

Witchford Parish Plan

Report & Action Plan

2008



Sponsored by:

Witchford Parish Council



THE WITCHFORD PARISH PLAN

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PARISH COUNCIL STATEMENT

"By giving everyone in Witchford the opportunity to express their views and ideas, we hope that the Parish Council is now better informed about local opinion. The work and decisions of Witchford Parish Council and other local organisations will be informed by the plan and be a useful guide in the decision making process.

Statistical evidence on specific issues backs up views and feelings and the voice of the community is strengthened. People are more involved in what goes on around them when they feel that their voice has been heard.

Statutory authorities can be influenced by the united views and needs of our community. Without the existence of a Parish Plan, any application for grant money is more difficult.

The Parish Plan should not be considered to be an end in itself, it should represent an opportunity for the community to make realistic recommendations, take them forward and follow their progress"

Witchford Parish Council – June 2008

A MESSAGE FROM THE PARISH PLAN STEERING GROUP

"The publication of this report is a major milestone in the Parish Plan process. It has taken much time and effort to make this possible and there is a certain 'relief' to see it completed. But this is by no means the end - rather it is the beginning of an even longer process, requiring further hard work and effort, to turn the wishes of the residents of Witchford into reality. As you read the report you will probably find at least one issue that affects you personally. If you care about Witchford and its future then please consider getting more involved with the actions listed at the end of this document – your help will make a difference."

Witchford Parish Plan Steering Group – June 2008

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Witchford Parish Plan is to identify the actions that will ensure our village develops in the way the community wishes. It is a summary of the thoughts, opinions and ideas of the people of the parish.

This report provides the background story on why and how the plan was produced. It also summarises the results of the village survey carried out in the autumn of 2007. At the end of the report there is a list of actions that have been recommended, following analysis of this public consultation with the villagers of Witchford. Various comments, obtained from the survey, are also quoted throughout the document.

WHY HAVE A PARISH PLAN?

Parish Plans are being produced by communities across the country. They are recognised as being a 'good thing', in that they encourage communities to indicate how they would like their town or village to develop, to identify key facilities and services, to set out the problems that need to be tackled and demonstrate how their distinctive character and features can be preserved. One of the most important aspects of a Parish Plan is that it forms strategic links with influential organisations, such as the district and county councils, police and primary care trust.

HOW WAS IT DONE?

The Parish Council decided, in late 2006, that it needed to produce a Parish Plan for Witchford. Invitations were sent out to all the groups, clubs and other organisations in the village, asking for support and for volunteers to join the steering group. This was set up in January 2007, when it was agreed that the Parish Plan would be developed by obtaining the views of as many villagers as possible, via a village survey. This is a tried and tested format, used by many other parishes, with affordable production costs and administration time.

Smaller groups were set up to formulate the questions to be used in the survey. To break the work down into manageable chunks, each group focused on only a few topics. These were reviewed and finally agreed by the whole steering group. A trial run of the draft survey was tested on a sample of the village during the summer of 2007. At this time it was decided to produce the survey both on paper and on the Internet, where it could be filled in on-line¹. The advantage of this approach was that the company providing the on-line version also supplied the tools to analyse the data quickly and easily.

The final version of the survey was published in September 2007 and distributed with the 'Witchfordian' magazine in October. This was collected at the end of October, in parallel with entries from the on-line version. Over 250 surveys were returned, totalling 530 individual responses, which volunteers transferred to computer by hand. Analysis of this data started at the end of December 2007 and a list of preliminary recommendations was reviewed by the steering group in February 2008.

Following the analysis of the survey, a number of recommendations were put forward for review by the Parish Council during March 2008. The action list was also forwarded to the Local Strategic Partnership for their review. This includes such bodies as the Police and NHS Trust, so is particularly important. The Parish Council adopted the action plan at their meeting in April 2008. This gave the go-ahead to formally present the plan and a report to the village at a public meeting on 28 June 2008. This report is a summary of the whole process.

Throughout the conception and creation of the parish plan, the steering group received support and advice from Jo Fitzpatrick of Cambridgeshire ACRE.

WHAT DID IT COST?

All the costs of producing, printing and analysing the survey, as well as the printing of this report have been met by a grant of £1500 from Cambridgeshire ACRE. The sums involved are:

Printing of the survey	£567
Online hosting of the survey	£102
Hire of room for meetings	£195
Printing of the report and results	£356
Prize draw	£50
Costs of public meeting	£50

Feedback from the survey:

"How much did preparing, distributing and collecting this survey cost? I'm sure this cost could be better spent on making current services actually work"

Grand Total **£1320**

All efforts were made to keep the costs as low as reasonably possible.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

At the end of this report there is a table of about forty actions. Many of these fall under the responsibility of the Parish Council, either in performing the task or in seeing that another organisation plays its part. Some of these actions can be completed with very little resources in a short period, while others may require a long time, a lot of money and substantial effort.

Although the parish plan steering group has now been disbanded, some of its members will be joining forces with the parish council to form a new committee. This group will be tasked with ensuring that each action is prioritised, progressed in a systematic fashion and dealt with in a realistic time-scale. One of its key requirements will be to communicate progress back to the village via the Witchfordian and the website.

The hope is that the Parish Council and the new committee will use the Parish Plan as a mini-referendum, empowering them to turn the Action Plan into tangible achievements.

ABOUT WITCHFORD

WITCHFORD TODAY

The village of Witchford lies about three miles to the west of Ely, Cambridgeshire. Its location is close to the junction of the A10 and the A142, which bypasses the village to the north.

At the last count², in 2006, there were approximately 962 households in Witchford, and the electoral role shows a population of 1785 (over 18s). In mid 2006, the County Council estimated the population of the village to be 2330.

Schools

Primary education is provided by the Rackham Church of England School, which has approximately 310³ pupils, mostly from Witchford but many from Ely and surrounding villages. Witchford Village College is a large secondary school of about 873⁴ pupils, covering year groups seven to eleven. It has a wider catchment area, including many of the villages west of Ely.

Churches

Witchford has two churches – St. Andrew's, which is Church of England, and a Baptist Church.

Shops & Services

Witchford used to be well-served with general stores, but these have gradually closed down, mainly due to competition from supermarkets and greater car use. But there are still some shops and services in the village, notably:

- Post Office – which also specialises in pet supplies as well as some household essentials
- Midway Garage – repairs, MoTs and motorbike sales
- Hairdresser
- Vegetable store – on A142 at Sutton Road

Eating & Drinking

There are a pub, social club and a restaurant in Witchford, plus a Chinese takeaway and the mobile Fish & Chip van.

Business Parks

There are two business parks in Witchford parish – Greenham Park, off Common Road and Sedgeway, on the north side of the A142. Although not in the parish, Lancaster Way Business Park is a larger park, bordering the village on the way to Ely.

WITCHFORD PAST

Witchford⁵ was formerly of greater importance. The Domesday Book refers to the Two Hundreds of Ely which meet at Wiceford. North Witchford is still the name given to one of the rural districts. The Manor consisted of 300 acres in Witchford and Wold (now merged into the parish of Witchford). After the Danish invasion in the middle of the 11th Century, the Manor and estate was worth £8, £12 in 1066 and £10 in 1086. The fall in value was no doubt due to the devastation caused by Hereward's exploits. Thurstan the last Saxon Abbot of Ely (d.1072) was a native of Witchford. Samuel Bentham, father of James Bentham, the historian of Ely, was vicar of Witchford at the time of his son's birth in 1708.

A local historian quotes that in 1860 Witchford "in a point of filth would bear comparison with the worst place in any part of the kingdom" with an open drain all along the Main Street. The drain was partly piped in the 1830s and totally piped by the 1880s. A thatched brick farmhouse adjacent to Grunty Fen Drain, to the right of Broadway was one of the worst conditioned dwellings in the village. In 1850 the house and residents were inspected by a medical officer. The large family living there had suffered from fever mainly because of the condition of the house and because it was built against Grunty Fen Drain. Originally a small wooden bridge was used to cross Grunty Fen Drain, this was demolished in about 1839.

In the last part of the 19th century, Witchford was one of the largest horse-trading centres in the country. Richard Beldam was the larger trader in the village and was said to have been known all over the Europe.

St. Andrew's Church

The church tower dates back to 1226 and is the survivor of an earlier church (One of the first churches on the site was built in AD607). The nave and chancel were rebuilt in 1376 and consecrated on 12th December 1376. In the 15th century the present porch was added. It was rebuilt in brick in 1838. The tower contains three bells by Christopher Graye 1671 (probably cast at Haddenham). The 13th century tower is 10 inches out of true.

Witchford's Environment

Until the drainage of the fens began in the seventeenth century, Witchford was an island village, its

environment dominated by the surrounding vast tracts of marshland. Though the fens were a paradise for wildlife, the people of Witchford's appreciation of this environment would have been utilitarian - a resource to be exploited. It provided a rich harvest of fish and fowl for the pot and market, peat for fuel, willows for hurdles, basketwork and fish traps, and grazing for cattle on the fringes of the fen. Over the next three hundred years as the fens were converted to fertile farmland, the environment became what it is today - a source of agricultural produce, but importantly also, a place to be appreciated for quiet leisure and relaxation.

Schooling

In 1789 there was a small dame school in Witchford; the older boys went to Ely for their schooling if they received any. In 1846-7 Witchford had become one of the best-provided villages in the Isle of Ely. About 100 children, in a population of 561 attended the school. The cost of running the school per year at the time was £30 of which the Master received £20 in salary. Parents were charged 1d a week for each child or 1s a quarter. Farmers were charged extra.

RAF Witchford⁶

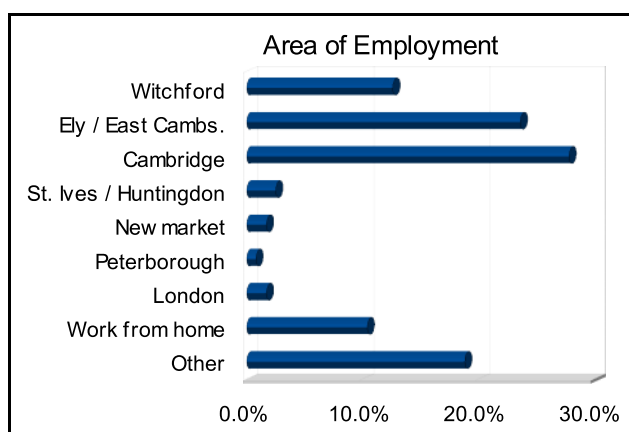
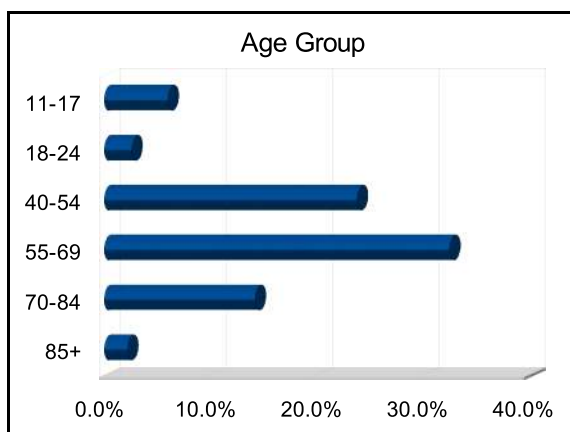
Actually RAF Witchford lies just outside the parish boundary, but it bears the name of the village. Construction began in 1942 and it was officially opened in June 1943. It had three intersecting runways and various hangers (one of which remains today), as well as a bomb store near Bedwell Hey Lane. There was a maximum of 1,732 personnel. Initially Wellington bombers flew from RAF Witchford, followed by Stirlings then the ubiquitous Lancasters of No. 115 Squadron. The airfield was closed in the spring of 1946. The offices of Grovemere Holdings house a foyer museum display in honour of the wartime occupants.

RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS

This section summarises the main results and conclusions obtained from the data in the completed survey. There is not sufficient space to include every single item, but the complete set of data is available for download from Witchford Online at www.witchford.org.uk.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Thank you to everyone who took the time to fill in the survey. About 54% of you are female and 46 % are male. You are in the age groups as shown in the graph below left. If you are in employment, your place of work is shown below right. A high proportion of residents work locally in Witchford and Ely, although Cambridge is the most popular destination for commuters.



Please note that all the following figures and results only reflect the views and opinions of the people who responded to each question.

COMMENTS

Throughout the survey you were invited to add your own comments and views. Most people took the chance to make their opinions heard in one way or another and we have included some of these, dotted around the report. Many were complimentary, other not so – we have tried to balance these fairly.

“I have lived in Witchford for 29 years and the village has become home and I value it the way it is now.”

“I expect this survey will just sit on a shelf gathering dust because they will say there is not enough money. Same old story - nothing will change!”

THE BIG ISSUES

One of the questions at the end of the survey asked the respondent to list the three most important issues that they felt affect Witchford. The outcome of this was a large and varied list. The top three, each mentioned by over 60 people were:

1. Speeding & Traffic

The response from the survey made one thing very clear - speeding traffic is a big concern to a great many people. It is probably just a minority of motorists that have a total disregard for the speed limit in the village, but the problem is perceived to be quite serious.

We are very lucky not to have more draconian speed control measures in Witchford, which can have their own unpleasant side effects. So let's hope that the message can be got across, before that has to happen.

2. Over-development of the village

Generally speaking, people choose to live in Witchford because they value the way of life that a village offers. Those who have lived here for a long time will also have grown to like Witchford for its many special qualities. So it is natural that there is resistance to over-development of the village and the immediate surrounding area. Especially there is opposition to the proposed waste processing centre near Lancaster Way. Also many people said that little or no more new housing is necessary.

3. Waste Disposal

The proposed waste centre has already been mentioned. Public opposition to the location of this has been voiced on numerous occasions. However, the people of Witchford are definitely committed to recycling, as long as it can be achieved in a practical manner – are the latest kerbside collections a step in the right direction? The subject of wheelie bins provoked a lot of comments too – we either love them or hate them, in almost equal proportions.

The next group of issues were mentioned by at least 30 people:

- **Crime & local police presence** – vandalism; visibility of policing; graffiti; anti-social behaviour
- **Post Office** – don't allow the post office to be closed
- **More shopping facilities** – grocery store
- **Schools** – keeping high standards of education; Rackham school & pre-school places
- **Teenage facilities** – providing activities for young people
- **Mereham** – widespread opposition to Mereham

The other items that received significant mentions included:

- **Public transport** – more bus services and cheaper fares
- **Healthcare** – surgery facilities in the village or improved access to others
- **Environment** – open spaces; footpaths; grass cutting; wildlife
- **Community spirit** – keep a village community spirit going
- **Affordable housing**
- **Litter, graffiti & dog fouling** – both on pavements and public footpaths
- **Parking** – school run congestion; cars parking on grass verges & pavements
- **Council tax** – protest against rising council tax charges; keeping council services

The remainder of this section looks in more detail at the main results obtained from the survey and outlines the recommendations that have been taken forward to the action plan.

BUSINESS

Support for local businesses is strong. Over 70% of responses were in favour of business and industrial development at Lancaster Way and Sedgeway. There was also support for small businesses operating from homes.

Postal Service

Overall, there seems to be a high level of satisfaction with the postal service. Some requests were made for an additional post box in the Manor Court area and this has been added as an action.

Post Office

Support for the post office was virtually universal, highlighting how important a service it is for the community. Let's make sure we use it and lobby the local councils to ensure its long-term survival!

Some comments were aimed at the other products that the post office sells, i.e. requests for more general grocery items and also longer opening hours. These will be forwarded to Shelley.

Local shops

The survey asked what new local shops people would use and two suggestions gained some, but not a large support:

- General store – unfortunately the trend in the village is for such shops to close, not open.
- Chemist – Witchford is too small to support its own chemist, but research is planned into schemes that deliver prescriptions to homes.

The post office is seemingly used by nearly everyone and many of the other shops and facilities in the village are also very popular. These are the percentages of people who said they use them: Midway Garage (44%), Vegetable store (68%), Hairdresser (44%), Mobile library (10%), Dial-a-ride (4%), Mobile Fish & Chips (31%) and the Village Inn (72%).

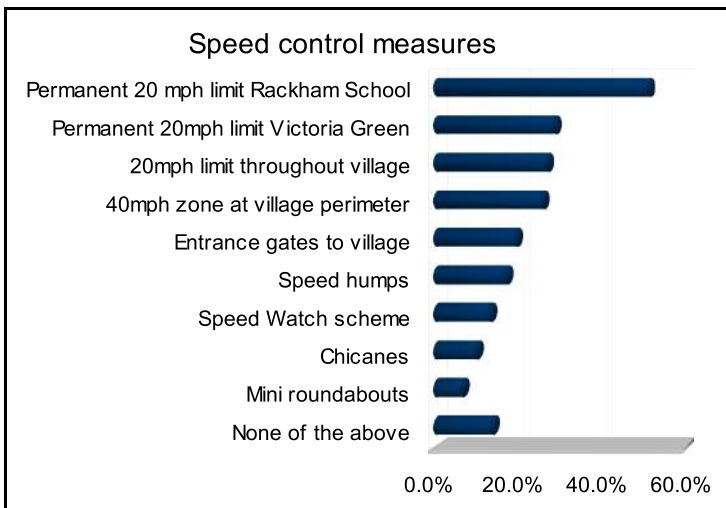
HIGHWAYS & FOOTPATHS

Crossings

Although there are no 'proper' pedestrian crossings, there are two places on Main Street, near the Rackham School and the Post Office, where the kerb has been designed to make crossing slightly easier. Over 73% of responses said that the present crossings are adequate, so no further action has been recommended.

Traffic speed control

Speeding traffic through the village was one of the biggest issues raised by the survey. A small majority of people were in favour of a permanent 20mph limit in front of the Rackham School and many of the other suggested ideas had favourable feedback. The recommendation is that the Parish Council commissions an expert review of traffic in the village and investigates the options for calming and enforcement.



“There is a flashing 30 mile sign in entrance to village and even when most cars set it off they don't slow down !”

“Please no speed bumps!”

Footpaths

About a third of respondents already use the footpath system, but over half would like more information and nearly as many would value better signposting. Dog fouling was also seen as a deterrent to taking a walk.

In response to these views, the 'Witchford Walks' leaflet has already been converted to computer format and published on the website. Actions have been raised to update and reprint the leaflet and to improve signposting where appropriate.

“We are now reaching our first year of living in Witchford. I think on the whole the village is well kept, friendly and I have no complaints. The walks are great and well posted. The village is clean and well kept. Well done and thank you.”



Parking

Many responses were also concerned about the number of cars during the morning and afternoon school runs and anti-social parking on pavements and the verge. The latter will be raised with the County Council and the Police.

Grass cutting

The overall conclusion from the survey is that the current scheme for grass cutting is effective and adequate. It is difficult to keep the grass looking neat and tidy all year round, especially when unexpected weather conditions cause variable growth.

Green corridors & Wildlife

More than 63% of responses felt that it is 'very important' to maintain all the undeveloped green corridors around Witchford. This is important feedback, which can be used to support the village's stance on the proposed waste recycling centre.

Similarly, over 79% of responses felt that wildlife around Witchford is very important. This will strengthen the Parish Council's support of groups involved with local wildlife schemes, such as Sandpit Drove Conservation Area and the Old Recreation Ground

Millennium Wood

The wood seems to be an under-used resource because, although about 30% of people visit it, even more would be prepared to go along if they knew more about what it had to offer. More information was requested by 41%, with 33% approving of a signboard at the entrance. The design and purchase of this will be investigated by the Parish Council and the Woodland Group.

Noise

Noise levels are generally not a great issue, although 37% of responses considered motorbikes to be a problem. These appear to be localised cases and something for the Parish Council and the Police to follow up on.

Street lighting

Street lighting in the village is seen to be generally adequate by over 90% of respondents. However, some suggestions for improvement were put forward, for example turning off the church floodlighting earlier at night. The Parish Council already has a rolling programme of improving street lighting, often in response to villagers' requests.

Energy efficiency & renewable energy

A large proportion of you (63%) do not want any more information on how to improve your energy efficiency, although this is easily obtainable via the Internet and from the District Council and other related resources. When asked about your views on renewable energy and conservation you were very positive about supporting energy saving in the home (91%) and solar panels on private homes (77%). But you were split evenly when it came to wind turbines on private homes and a wind farm near Witchford.

Drainage

During heavy downpours there can be localised flooding at the road junction of Main Street and Victoria Green. Anglia Water have been made aware of this.

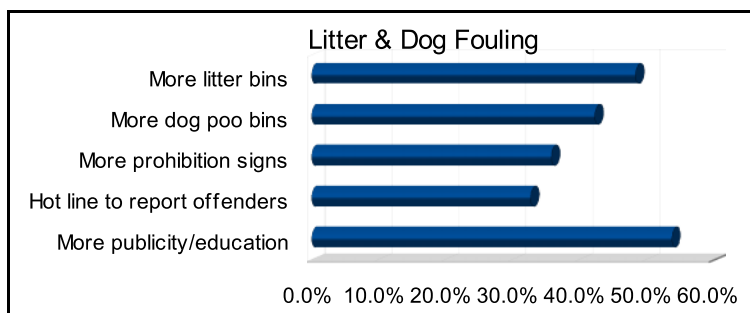
Litter & dog fouling

Some split opinions on these issues – on one hand there appear to be places where litter and dog mess are problematic; on the other, according to comments, people seem to be happy with the current situation.

Litter problems will be tackled in three ways:

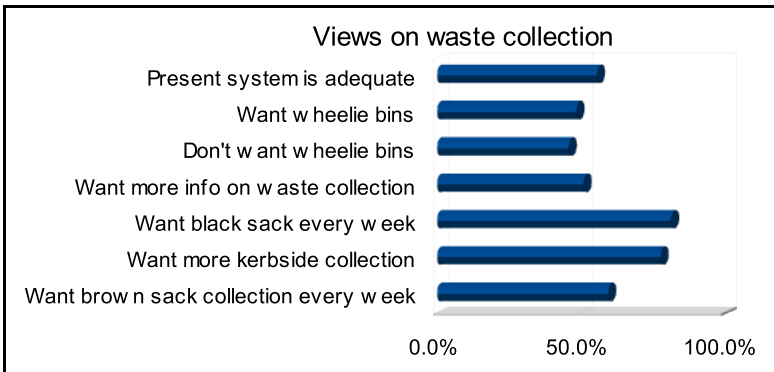
- There is an existing plan to install two more litter bins in Victoria Green
- The village litter picker will be asked to survey the village for litter 'black spots' , so that any further litter bins can be targeted where they are needed most
- The local schools will be asked to provide more education, to help prevent littering

Similarly, there is already a plan to install more dog bins on Victoria Green and this will be completed. The dog warden will be asked to repeat an earlier article on this issue in the Witchfordian, that was published a little while ago.



Waste collection

Unfortunately, new waste collection plans for East Cambridgeshire were finalised just as the survey went to press. So the results of the question on waste collection may not be as complete as hoped. The main conclusions drawn from this are that the village is split evenly for and against wheelie bins; people are in favour of more kerbside recycling and wish to retain the weekly black bag collection.

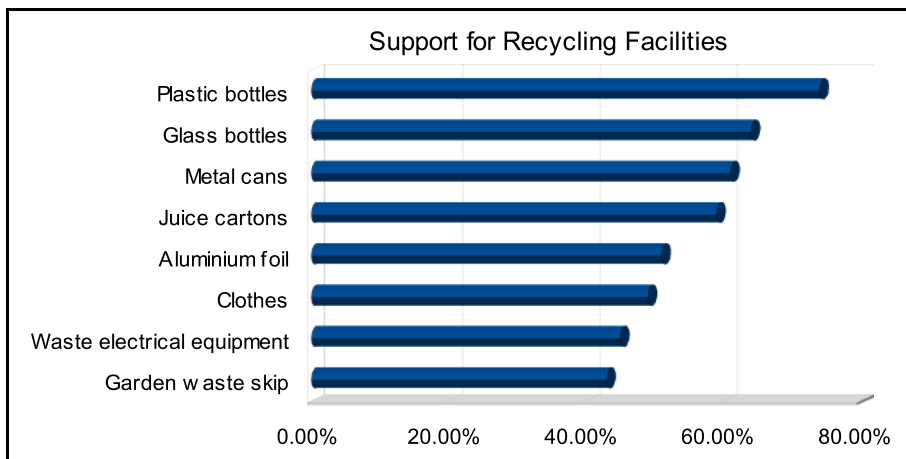


“Definitely yes to wheelie bins and weekly recycling with more bins / boxes. Brown sacks are a waste of time - always losing bottoms.”

“Previous experience of wheelie bins was a nightmare”

Recycling

Around half or more of respondents were in favour of various new or improved recycling facilities in the village:



The latest recycling scheme from the District Council does, of course, address many of these items. Your comments expressed concerns about how often the existing banks are emptied. Also there is resistance to them being sited near to residential areas.

“Wheelie bins not suitable for my terraced house. There should be more flexibility with recycling and we should be able to recycle more. I use the refuse tip (Grunty Fen) in preference to roadside recycling”

Improving Witchford's Environment

A number of suggestions were put forward to improve Witchford's environment. As well as the items already mentioned earlier, the following ideas have made it on to the action list:

- Tree planting – a programme of new tree planting is in progress and suggestions for new trees are welcomed
- Public seating – two new benches are already planned for Victoria Green

SPORT, RECREATION & ARTS

The Village Hall, St. Andrew's Hall and the Baptist Church all seem to be quite well utilised for social activities. To ensure that this continues, the organisations responsible for these facilities will be encouraged to publicise them via the Witchfordian and the web site.

Sports & social activities

The three most popular reported sports and social activities in Witchford are:

- WADS 9.5%
- Fitness club 8.3%
- Football club 5.4%

And outside Witchford:

- Swimming pool 38.5%
- Fitness club 13.9%
- Golf club 8.0%



Activities for children

It is a similar picture for children's activities, in Witchford:

- Football club 32.5%
- Brownies 23.2%
- WADS 16%

And outside Witchford:

- Swimming pool 59%
- Golf club 8.6%
- Football club 5.4%



But let's not forget the numerous other activities that are available in the village or in Ely, including: Beavers, Cubs & Scouts, badminton, bowls, Tang Soo Doh and horse riding.

New Clubs & Activities

The survey asked what new clubs and activities you would like to participate in. There was a huge range of suggestions - a few of which are printed below - and the message was clear: there are plenty of like-minded people who would like to get involved in group activities, if only they knew who else shared their interest. (The one exception might be the Fen Mountain Rescue Team, that one was suggested).

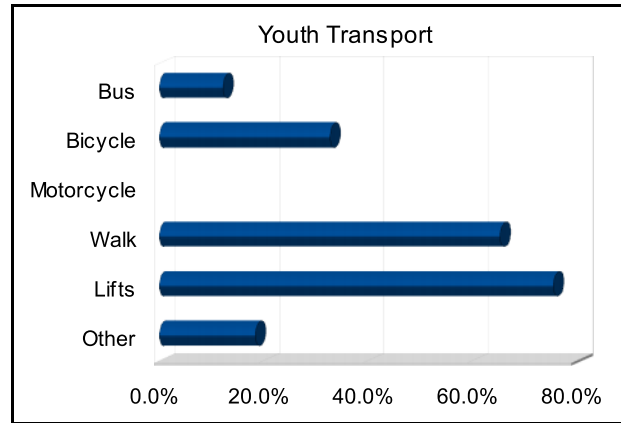
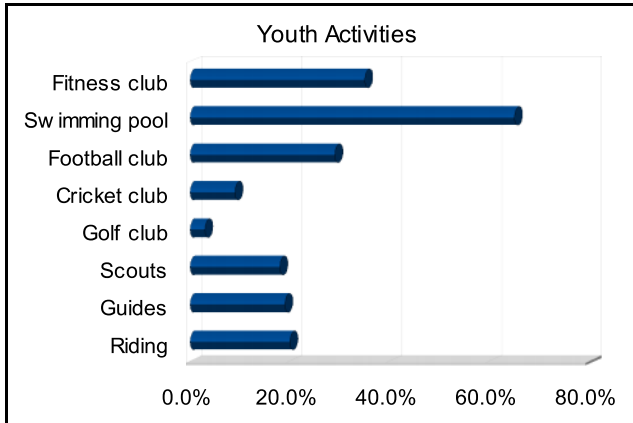
The steering group feels that this needs a 'catalyst' to get things started and has proposed to the Parish Council that a 'Club Fair' could be staged at one of the village events, to enable existing and new clubs to attract new members. Are you interested in any of the following activities? If so, you are not alone...

- Tennis
- Archery
- Yoga
- Book club
- Over 55s/60s club

YOUNG PEOPLE

The survey contained a section specifically to be answered by people in the age group 11-18 years. About 50 replies were received and, although this is not a large sample, it highlighted the fact that young people in Witchford do not have a great choice of things to do, unless they are able to travel to Ely or Cambridge.

The Youth Club is not well attended – 92% never visit - and this is something that the action plan hopes to address. The most popular activity is swimming in Ely, followed by going to a fitness club. Riding, football, Guides and Scouts also have strong followings, as shown by the graph below left. The right hand graph shows how young people get to their activities.



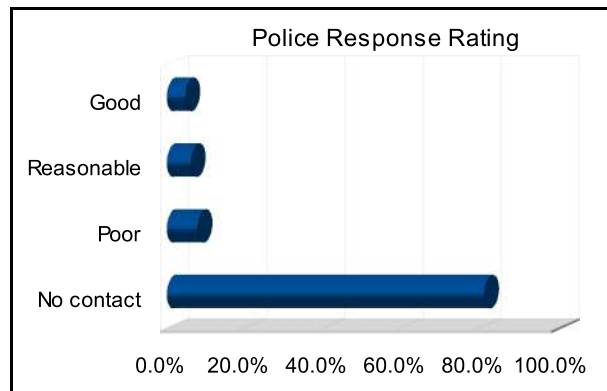
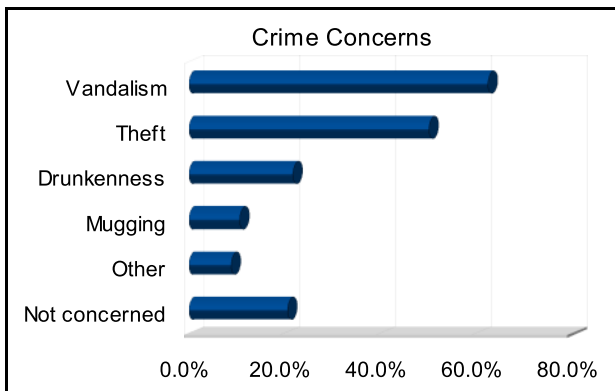
Over two thirds of respondents thought that there are not enough facilities for young people in Witchford and only 10% would not support the building of more. A skateboard park, sheltered seating, basketball area, remote control car track, cricket pitch and cafe were all mentioned as possible new youth facilities. These ideas will be forwarded to the Youth Club and the group involved with the proposed multi-purpose youth facility.

The favourite place for young people to meet is Victoria Green (63%), followed by the recreational ground (42%) and Common Road (39%).

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Crime

According to crime statistics, Witchford is a relatively crime-free and safe place to live. So the survey asked villagers what types of crime and anti-social behaviour concerned them most (below left). The survey also asked for a rating of the Police response to any crime that had occurred (below right).



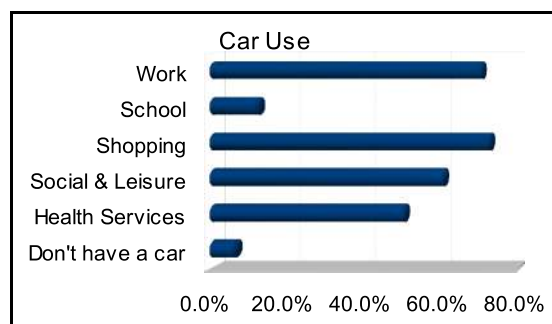
These results need to be passed on to the police, highlighting the fact that many people, who had needed to contact the police, considered their response to be poor.

Neighbourhood Watch

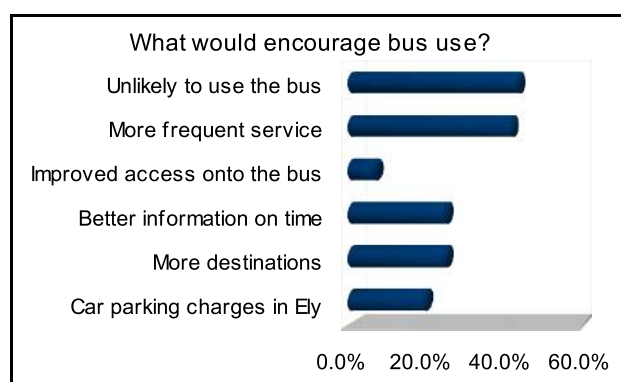
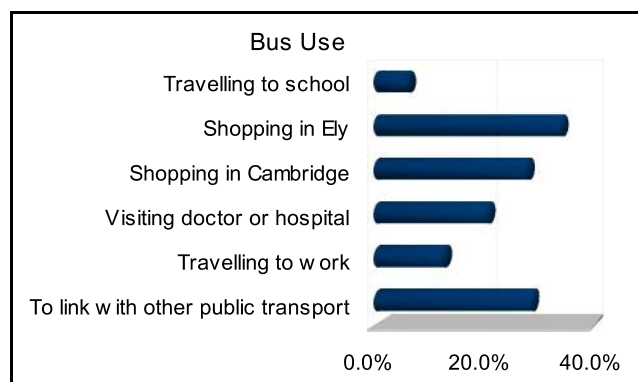
About 10% of villagers who responded to the survey are already members of a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. About another third would like to join their street's scheme. The recommendation is that Neighbourhood Watch needs to be promoted more, in conjunction with the police and publicised in the Witchfordian and website. More coordinators will need to be recruited if coverage of the whole village is going to be a target.

TRANSPORT

A high proportion of people in Witchford rely on their car for transport, as illustrated in the graph. Only 6% of respondents do not own a car.

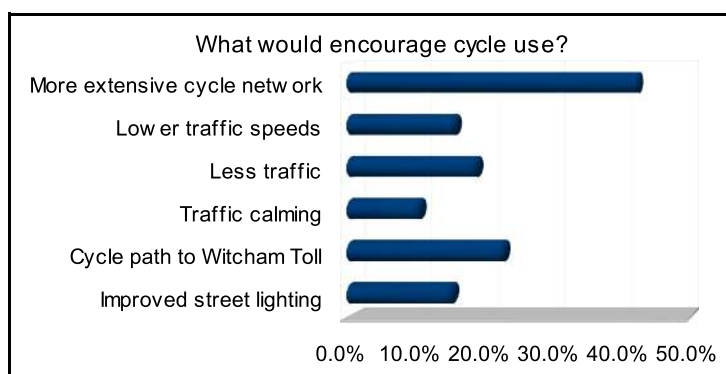


The bus is comparatively unloved, with 43% of people unlikely to use it. More frequent services, with better information on times and more destinations might promote additional use, while many people could be persuaded if car parking charges are introduced in Ely.



Cycling

Just over half of the people who responded said that they are cyclists. Cycling would be even more popular if there was a more extensive network of cycle routes and if there was less traffic. A cycle path extending to Witcham Toll will be investigated.



Other transport services, such as Dial-a-Ride seem to be little used, with most people unlikely to use these, although they can be extremely beneficial in certain circumstances. These organisations will be encouraged to advertise their services more widely.

EDUCATION

Very few respondents expressed problems with getting their children into Witchford's schools. Any concerns centred around the wait for a place at Rackham Pre-school, or the potential for over-crowding at Rackham Primary School. These concerns will be forwarded as appropriate.

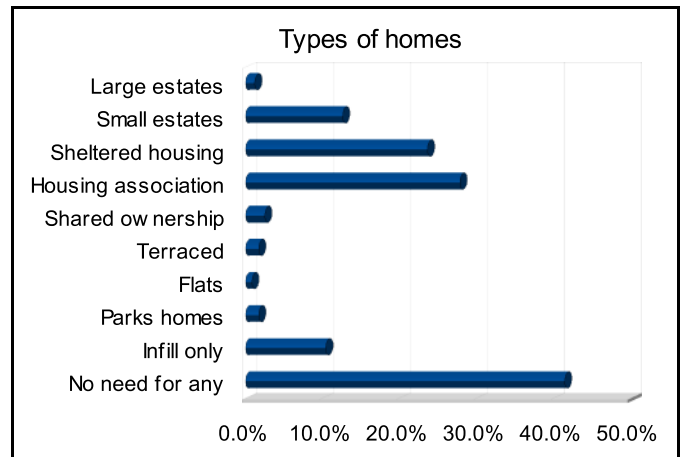
HOUSING

There is a strong body of opinion that says the village does not need to expand any further. Further large developments, of the likes of Victoria Green etc. are not seen as necessary. The majority view is that, if any new housing is built, it should be limited to small estates and in-fill development only, preferably for sheltered housing and housing associations.

The survey also gathered views on peoples preferences if they were buying a property in Witchford. This data will be supportive when the Parish Council is consulted on planning applications for new properties. For example, two thirds of respondents thought that parking for at least two cars was important and half expressed a preference for a larger than average garden. Over 62% would prefer a nearby open space or park and 86% thought that energy efficiency is an important factor when buying a home. In the current economic climate it was no surprise to discover that villagers are unable to move home within Witchford because of high house prices (52%) and the cost of moving (28%).

Types of Homes

The survey asked for your view on what type of new housing, if any, should be built in Witchford. As the graph shows, there is a preference for no more building at all, although housing association and sheltered housing gathered noticeable support.



Social Housing

The question asked if you agreed with the pressure from government to have more social housing in new developments. The responses showed that 23.5% were in favour of more social housing being included in new developments and 53.6% were not in favour. 22.9% had no opinion.

Planning

Planning has always been a 'hot potato', especially with the development of the new Wilcon estates over the last decade or so. In spite of this 40% of respondents were quite or totally satisfied with the planning process and 30% were quite or very dissatisfied with the planning process. Around 30% expressed no opinion.

This question provoked a number of comments about the planning process, which will be forwarded to the District Council. A selection of these follow and the full list is available on the website:

- *Earlier publication of applications*
- *More information available on the Internet*
- *The Parish Council should have a greater influence...they know the area better*
- *Not be over-ruled by national government*
- *More consultation with residents before decision made*

HEALTH

The survey asked how often villagers use a wide range of health services. Unsurprisingly, the doctor had the highest response with over a third of villagers often visiting their surgery. This was closely followed by the dentist and the services at the Princess of Wales hospital. About half of respondents also occasionally make use of the Minor Injuries unit in Ely and around a quarter have had to call on the out of hours doctor. The survey indicated that people do not generally have a great deal of difficulty getting access to health services – 25% occasionally have problems getting to see their doctor.

Most comments on this subject were regarding the lack of a surgery in Witchford, which has become a bigger issue as the village's population has increased in recent years. Suggestions for improvement included having a doctor or nurse stationed in the village for a couple of sessions per week, assistance with delivery of prescriptions and help with transport to surgery or hospital.

PARISH COUNCIL

Over 80% of respondents felt that the Parish Council is doing an effective job. More than 70% know how to contact the Parish Council and at least 90% actually read the minutes of meetings, in the Witchfordian or on the website. But over a fifth of respondents did not realise that Parish Council meetings are also open to the public.

A high proportion of villagers are not entirely clear of the roles of the Parish, District and County Councils, so it is planned that further information will be made available to clarify these.

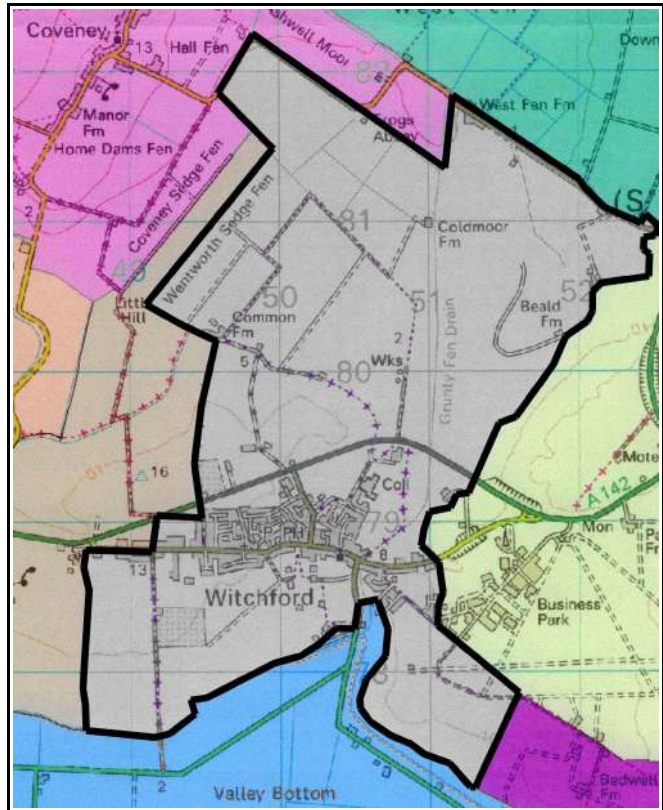
The survey asked if you would be prepared to pay a higher council tax to meet some of the needs of Witchford, such as grass cutting, dog mess bins and a youth facility. On average, over 70% of respondents did not wish to see their council tax bills increased to provide for such services.

Parish Boundary

As you can see from the adjoining map⁷, the boundary of Witchford Parish extends a long way outside of the village itself. There are also a couple of peculiarities:

- (i) houses along the north side of Sutton Road (to the west of the village) are in Wentworth Parish
- (ii) some of the park homes in Bedwell Hey Lane are located in Wilburton Parish.

The parish council would like to rectify these two issues when the parish boundaries are next adjusted – 78% of the replies to the survey were in support of this.



CHURCH & COMMUNITY

Churches

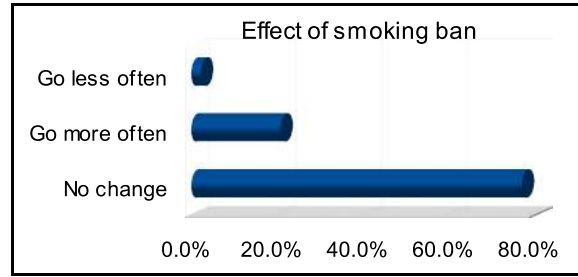
Around 100 people expressed an interest in being part of a 'Friends of St. Andrews', in order to support the structure of our historic church.

The most regularly-attended types of service are weddings, baptisms and funerals. But nearly 40% of respondents also indicated that they would attend special services for major festivals.



Pub & Club

Mainly out of curiosity, the survey asked if the recent ban on smoking in public places affected your use of the Village Inn or Social Club. The results imply, as shown right, that this should have resulted in an increase in business at these establishments.



Witchfordian & Witchford Online

The Witchfordian is a popular read, with 93% of respondents referring to it at least once a month. The parish noticeboard is also looked at by 52% and the Witchford Online website by 17%

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & REFERENCES

To download a copy of this report in PDF format, please visit the Witchford village website:

www.witchford.org.uk

If you would like to get involved with any of the actions listed in the following pages, or wish to pass on any comments about this report, please either write to the Parish Council (address below) or send an email to:

parishplan@witchford.org.uk

Address of Witchford Parish Council:

**Witchford Parish Council
Clerk: Mrs. S. M. Monteith
174 Main Street, Witchford
Ely, CB6 2HT**

The work of the Parish Plan, including the production of this report, was carried out by a team of volunteers, including parish councillors, members of village clubs & organisations and other villagers. The main steering group members were Andy Howe (chair), Shelagh Monteith, Gillian Shields, Mavis Utteridge, Richard Braund, Gill Brand, Malcolm Flack-Crane, Sandra Thomson, Josh Oddi and Anna Hult.

The Witchford Parish Plan is sponsored by Witchford Parish Council and Cambridgeshire ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England).

REFERENCES

- 1 Online survey facilities provided by Survey Monkey: www.surveymonkey.com
- 2 Population figures from Cambridgeshire County Council (provided by the Parish Council)
- 3 Figure from the government's Department for Children, Schools & Families website
- 4 Figure from the government's Department for Children, Schools & Families website
- 5 Much of the history of Witchford was extracted from "Witchford and its everyday life", by W.T. Maskell, published in September 1993.
- 6 History of RAF Witchford from RAF website: www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/s50.html
- 7 Parish boundary map courtesy of East Cambs. District Council

ACTION PLAN

The following recommended actions have been compiled from the responses to the village survey and other comments developing the Witchford Parish Plan. This list has been adopted by the Parish Council and will be regularly reviewed by them as it progressed and completed, updates will be made available in the Witchfordian and on www.witchford.org.uk. For further information visit the website or contact us at the email address below.

Witchford Parish Plan Steering Group

email: parishplan@witchford.org.uk
 website: www.witchford.org.uk/html/parish_plan.html

Issue Headings	Aim/Action	Priority	Partners
BUSINESS			
Local business	Further expansion of Lancaster Way & Sedgeway business parks to be supported, on the proviso that the village's status is not adversely affected	Low	Grovemere Lancaster Way businesses Sedgeway businesses
Post Office	Make all possible efforts to support the village Post Office.	High	County Council
Post Office	Request a post box in the Manor Court area	Low	Post Office
Post Office	Forward feedback on the other facilities offered by the Post Office, to Shelley.	Low	Post Office
HIGHWAYS & FOOTPATHS			
Speeding traffic	Parish Council to commission expert review of speeding in the village and proposals for further calming measures.	High	Parish Council & Cambridgeshire County Council
Footpaths	Update and reprint the Witchford Walks leaflet. Publish individual walks in the Witchfordian on a regular basis. Improve signposting.	High	Parish Council & Open Spaces Group
Parking	Prevent anti-social parking i.e. on verges	Medium	Parish Council County Council Police

Issue Headings	Aim/Action	Priority	Partners
CONSERVATION & ENVIRONMENT			
Millennium Wood	Install an information board at the entrance to the Millennium Wood, to encourage visitors and to explain what it can be used for.	Medium	Parish Council & Woodland Group
Waste disposal	Feedback views on recycling to District Council - especially split opinions on wheelie bins vs black bags. Also positive response to recycling in general.	High	Parish Council District Council
Energy Efficiency	Provide more information to residents on how to improve their energy efficiency in the home, through generally available literature and internet resources	Medium	District Council
Lighting	Reduce lighting costs, and light 'pollution', by turning off church lighting after midnight.	Low	Parish Council PCC
Lighting	Street lighting to be improved in some areas, as per existing rolling programme and feedback from villagers	Low	Parish Council County Council
Littering	Install two more litter bins in Victoria Green (as per current plans)	High	Parish Council
Littering	Consult with the parish litter picker to see where litter 'black spots' are – target new bins where they are needed most	High	Parish Council
Littering	Provide more education to help prevent littering, e.g. via schools	High	Parish Council Schools
Dog fouling	Install more dog bins on Victoria Green, as per current plan	High	Parish Council District Council
Dog fouling	More education via Witchfordian (previous article written by dog warden)	Medium	Parish Council Dog warden
Tree planting	A programme of tree planting is already in progress. Listen to suggestions for other new tree planting	Medium	Parish Council Woodland Group Open Spaces Group
Public seating	Two new benches are already planned for Victoria Green	High	Parish Council District Council
Rainwater draining	Pass on concerns regarding drainage at Victoria Green/Main Street junction to Anglian Water	Low	Anglian Water

Issue Headings	Aim/Action	Priority	Partners
SPORT, RECREATION & ARTS			
Social venues	Promote greater use of venues in the village through publicity – St. Andrews Hall, Baptist Church, Village Hall.	Low	Parish Council, St. Andrews Church, Baptist Church, WPFA.
Clubs	Promote new and existing clubs and social activities. To be achieved through publicity and a 'Club Fair' to be organised by the Parish Council.	High	Existing clubs.
Clubs	Promote use of sports facilities at the Village College	Low	WVC
YOUNG PEOPLE			
Youth club	Work with the Youth Service to promote use of the Youth Club, improving access and enhancing its profile among young people.	High	Parish Council Youth Service
Outdoor facilities	Investigate opportunities for outdoor youth facilities in public common areas, such as football goals and basketball	Medium	Parish Council District Council Youth Service
Indoor facilities	Consultation is currently in progress regarding a potential new youth facility. Parish Council to monitor and support as appropriate	Medium	Parish Council Youth Service
COMMUNITY SAFETY			
Crime prevention	Work with police to improve visibility of police presence	Low	Police Community Safety Partnership
Police	Pass on data regarding rating of police response to crimes in the village	Low	Police
Neighbourhood Watch	Encourage greater membership of Neighbourhood Watch schemes, through consultation with the police and publicity in the Witchfordian.	Low	Police Neighbourhood Watch
TRANSPORT			
Bus	Pass bus data and comments to County Council and Stagecoach for information	Low	County Council Stagecoach
Cycling	Liaise with County Council Cycling Projects Team to research cycle usage and improvements to the network	Medium	Parish Council County Council

Issue Headings	Aim/Action	Priority	Partners
Dial-a-Ride and Hospital Car schemes	Get Dial-a-Ride and Hospital Car schemes to advertise their services in the Witchfordian/website on a regular basis	Medium	Parish Council Dial-a-Ride
EDUCATION			
Rackham School	Forward concerns about over-subscription of Rackham Pre-school & Primary School, especially with regard to children from outside the village and potential further population growth	Low	Rackham School LEA
HOUSING			
New housing	Forward views on new housing and development to District Council	Low	Parish Council District Council
New housing	Keep data on file to support responses to future planning applications	Low	Parish Council District Council
HEALTH			
Access to health services	To improve access to health services in Witchford: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Surgery/doctor/nurse in the village ● Delivery of prescriptions ● Help with transport to surgery/hospital 	High	PCT Care network
PARISH COUNCIL			
Parish boundary	Request changes to the parish boundary, when these are next up for review	Low	Parish Council District Council
Council services	Communicate information on services offered by Parish, District & County Councils	Low	Parish Council District Council County Council
Planning process	Pass on villagers' views on the planning process to the District Council. Consider these views when reviewing planning applications	Medium	Parish Council District Council
CHURCH & COMMUNITY			
St Andrews	Set up a 'Friends of St Andrews' scheme to help preserve the fabric of the church buildings	Medium	St Andrews Church PCC

