support for people to find work, particularly young people. Support services already exist in the town, including Prudhoe Rural Employment Hub delivering the Bridge Project which is run by CAN at the Spetchells Centre, and the CAP job club, and at the Fuse. Tailored support for young people may be available through schools and the youth service. Local vacancies are also regularly posted on the Prudhoe Matters website. These services may be sufficient for current need, but PCP may have a role in raising awareness of the availability of the service.

The partnership could help publicise these initiatives which appear able to meet current demand for employment support and advice.

e) Traffic & Transport

i) Parking Issues

Many people raised issues regarding difficulty finding parking spaces, poor surfaces to car parks and illegal parking. In the short-term PCP may want to work with the County Council and landowners to agree a programme of repairs to car park surfaces, and with the Police to identify ways in which the community can support them with addressing parking issues.

Longer-term, it may be possible to develop new parking facilities. However, this may need to be considered as part of a wider development plan for the Town, taking into account other developments such as that planned at the Bypass, any new housing, or to take forward the idea of pedestrianizing the town centre.

This could come within the remit of the proposed town centre working party. The Partnership can pass on these concerns to the County Council but members questioned whether more car parks were needed as yet.

ii) Shuttle bus / community transport schemes

Many people raised the need for more transport services around the town to access facilities and link with bus and train services to other towns. The preferred option would be a shuttle bus operating on a regular basis throughout the day. A commercial transport provider would only consider if it could be made profitable and it is likely that NCC subsidies would be necessary. It is unlikely that this would be forthcoming in the current financial climate and much stronger evidence of need would be required. PCP may wish to consider implementing community transport alternatives such as provision of a volunteer driver scheme or arranging shared taxi services. Potential partners may be existing community transport providers or taxi firms. In the survey 9 people indicated an interest in volunteering as drivers.

The Partnership led a consultation on transport schemes in 2018 which concluded that a shuttle bus was not practical but led to a leaflet publicising existing assisted transport schemes. It could look at developing a volunteer driver scheme in the medium term.

iii) Better co-ordination of Bus and Train Services

This could be a complex issue to address, requiring partnership working between a number of transport providers and Northumberland County Councils. Changes in service timetables may also have a knock-on effect on services to neighbouring towns and connections to ongoing services from Newcastle and Carlisle. PCP could have a role in ensuring these issues are given due consideration and keeping the public informed about the practical issues.

The Partnership held a consultation on these issues last year and should keep them under review

iv) Better facilities for cyclists

There is a demand for more cycle lanes, cycle paths and cycle parking facilities. Improving cycle facilities would fit well with sustainable transport strategies and support may be available from

partners including Sustrans and Northumberland County Council. Taking this issue forward would require working in partnership with the Planning Department, and landowners and to be planned in the context of other developments in the town. Grants may be available to support installation of cycle parking facilities.

The Partnership acknowledges this could be helpful but does not consider it is a priority.

f) Social Housing

There has been significant housing development in the town in recent years, and some small-scale developments are being planned including supported living flats at the site of the old police station. Respondents to the survey expressed concerns that future development should be limited, any that took place should focus on local needs and be 'really affordable.'

A small demand for more social housing was identified through the survey, with the highest level of need appearing to be for starter homes for young people. However more evidence would be needed to support any further development.

The current policy environment is supportive to housing development with funding available from the Homes and Communities Agency via Northumberland County Council. Community Action Northumberland is able to provide support and advice to communities wishing to develop their own housing projects through 'Communities CAN' a community led housing hub for instance helping with carrying out housing needs assessments which will provide robust evidence needed to achieve planning permission and access grants. Stocks field Community Association has been successful in developing community led housing schemes and would be able to offer support.

The Partnership has been active in this area and continues to look for opportunities to develop social housing.

In summary:

The Partnership will continue existing initiatives in relation to:

- *Provision of youth services*
- *Access to shops for wheelchairs and pushchairs*
- *Social housing*

The Partnership will start new initiatives as resources allow, hopefully during 2019, in relation to

- *Dementia awareness*
- *Cultural activities and facilities*
- *Improving the town centre – in partnership with the Town Council*
- *A volunteer driver scheme*
- *Setting up a volunteer bureau*

The Partnership has conveyed concerns identified in the survey to other bodies in relation to:

- *Maintenance of roads – reported to County Council*
- *Location of Police Station – informed Police*
- *Parking in Prudhoe*

The Partnership does not consider it can give sufficient priority in the next three year work plan to:

- *Anti social behaviour*
- *Sports facilities*
- *Creating job opportunities*
- *Better facilities for cyclists*