**Exeter Community Forum Youth Consultation**

* 14 young people attended, encompassing a mix from year 8 – 10 at school, who live dispersed across the city.
* Youth sessions in the week leading up to the event enabled young people who could not attend to have their opinion taken into account.

In order to find out what the young people thought about how the money should be spent, they were asked the following questions:

* What would you change about Exeter, to make it a better place to live?
* What could be done to make ALL young people feel included in their communities?
* What is important for young people, in their communities, in Exeter?
* What would improve your experience of living in Exeter? (Think about physical things and places, as well as services and things to do)
* If you were designing a new neighbourhood, what would you plan to have to keep young people healthy and happy?
* What do other areas of the city have, that you wish you had where you live?
* If you could spend money on changing your community, how would you spend it?

I have grouped their responses into the categories that have been used to present the findings of previous consultations, in spider-diagram format, on the Exeter Community Forum Website.

**PEOPLE:**

* Inclusion
  + Young people to be treated equally – break down stereotypes/reputations that divide communities. This could be achieved through supporting young people from those areas to show what they care capable of achieving.
  + Young people need to see that people care about them
  + The Council should recognise when young people need support
  + More opportunities to get involved. eg: volunteering opportunities
  + Youth centres
  + Homeless shelters
  + Care in the community
  + Community centres
  + More places for teenagers to go
  + More PCSOs to keep us safe on the streets
  + Need to feel more connected to our communities
  + Need to be listened to
  + Need to feel empowered/supported to organise events
  + Need responsibilities within communities

The young people displayed a real enthusiasm for being asked their opinion and of all the conversations we had, the ones about getting their voices heard were particularly animated. Their comments around issues of inclusion encompassed both physical spaces and feeling valued. The most common comment was that we need more youth centres. In response to the question: ‘What would you change about Exeter, to make it a better place to live?’ the most poignant response was: “It shouldn’t just be down to youth workers once a week.” Youth centres and spaces where young people feel welcome are often different from spaces utilised by other groups within the community, and the young people expressed a need for both more youth-specific venues, but also inclusion into spaces used by the wider community.

* Education
  + Museums
  + More educational opportunities
  + No uniform so we can express ourselves

The comments made about freedom to express themselves were linked with the above comments about wanting there to be more ways in which to have their voices heard.

* Health
  + Gyms in parks
  + Make drugs less accessible
  + Leisure facilities

Gyms in parks came up a number of times. This was of interest, as it was in line with the general expression of the need for more sporting facilities, but also demonstrated a desire from the young people to be able to keep fit within their communities, rather than having to cross the city to access facilities elsewhere. The accessibility of drugs was a comment that came up linked to wider conversations about health and welfare.

* Services
  + Unlimited wifi
  + Supporting young people through difficult times
  + Counselling services for young people
  + Bereavement services for the whole community

The young people spoke openly about how hard life can be sometimes and expressed a wish for the provision of help to be embedded within the communities that they live in.

**PLACE:**

* Facilities
  + Restaurants in communities, not just in the centre of town
  + Astro pitch
  + Swimming pool
  + Ice rink
  + Rock climbing
  + Use of the university’s astro pitch

It became apparent that the barriers to accessing existing facilities were linked to cost and transport. The need for access to sports was a common theme and links in with their sentiment about needing more places for young people to go.

* Housing
  + Care homes
  + Homeless shelters

The young people often spoke explicitly about the needs of other groups in their communities and said that new houses being built should create spaces for lots of different kinds of people to live.

* Transport
  + Train stations
  + Cycle routes

The young people noted that those who live near places with better transport links are able to access facilities more easily. They also spoke about safety, with reference to cycle lanes.

* Environment
  + More lighting in parks – they can be scary and feel dangerous
  + New parks
  + More green spaces and rivers
  + Better street lighting
  + Solar panels in fields

Lighting and safety were spoken about at length, indicating the young people’s need to feel secure in spaces that are available to them; the need for a higher PCSO presence also came up several times. On a broader note, it appeared that young people want to feel safe and empowered to use the spaces that they have access to in a responsible way but also that the provision of more spaces, designed with their safety and wellbeing in mind is desirable.

In conclusion, the three key issues that came up, through conversation and during the question-answering activity, were: the need for more youth centres; the need for better access to more affordable/free sports facilities; and the need to feel valued and for their views to be deemed significant within their communities.

**CRITERIA:**

Based on the list of criteria that was provided, in making it more user-friendly for the young people, I grouped it as follows. It should be clear how these categories link directly to the original list.

The criteria were presented to the young people through asking them to complete the phrase: “The most important reason to spend the money is if…”

People

* …it helps groups of people, eg: older, younger, marginalised, vulnerable
* …it improves health, wellbeing and quality of life

Community

* …it helps the community to feel connected and empowered
* …it supports the community by listening to what they want
* …it tackles a neighbourhood’s needs

Environment

* …it help to improve the environment and green spaces
* …it tackles problems with traffic, parking or pollution
* …it makes cycling a priority

Development

* …where the houses are actually being built
* …only develop an area if roads and services are provided as well as houses

Finance

* …it is financially possible
* …it is good value for money
* …it will mean that buildings and resources are used in a flexible way
* …it spreads funding equally across the city

Council and Exeter Community Forum

* …it meets the goals of the Council
* …it clearly links to the Exeter Community Strategy vision

They young people were given 1 red, 2 orange and 3 green stickers, to stick next to the issues that they felt were the 1st priority (red); 2nd priority (orange); 3rd priority (green). This meant that they could potentially place one sticker next to each criteria heading.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Red Stickers | Orange Stickers | Green Stickers |
| People | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| Community | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Environment | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| Finance | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Development | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Council/Forum | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The young people were interested in how decisions around the allocation of money are made, and whilst they did not all express their 2nd and 3rd priorities, they all expressed their top one.