

Lutterell Hall Consultation Report

January 2020

Introduction

Following the Rushcliffe Borough Council Cabinet decision in June 2019 to market Lutterell Hall and explore options for its future use, a short survey was developed by the Council's consultation team to gauge residents' views. The survey contained eight closed questions, where a range or scale of answers was provided, and one open question which invited respondents to tell the Council anything else they wanted it to know.

The Council understood the affection many in the community held for the Hall, so the Council asked The Campaign Company (a national consultation organisation) to validate the survey. This involved them reviewing and passing comment on the Council's draft survey. A few minor changes were made as a result of this process.

The survey was opened on 11 October 2019. It was available online, to complete electronically, and in printed format from Rushcliffe Arena, the Rushcliffe Community Contact Centre, and from Lutterell Hall. The consultation was advertised on the Council's website and social media channels as well as being picked up by local media outlets.

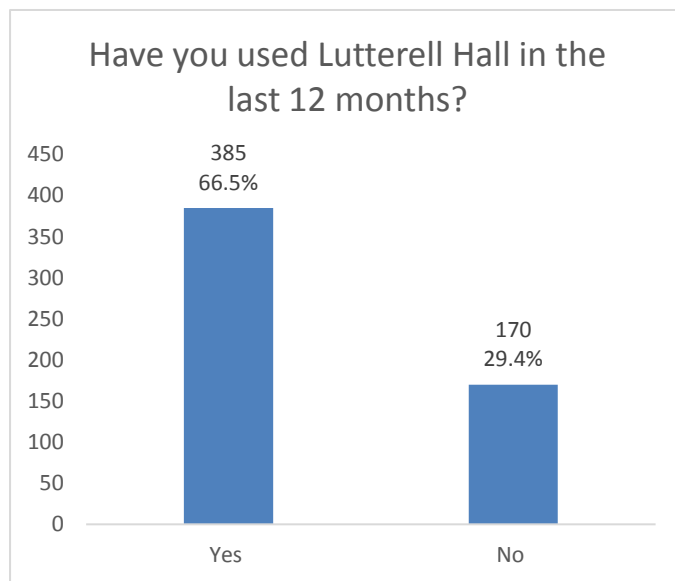
The survey closed on 30 November 2019 and, in total, 689 responses were received.

Analysis of the response to the survey took place between 1 December 2019 and 10 January 2020. Stage one of the survey analysis was to filter the responses to remove those with postcodes not falling within the West Bridgford Special Expense area. This was done to ensure that the views of those paying for (via the Special Expense) and living near the Hall, potentially the more regular users, were heard. This left the Council's consultation team with 579 valid responses to the survey. Stage two involved the analysis of questions 2-8 which asked respondents to express a view against a scale of prescribed responses. Stage three of the survey analysis involved the coding and analysis of question 9 which asked residents for any other views. There were 375 individual responses to analyse ranging from one sentence to several hundred words. Common themes were identified and coded to establish strength of feeling.

The results of this analysis are presented below over two sections. The first looks at the quantitative data, that which can be expressed in numerical form; and the second provides insight into respondents' views under the key themes emerging from the qualitative survey data.

Findings

Questions 2-8 of the Lutterell Hall Consultation focused on quantitative data. The responses to each of these questions can be grouped together and shown in both tabular and graphical form. 579



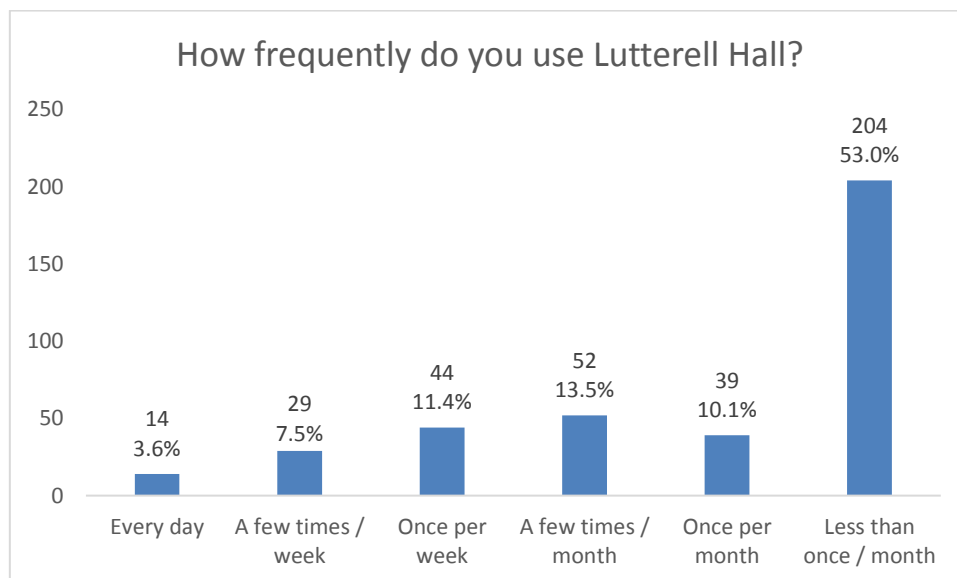
responses have been included in this analysis. Question one asked for respondent's post code so that responses could be filtered to the West Bridgford area only.

Question Two: Have you used Lutterell Hall on Church Drive in West Bridgford in the last 12 months?

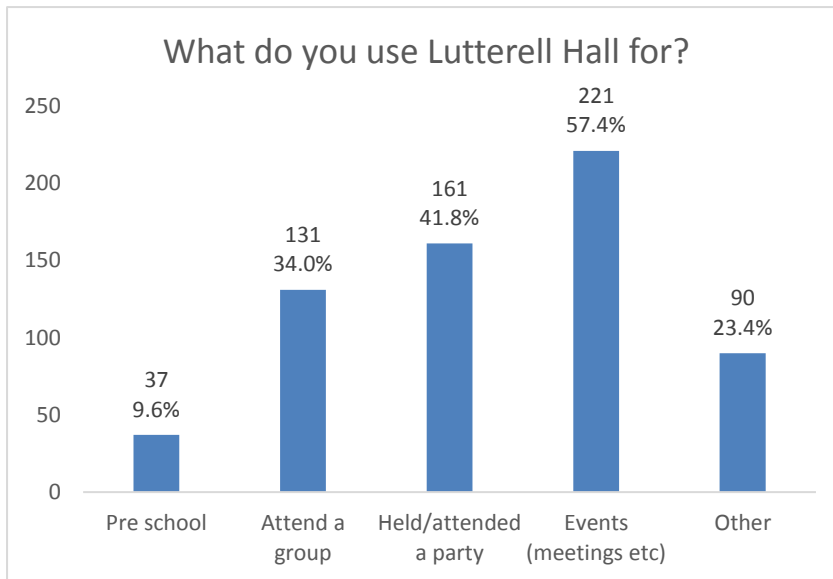
Of the 579 responses, 385 respondents had used the Hall in the last twelve months (66.5%) and 170 respondents had not (29.4%). 24 people skipped this question (4.1%).

Question Three: How frequently, on average, do you use Lutterell Hall?

Of the 385 respondents using Lutterell Hall, 87 use the Hall once a week or more frequently. 91 respondents use the Hall on a monthly basis but the vast majority of respondents use the Hall less frequently, with 204 having used it in the last twelve months but not on a regular basis.



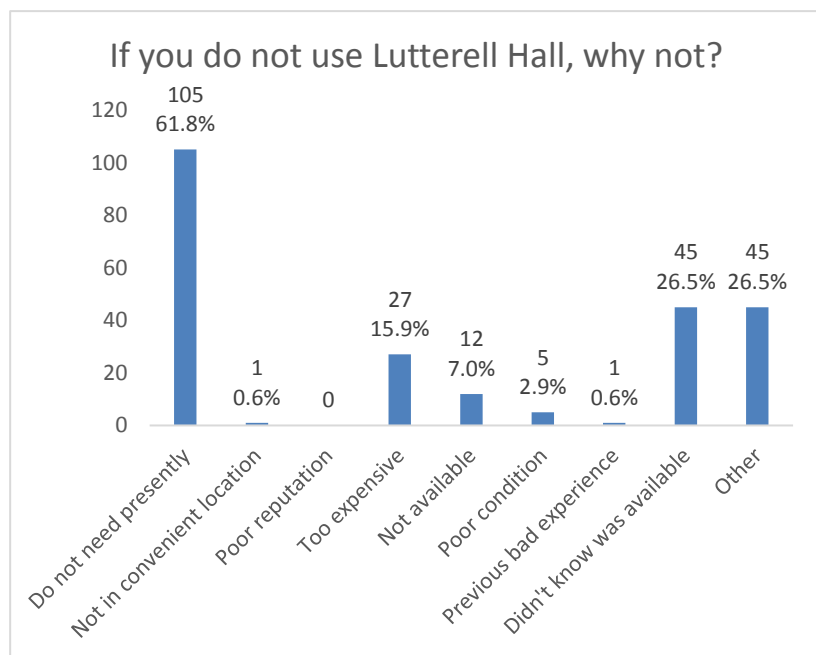
Question Four: What do you use Lutterell Hall for (please tick as many as apply)?



Question Four asked what people used the Hall for. Thirty-seven respondents (9.6%) used the St Giles pre-school; 131 (34%) attend a group that meets at the Hall; 161 (41.8%) had attended a private party held at the Hall; whilst 221 (57.4%) had been to a meeting. Additionally, 90 respondents (23.4%) had used the Hall for a different reason).

Question Five: If you do not use Lutterell Hall, we would like to understand why. Please tick as many as apply to you

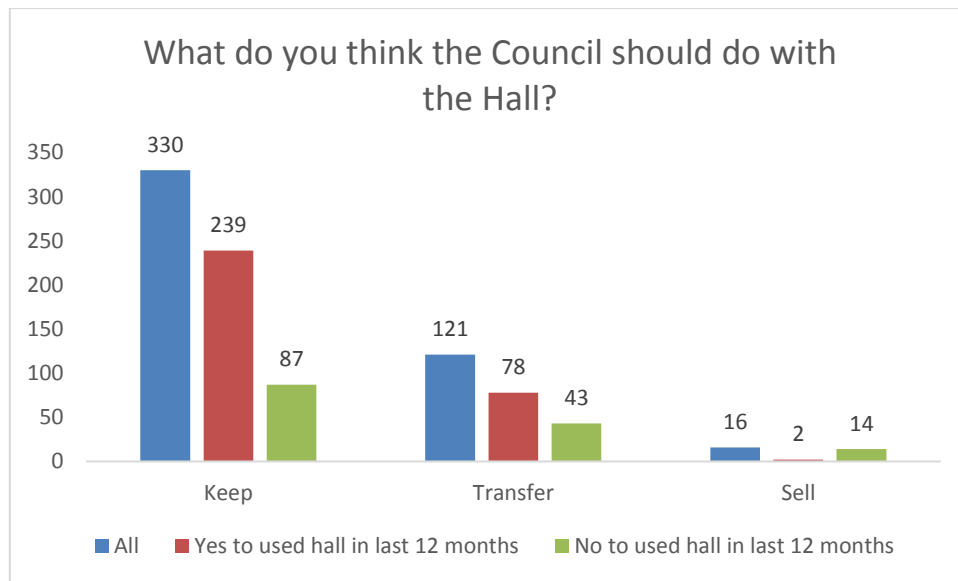
Of the 170 respondents that answered this question, 105 (61.8%) responded that they did not need to use the Hall at the present time. 45 respondents (26.5%) did not know that the Hall was available to hire, whilst 27 (15.9%) felt the hire charges were too expensive. It is interesting to note that no one stated the Hall having a poor reputation as a reason not to use the Hall.



Question Six: Taking all of the above information into account, what do you think the Council should do about the future of Lutterell Hall?

Following some information about the condition of the Hall, question six asked what respondents felt should be done with the Hall in the future. Overall, 330 respondents (57.0%) felt that the Hall should be kept; 121 (20.9%) felt it should be transferred to a third party, and 16 respondents (2.8%) thought the Hall should be sold. 63 respondents made alternative suggestions including creating a day-time business hub, holding more indoor markets and establishing a local museum. However, the majority

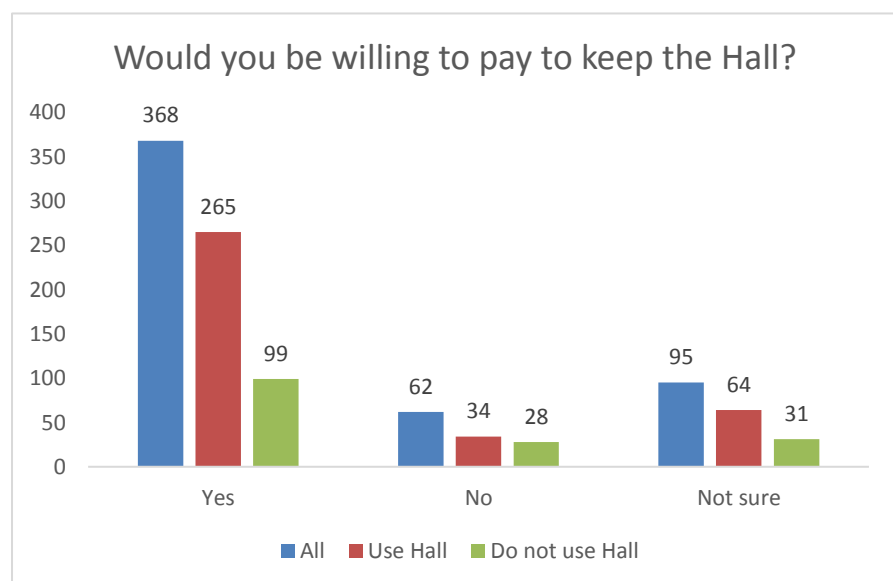
of these comments suggested that the Council keep the Hall and reallocate funding from elsewhere, or utilise better marketing and deals to raise awareness and increase use.



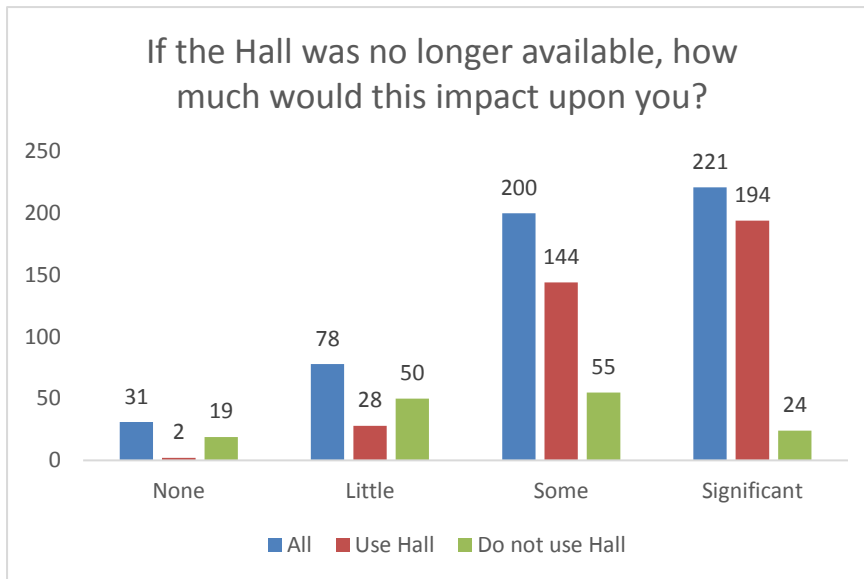
If this data is analysed at a lower level taking into account whether respondents have used the Hall or not in the last twelve months, an interesting picture emerges. 239 respondents who have used the Hall in the last twelve months believe the Council should keep the Hall compared to 87 respondents who have not used the Hall. In terms of supporting the transfer of the Hall the numbers are closer with 78 of those who use the Hall considering this to be a good idea compared with 43 respondents who do not use the Hall. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of those who believe selling the Hall is the better option, 16 respondents, 14 of these do not use the Hall.

Question Seven: Would you be willing to pay an increase on the local element of your council tax to see the Council keep Lutterell Hall?

Overall, 368 of the 579 respondents would be willing to pay more as part of the West Bridgford Special Expense to see the Council keep the Hall (63.6%); 265 of these respondents use the Hall and 99 do not. 62 respondents would not be willing to pay additional money to the Council to see the Hall retained and 95 remain unsure.



Question Eight: If Lutterell Hall was no longer available for community use how much would this impact on you ?



Of the 579 respondents to this consultation exercise, 221 (38.2%) reported that they would experience significant impacts if the Hall was no longer available; this can be broken down into Hall users at 194 and non-users at 24. Very few people (31 overall) believe that there would be no impact to the Hall no longer being available.

Question Nine: Do you have any further views you would like us to take into account when making a decision about the future of Lutterell Hall, West Bridgford?

The final question of the survey asked: “Do you have any further views you would like us to take into account when making a decision about the future of Lutterell Hall, West Bridgford?”. 375 individual responses, some covering multiple topics, were provided to this question. These responses were analysed to identify key themes (common topics mentioned by different respondents). Commentary on those key themes is provided below:

Community

By far the largest number of comments received in response to the survey related to Lutterell Hall and its position within the local community – almost three hundred and fifty comments overall. One hundred of these cited the Hall as a community asset or resource well regarded by the local community; in the words of one respondent: “As a resident of West Bridgford for over 20 years and with 2 children, Lutterell Hall has played and continues to play a big part in our life and our community. Losing it would be an immense effect to us and our future community life”. Another noted that: “West Bridgford has no comparable community space in the central area and its loss would be of huge detriment to the local community”. Respondents were concerned that losing the facility would be detrimental to community life, with almost one hundred commenting on the loss of amenity closing the venue would have: “It would be a great loss to the community if it wasn’t kept as a community hall”, and: “with growing social isolation, community centres like this are vital to ensure communities like West Bridgford remain thriving”. Thirty-eight respondents to the survey cite the location of the Hall and the excellent transportation links in Central West Bridgford as a reason to retain the Hall: “The location of Lutterell Hall is a really significant benefit to the community – its fantastic that it is so close to the bus routes that run through West Bridgford’s Central Avenue. This means that it is accessible, in our forward-looking community, with all of our concerns about our climate, with the

need to drive to the venue". Twenty-six respondents stated that providing community facilities was the responsibility of a local council as summed up in this quote from a resident: "Lutterell Hall is a community facility. The responsibility of a local authority is to provide facilities for the local community. To contemplate closing such a facility is a dereliction of duty". Twenty-six respondents stated that the town is lacking an alternative venue: "There is no venue comparable with Lutterell Hall in West Bridgford that has direct access to public transport and is centrally located", and an additional twenty-five commented upon the Hall's accessibility: "The Hall is situated in the centre of West Bridgford. This area is served by shops and numerous busses. The latter means that it is convenient for people who do not wish to use (or possess) cars. It is a hub for West Bridgford and should not be pulled down". A small number of respondents recognised and commented upon the need provide for a growing population: "we need more community infrastructure to support the growing population". There were also comments relating to the community benefits of the Hall with regard to its cross-generational appeal, its secular nature, and onsite parking.

Architecture

156 individual comments were received relating to the architecture of the building. Fifty-six of these related to the historic value of the building, including a number of requests to preserve the building regardless of future ownership or use. In the words of one respondent to the survey: "Lutterell Hall is a beautiful piece of West Bridgford history architecture and culture, and an essential community centre that must be preserved" and another commented: "It is a beautiful example of late 1920s architecture and should be preserved for its heritage value". Additionally, thirty-four comments mentioned heritage and twenty-nine focussed on the character of the building with one respondent commenting: "In an area which largely lacks buildings of architectural merit it is a pleasure to walk past or to enter". Eighteen separate comments mentioned the Arts and Crafts movement and two named the architect Alfred John Thraves. Many of the comments in this section mentioned how disappointing it would be to lose such a visually individual building from the town including: "Such a lovely Arts and Crafts Building is an asset to the community and should be preserved with care and respect". An additional nine comments suggested that the building should be awarded Listed Building status.

Uses

One hundred and fifty-three respondents to the survey chose to tell the Council how they used the Hall currently. The pre-school received the greatest number of individual comments with fifty-three overall; in the words of one respondent: "The pre-school is absolutely one of the best in the area. It is renowned for being amazing and all the parents that I talk to rate it so highly. It would be a shame to lose that for the whole community". Twenty-eight respondents have held a private party at the venue, while seventeen mentioned they attend an exercise class at the Hall, with an additional fourteen attending dance classes and ten the local choir. Also mentioned were hot yoga, Zumba, markets and fairs, church activities, the Air Cadets passing out parade and luncheon clubs for the elderly. One respondent summarised the benefits of the venue: "It can accommodate large groups of people, whereas many of the little halls for rent are so small, numbers are limited, especially keep fit classes like Zumba".

Marketing

The consultation exercise has highlighted that marketing of the Hall could be seen as an area for improvement with one hundred and twenty-four individual comments. Seventy-four call directly for

proper advertising of the Hall, as demonstrated in this succinct quote: “The Council needs to invest in a proper campaign to market the Hall”. Twenty-three respondents suggested that examples of what the Hall is currently used for, in marketing materials, would encourage further use; ten people suggested that advertising the availability of the Hall would help users book the venue, and two suggested more could be done to promote the facilities available within the Hall. Six respondents suggested that stronger links could be developed with the Registry Office with particular regard to linked celebrations. Four respondents suggested notice boards outside the Hall would be beneficial in terms of marketing events within the Hall, with a further two suggesting advertising in local shops and three more in the West Bridgford Local News publication. In the words of one respondent: “There is no reason the Council could not make this a thriving facility with the right marketing and pricing strategy”.

Costs

Ninety-nine comments made by survey respondents related to the cost of running or repairing the Hall. Thirty-one remarks related to Council Tax with some questioning the need for an increase: “I would be prepared to pay more in local taxation if required but currently fail to find the argument that in order to keep the Hall in public ownership additional taxation is required convincing”, and others agreeing that an increase would be justified to keep the Hall: “A small increase in Council Tax should be considered as an obvious solution to this dilemma. The outcome needs to be a result of careful and considered benefits for the community as a whole, rather than the question of money being the deciding factor”. Additionally, twenty-three comments related to the future funding of the Hall, with some respondents making suggestions about funding models; seven comments related to community funding the Hall directly. There were thirteen statements relating to the cost of the repairs to the building.

Booking

Overall, fifty comments about booking the Hall were received from survey respondents. Twenty-two respondents commented on the costs associated with hiring the Hall with one resident highlighting: “The Hall for birthday parties is £32 an hour. That is £100 before you even start your party. Think about a differing price structure dependent on the reason for hire”, and another suggesting that: “cheaper rates could attract more local groups”. Twenty-two remarks were also submitted which suggested that the Hall was difficult to book which would have an effect on bookings, and four respondents recommended an online booking option should be investigated: “I would advise the Council embed an online booking system that is fit for use”.

Fees

Twenty-four respondents to the survey mentioned the existing fee structure for hiring the Hall. Twelve suggested that the published fees are higher than comparable sites in the local area: “The charges for use are higher than comparisons such as the upstairs function room at the Poppy and Pint pub in Lady Bay, for example”, whereas four respondents believed the venue to be reasonably priced. A number of suggestions were made by respondents to the survey including flexible timings, a set day rate, and reduced rates for block bookings or West Bridgford residents. One respondent suggested: “the charges for community groups are too high, there is little incentive for such groups to use Lutterell Hall. These groups should be subsidised by the Council not charged for using the facilities”, and another, “I think if the Hall was more affordable it would be used more often for parties etc”. One

respondent suggested reinvesting the proceeds of the sale of the Hall, “What about building a new fit for purpose facility somewhere in the centre if you decide to sell?”.

Limitations of the Survey

The Council received seventeen comments about the survey and questioning its objectivity. Respondents were concerned that the questions seemed loaded and pushed those responding to the survey to support selling the Hall as a way of avoiding additional Council Tax.

Amenities

Overall, fifteen comments submitted by residents concerned the amenities provided at Lutterell Hall. Two concerned the loss of essential town centre parking, whereas eight comments referred to the bar provision and five to catering facilities on site. A number mentioned the “mandated use of a low quality and high cost bar provision” as a barrier to booking. Whilst the condition of essential facilities also featured highly: “the toilets and kitchen need upgrading”.

Cynical Council

Comments from six respondents questioned the Council’s motivation for considering the future of the Hall with one resident suggesting: “this seems like a cynical attempt from Rushcliffe county [sic] council to profit from the sale of additional land with nearby properties on sale” and another to state that, “not everything is about profit”.

Sell Hall

Four comments were received suggesting that the best course of action would be to sell the hall, most suggested that it shouldn’t be sold for development, but to someone who would make use of it in its current form”. Other suggestions included reinvesting the money from the sale in a new purpose built hall for the local community.

No Parish Council

Four comments to the survey suggested that the Hall is valued as a community asset as there is no Parish Council in West Bridgford, with one respondent stating that: “there is a democratic deficit in West Bridgford with a lack of parish / town council. The Hall should belong to the parish council which it did when it originally existed”, and another asking: “Where else can the community of West Bridgford come together to discuss matters as we have no parish council?”.

Summary of findings

The Lutterell Hall consultation exercise, run by Rushcliffe Borough Council between 11 October and 30 November 2019, demonstrated a substantial level of concern about the future of the Hall. The survey received nearly 700 responses (579 from the West Bridgford area) and the majority of respondents wished for the Council to keep the Hall or at least to transfer it to a third-party intent on keeping the Hall in community use (78% of all respondents). In fact, only 3% of respondents supported the sale of the Hall; whilst 64% stated that they would be willing pay more as part of the West Bridgford Special Expense to see the Council keep the Hall.