

STAKEHOLDER HOLIDAY BACK 2021





GLOUCESTER COMMUNITY
BUILDING COLLECTIVE

INTRODUCTION

Like many organisations, we had to adapt during lockdown and work very differently. We learned a lot during that time about the power of community. We were due to refresh our strategy in September 2021 with the team and our Board, so decided to ask people in the community, a number of questions to help us think about our strategic priorities.

During August 2021, we spoke to over thirty people, including:

- Residents
- Community-led/based organisations
- Stakeholders who have worked with us or have been involved previously e.g., Gloucestershire Constabulary, University of Gloucestershire, Social prescribing link workers, Barnwood Trust builders, City Council representatives
- Current strategic investors or those with secondees working with us
- Project funders

People were very generous with their time and provided honest and helpful feedback for which we are grateful and which we have used to inform our plan.

In particular, it was a reminder to us that we do not work alone, that there are many fantastic people and organisations working in Gloucester in communities and that we all have a part to play in making Gloucester a great place to live where everyone can have a good life.

1. WHAT IS YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT WE DO?

The overall feedback for this question positively identified what we do. That we worked, connected and supported residents to enable them to build stronger and more resilient communities.

"GCBC flips traditional community development on its head and works from the ground up, listening to communities." - RESEARCHER, UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

"Integrating yourselves amongst the community to empower them" - GLOUCESTERSHIRE CONSTABULARY

"Building resilient, connected communities which create healthier places to live. A place where there is good cohesion and community spirit to do things for themselves and able to help each other out in a crisis." - CCG

There were some great words used:

"PASSIONATE ABOUT CONNECTIONS"

"CONNECTED"

"OIL IN THE COMMUNITY ENGINE"

"POSITIVE AND ENTHUSIASTIC"

"HELP US SEE WHAT WE CAN DO TOGETHER"

"OUT AND ABOUT AND VISIBLE"

"SUSTAINABLE"

"SHARING AND MENTORING"

"HELP US GET STARTED, BRIDGING DIVIDES"

"EMPOWERING"

"CHALLENGING"

"COHESION"

"RESILIENCE"

"BRILLIANT"

"COMMUNITY SPIRIT"

"ADVOCATE IN SYSTEM FOR STRENGTHS/ASSET BASED WORKING"

There were comments that we have noted before about having been "too purist" in the past.

Some people thought we prioritised wards with greater inequalities, while others noted that we do not go in to an area with a set agenda.

2. HOW DID YOU INTERACT WITH OUR TEAM OR ORGANISATION?

This question revealed some confusion with previous work done by Barnwood or the City Council with some organisations feeling that connections had been “lost in transition” or they had not realised who we now were.

Many people had taken part in the Barnwood work and counted themselves as champions so were very supportive and in some cases were able to do this work themselves.

A number pointed to the value of meeting community builders and getting out and about with them, talking about “penny dropping” “getting it” etc.

The team was felt to be friendly and approachable by most.

A number of community led organisations reported that they did not know who the builders were or where they worked; others that they valued the way in which they had worked with the team during lockdown and praised them for “catalysing communication”.

Residents had met builders in all sorts of settings as would be expected: picnics, libraries, approached by community builder on street, church groups, walking back to my house, ideas party, chatting at local venues.

Residents often described the approach e.g. “personal” or “hitting it off” or “informal”

3. HOW DID THEY CONNECT YOU TO OTHERS?/WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE?

Residents stated that they had been connected to groups/people/neighbours/venues and sometimes services.

Some residents talked about help with integrating into neighbourhood because previously isolated or new to the area and lonely or depressed.

Community led groups talked about joint working in lockdown e.g. The Loop worker and community builder, or connecting residents to their organisations.

Strategic investors talked about us "bringing people into the conversation who would not otherwise be included", our knowledge of those areas where we work, connecting them with people's ideas and sometimes seemed to think we would help them to talk with communities.

Some stakeholders felt a bit disconnected during Covid.

Project leaders/funders talked about linking to other areas of their work and developing a common approach/thread based on strengths and assets

"Have been connected to funding opportunities. Also the community builder came with me door knocking so that I could meet people and set up groups." - RESIDENT

"I was interested in doing more exercise and you introduced me to another lady who was interested in starting an exercise class. We leafleted the neighbourhood and the class started back in September 2020." - RESIDENT

4. WAS IT HELPFUL/WHAT WAS GOOD ABOUT IT?

Residents talked about learning new skills, taking on new roles, meeting others, gaining confidence, getting out, exercising more, feeling supported to do new things, being better connected, running clubs and activities.

Community groups reported that we can help extend their reach and also build use of their facilities by stimulating use by residents who are setting up new activities which need a venue or just meeting up and need a venue and generally connecting people to them.

Project leads talked about valuing the partnership with GCBC , wanting to work together in the future, "team of lovely people who care about communities", good relationships and trust.

Stakeholders more generally talked about the team's helpfulness, passion and positivity and how it had influenced their thinking.

Some strategic investors seemed to be happy for GCBC to be a bit challenging and talked about GCBC being "the conscience" in a positive way or championing a strengths based approach.

Some were very unclear on how we could measure success and this was particularly pointed in some cases drawing the distinction between a useful service led response and an unhelpful approach - suggesting e.g. That we might not set up a youth club for people.

"Meeting people, having the ideas party, and making new friends, contacts, linking in art stuff from summer things and connecting across the city with others in similar places." - ROOTS COMMUNITY COFFEE

"I don't know a lot of people even though I have lived in the area for many years. I have met more people through your introductions and these connections have deepen beyond salutations." - RESIDENT

5. ANY FURTHER THOUGHTS ON WHAT WE DO/OUR ROLE?

Residents had less to say about this than others, although mostly they felt we should keep doing what we are doing.

In general, we were encouraged to extend across Gloucester but for community organisations, there was a particular emphasis on collaboration, shared learning and support and working out between us what is needed where.

Some areas have their own community builders and others felt there was room for us and them because we are “getting out there, meeting the people who don’t come through our doors...there is a real value to that”.

Some strategic investors wanted something a little more concrete and service led – a question was - what is your product, why aren’t you providing direct support to people?

A number felt GCBC was a key collaborator in the system and needed to be part of the bigger picture.

Project funders in addition talked about the need to generate shared evidence of what works to secure funding for future work and how we might do that together.

"Let's think about what we can usefully share – talk about the good in different patches. Come to on my patch meetings sometimes. Help with the “so what” the solutions to make them more strengths based
GLOUCESTERSHIRE CONSTABULARY

"You are out and about in the community and seem to pop up all over the place, I think you are doing a marvellous job." - RESIDENT

"All of us, collectively need to harness our work from a Gloucester perspective and GCBC part of that, safety partnership, integrated locality partnerships, etc. Inequalities – where do we want to combine forces and how." - CCG

6. HOW CAN WE BE HELPFUL TO YOU IN MEETING YOUR PRIORITIES?

Residents responses were mostly to do with potential support with funds to do things or hearing about others doing similar things in other communities.

Community organisations spoke about how we work together and understanding the value we create together including working with funders to understand that this work takes time and together building the reputation of communities and what they can do.

Strategic investors mentioned specific priorities such as anti social behaviour and a public health approach, inequalities and climate change as well as the need to be able to prove sustained impact of our work and the desire to have information to help them argue the case.

There were others, however, who said they did not want to impose their priorities or agenda as we should be community led.

Stakeholders talked about the need to keep up momentum of this approach “keep people on the journey”, raise our profile across the whole of Gloucester, and for countywide stakeholders some wanted us to influence within Gloucestershire as a whole.

7. OTHER COMMENTS

The exercise was helpful in itself to build connections and several people commented that it was nice to be asked and everyone made time for us.

Mostly people were very positive about their current relationship with us, although there was a feeling in some places that we have become a bit disconnected and momentum was lost.

There was concern from some stakeholders as to how we would raise funding without being distracted into specific project requirements rather than community led – “what will you do when the money runs out”.

A number of people commented that our communications were poor and that they did not know enough about what we did who we are and where we are working.

Some also spoke about the risk that our work would encourage the idea that councils and others could pull back because communities can do things for themselves, citing the movement of the team from the County Council and potential reductions in City Council teams (speculative).

Some queried to what extent we were community led ourselves and offered some thoughts on how we might get there.

"I think the next phase of the GCBC should focus on the places it serves owning it and understanding who the beneficiaries are by bringing residents onto the board and involving residents in the strategy development." - GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

"Enjoy working with GCBC, feel excited and relieved you are there and do what you do." - CCG



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