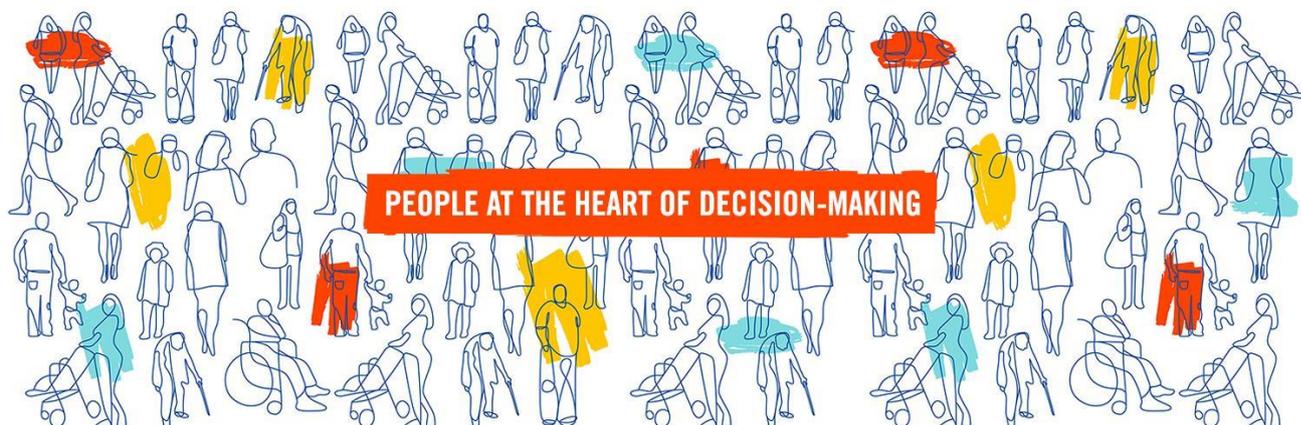


# What do people in Test Valley value?

Report on findings from deliberative  
workshops with residents in November  
2022



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## About Involve

The Involve Foundation is the UK's leading public participation charity, with a mission to put people at the heart of decision-making with offices in Belfast, Edinburgh and London. Involve delivered the workshops – designing and facilitating the process through which the participants learned, considered, and came to recommendations on the topics.

Involve play a vital role in the design, governance and delivery of deliberative events, research and engagement processes that we provide. We also provide quality advice and guidance to our partners to help them delivery quality participation. This enables participants of deliberative and democratic practices to feel confident and enabled to make their contributions fairly and feel listened to.

We support participants to get involved and take part, by removing barriers and improving access and confidence, which in turn enables a more distributed and fair voice to influence decision making. We can also enable commissioners and funders to take a step back from direct control of processes so that they can be reassured they get high quality, independent and informative insights, decisions and recommendations from participants.

We demonstrate how citizens can help solve our biggest challenges. We believe that decision-making in the UK needs to be more:

**Open** - so that people can understand, influence and hold decision-makers to account for the actions and inactions of their governments;

**Participatory** - so that people have the freedom, support and opportunity to shape their communities and influence the decisions that affect their lives; and,

**Deliberative** - so that people can exchange and acknowledge different perspectives, understand conflict and find common ground, and build a shared vision for society.

Our recent projects have included:

- Local Climate Engagement – training, mentoring, peer-learning and hands-on support to assist local authorities engaging communities on climate change.
- The People's Plan for Nature – the People's Assembly for Nature, building a public mandate for actions we can all take to protect and restore nature.

## Executive Summary

A series of independently facilitated, deliberative workshops were held with residents in Autumn<sup>1</sup> to help inform the Test Valley Borough Council's new Corporate Plan, due to be published in spring 2023. The Council were particularly interested in hearing residents' views on:

What makes communities work well as thriving places where people can live fulfilled lives?

And what role should the Council be playing to help realise this in Test Valley?

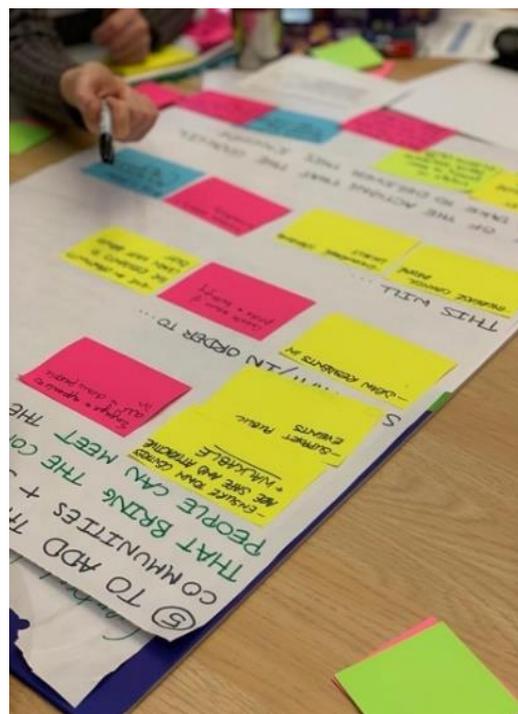
### Key principles and Final statements

A set of key principles for 'supporting a thriving test valley in the future', and 12 final recommendations for the Council were developed over three workshops and finalised over the fourth event. Participants from the final workshop also provided a 'vote' on their degree of support' for each the final recommendations.

### Principles for a Thriving Test Valley

A set of key principles for 'supporting a thriving Test Valley' in the future developed by participants on the final workshop, are summarised below – these acted as a 'reference' for the participants, about how issues should be approached:

- a. Accessible to all
- b. Considerate of local needs
- c. Considerate of the environment & sustainability
- d. Protect & conserve nature & greenspaces
- e. Community involvement & Societal wellbeing
- f. Value Diversity
- g. Community cohesion
- h. Inclusive spaces
- i. Enabling Mobility & Connections across Test Valley
- j. Two-way dialogue
- k. Financial Viability
- l. Shared events across Test Valley & Connecting Communities
- m. Healthy democracy



<sup>1</sup> Further information on the Corporate Plan and how it was developed is available here: <https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/aboutyourCouncil/corporate-plan-2023-2027>

## Final Statements

Final statements were presented to Councillor Phil North, the Leader of the Council, and other managers of TVBC on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2022, by the participants. Councillor North gave a response at the time and committed to taking all the recommendations for deeper consideration back to the Council to help shape the Corporate Plan and other activities of the Council.

The final statements that the participants developed and the level of support for them in the final vote by participants, are listed below.

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*‘...Made me feel my opinions matter’ - participant feedback*

*‘WOW! As I read and rated each statement it slowly developed into an appreciation of what was actually achieved...’ - participant feedback*

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### Statement 1: Central Locations - 100% Support

<b>To add the most value to our communities &amp; support ...</b> central locations that bring the community together & where people can meet	
<b>The Council should...</b>	ensure town centres are accessible, safe, attractive, offer a diverse & affordable programme of events, which engage & appeal to all ages.
<b>In order to...</b>	draw residents in & to create a sense of pride & belonging.
<b>This will...</b>	give residents an opportunity to meet, bring in visitors & increase spending in the local economy, & increase accessibility.
<b>Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...</b>	improving toilet facilities & infrastructure, including help & support at events, the Council being present in town centres, having a central information hub for events & volunteering, having a monthly newsletter via post, having events that focus on specific groups, giving Community Interest Groups free or subsidised memberships, getting people together with new & intergenerational activities, highlighting points of interest & the area’s history to improve people’s knowledge, & encouraging business sponsorship.

### Statement 2: Communication & Connectedness - 100% Support

<b>To add the most value to our communities &amp; support ...</b> communication & connectedness	
<b>The Council should...</b>	support consistent, two-way multiplatform communication.
<b>In order to...</b>	provide the possibility of greater involvement & spread awareness of what's happening.
<b>This will...</b>	give communities a voice, a sense of ownership & equal opportunities across the Borough.
<b>Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...</b>	inviting local communicators, having a central communication hub such as a Test Valley app or using QR codes.

### Statement 3: Building Thriving Communities - 100% Support

<b>To add the most value to our communities &amp; build thriving communities so people want to stay living in the area</b>	
<b>The Council should...</b>	improve the local economy by encouraging business & industry, & provide affordable housing with commutable transport links.
<b>In order to...</b>	encourage diverse demographics to stay in Test Valley & contribute to the local economy without the need to go elsewhere.
<b>This will...</b>	achieve a vibrant community with more balanced demographics & improved quality of life.
<b>Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...</b>	encouraging mix of industries and job opportunities, encouraging neighbourhood development plans and reconsidering transport needs to be sustainable and commutable.

### Statement 4: Strong communities & Belonging - 100% Support

<b>To add the most value to our communities &amp; create strong communities with a sense of belonging</b>	
<b>The Council should...</b>	have an in depth understanding of the community & its demographics.
<b>In order to...</b>	tailor the actions & decisions to meet the needs of the community.
<b>This will...</b>	engender a sense of pride & bring people together.
<b>Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...</b>	building data from surveys about the demographics of the communities, personalising communication and increasing awareness of how communities can be supported eg. Grants.

## Statement 5: Local Facilities - 97% Support

To add the most value to our communities & ensure local community facilities are affordable & accessible	
The Council should...	improve information for residents & support facilities to thrive.
In order to...	improve participation & affordability.
This will...	increase wellbeing, a sense of belonging & community cohesion.
Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...	transparency on financial contributions to facilities like S106 or grants, making the Test Valley Borough Council website a one stop shop for all local events and facilities, & working with social newsletters and local media.

## Statement 6: Diversity &amp; Inclusivity - 97% Support

To add the most value to our communities & celebrate diversity & inclusivity	
The Council should...	develop & encourage open engagement with all members of our community.
In order to...	offer a voice for all that everyone feels welcome.
This will...	encourage cohesion, belonging & a sense of shared values.
Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...	engaging community leaders, increasing community engagement officers, have early years education that is reflective of community demographics, have multi-cultural events that celebrate similarities & create welcome packs for new residents.

## Statement 7: Making the most of existing facilities, venues &amp; spaces - 94% Support

To add the most value to our communities & make the most of existing facilities, venues & spaces	
The Council should...	offer usable & well-maintained, affordable, multi-purpose spaces.
So that...	community groups, small businesses & individuals utilise them.
This will...	increase attractiveness & pride in the area, reduce wasted space & encourage people to the area.
Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...	clear communication about what's available or Council owned, offering free short term usage like shop hire, and having an information centre for the use of spaces.

## Statement 8: Participation &amp; Involvement - 94% Support

<b>To add the most value to our communities &amp; invite participation &amp; involvement</b>	
<b>The Council should...</b>	Be accessible & continually reach out to all members of the community.
<b>In order to...</b>	enable residents to become more involved in decisions that affect them. The Council should explain its responsibilities & what it does to fulfil them.
<b>This will...</b>	empower everyone in our community to buy into & have ownership of Council decisions, have common vision & shared goals.
<b>Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...</b>	continuing deliberative engagement, using diverse methods, language & platforms, celebrating successful initiatives that inspire, signposting residents to relevant authorities and measuring the success of processes such as these workshops.

## Statement 9: Local Wildlife &amp; Nature - 94% Support

<b>To add the most value to our communities &amp; protect local wildlife &amp; nature for the future</b>	
<b>The Council should...</b>	protect & enhance an environment policy specific for Test Valley
<b>In order to...</b>	preserve Test Valley's unique chalk stream habitat & countryside
<b>This will...</b>	ensure the survival of our environment for the long-term future.
<b>Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...</b>	education, monitoring & liaising with other agencies to support enforcement.

## Statement 10: Access to Green spaces and Parks - 94% Support

<b>To add the most value to our communities &amp; support access to local green spaces &amp; parks</b>	
<b>The Council should...</b>	put access to green spaces at the top of all planning & decision making processes.
<b>In order to...</b>	preserve & protect for current & future generations. Every Test Valley resident should have access to green spaces that meet their needs.
<b>This will...</b>	improve community wellbeing & make Test Valley a more desirable place to live.
<b>Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...</b>	having business sponsored environmental wardens, a central point like an app or website for communicating what's available, having sufficient funding and improving pathways and accessibility.

## Statement 11: Volunteering - 91% Support

<b>To add the most value to our communities &amp; support volunteering</b>	
<b>The Council should...</b>	provide leadership, expertise, a central volunteering register & practical support to make it easier to volunteer.
<b>In order to...</b>	expand awareness of the scope & extent of opportunities available, advance & enrich community involvement, & encourage others to help.
<b>This will...</b>	increase the wellbeing of people & communities, promote connectedness & community spirit, & create a caring community all can be proud of.
<b>Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...</b>	training (eg first aid, disability) for volunteer leaders so volunteers feel valued, an E-learning hub, a pride in the community award or dinner, publicly thanking volunteers, having regular volunteering events like a market stall where individuals can go round & talk to people about volunteering opportunities, communicating how to get into volunteering, recording & utilising volunteers' skills, bringing respect for all with equality, engaging international, national, regional charities, joining up volunteering, and encouraging donations to support volunteering.

## Statement 12: Culture - 91% Support

<b>To add the most value to our communities &amp; support a cultural identity for people to take part in &amp; appreciate as a community</b>	
<b>The Council should...</b>	make sure overarching principles about diversity & accessibility are considered when developing Test Valley as a cultural centre.
<b>In order to...</b>	build on Test Valley's historic identity & to broaden access to a range of diverse arts & cultural programmes.
<b>This will...</b>	broaden cultural horizons, develop a sense of belonging & open up opportunities that boost economic growth.
<b>Some of the actions the Council could take to deliver this include...</b>	promoting a broader range of events to celebrate cultural diversity, having human libraries to share first hand experiences & understanding, having free & affordable events accessible to all, and supporting the enhancement of educational programs.

## INSIGHTS

### A summary from the discussions

#### The 12 priority 'themes'

After the discussions over the first three workshops twelve 'themes' emerged about what was important to people<sup>2</sup> - these were used as a basis for the Statements:

1. Protecting local wildlife and nature for the future
2. Valuing and celebrating diversity and inclusivity
3. Supporting volunteering
4. Ensuring local community facilities are affordable and accessible to all
5. Central locations that bring the community together and where people can meet
6. Building thriving communities so people want to stay living in the area
7. Accessing local green spaces and parks
8. Making the most of existing facilities, venues and spaces for more impact
9. Communication & connectedness
10. Cultural identity for people to take part in and value as a community
11. Creating strong communities with sense of belonging
12. Inviting participation and involvement

### What's important for Thriving Communities

Participants discussed things that they thought were important for thriving communities:

- Wellbeing in communities is about good infrastructure and facilities; good services, in particular health and education; a sense of belonging in the community; getting involved in the community & being inclusive/accessible.
- Participants valued things that brought people together to meet, such as community events like carnivals, or local businesses like cafes and pubs.
- Outdoor spaces were valued for being places to exercise, to look after mental wellbeing and to meet others. More could be done for protecting outdoor spaces.
- People were also positive about initiatives for supporting the local economy.
- There was a feeling that COVID-19 & lockdown created a new community 'spirit' and better connections, although for some this seems to have faded.
- Good communication so people know what is happening in the community.
- Transport and infrastructure were also an issue across the regions, but particularly in rural areas.

<sup>2</sup> After the discussions over the first three workshops, the insights were analysed by Involve into twelve 'themes' about what was important to people, and 'snapshots' were created to support Workshop 4