

FACILITIES, LOCAL COMMUNITY & PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Community Facilities

Woodford is viewed by the majority of its residents as a good place to live with more than 90% of people expressing their satisfaction. The planning survey identified much positive feedback in relation to churches, social venues, sports facilities, organized activities children's play areas and the school.

The feedback has, to some extent enabled us to identify where shortfalls exist and where we can make some improvement. In contrast, and despite nearly 60% stating that there was strong community spirit, it was felt that Woodford could not be described as an integrated community.

Results from comment cards and other anecdotal feedback also led to the conclusion that a specific focus should be aimed at the development of existing community provision, enabling these facilities to be more integrated and inclusive. This conflicting area of village life presents us with challenges as well as opportunities. Some sections of the community may view any changes with suspicion and resistance. There is a fear that the village may be facing the threat of a north and south divide that may extend beyond the geographical boundaries.

A perceived ground swell of concern is that any changes proposed by the plan could threaten the fabric of the tapestry that is our village.



Recommendation

Continue to listen to the voices and opinions of the villagers

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Village Hall

By the late 1990's the Woodford Church Hall had fallen into major disrepair and had become a financial liability. Attempts for it to be taken on as a potential village utility, were unsuccessful, as at that point neither the will nor the funding was attainable, and it was subsequently sold. Irrespective of history, a substantive number of people have called for the reinstatement of a Village Hall or a community owned venue to hold a selection of community activities. At present there is no neutral venue for community organised events and the Scouts Hut in Baker's Lane is the only designated youth facility. The idea of a new purpose built venue was considered. However, taking into account the cost, position and the need for an appropriate business plan, this was not thought to be a viable option at this time.



Recommendations

1. Optimise facilities that already exist within the village
2. Promote membership to Woodford Community & Sports Club

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Woodford Community and Sports Club.

In the last few years there has been a lot of work done by a small and dedicated group of people to improve the facilities as well as getting the Club back on track financially. The work has been substantial and is ongoing. There is a stigmatised perception based on its Working Man's Club image. However, some successful attempts are being made to appeal to the wider community.

Management of the Club and the playing fields is directed by covenants set out in the lease agreement established with the Parish Council in September 1992. Planned recommendations will only be achieved if it is the will of people to influence change in this way.

The Club premises could be adapted to meet the differing needs of our village. If we do not use it we will lose it.

To be a community resource the club needs to be managed by the people for all the people.

Recommendation

1. Ensure that the playing fields management committee has full representation from appropriate groups.
2. Monitor and evaluate the needs of the village and the success of the club in meeting those needs.



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Public Transport (bus service)

There were mixed opinions regarding the quality of the bus services. Thirty one percent of the village use the service as their main form of transport and seventeen percent of those are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Although there are significant complaints about the service it appears that a village the size of Woodford would not normally receive such a high frequency of buses. In addition there is no contract with Northamptonshire County Council to provide a specified level of service. Centrebus receive a licence to run a Northamptonshire service and timetables are developed based on the company's own business case. Therefore, the process of awarding licences as opposed to contracts makes it more difficult to influence change through conventional, local authority channels. This makes it more important to ensure satisfaction feedback is also consistently presented to the Centrebus company.



Recommendations

1. Parish council to report service dissatisfaction.
2. Individuals to use Centrebus complaints procedure.
3. Publicise any changes in the service timetable.