

Suckley Parish Survey 2012 – Parish Council Proposals

Summary

This document provides Suckley Parish Council's proposed actions in response to the Parish Survey carried out in August 2012. Detailed comments are made in later sections.

Based on the results of the survey, the Parish Council will prioritise the following facilities and services for promotion and – where legally possible – council tax support:

- Suckley Post Office
- Broadband improvement
- Footpath and bridleway maintenance
- Facilities for children

Funds will also be provided for the following facilities, but only to the limited extent currently provided:

- Public houses (rate relief)
- Longley Green quarry site (mowing and other necessary maintenance)

The Parish Council will actively consider requests for financial support of other facilities (such as the Village Hall). However, for reasons explained later, it will require evidence that genuine demand exists for the facility before providing support from council tax.

Finally, residents are reminded that the future of all facilities and services is in their own hands. **If you want to retain a local facility, use it! Is there something you'd like to see happen? Organise it!**

1) Forms completed, demographics & location of respondents

The response to the survey was disappointing. A return of 23% suggests that either a majority of parishioners do not care about the future of the Parish, or possibly believe that their views will not be counted. This is quite incorrect: the survey results will be used directly to determine your council tax's use from 2012 and in discussions with outside bodies in matters which directly affect parishioners, such as housing development and new businesses.

Although a disproportionate number of responses were received from residents giving their age as over-65, the survey results did not vary significantly between age groups. The Parish Council believes that its proposed actions will benefit all sections of the community.

2) Importance of Facilities & Services (questions 4/5)

It was clear from all sections of the survey that Suckley Post Office & shop is the single most valued facility/service in the parish. No other item was rated "vital" by more than half of the respondents.

Of the remaining facilities/ services, the relative popularity of the Suckley Newsletter and – to a lesser extent – The Sphere are noted. The importance of providing door-to-door information about parish activities, events and facilities is clear.

The low number of responses categorising the various meeting places (village hall, church, pubs) as vital was surprising. The same comment applies to Suckley Playing Fields, though we note that a significant number of respondents marked all these facilities as "important".

3) Public Meeting Place – Need, location & type

The response to questions about a meeting place appears to the council to be at odds with the amount of support parishioners have demonstrated over recent years. Though responses indicate the village hall is wanted, attendances at events organised by the building's owners – the Hill Trust - have been extremely low over recent years. Indeed, several events have had to be cancelled over the past two years due to insufficient numbers.

In contrast, History Society events at the village hall are well attended, as are the monthly quiz nights organised at The Nelson Inn. We encourage residents to make contact with members of the Hill Trust to help organise events that they would like to see.

The Parish Council is not convinced that allocation of council tax funds to Suckley Village Hall would be prudent at present. If residents demonstrate a real enthusiasm for events organised there, this position will be reviewed.

4) Housing, Employment & Shopping

Under current legislation, decisions on planning are made by Malvern Hills District Council, though Suckley Parish Council is permitted to provide input. The Parish Council notes that a majority of residents are prepared to accept certain forms of additional housing and employment and will use this in any relevant discussions with the District Council. If decision-making powers are devolved to the Parish Council, it will be guided by the residents' wishes as expressed in the survey.

The results of the shopping section show a disappointing lack of commitment to the local shop, despite its “vital” status. The only possible message is “use it or lose it”.

5) Cars & Public Transport

It is evident that almost every adult in Suckley has access to a car and that the vast majority would prefer to use them to public transport. Indeed, there are more cars available to parishioners than there are residents over 18: the result, presumably, of many 17 year olds acquiring a car as soon as they are able to drive.

In the light of the survey and previous experiments which failed to generate support, the Parish Council does not believe that there is sufficient demand for any form of community transport to justify council tax support.

Parishioners are reminded that the bus service to Worcester is the most frequent it has been for some time and timings are suitable for both schoolchildren and those in employment in Worcester. Again, use it or lose it.

6) Children’s facilities

Only 13 households with children responded to the questions aimed at under 18s. With so few responses, it is very difficult to judge what facilities are required or if the two locations mentioned in the survey are the best situated to match families’ needs. The Parish Council would welcome additional input from residents about children’s facilities.

Some comments suggested that the playing fields’ equipment requires maintenance and this will be checked. Parents who have any concerns about existing facilities are asked to make direct contact with the Parish Council.

7) Provision of Council Tax Support

Based on the survey results, the Parish Council proposes to go forward as follows:

- **Broadband** – the council is not legally able to support utility providers financially, but we will continue to lobby for better broadband provision via the county council’s initiatives. Residents are strongly encouraged to express their interest in better rural broadband connectivity via: <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/superfast-broadband/vote-for-broadband.aspx>
- **Bus services/ Car sharing/ Community taxi** – no financial support will be provided for the reasons outlined in section 5.
- **Children’s Facilities** – see Suckley Playing Fields and Longley Green Quarry
- **Footpaths/ bridleways** – financial support will continue to be provided as now. Repairs are currently undertaken by volunteers, more of whom would be welcome. Any person wishing to help sustain footpaths and bridleways should contact the Parish Clerk (details in the Suckley Newsletter & The Sphere)
- **Good Neighbour Scheme** – no additional financial support is proposed.
- **Housing & Employment** – If decision-making powers are devolved to the Parish Council, it will be guided by the residents’ wishes as expressed in the survey.

- **Longley Green quarry site** - the Parish Council will continue to maintain the quarry (as required of it as landowner and consideration will be given to proposals for greater amenity use of this asset).
- **Mobile Library** – no financial support is proposed, but the Parish Council will encourage this service to serve Suckley School with a view to growing the number of regular users (currently just 11 residents)
- **New village social/ meeting facility** – no financial support will be provided for reasons outlined in section 3.
- **Post Office & Shop** –rate relief will continue to be provided as now. The council will discuss what additional support or encouragement to use the facility can be provided. Residents are strongly encouraged to use the shop more and to support initiatives to bring car licensing facilities to Suckley – please ask the sub-postmaster for details
- **Recycling Facilities** – financial support is provided by Malvern Hills District Council.
- **Suckley Church** – no financial support is proposed.
- **Suckley Newsletter** – no financial support will be provided as the publication is self-funded via advertising.
- **Suckley Playing Fields** – the Parish Council will continue to maintain the playing fields (as required of it as landowner). It will also consider proposals to increase the amenity value of this facility as it believes this will benefit both Suckley School and the wider community.
- **Suckley Pre-school** – no financial support required as the pre-school has now closed due to lack of attendees
- **Suckley School** – no direct financial support is proposed, but the council will support other facilities such as Suckley Playing Fields which are of benefit to the school. The parish council will also work with local charitable bodies to support the school wherever possible.
- **Suckley Village Hall** – no financial support will be provided for the reasons outlined in section 3.
- **The Sphere** – no financial support is proposed.
- **Village Map** – no further financial support is proposed.
- **Village Pubs**– rate relief will continue to be provided as now. The council will discuss what additional support or encouragement to use these facilities can be provided. Residents are strongly encouraged to support both pubs in the parish.
- **Other Items** – the Parish Council will continue to employ a lengthsman to assist efficient drainage from local roads and drains. Residents with issues concerning crime or establishing Neighbourhood Watch Schemes should contact the local beat police officer directly using the contact details in the Suckley Newsletter and The Sphere. Residents dissatisfied with road conditions should report issues directly to Worcester County Council using the existing facilities provided online at:
<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/report--a-highway-problem.aspx>