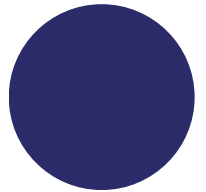




# Chard Community Review 2022-23

## Executive Summary



### Introduction

The Survey Questions were built around ten themes the Steering Group thought most important to the town, and prioritised questions around Health & Wellbeing and Community Facilities & Services. The survey was promoted online to all residents, including under 18s, over three weeks in February/March 2023. To assist those who didn't have internet access or needed help in completing the survey three engagement events were held. A total of 539 people completed the survey which roughly equates to 5% of the adult population.

The community engagement events held over 2 days (9 and 10 June 2023) were a real success, actively enhancing the community feel in the High Street and providing an outlet for an additional 75 people to have their say.

Themes which appeared repeatedly in the analysis are:

- Public transport provision
- Arts and creative activities
- Food: growing food, food distribution, food pantry, local farm foods etc



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## Demographics

Of 537 respondents, 368 have lived in Chard for more than 11 years. All the survey respondents were aged over 18. One reason for the lack of under 18s response maybe because the prize draw was only open to those over 18. Some dedicated research needs to be undertaken to elicit the views of children and young adults to ensure their views are included in taking the community plan forward.

## Your Town

We asked two questions about what people value most and least about living in Chard with the intention of creating a baseline of data which can be revisited every 5 years. The highest number of respondents to this question listed 'like being close to the countryside' (485), as their main reason for liking to live in Chard. The least valued aspects of life in Chard were public transport with 270 responses (the shortcomings of which are seen elsewhere in the survey findings) and local facilities (212). 'Other' comments to this question demonstrated specific concerns over crime and safety, lack of doctors and dentists, development of new housing without adequate infrastructure and facilities. All these concerns are found again in other survey topics.

## Health & wellbeing

The health of our community is generally very good. It is pleasing to see that of 506 respondents, 462 feel they have fair/good/excellent physical health and 453 feel they have fair/good/excellent mental health. 225 respondents feel that improved community and public transport would improve their health and wellbeing needs, echoing the shortcomings of public transport in other topics.

Comments showed that many respondents didn't know what health activities were going on in the town: given the amount of existing clubs and sport provision and activity there is in Chard, improved communications about what is available could reach more participants and therefore have a greater impact.

Arts-based/creative therapy and activities would be more popular among respondents than life skills. We will share this finding with Culturally Chard to discuss how health and wellbeing outcomes can be communicated in their offer.





## Community facilities and services

In asking what function the Community Hub could best offer, arts and creative activities were most popular response (511 responses supporting live music, live theatre, arts and crafts activities), again reflecting this repeating theme throughout the findings. We asked how the Hub could contribute to better childcare provision in the town: 74 respondents asked for training in first aid for children, followed by play days (58) and drop in sessions (56). When asking how this provision might be paid for, it marked a clear split between by users making donations/pay what you can (109) and securing funding through grants (107). Comments revealed concerns that by charging, we may exclude those who really need extra support.

The findings around how best the street market can be developed demonstrated significant interest and support for expansion of the market offer, particularly around selling tools and local produce made locally and unique to Chard, making sure it would not be selling something that is already on offer within the town. Food was the most popular (with responses supporting local fruit veg/cakes and bread/meat, pies and pasties/street food stands).

The top 3 facilities which need improvement in Chard are the market (207), public toilets (204) and footpaths (110). The top 3 facilities which respondents would use if they were available in Chard are theatre/cinema (234), outdoor gym equipment (120) and a community oil scheme (91). As cinemas and theatres are struggling and some are closing around the country it would be a good idea to think creatively to enable people to get to local theatres and cinemas, or consider introducing a film club to the town. The top 3 suggestions for community events are a beer/food festival (300), live music events (283) and cultural/heritage events (202). Many of the comments also echoed these as well as suggesting a 'Fun Run', pet shows and other outdoor creative events. The strength in arts responses continues.



## Businesses

There has been a loss of large industry in the town over recent years and we wanted this survey to capture the strength and scale of businesses and social enterprise in the town currently. Most business/social enterprise/charity in the town is SME scale (less than 250 employees). Public transport (137) and parking (135) were the strongest responses for what could be improved for businesses in Chard. For those working from home, as in other parts of the survey, broadband (117) and public transport (69) appear to be the main concerns.





## Climate Emergency

Climate change and environmental issues are important to the respondents. Tree planting is the most popular option for action (384), with support for infrastructure projects also featuring highly: local solar projects (350); solar street scheme (349); local wind farm projects (330). There is a desire for a Green Charter to be adopted (312) and for the Town Council to work with Somerset Council and other community organisations to explore how the town can adopt initiatives to improve its response to climate change. When asked “what services or facilities would you use or would like to see in Chard if they were available”, 278 wanted to see recycling extended to on-street schemes, 276 want wildflower planting (this already exists so perhaps needs better promotion and understanding within the town scheme) and 232 want a freecycle scheme (again, this already operates so requires better promotion).



## Cost of Living Crisis

411 out of the 539 respondents provided their views on how increased household costs have affected them. 231 responders were 'extremely' or 'very affected' by food costs, 224 responders were 'extremely' or 'very affected' by energy costs and 176 responders were extremely or very affected by fuel costs. Conversely, 91 responders were 'extremely' or 'very affected' by Mortgage/rent. The verbatim comments show the spectrum of affect:



“ \_\_\_\_\_  
I think I will die  
\_\_\_\_\_ ”

“ \_\_\_\_\_  
*These are only minimal due to our household income. I'm aware of the devastating impact on others.*  
\_\_\_\_\_ ”

In terms of how the Town Council could help, 334 responses suggested they could help with signposting to money saving information, grant schemes, Citizens Advice etc. A “warm bank” had 141 responses, and this may have been a different result if the survey was conducted earlier in the winter.



## Community Safety

The top 3 concerns around community safety are lack of police presence (271), antisocial behaviour (261) and distance from emergency health provision (218). A repeated theme in the comments was drug dealing, with other subjects of fly tipping and lack of access to Dental and Healthcare. No under 18s completed the survey, yet activities for young people are top of the list (238) of ways to improve community safety. A considered action would be to create a ‘focus group day’, taking an interactive approach to gain a better understanding of how our under 18’s feel about their safety.





## Young People and Children

While we know that no under 18s completed the survey, parents and carers may have entered responses based on knowledge of young people's activity in their household. When asked what facilities children and young people use in Chard, the outdoor play provision appears well used with playgrounds, skate/bike park, sports centre and reservoir walks taking the top 4 spots. The survey showed that young people go elsewhere for cinema and shopping.

'Anti-social behaviour' was the most common cause for preventing children from engaging in activities more generally, with 146 responses. Anti-social behaviour also occurs as the dominant response to a previous question around 'concerns related to community safety'. Lack of information is the second highest response here: again, this lack of knowledge of what is available recurs throughout the survey.



## Retired and Older People

We asked what the community or other professionals could provide to give retired/older people more support in their physical and mental wellbeing. 132 respondents to the survey wanted more support from health professionals/other professionals/Village Agent. All the questions in this topic demonstrated demand for more social interaction and activities, from walking clubs and craft groups to adult learning and opportunities to share/teach traditional local skills to others.

Once again, the call for better understanding of what is on offer came top of the list (125) of how to improve provision. It is an indication of the need to support people in a variety of ways in order to access the diverse activities that Chard has on offer. People feel isolated and don't feel they know how to be more active in Chard.



# What's next

This report is expected to be reviewed for change in perhaps a 4-5 yearly cycle, and for specific aspects to be developed when thought appropriate by the Town Council. It is supported by a separate Action Plan of projects to be undertaken when funding allows, or to sit ready for opportunity in the future. This will be a “working” document with regular updates on progress and developments from designated working groups, volunteer committees as well as the Town Council.

Smart Communities will provide a funding plan outlining grant giving opportunities in line with our chosen themes and prioritised actions. Initiatives within the action plan will depend on resource and volunteers to complete

## Privacy Statement

Analysis was conducted by Smart Communities Ltd part of Community Council for Somerset (CCS) Group. Data was captured for legitimate and contractual purposes. Information was collected and analysed in accordance with Smart Communities Ltd role as a Data Controller and Data Processor.

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# Community Review

Your future plan

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