

Community Mapping Pilot in St Athan

Community Engagement Summary Report

June 2016

1. Introduction

The St Athan Community Mapping Pilot Project funded under the Vale of Glamorgan Council's LEADER programme, a European funded programme to deliver rural regeneration by developing innovative ideas that create long term social and economic benefits for rural Vale. One of the themes under the regeneration programme is to help 'Communities Evolve' by exploring new ways of delivering services, facilities, activities and networks.

The aim of the Community Mapping Pilot Project in St Athan was to find new ways to engage people to identify in a positive way to identify what the community's assets and needs are. The project sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the St Athan by working with the local residents, stakeholders and businesses to explore the positive aspects of the area mapping both the physical assets and the social relationships within the community.

2. Community Mapping in St Athan

St Athan was selected as the pilot area as the LAG felt the community taken full advantage of the external funding in the past and as it is one of the more deprived areas in the rural Vale. The LAG felt that this was a timely exercise to undertake in St Athan as it is an area undergoing change with new housing developments and the Enterprise Zone, with new employment opportunities eg. Aston Martin.

In St Athan there was no particular group that was driving the project, but the feedback from the community was that St Athan is the 'forgotten village' and nothing ever happens. The project opened up an opportunity to change people's attitude and make things happen.

3. Community Engagement

The starting point in December 2015 was to build up a network of people who were active in St Athan to find out what was going on where, what services / activities were provided and what the community felt its needs were in the future. Nearly 50 individual meetings were held with members of the community and stakeholder to gain an understanding of the area. As outsiders this was a useful exercise in building stronger relationships in the community.

To gain wider community feedback, there were three different approaches to capture feedback from the wider community:

- Focus Groups
- Drop in Sessions
- St Athan Community Survey

i. Focus Group Exercises

A series of targeted community engagement was undertaken with residents attending a range of activities in the area. A total of 12 Focus Group Exercises including attending Mother and Toddler Groups, Over 50's groups, guides and brownies groups took place between February and May 2016 engaging over 230 people. It should be noted that a number of people attending activities in St Athan did not live there.

Most of the Community Mapping promotion was undertaken by activity organisers, however except for The Half Term Crafty Café which was promoted on social media. Although a lot of the engagement was general conversations with participants, in some cases different approaches to community mapping was used to gain feedback.

The Focused Groups was an excellent way of getting feedback from those already engaged in activities in the community. It did however highlight how many people were prepared to travel and come from out of the area to access services they wanted to participate in.

ii. Community Survey

To ensure that the wider community of St Athan had an opportunity to comment, a community survey was produced. The survey was open from Monday 25th April 2016 to 6th June 2016. Posters were put up around the ward to publicise the drop in events and community survey. All businesses / service providers also had information fliers to give to members of the public.

A further flier was dropped around all properties in the St Athan Ward (including the communities of Eglwys Brewis, East Camp / East Vale, St Athan Village, Gileston, West Aberthaw and Flemingston) and West Camp in early May advertising the survey and a further drop in session at the Library and Community Centre, in St Athan Village on Thursday 19th May 2016.

The public were encouraged to complete the survey on-line, however paper copies and return boxes were available at the Post Office, The Gathering Place, the Hive and the Library.

A total of 214 surveys were completed by the community. The over one third of the surveys were completed during the first week of the survey launch and a further peak following the flier distribution around all properties. Additionally approximately 45 paper copies were entered electronically at the end of the survey period. The survey was translated into Welsh, however no responses were received through the medium of Welsh.

Summary of responses

About You

Over 90% of those completing the survey lived in St Athan ward with the majority (55%) living in St Athan village. There were no responses from residents in West Aberthaw.

Of those responding one third did not work and over 25% worked locally within 5 miles. Only 3% commuted over 20 miles. In terms of age, 75% were aged between 25 and 70 (with an even breakdown within the different age brackets – 25- 39 yrs, 40 – 55yrs and 56 – 70yrs). Only 4% of respondents were under 16 years age.

About your Neighbourhood

In terms of living in St Athan, 85% wholly like or quite like living in the area with only 2% disliking it. There was mixed feelings about community spirit with 60% having positive views of the community spirit and 40% having negative views. Over 40% knew 1 – 5 neighbours, only 5% knew no neighbours and 20% knew more than 20 neighbours. The majority of respondents felt safe around the area with only less than 7% feeling no safe or not at all safe.

Services in St Athan

In terms of what respondents' views about services / facilities were, they ranged from excellent and good (included community centres, schools and doctors) to satisfactory to poor and very poor (included play areas and parks, children's activities, sports provision, training opportunities, public transport and local clubs).

General comments about the use of services and facilities included the need for more facilities as existing provision is very poor, need for more kids activities, need to improve public transport and provide a train station and need to improve the play area and parks .

It is interesting that although many respondents commented on the range of services / facilities available, a lot of respondents did not use them. Depending on your circumstances the school was either used daily or never.

Responses to the open question about why they didn't use facilities in St Athan included nothing here, need for a new park, station, supermarket and improved public transport.

Of those responding to the question about services they access outside St Athan, the respondents indicated they accessed the following services / facilities outside the area: shops, pubs, restaurants, gyms, play areas and dentist and banks.

Only 55% of respondents responded to the open question about what activities you would like if they were available in St Athan. The most popular responses included more sports activities and clubs, more children's activities and clubs and improved play areas.

Digital Technology

In terms of digital technology, over 90% of respondents had access to a computer / tablet at home, internet access, email address and a mobile phone, over 80% use on-line banking and on-line shopping, however only 50% access the St Athan Hub Facebook Page. Only 3% have none of the above.

The question relating to barriers to accessing digital technology had a poor response rate with only 25% of respondents answering the question. Of those respondents 60% sited poor internet coverage and 20% lacked confidence using computers and tablets. Of the 80% of people responding to the question asking whether they were interested in attending Digital Drop in session, one third stated they would be interested.

Future of St Athan

Only 60% of respondents answered the open question about what they would most like to improve in your neighbourhood. The most popular suggestions where:

- **Improving public transport** so it is more reliable particularly providing a more regular service, making better connections with the train service at Llantwit Major, improving the commuter service into Cardiff and providing a service from St Athan to Cowbridge.
- **Providing a train stop at Gilston**
- **Reducing traffic speeds and improving pedestrian environment** – comments included reducing traffic speeds both through the village and at the cross roads with the monument, suggested traffic calming measures and improved pedestrian crossings
- **More kids activities**
- **Better policing**
- **More community events**

Approximately 60% of the respondents thought the future of St Athan was promising. The community are keen to see changes and action in the area. Approximately 20 of the respondents left contact details stating that they would like to be further involved.

iii. Drop in Sessions

There were three drop in sessions organised in St Athan inviting residents to pop in and have a chat about St Athan with officers and volunteers. These were held on:

- Monday 25th April 2016, 9am to 8pm, the Gathering Place, East Vale
- Wednesday 27th April 2016, 9am to 8pm, the Gathering Place, East Vale
- Thursday 19th May 2016, 2pm to 6pm, St Athan Library / 6pm – 7.30pm St Athan Community Centre

Publicity for the two events in April was by posters distributed around the community and in key business / community locations, press release and social media. A larger flier drop to all properties in St Athan advertised the last drop in session in May.

The lobby of the Gathering Place was a good location to have the drop in sessions as the team was able to speak to people coming and going from the activities in the centre. It was however difficult to get everyone to sign in so the numbers of people recorded is less than the number of people we spoke to. Most of the people were coming to the building anyway, rather than a specific visit to discuss the community mapping project.

At the library there were only 5 people who attended, most of whom had seen the flier and wanted to discuss their views on St Athan. At the Community Centre, no members of the public attended, however discussions were had with those attending Bingo.

Display boards presented three questions to the public to simulate debate:

- What do you like about St Athan?
- What services do you use in St Athan / Outside St Athan?
- What are your hopes / aspirations for the future

Many people liked living in St Athan because it's rural, quiet and the community feel / family / friends. They use a range of services including the local shops / post office, parks, doctors and mother and toddler groups, however travel further to do larger grocery / clothes shopping, leisure centres / gyms / swimming pools, access larger play areas / parks and other entertainment eg. Pubs, cinemas, bowling and soft play.

The key issues being identified were:

- Improved public transport
- Improving provision for kids
- New play park
- Provision of new services
- More community events
- More community police
- Change in people's attitude

Summary

The Community Mapping process has been invaluable in gaining feedback from the community but more importantly building relationships to facilitate residents taking action and making changes.

There were 6 key themes that were consistently raised as issues in the focus groups, drop in sessions and through the community survey. These were:

Issue 1: Improve the public transport

- Poor co-ordination of bus and train services at Llantwit Major
- No early commuting buses into Cardiff
- No bus service to Cowbridge
- Re-instate the train station / halt in the village

Issue 2: Lack of Children's Activities

- Particularly for school age children – 5 to 16 years
- No sports clubs eg. Football
- No youth club

Issue 3: Poor Play Areas

- In particular limited investment in the St Athan Play Area by the Community Centre, Glyndwr Avenue

Issue 4: Safer walking environment

- Speeding traffic through the village
- Safer crossing places
- Dropped kerbs

Issue 5: Improving service provision

- New coffee shop
- More shops
- Extending hours of the doctors
- Provide a dentist
- More activities for adults, particularly sports activities
- More community events
- Better policing

Issue 6: Lack of communication

- Lack of awareness of what's going on in St Athan