

Customers and Communities POSC: 15 September 2011**Vision for Kent Consultation****1. Some early themes emerging from the consultation**

The consultation leaflet gave respondents the opportunity to comment more generally about other actions that they felt needed to happen to achieve the ambitions. Around 250 people (30% of all respondents) took advantage of this making over 900 suggestions. In this early stage of the analysis some key messages are starting to emerge for each ambition and these are shown in the table below.

Ambition	Theme	Theme	Theme
1 – To Grow the Economy	Improve all types of infrastructure including roads, rail, air, and broadband	Reduce unnecessary regulation and increase support for businesses, especially SMEs and entrepreneurs	Raise employment through support, training, education, apprenticeships and opportunities
2 – To Tackle Disadvantage	Encourage self reliance and promote personal resilience	Deploy a range of incentives to get people into training and work	Support realisation of aspirations, particularly young people
3 – To put citizens in control	Give people a real say through effective consultation and engagement	Support people to take control by offering training or advice	Take effective measures to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour

2. Raw material relating to Ambition 3 ‘to put citizen’s in control/

Below is a sample of the raw material from the Vision for Kent consultation that most closely relates to Ambition 3 ‘to put citizens in control’. This brings out some of the more interesting comments – though it is not necessarily wholly representative of all the views received.

Even from a cursory read readers will see the breadth of comments and ideas received. More work will be undertaken in the next few weeks to extract the key messages from this consultation exercise.

People Making Decisions – (selected from 68 comments)

Stop tokenistic consultations and ask real people what they need in their lives. eg. Ask the unemployed what would help them get back to work. Ask people who cannot afford to stay in their homes due to benefit cuts how best to support them to find work and affordable homes.

Try to overcome the prevailing apathy of most people who feel that they have no say in the decision making process, or that when they do express a view, it is ignored. The community forums seem to have declined as people feel they are just an opportunity for officers and elected representatives to tell us what a splendid job they are doing; concerns and criticisms do not seem to have any outcome. I think there is a case to be made for devolving more power to town and parish council level.

Consult properly - where people are - don't pay lip service. The only people who have time to go to local board meetings are retired. And people go to the website to find something specific not browse so they'll rarely see consultations. Make sure they are covered in all the papers (advertise if they won't include as editorial). And to catch younger audiences make sure you fully using all the social media channels- not just to tweet a link but to have discussion and generate debate. Finally, don't ask for feedback then let people's time and energy go into a black hole. Make sure you feedback, using all the channels, to make sure people know their feedback was heard - and that it affected something -or they'll never give you the time again. People will understand if their particular point isn't included as long as they know it was heard. No info coming pout leads them to become cynical at best and saboteurs at worst.

We don't want more layers of bureaucracy or set up more 'Talk Shops' let the elected people get on with the job in hand. Also there does need to be an ability for using the current resources more effectively and not saying 'this is ours and that is yours'. We are all in this together and need to get on with things. Putting public buildings and resources to better use would be much better than spending more time and money on setting up more talk shops.

Ensure that elected members of the KCC contact and keep in touch with their Electorate on a regular basis. Currently, members of the KCC seem remote and uninterested to many voters

"Putting citizens in control of Kent" sounds a laudable objective but it must not be pursued at the expense of the government and public authorities playing their rightful roles in the provision of public services. Essential services cannot be left to charities, voluntary organisations and volunteers, although all of these do, of course, have a valuable contribution to make.

Be sensible we all have opinions but it doesn't make us right for the job necessarily. Lead from the top and as good managers of people do, consult and recommend based on the input from the public and the expertise of the leadership in local government

I'm a little apprehensive about putting citizens in control in Kent. I would however like to see charities and voluntary organisations do more good work

Councillors and the government are elected to represent the people and make decisions on their behalf. Cant have everyone making decisions it would lead to too much arguing

People Designed Services – (selected from 20 comments)

Ensuring that vulnerable service recipients are able to be fully engaged in identifying their needs and ways in which this can be dealt with.

Ask people for their ideas on all sorts of topics - including saving energy and reducing waste, etc., but also on what sort of shops they'd like to see in the Town Centre; whether we approve of more pubs and nightclubs being granted licences; how many police officers we'd like to see on the streets, and where we'd like buses to run - ask us, in the first instance, and then listen to our replies and act on them.

Lots of people have plenty to say, most of which makes good sense. Listen to them and take note of what they are saying. We can't all be on councils or governments but what we have to say can be just as wise and sometimes even more so. Hold a huge meeting in a huge hall. Divide people into groups appertaining to what ideas they have and what they have to say. You may be pleasantly surprised.

Support People to Take More Control – (selected from 44 comments)

It's not so much putting them in control as having ownership of their communities that create a sense of belonging and responsibility. Encourage community engagement and intergenerational engagement bringing all ages together

Persuade people that they have both the ability and a duty to contribute to the success of their community

Mean it! Give people real opportunities to get involved, take risks and act on what they say and not just pay lip service AGAIN!

Work with local civic groups to provide appropriate help in the locality rather than blanket solutions.

For citizens to really be in control we need to really start working on the ground now, building up from the street, neighbourhood, ward and then district level. This will not happen over night but with patience and real commitment it can happen. There needs to be more effective partnership working between the public and voluntary sector avoiding duplication and sharing the limited resources that will exist.

An important part of empowering people so that they are able to take responsibility for themselves is supporting people to manage the risks to their communities and businesses. This should include empowering communities to manage their relationship with the environment, whether this is building resilience to climate change or managing their own environmental footprint.

It is good to see the aspiration to “Work with faith groups who already have a key role in community leadership to build and support communities” but the Kent Forum should seek to better understand exactly what local churches are doing in support of local communities as much activity is already taking place corresponding to this V4K ambition. Activities such as running youth groups, local ‘litter picks’, providing spaces for community activities and those which benefit vulnerable groups are already achieving some of these V4K priorities and will continue to do so. Churches in Kent have many members who undertake such activities on a voluntary basis within the framework of a formal structure (a church or network of churches). These activities are not only a great example of how local groups can deliver parts of this V4K ambition but churches should be encouraged to further develop such activities to have a greater impact as part of their local communities.

Support VCS – (selected from 17 comments)

Acknowledge and appreciate the importance of charities and voluntary sector orgs and groups because they support and connect with the citizens on a grass roots level.

Child protection rules and CRB checks for work with anyone deemed "vulnerable" are too restricting. It is hard for healthy relationships to develop between different age groups. It's hard to try out different volunteer roles to find the one that fits, when each organisation has a costly, time consuming procedure. It doesn't help much in protecting people: so much abuse is within families; isolating families within themselves means abused people are less likely to have access to healthy supportive outside relationships.

Don't reinvent the wheel - there are lots of great community organisations already but they could do with more support e.g. scouts, cadets, sporting organisations like cricket, football, rugby clubs etc.

support local infrastructure organisations to provide their services e.g. CVS'S and volunteer centres. support for infrastructure, recommendation to support VCO's like Kent supports local businesses

Tackle Crime and Anti-social behaviour – (selected from 23 comments)

Citizens should be able to have agreement on how criminals should be punished, particularly local criminals. Maybe set up some local groups similar to neighbourhood watch where members are responsible for monitoring and reporting back to a committee on issues that affect that area.

In our area there is an Asian shop owner lovely man and very hardworking terrorised by local school girls and racially abused on a daily basis .The school do nothing , the parents don't care and the community police do nothing. Collectively they should all be meeting to tackle this issue and stamp it out it isn't acceptable what ever happened to team work?!

with regard to asbo culture-give the disadvantaged young people things to do and get them involved instead of waiting for their boredom to force them into making nuisances of themselves.

Tackling crime and anti social behaviour should start in the home. parents should take more responsibility for children's behaviour but often do not know how to bring their children up, this is where I feel that children's centres could offer parenting sessions coping with difficult behaviour and teenage problems.

We have a lot of skateboarders in Cheriton. They have nowhere to go so do it on the street or churches property. Maybe the council could give them a plot of land to make a skatepark. But make them do all the work i.e. digging etc. This would keep them off the main street. Maybe get local shopkeepers to put some money into it as they hand around the shops. The nearest skate park is at the harbour in Folkestone so they cant get to it. I do talk to these kids and they respond

New Ways of Working – (17 comments in total)

Seek Big Society champions in wards and to work with them to ensure they have the capacity to encourage greater volunteer involvement but keeping revitalised public services

Do not follow the localism route, this will not improve services. It will just put the costs onto smaller local councils etc., and in many cases duplicating the work across the County. The roles carried out by County and District Councils should stay with them, not for instance parish and town councils to do this work, when they do not have the staff or enforcement and insurance would become astronomical for each of these small council.

Other Ambition 3 Comments – (45 comments in total)

DONT do any of the above. Stop trying to control peoples lives and stop giving the expectation to people of doing everything for them

I thought we elected councillors to run Kent + pay officers. Hopefully this is not a cost cutting exercise for volunteers to RUN KENT!!!

