

## **The Lyons Inquiry – Public Engagement**

### **Comments from Focus Group – 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2006**

#### **The Strategic Role of Local Government**

*What makes the Staffordshire Moorlands different from other areas?*

- It used to be different – a nice place – now its not different from other areas like Stoke.
- It would all be the same if we joined up with Stoke.
- The Potteries is worse than here.
- Public transport is few and far between in this area.
- Services have shrunk in the Staffordshire Moorlands.
- Staffordshire Moorlands is a friendly place and shopkeepers tend to help you more.
- Moved here from the south of England 10 years ago – we found it far more friendly and different from there. Also, you can get from where you live into the countryside very quickly.

*Does SMDC have an impact on the district itself?*

- It does have an impact – not always positive, however, but seems to try and do a good job generally.
- The campaign against Pointons has been a good one, and the Council has been very proactive and positive in what is has been doing – much more so than 15 years ago. Councillor Malcolm Ward has been very good in what he has done.
- Stoke is well-resourced, and has better resources than this area.

*What impact does it have?*

- CCTV is not working – what do we get for the money we spend? It is not functioning as it does in other areas. I've never seen a good picture from CCTV – people know that the cameras are not working.
- The Council is not working for the people in Leek – they are working for big business – why is that?
- Do we need two lots of people – is there any need for a county and a district council? We would rather have a local council, not one based in Stafford.
- We don't get any policeman in our area.

*What makes the Staffordshire Moorlands a good place to live?/What do you like about the Staffordshire Moorlands?*

- It's the area – the geographical area. With all the things we have lost over the years, such as industry and employment, tourism is now a vital part of things.
- The library is good – I love the library.
- You get a reasonable selection of everything you might want in Leek.

- I wouldn't want to move from Cheddleton or Leek – you know lots of people, and that is good.

*What needs improving in the district?*

- Police services – we have no access at all to the police.
- The market is good, but it is shrinking.
- Transport facilities need to be improved.
- We like what has been done to Getliffe's Yard – that is super. Would like to see something done to Silk Street as well.
- Got to have a balance between the needs of big business and small traders.
- It is a shame that we don't have more entertainment in Leek. When I was little, there were three cinemas, but now all we get are pubs.

*What services does SMDC provide?*

- The bins!
- Recycling is very good, if you can access it. We can't have it in Hollow Lane!

*Does the Council do enough/what else should it be doing?*

- Recycling is an issue – how come we have to pay for it, when we often have to do it ourselves? We effectively pay twice for it.
- The gritting is done well.
- Money was wasted on road humps, in Parker Street, Fountain Street etc.
- Not many people would complain about the waste collection service. Also, the brown bins are very good.
- Can plastics be recycled – we definitely want this to happen.
- Are councils responsible for speed cameras, because they don't work.
- Not enough parking spaces available, but it is good that you don't have to pay after 3.30pm.

*When something goes wrong in the district, who do you complain to?/what do you expect to happen when you complain?*

- We rang up about Pointons quite a few times, and people generally get back to us pretty quickly.
- I made a comment about the state of the bus station a couple of years back in consultation and nothing has been done about it – the entrance has not been sorted out.
- I did ring up with a complaint once, and was passed around the council, and not really helped.
- The switchboard at SMDC are very good when it comes to dealing with you calls.
- When people trip up on paving slabs, why does the Council fight it? Why don't they just put the pavement right instead?

*Are you satisfied with SMDC and the job it does?*

- SMDC have got it right compared to Stoke – there are too many high paid managers at Stoke and they don't really help people at all.
- People on the Council at Stoke and in the Potteries don't know what is happening, but in Leek we get more information on things – everything is far more open and transparent.
- It is transparent, and often in the papers – this is a good thing. We know what is going on with our councillors and what they are doing – they are local people with our best interests at heart.

*What would increase your satisfaction levels?/What are you dissatisfied with?*

- More car parking spaces in the town would be good.
- Something needs to be done about the bus station!
- The industry has gone out of the area in recent years. Companies come to the planning department and do not get any help – perhaps planning has too much power in this aspect.

## **National and Local Priorities**

*Which organisation should set priorities for the Staffordshire Moorlands?*

- Should be SMDC.
- Central government should not decide on these things – every area is different.
- Who sets the bands for Council Tax? This needs to be sorted out.

*Should Staffordshire Moorlands DC decide on targets for the area, or should central government do this?*

- I can't decide whether it is better for a Council who is local to do this, or for a detached central government to do it – will it create mayhem if every area is different?
- Everything is going bigger again, so is it feasible to set targets for local areas in this way?
- Who set targets now and how do they come up with them?
- SMDC knows what it is talking about for this area.
- How democratic is it when you look at how councillors are elected? When you try to get onto the Parish Council, for example, it can depend on who you play golf with.

*Should central government/regional government/Staffs CC/SMDC decide on where money is spent in this area?*

- SMDC should do this as they know what is wanted for the area. However, there should always be restrictions on what they can do!
- If services are cut, then taxes should be lowered and vice versa.
- It is to the credit of the Council that they now allow 12 monthly payments for council tax.

*Should central government or SMDC decide on which services should be cut?*

- No matter who cuts things, they are not going to be popular!
- No services should be cut.
- Councils used to employ their own people to do jobs, and this should be done again. They should not use outside firms to do this work.
- Is this an exercise you are doing because you are about to cut services?

*Are there any additional services SMDC should provide?*

- Bigger swimming pools!
- More police on the beat – greater police presence does give more confidence.

*Would you be prepared to pay for these services?*

- No, not really! In reality, would always pay for better services.

*List of services*

The group did not really put suggestions forward on this question, as they felt that they did not really know who provides what.