

**SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY QUESTION TIME
ORGANISED AND SUPERVISED BY SAVANNAH
DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION, BRISTOL**

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Background

Bristol is acknowledged as a high growth area within the South West region, it is comparatively wealthy. Yet within it, there are substrata of society, which are disenfranchised, excluded from this wealth and opportunity. These include many young people who regard themselves as cut off from mainstream society and see little chance of accessing the opportunities, which seem easy for the majority. These young people are typically from backgrounds with endemic poverty, often suffering multiple deprivation as families in terms of race, unemployment, poor qualifications and poor housing [white & black] inclusive.

The Community Question Time came as a result of other events held by Savannah Development Foundation and funded by QUARTET Community Foundation and International Organisation of Migration. These events include; Elders Forum, Creating Aspirations for Empowerment programme targeted at young people and Computer and Motivational sessions bringing together elders and young people.

Elderly people, young unemployed, NEETs, asylum seekers, refugees alike in the area are deeply lonely, house bound, and with propensity to be involved in unsocial activities, especially those between 18 - 25. This Question Time provided avenue not only to interact, but have first hand of issues surrounding them. Young people on the other hand, are lonely, isolated and gets involve in crime, drugs, etc, the programme will give them identity and what to look forward to - thereby disengaging them from unscrupulous activities. The programme has given them a sense of belonging, meeting friends and making friends – above all free interactions with their elders.

It is for the above issues that the Community Question Time became inevitable and as a process to enable the voices of the community to be expressed and heard.

The Aim of the Programme

The main aim of the programme was to bring communities together to express their views publicly of topical issues affecting their communities. Furthermore, central to the main aim are:

- To build stronger communities;
- Bringing young and older people together;
- Bring diverse communities to work together;
- Creating healthier and active community and help prevent criminal activities and anti-social behaviour.
- Focused topical subjects such as; health, education, traffic movement, youths, elderly care, government funding cuts, vandalism, waste management and collection, youth facilities, and many more....

The Key Objectives of the Programme

- Better communication amongst community people
- Older people getting involved in community matters
- Community getting involved in decision making
- Interconnectedness
- Engage local and community people to have a say and interact with others
- To address the more practical challenges that people face in their communities.

The Target Audience & Location

The programme specifically targets young and older people primarily of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic [BAME] communities in the inner city areas of [St Paul's, Ashley, Lawrence Hill, St Werburghs and Easton] and sub- areas such as St George, Speedwell, Horfield, Lockleaze, Bedminster, Hartcliffe and Southmead.

Altogether, there were 7 Community Question Time events held and spread over the above named electoral wards with audience of average 30/40. The audience were mixed in all events in a ratio of 80/20 between BAMEs and Whites. The Panel members remained a 50/50 of BAMEs and Whites and of mixed expertise including; community activists, Parish Priest, Educationist, Business owners, Public servants, Police officers, engineer, Counsellors, young people and elders. Throughout the events the programme attracted one Counsellor in St Paul's, four Counsellors in Lawrence Hill, two Counsellors in Horfield and one Counsellor in Southmead.

Summary of Community Question Time Outcomes

1. Some of the major issues, concerns and questions that the audience cited in the event held in; St Paul's, Easton, St Werburghs, and Ashley include:
 - Elders fear of young people walking when walking along the street due to the recent murder of the Somali young person.
 - Declining community and local agencies in the area
 - Educational establishments failing young black boys
 - Gang culture amongst young people

The issue of inner city problems such as, young unemployment, truanting, a lack of political response to inner city matters and poverty as major issues impacting on young people involving in anti-societal behaviours.

Family breakdown within society and parents lack of concern of what their children are involved with or where their children are at certain time of the day. This response was fully supported by majority in the audience believing that there is role for government and role for parents – and matching the two brings decent and better community.

African and Caribbean elders to be more involved in youth upbringing - An Elder/Young people workshop was one of the suggestion put forward to be held on quarterly basis, allowing the elders to tell stories on [how it used to be] opening up debate amongst elders and young people.

The School curriculum was blamed, and a lack of representation of BAME teachers in Schools to serve as role models. Members of the audience also called for more BAME business people, professionals, etc, to join the Schools as Governors.

The Police and their tactics of Policing within the inner city areas compared with other areas in Bristol was a strong concern. Young black people are always seen as trouble makers by Police officers and called for a better relationship between Police and young people.

The formation of small gangs along various Streets in inner city especially along Ashley Road, and Grosvenor Road – and called for active policing to confront the gangs on the streets rather than waiting for them to make a mistake and use that as measure of confrontation. A local Vicar in the audience who has been very active with the police after a murder incidence of a young person promised to do more work with young

people – on the street and also called for the various Churches to take active role in young peoples' development and affairs.

2. Some of the major issues, concerns and questions that the audience cited in the event held in Lawrence Hill, Stapleton Road, St George, Speedwell, etc, include:

- What support does the government have for micro –businesses in the area?
- Why is it that tax and rate breaks aren't given to micro-businesses for the first three years of starting to allow the business to establish and develop a moderate financial stability?
- Why is it that banks view most small businesses in Ashley, Easton and Lawrence hill as unsustainable?
- Banks are only interested in helping big businesses!
- Business people are struggling!
- New businesses are opening and shorting down in short span of time!
- There seems to be nothing to help the small business person to sustain the business financially! Why is this?
- Concerns and Questions asked about Crime; (Anti-Social behaviour) Drug use and open dealings plus other misdemeanors and impact on local businesses and residents, especially residents with young children.

The following views were expressed accordingly; a senior Manager of the Council indicated that there is currently an ongoing consultation with businesses in Stapleton Road about a variety of Issues. More so, Economic Development is a key element to development and cited various support agencies that provides free advice about business development.

Shop keepers in the area struggle to shut their shops to attend meetings or consultations, especially when competition is so intense along Stapleton Road.

Crime is daily occurrence, the converted flats , now managed by council are full of young drug users, they sit on the steps of there houses, throwing drink cans, food containers onto the roads ; just generally messing up the area with no regard for others and residents around them. Drugs selling and sex work activities are all displayed in everyone's face to be seen!

The closure of Barclays Bank on Stapleton Road was cited as a major predicament on small business owners who will now travel some distance to operate their Bank transactions.

The issue of influx of small businesses set up and owned by the Somali community was cited as an enhancement to the area – and these businesses should be given support to grow.

On the issue of teenage problems; Community needs to take responsibility for its teenagers and young adults. Parents and guardians should know about their children's where-about! If they are on the streets, why are they there?

Initiatives for young people to do creative work, single parents need support to know how to help their children. More 1:1 support needed to work with mothers and children. The gap in the statutory services, especially when it comes to emotional support should be reviewed.

Government has been putting money at various projects for and it does not seem to change much. People need to be left to maintain their authority as parents with their children and youth, however not every parent has the essential skills required to raise children or the confidence to challenge their big teenagers.

Sense of community needs to come back to the area.

Young people do not feel they fit in.

Young people see wrong role models.

People can't read leaflets

Can't understand leaflets

Can't leave their shops to attend meeting

There was observation from the audience on local business owners and indicated that from his personal experience, business matters is not just a local problem, but a global problem. People can get business advice however, there is no capital invest in starting up or developing existing businesses.

Businesses that have been quoted as doing well have not done so on the back of bank supports, it's because they have used their own connections be it friends or family to set-up. There is a severe disservice from banks to small business owners.

Stokes croft was cited as a developing area, it has not had money thrown into it.

There was a query why the big property in Stokes Croft area has been derelict for over twenty years, and the local authority has not requested for a court order to purchase it. It could be put to good use and it will serve the area much productively instead of just being left to rot.

There was explanation that various attempts have been made by the local authority to purchase the property, (West Moorland House) but all in vain. The building as it stands is owned by two very rich and influential business brothers that currently

resides outside of Bristol, they have consistently blocked all attempt made by Bristol City Council and before it the Avon County Council to purchase the building.

Member of Audience: Publication in the Evening Post that, Bristol City Council will make a cut to staff and services to the amount of £22 million. What effect is this going to have on people that are dependable on those services? The Panelist responded that the Council is still working out its budget and when finished it may not be as bad as people had envisaged.

On the issue of street cameras, concerns were raised about Stapleton road which is covered with cameras, admittedly, some of them have been damaged, but the police do not use these cameras. What is point of installing cameras on top of council estates and not being able to access it to avert unwelcome intruders or alert police of on-towards activities or incidents?

There was general view that Police should use these cameras, to catch, dangerous Drivers, Fly tippers, Sex Workers, Muggers, etc.

Conclusion:

- Parents and community to communicate about topical issues and work towards solutions with relevant groups.
- Councillors, Police and Neighbourhood Coordinators to communicate amongst themselves in more proactive manner
- Parents to source for appropriate support in parenting children and youths
- Cameras need to be used more effectively by police and access to high rise dwellers be improved.
- Business issues are global, business owners need to evaluate and diversify if necessary, in the absence of needed cash flow.
- Crime and anti-social behaviour on Stapleton Road needs to be tackled appropriately and head on by relevant authorities.
- Police to increase patrol on Stapleton Road on a daily basis and trouble shooting households be dealt with.

3. Some of the major issues, concerns and questions that the audience cited in the event held in Horfield and Lockleaze, include:

Volume of Traffic in the area

Care for the Elderly

Youth Vandalism

Government Funding Cuts

Waste Management & Collection

Volume of Traffic in the area

There were serious concerns about the volume of traffic on some of streets in the area, which the audience think might result into accidents and serious environmental issues as well. The problem community face on this issue appears to be two-pronged; as part of the boundary falls within Bristol and the other South Gloucestershire.

It was generally agreed that, a petition be raised and signed by community to the two local authorities for action. The Councillor on the panel promised to raise the matter in the Council meeting.

Care for the Elders:

There was concern that the elderly population in the area is one of the highest in the City, and whether or not their needs are being catered for. Majority of the people in the audience agreed that, there are facilities for the elders – and indication that the area is top districts that do cater for the elderly, and facilities include; a club where they meet for entertainment, Community Trust that makes a quick meal for them, gentle exercise classes, Four Art classes, computer classes, and coffee mornings - however, the problem being the frequency of use by the people it is being targeted. Elderly people in the area rarely leave their homes and make use of local facilities and there could be various reasons for this lack of usage. Some of the issues cited include; fear of attack; inadequate publicity and information; assurance from facility providers; unsure of what the benefits are; etc. The issue of people suffering with dementia was raised and again a club for people with learning difficulties, provision and cares for people with dementia, residential type of home were all cited as good practice initiatives to support varied groups.

Although there may be a short fall in the community funding from the Council's budget, there is need for community agencies to source other funding schemes to support existing provisions.

It was also raised that the Government is trying to persuade elderly people away from selling their houses to get into care homes and that there are small grant in neighbourhood partnerships projects to help elders.

Youth Vandalism

There is problem of youth vandalism in the area, but much better than it was five years ago. The area is working with Police to address the problem, and this was authenticated by the officer in the audience. The Council is also encouraging schools to do something creative than engage with youths to alleviate the problem.

Government Funding Cuts-How does it affect

People felt it is not clear yet how the funding cuts would be implemented and that the Private sector will be losing jobs.

The promise is that government will give incentives to allow the private sector to create jobs. This is not clear yet. Companies always look for more efficient ways of operating and this may lead to job losses.

A response from the audience was that the government had no option due to what they inherited. If cuts are not done, it will increase the debt. Government consulted widely with the public on the issue. The Bristol City Council is determined to ensure parity and to protect services. This is difficult time and the City will do whatever it can to maintain existing services.

Waste Management & Collection

The situation with waste management is not so bad in this area. Horfield and surrounding areas are quite good with it... Horfield and areas is top of the league in recycling. Emphasis was made on local businesses to do more on recycling waste than looking upon the Council to do all.

3. Some of the major issues, questions, and concerns that audience cited in event held in: Southmead, and Hartcliffe include:

- Health & Social Issues
- Care for the Elderly
- Youth Facilities
- Government Cuts
- Waste Management
- Car Drivers Speeding

Care for the Elderly

There were concerns on the issue of need of people with mental health problems. It was also expressed that Bristol City council is not involved in the placement of clients at the Winterbourne Care Home where there had been reports of scandalous practices. There is need for more sheltered housing in the area. The loss of wardens from existing sheltered homes has had a worsening effect on the residents – as well as concern about the people who are being given extra benefits and have not worked for it.

In response to addressing the social issue of **isolation** amongst elders and community involvement, an audience member expressed frustration about how difficult it is to get people out of their homes, and that elders requires trust and confidence building.

There are many venues that provide activities for elders however, issues preventing their usage by elders needs to be addressed; issues such as: lack of transport, lack of volunteers, unreliable Care Staff, and lack of accessible facilities.

Government Cuts: How does it affect you? It affects the police! All issues being discussed have finance implications. What are your views about the cuts?

There are implications for meals on wheels Service. Subsidies to transport will be taken away from North Bristol. It will affect a lot of people. There is need for more social housing. Green spaces are being taken away. Subsidies for children attending catholic schools will be taken away. A genuine sense of frustration from the audience as the various areas that would be affected by the cuts was read out.

Another expressed that; the national debt is not going away. People are out of work.

All the people who should pay national Insurance, tax and all revenue contributions are out of work! With the care system, it's the same! The carers do not get the money they need to enable them to continue caring for their loved ones in their homes; instead it's the companies that are bidding for Service Contract, and getting the money and not providing adequate and efficient services. In conclusion, the Council was blamed for its inactivity.

Another concern was cuts on transport (Bus 20), this will affect a lot of elderly people.

In response, cuts proportionally affect those who are already vulnerable.

People will also be affected, especially young people. Already there are a lot of young adults of working age between the ages of 18 to 28 out of work,

Statistically, the longer they are out of work the harder it is to gain employment.

Some people though get lucky and get the opportunity to retrain or sustain a low earning pay in comparison to their education capacity and acquired skills. In a lot of ways, this is a brain drain to the country.

The ironic aspect is that those who are in this situation and on low pay have to be subsidised through welfare benefits, in an attempt to keep people just above poverty levels.

The people who have the power are not listening! It's not the local Councillors that make the decisions. The local council looks at different aspect of an area, make cuts.

The key people in an area are not listening either nor are they playing smart to stay ahead of government cuts targets. The Drug project was cut in order to make it

cheaper, but now they have reduced hours, which means they see less people. The main solution to addressing the problems will require listening to the people.

A response from the Police Unit that contribution from the Unit has been increased in the area to boost the services in Southmead. Two more officers are yet to join the Southmead team. Although there are other cut that impinges on the services that we provide, the unit is always keen to improve services in the area.

What facilities exist for youths in Southmead? Are there issues of vandalism or any anti-social behaviour? What form do they take? How has it been addressed?

In response, the Police highlighted activities such as visiting the youth centres, remove young people of the streets and encourage them to go into the clubs and schools. There was an expression of the duties of parents in their child or children upbringing and called on all people to take interest in what the youths are doing. Some projects in the area that had impact on youths in area are: The Southmead Festival and the Post office Appeal. This year it will be a Rugby tournament to match role models where people work with the youth in pairs. There is also working with families and take some youths on trips when parents cannot.

Health and Social Issues

Southmead is in the top 8 wards in the city's poverty community. Health wise, Southmead has stood still, putting it in the bottom of progressive areas. Money from Connections has run dry. Probations are gone, and youth offending team is threatened in Southmead.

North Bristol is putting in a bid to hold the Youth Services together, but funding is threatened and the services will then go. There are few Councillors, we can achieve things without cuts, Schools need stable Staff and the pupils deserve consistency.

Southmead need the Breakfast Clubs to support working parents and those who are really strapped for cash to put food on the table in the morning; these are all real situations and they do happen even in this day and age.

Southmead is in an area where it will never going to be in the top league at school.

A person is valued not because of the job they do, but because of the person they are.

The way council and the government suggest that if you have not attained the A leagues of the education table you are nothing is very wrong.

Southmead need to drum a sense into its young people that they can do better, not that they have failed. If people constantly talk down Southmead, it won't get anywhere.

It's very tricky to be honest about things, but someone has to be and stand up for the area. Everything you hear about a place is not what it is. People need to be proud of what and who they are.

It's not a good enough reason to blame people's behaviour on television, The US President Obama and Secretary of State were named as good role models of ordinary background. It's important that society reflects positive role models.

Waste Management and Traveling at High Speed.

It was expressed that Pen Park Road used to be so dangerous to cross with motorcycles, fire engines, police cars and just about anyone that fancied a bit of car racing on a long stretch of road. It's good a thing they have installed speed breakers on the roads plus the Zebra crossing that make the road a safer road to use by pedestrian.

The issue of traffic is a concern in most areas of Bristol. Child mortality rate in open space other than in the home is mostly due to car speeding.

What is the council doing with this waste management? The change of waste collection schedule has not helped at all.

There are a lot of waste accumulating on roads corners, where the Council used as designated collection point. A lot of mess is created on these road corners; as some people cannot be bothered to dispose of their waste properly. Who exactly is responsible for clearing the street? Is it the Council or the private companies that has the responsibility?

The audience put the blame "on same people", the same house hold that are causing the rubbish build up on certain roads, it's all to do with peoples moral value of their environment. It's a very difficult one. People need to take pride in their environment and think of it as the extension of themselves. People should ask themselves questions, why they will dump rubbish, when it will cause an eyesore or health and safety risk to others.

The local authority also has questions to answer about the time scale they have set for rubbish collection in some areas.

On the issue of speeding in the area the Police affirmed that they do stop car drivers when they speed over the limit and have had days of action through out North Bristol to raise the awareness of driving at high speed, and have recently implemented speed limits in built up areas.

Keys issues to note

- Consultation on waste, youth activities, care for elders and traffic matters should be an ongoing event in the area;
- Southmead should endeavour to attract inward investments to create jobs for young people;
- The newly refurbished general Hospital in the area should focus on employing local people as priority;
- There should be more recreational facilities to engage young people to be active rather than inactive and get involved in unsocial activities;
- Schools in the area should attract the best facilities, resources and people to adjust the league table for the better;

Conclusion

The Community Question Time has generated a new impetus in people bringing out the community spirit of working together and connecting with one another. During these events, communities endeavour to put their individual and personal disunity aside and face one common problem that affects all. The programme has been able to bring together the communities of Somali and African-Caribbean with long standing community problems – who are able to integrate together and focus on the key issues affecting their areas – rather than working in isolation.

The programme also bring the best out of African/Caribbean elders – who are traditionally home-bound, making contributions and sharing views with others. It has also enabled better communication between elders, young people, minority communities and White communities respectively.

It is with interest to state that, there are only few local projects that could referenced the participation of local Councillors – in this case, there was active participation throughout the event, although very little reaction in some areas such as Lockleaze, and Southmead.

The programme generally has fully highlighted major issues impacting on the various areas and communities – where as people may not have expressed these views and opinion, the programme makes its possible for them to do so, and without fear or recriminations.

The issue being highlighted, discussed and debated in all of the areas has commonalities, and there are no widened variances. Indicating that, most inner-city bound areas share common problems. People in these areas are also willing to be involved, engaged and predisposed to help in a variety

of ways, however, are limited to do so due to a lack of information, and fear of not being taken seriously. The programme itself has been commended by local Councillors and particularly by an MP as 'good practice' project for community building, community cohesion and effective means of creating a community agenda.

Communities, people, businesses and wider public have all learnt very good lessons from the programme and describe it as 'unique' and worthy of replication in other areas.

Finally, Savannah Development Foundation envisage publishing the outcomes of the Community Question Time on its website to enable people, businesses, communities and policy Makers to access and make use of the outcomes for better service strategies. Furthermore, Savannah Development Foundation will continue to build on the outcomes in sourcing other public funding to address some of the issues highlighted by the people.

References

- 1. Community Question Time held in St Paul's and St Werburghs**
- 2. Community Question Time held in Lawrence Hill and Speedwell**
- 3. Community Question Time held in Easton**
- 4. Community Question Time held in Horfield**
- 5. Community Question Time held in Lockleaze**
- 6. Community Question Time held in Southmead**
- 7. Community Question Time held in Harcliffe**
- 8. Contributions from local people**
- 9. Contributions from the Police**
- 10. Contributions from Local Councillors**
- 11. Contributions from Council Neighbourhood Managers**
- 12. Contributions from Panel Members**
- 13. Contributions from Elders**
- 14. Contributions from Young people**
- 15. Contributions from local Parish Priests**
- 16. Contributions from Business owners**