
Meeting of the Cabinet – 12th February, 2020

Report of the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing

Dudley People’s Panel Recommendations

Purpose

1. To consider Dudley Council’s response to the recommendations of the Dudley People’s Panel which has deliberated on the question:

“What can communities and the council do together to make Dudley and Brierley Hill town centres places that are vibrant, welcoming and somewhere we are proud of? How will we know we are making a difference in: 12 months; 3 years by 2030?”

To consider recommendations made by Place Scrutiny Committee on how the Council should respond to the People’s Panel proposals.

Recommendations

2. That the Cabinet:-
 - Receive and note the recommendations of the Dudley People’s Panel.
 - Endorse the recommendations of the Place Scrutiny Committee, including the development of an action plan on the implementation of the recommendations.
 - Approve the proposed governance arrangements for the implementation of the recommendations.
 - Support the continued involvement of People’s Panel members, residents living in Dudley and Brierley Hill town centres, local councillors representing Dudley and Brierley Hill wards and the wider public in delivering the recommendations.
 - Request officers to consider future opportunities to use this type of approach to support the understanding of public views on complex or contentious issues.



Background

Background to the Dudley People's Panel

3. In December 2018, the Council decided to bid to the Innovation in Democracy Programme and in March 2019 we found that we had been selected as one of three Councils to participate in the programme.
4. Innovation in Democracy is a new programme led by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. The programme aims to involve citizens in decision making at local government level through innovative models of participatory democracy. The programme provides support to participating local authorities to open up a policy decision to citizen deliberation through a Citizens' Assembly process, complemented by online civic technology tools to extend the reach, transparency and accountability of the process.
5. Participatory democracy is the process of involving people meaningfully in decision-making where citizens can deliberate on issues that can then be implemented. One approach that can be used is Citizens' Assemblies, which allows sufficient time for participants to deliberate complex issues and provides access to a range of experts to help in their deliberation.
6. These approaches can support the achievement of the Forging a Future Vision, particularly the Healthy, Safe, Resilient Communities aspiration, as there is good evidence that participation in local decision-making contributes to resilient communities. The Council was keen to ensure additional synergies were made by selecting an issue that would support one of the seven vision aspirations. Therefore the future of the Borough's high streets was selected as the issue to be explored.
7. This programme will also support the Future Council Future Community work stream which aims to transform the way that the Council engages with communities, testing out new ways to enable the public to participate in decision-making.
8. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government have appointed Support Contractors to run the programme, with a social enterprise called The Democratic Society leading the work with Dudley Council.
9. The Council is also currently using similar deliberative enquiry approaches to explore community health action and digital engagement with the Council.

Setting a Question for Deliberation

10. It was important to set an appropriate question that would provide key insight to assist elected members in making important decisions about the future of town centres. All elected members were invited to a question setting workshop in which they discussed which town centres the People's Panel should focus on and the scope of the question to be asked. Sixteen Councillors from across both political groups and representing wards across the Borough attended this workshop.
11. The following question emerged from these discussions.

“What can communities and the council do together to make Dudley and Brierley Hill town centres places that are vibrant, welcoming and somewhere we are proud of? How will we know we are making a difference in: 12 months; 3 years; by 2030?”

12. The final version of the question was approved by the leaders of both political groups.

Establishing the Panel

13. The Sortition Foundation was commissioned to carry out the recruitment of members of the public to the panel. Letters were sent to 10,000 randomly selected addresses and 301 responded. 50 respondents were then selected who were broadly representative of the population of the Borough, including 20 from a 1.5 mile radius of Dudley town centre, 20 from a 1.5 mile radius of Brierley Hill town centre and 10 from the wider Borough. Input from residents living outside the two town centres was an important part of the process; encouraging the sharing of ideas from other areas and feedback on what would bring more visitors into the town centres. Communications and Public Affairs supported the recruitment process, including sharing information at www.dudley.gov.uk/peoples-panel.

Advisory Group

14. An independent Advisory Group was appointed to provide advice and oversight to ensure the Panel's plans, evidence and materials were accurate, balanced and unbiased. The group was Chaired by The Democratic Society.

15. Membership comprised:

- Anna Baker-Barnes – Revival Fires
- David Hoskin – Diocese of Worcester
- Eve O'Connor – Cornbow Centre, Halesowen and Dudley Borough Vision Lead for Town Centres
- Iain Walker – newDemocracy Foundation
- Kate Green – Dudley Council for Voluntary Service
- Tim Sunter - Brierley Hill Community Forum



- Traci Dix-Williams - Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust
 - Sean Latham – Dudley Youth Council
 - Shane Birch-Bastock - Pentax Developments Ltd
 - Vicky Rogers – Halesowen Business Improvement District
16. In addition the Group has been attended by Council officers from Regeneration and Enterprise and Public Health and Wellbeing to support the process.

The Panel Deliberation Process

17. The panel sessions took place over the weekends of 2nd, 3rd and 30th November and 1st December, 2019.
18. Weekend 1 started with a welcome from Dudley Council provided by Councillor Angus Lees and Deborah Harkins, setting out the background to the 2030 borough vision, in particular the town centre strand and how the People's Panel will help to develop an action plan for achieving this vision. Panel members then heard from Council Officers about the regeneration projects that were already planned, such as the Midland Metro, the Institute of Transformational Technologies (IOTT), the Very Light Rail Innovation Centre, Portersfield development and the Resonance music institute. There was also a presentation from the Midland Metro Alliance. The Panel was asked to consider the opportunities these present for Dudley and Brierley Hill town centres, as well as what else communities and the Council can do together to help town centres thrive. Day 1 finished with a presentation on what makes town centres thrive and the Panel heard examples from other parts of the country.
19. On Day 2 Panel members heard about previous development frameworks developed for Dudley and Brierley Hill and what has changed since. Following this a number of short presentations covered community hopes and ideas, the value that local providers can bring to Dudley and Brierley Hill town centres and innovative ideas that have worked in other places. At the end of weekend 1, Panel members had created a set of essential values and principles for each town centre.
20. During weekend 2 Panel members focussed on turning their essential values and principles into reality. This was supported by additional presentations and information identified by Panel members as being required during weekend 1. Panel members also heard the views of the wider community, including the results of an online survey carried out in advance of the People's Panel (completed by 43 people in relation to Brierley Hill and 81 people in relation to Dudley) and the outcome of discussions with younger and older people.
21. Speaker presentations were live streamed and are available to view on [You Tube](#).

The Panel's Recommendations

22. A full report on the detailed recommendations made by the panel on 12 priority areas has been circulated to Members. The report is also available on the [Internet](#)
23. The twelve priority areas are:

Dudley	Brierley Hill
Be safer with less crime	Be safe with less crime
Be full of public squares to meet, eat and relax	Be clean
Celebrate and showcase its strong history in a tangible way	Have more of a purpose and identity
Be home to first rate entertainment with venues for live music, comedy and festivals	Have more of a variety of shops and retailers
Have a fully extended Black Country Living Museum with green spaces and activity areas	Involve local people in creating community events and participation
Celebrate food and seasonal festivals	Be livelier with open public spaces for people to sit and congregate

24. On the final day participants voted on the most important recommendations as to the strength of support or opposition to the proposal. Overall most of the twelve proposals were supported. The three most strongly supported proposals for each town centre were:

Dudley	Brierley Hill
1. Be safer with less crime	1. Be safe with less crime
2. Be full of public spaces to meet, eat and relax	2. Involve local people in creating community events and participation
3. Be home to first-rate entertainment with venues for live music, comedy and festivals	3. Be livelier with open public spaces for people to sit and congregate

25. These priorities were presented by participants to the Council on the final day and officers were allowed to ask questions to clarify the points and ideas raised. This feedback session was filmed to capture the voices of participants, including why their proposal is important to them and feedback on being part of the People's Panel.

Feedback to Elected Members

26. A report was taken to informal Cabinet on 18th December, 2019 and a session to feed back the outcome of the People's Panel to all elected members also took place on 18th December, 2019. Five Councillors from across both political groups and representing wards across the Borough attended this session. Those attending

made some overall suggestions, as well as sharing some ideas about how the three most strongly supported proposals for each town could be implemented:

27. Overall suggestions

- Ensure strong links are made to the borough vision.
- Promote the benefits of the Business Improvement District (BID) approach to town centres, including showcasing the achievements of the Halesowen BID.
- Involve People’s Panel and the wider public in implementation.

28. Feedback on most strongly supported proposals

Dudley	Brierley Hill
<p>Be safer with less crime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend Public Space protection orders at the Inhedge and Wolverhampton Street • Consider investment in public realm around the Inhedge, LED lighting and police resources • Working together with local community groups and businesses is important 	<p>Be safe with less crime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider investment in LED lighting • Explore pedestrian links from the high street to Venture Way – involve the community to create these • Use council powers to issue closure orders and take action on empty buildings
<p>Be full of public squares to meet, eat and relax</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities to improve the Inhedge area • Opportunities for public open spaces along the Metro corridor • A new vision for the top of the town centre is needed – less retail, good quality residential offer 	<p>Involve local people in creating community events and participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the market and other community assets the focal point • Provide walking routes and better signage • Work together with Dudley CVS, local community groups and businesses
<p>Be home to first rate entertainment with venues for live music, comedy and festivals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better promotion of what is already available – involve People’s Panel in this • Explore open air events / mobile screens in Coronation Gardens, Stone Street Square, Castle etc. (especially for Commonwealth Games) • Explore a stronger focus on entertainment within the council’s governance and scrutiny arrangements 	<p>Be livelier with open public spaces for people to sit and congregate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the open green space outside the Civic Hall • Explore options to pedestrianise the high street • Use powers to prevent illegal car parking along the high street

29. The Councillors also reflected on some initiatives already planned or underway, such as investment in CCTV, a new bus station in Dudley, Heritage Action Zone and Future High Street bids for Brierley Hill and a feasibility study on a large entertainment venue for the Borough.
30. Members of the People's Panel attended the Place Scrutiny Committee held on 29th January, 2020 to present the Panel's recommendations. The Committee made a number of important suggestions about the implementation of the recommendations which are summarised below:
- I. That a plan is developed for the implementation of the recommendations that clearly sets out the actions required, the timetable for delivery and whether the action is
 - something that the Council can do
 - something that the Council and community/ business can do together
 - something that the community/ businesses can do
 - II. That there the following groups have the opportunity to contribute to the development and delivery of a plan to implement the recommendations:
 - People's Panel participants
 - Elected members that represent wards in the wider Dudley and Brierley Hill areas
 - Residents and community groups
 - Local businesses
 - III. That all of the proposals that were developed in the panel are considered for inclusion in the plan, not just the proposals that were prioritised
 - IV. That the actions within the implementation plan are assessed for their impact on equality and diversity.

Next Steps

31. The Council will need to give consideration to governance and accountability for responding to and implementing the recommendations of the People's Panel. It is proposed that strategic oversight be provided by the Forging a Future Executive through the town centres aspiration.
32. It is proposed that a task and finish group comprising officers from Regeneration and Planning, Public Health and Wellbeing and involving Communications and Public Affairs colleagues is established to develop a plan for the implementation of the plan. Members of the Advisory Board will be asked to join the task and finish group. The group would involve People's Panel members, local ward members, businesses and community groups in the development of the plan.
33. There are emerging town-based partnerships in both Dudley and Brierley Hill that could be expanded to oversee and report on the implementation of specific

recommendations. The Panel's recommendations could also be used to help develop the Dudley Town Deal Investment Plan due to be produced by Summer 2020.

34. Some participants of the panel are keen to be involved in discussions about the two town centres on an ongoing basis, providing an opportunity for the Council to engage with an informed group to test out proposals and even to involve them in delivery.
35. Officers have learned about the process and feedback from the participants showed the value of this way of working. Consideration needs to be given to how these approaches can be used by the Council and other partners for complex issues in the future.
36. During the process the Panel mentioned smaller scale interventions and ideas which should be picked up by the Council and local communities.

Finance

37. The People's Panel process has been funded by Central Government as part of the Innovation in Democracy Programme. This included a payment to participants to thank them for their time and to cover any expenses.
38. The financial implications of addressing the proposals made by the panel are not yet known and as a low-taxing, low-spending authority the Council will need to work with partners to address the aspirations revealed through the process.

Law

39. Pursuant to Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 a Local Authority shall have power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.

Equality Impact

40. Recruitment to the People's Panel was undertaken to ensure that it was broadly representative of the Dudley population in terms of gender, age, geography, occupational group, household type, disability and ethnicity. In order to support participation from across social groups, participants received £300 (plus expenses) for attending and contributing to the panel.
41. There was a skilled and experienced facilitator on each table to ensure that all participants were able to contribute and were heard. Both venues also had a hearing loop available.
42. The Place Scrutiny Committee has recommended that that the actions within the implementation plan are assessed for their impact on equality and diversity

Human Resources/Organisational Development

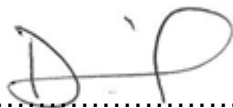
43. Dudley Council elected members and officers from across the Council attended all of the sessions in speaker, support, facilitator and observer roles. This has enabled knowledge of the approach used to be transferred to the Council, in case decisions are made to use this approach in the future.

Commercial/Procurement

44. The delivery of the programme across the three local authorities was procured by central government rather than locally. If these methods are used again for other complex issues in Dudley, consideration will need to be given to whether it should be delivered in-house or procured.
45. There are no direct commercial implications within this report.

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

46. This approach has been explicitly used as a way the Council can contribute to the Healthy, Resilient, Safe Communities aspiration of the Forging a Future for All Vision. We know that feeling able to influence decisions that affect our lives is an important determinant of health and wellbeing. Participants expressed an interest in being involved in implementing recommendations and in work to make Dudley and Brierley Hill vibrant places in the future.
47. Feeling safe and bringing people together were identified as priorities by the Panel and these are two important core influences over health and wellbeing in Dudley.



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List of Background Documents

[Report of Dudley People's Panel](#)