

In March 2020, Scarborough Borough Council (SBC) had a single day consultation of Whitby residents about what they wanted for the town as part of the Town's Fund (with additional input from a UK Government website where people could add ideas, but poorly advertised). This was touted repeatedly by SBC as "extensive consultation". The data obtained from this was never published, but out of it came 6 projects, with an SBC-selected team (including 90% non-Whitby residents) to push it forward. It's fair to say that the majority of projects selected gave very little benefit to residents of the town, and most would not have been chosen by people who live here.

Contrast that with May 2023 when Whitby Community Network (WCN) undertook a consultation of residents of the town about their "Vision" for Whitby, what they liked and disliked, and what they would like to see improved. This consultation utilised an online map of the Whitby Parish, using the [CreateStreets](#) software, obtained using funding from a local grant of one of the local SBC councillors. The consultation was advertised online and via posters around the area, with paper slips also available in some community locations. The consultation had two components, firstly clicking on places around the town and giving an opinion about that place, and secondly of 4 education locations (Caedmon College, Eskdale School, Sixth Form, and Maritime Academy (Town Deal)) and giving an opinion on the current proposals for those sites.

In the places consultation a total of 601 places were commented on, signifying that **up to 4.6% of the population had participated**.

Andy Jefferson, retired IT consultant and WCN trustee said *"This was achieved with no funded advertising, solely relying on volunteers, and very little cooperation from either Whitby Town Council or North Yorkshire Council (NYC). Contrast this with the 0.2-0.4% typically answering the NYC Let's Talk surveys. In terms of schools only 5 pupils out of 650 at Caedmon took part, and none from Eskdale, despite promises from the schools. To achieve this level of participation with no funding to get the word out represents an excellent result. If we can do this with no funding or cooperation from councils that will benefit from this data, imagine what we could achieve if councils actually worked with us. Needless to say this was higher participation than the SBC 'extensive consultation' of 2020"*.

In terms of the conclusions of the survey, he said *"housing came out as the most topical issue, with a consistent desire for truly affordable homes to buy as well as having social rented houses, with an urgent need to halt the feeding of the holiday let market, as evidenced also in the Parish Poll in June 2022. There was also strong desire that we need to protect and enhance the little green space that we do have, with 2 of the sites 'reserved' by SBC for their "Better Homes" receiving unanimous support to remain as green space, with many pointing out that we are already below the minimum standard."*

*"There were significant comments about the state of the public transport system, with it being considered as not fit for purpose by residents, with a lack of bus coverage and poor timetabling. The road infrastructure also had many problem areas marked, particularly junctions along the A171 between 4-lane ends and Whitby Business Park, as well as the end of Love Lane, with the town not being viewed as particularly pedestrian friendly. People also see parking as a major problem, with significant support for having larger Park-and-Ride facilities on both sides of the town, to remove the traffic through the town, as well as the wider issue of campervan parking"*.

*“The decades of underinvestment in infrastructure around the town was highlighted, with the Spa Pavilion, Swing Bridge and Cliff Lift receiving notable comments about the need to maintain and enhance what the town has, rather than the gradual decay that the town has had to suffer in recent years. On the majority of places receiving comments, there was actually a very wide level of agreement of the problems, and we see that as a big positive – there are many things that unite residents.”.*

In the education sites consultation, 153 responses were received, as follows : Eskdale (12% agree, 82% disagree), Caedmon (18% agree, 71% disagree), Sixth Form (18% agree, 79% disagree), and Maritime Academy (48% agree, 48% disagree). Andy said *“this shows the level of dissatisfaction amongst residents about the proposal and perceived lack of openness from NYC and the Whitby Secondary Partnership. People want to be consulted openly, and their concerns answered, not simply whitewashed and ignored.”*

*He concluded*

*“Unlike all previous council-led consultations, WCN has published all results from this exercise on our website, freely viewable by all, since we believe in transparency. We have also openly analysed where the consultation could be improved ... a step you would never have from a council-run exercise. From here we look forward to NYC acting on these results, and this will be the real test of whether they really are **‘the most local of all councils’**. We are also considering expanding the exercise to the whole Whitby district subject to obtaining funding, and interest from parishes.”.*

You can read more about the consultation on the Whitby Community Network website at <https://www.whitbycommunitynetwork.org/vision-for-whitby/>