

Meeting	Community Development Committee
Date	7 th July 2026
Report Title	Community Choices Consultation Analysis
Agenda Reference	16
Author	Laura Cutter, Deputy Clerk, HR & Services Manager

Officer's Recommendation:

1. To note the consultation analysis to date.
2. To note the next steps for the consultation and community choices programme.
3. To note how the Community Choices ideas align with the Community Led Action Plan 2026 – 2029.

Background

This year's theme for the Community Choices and the Council's Community Development programme is 'Healthy Inclusive Community'. All the proposed ideas support this theme.

The consultation process took place in three stages:

Stage 1: Residents will be invited to identify the issues and themes that matter most to them through an online consultation promoted via our website, social media and parish-wide QR code posters. [\(Completed\)](#).

Consultation Response:

A total of **nine responses** (9) were received during the initial Community Choices consultation. Whilst this level of response was lower than anticipated, the consultation was promoted widely through the Parish Council's communication channels and community networks.

It is recognised that residents may find it more challenging to generate project ideas from a blank canvas. Experience from similar engagement exercises suggests that participation often increases during the second stage of the process, when residents are invited to vote on a shortlist of clearly defined themes or project proposals.

It is therefore proposed that Stage 2 of the Community Choices programme proceeds alongside officer analysis of the consultation responses. Officers will review the suggestions received, identify common themes and priorities, assess feasibility, and develop a programme of potential projects for public consideration. Residents will then can vote on these proposals, helping to ensure that funding is directed towards initiatives that reflect community priorities.

Stage 2: The six priority themes identified by residents will be used to develop potential projects and initiatives. Officers and Councillors will assess options and create practical proposals based on community feedback. [\(As Below\)](#)

Stage 3: Residents will then be asked to review and vote on the proposed projects, helping to determine which initiatives, receive priority for future investment. [\(Next Step\)](#)

Budget

During budget setting for 2026/2027, Council agreed to £2,500.00 for Youth and £5,000.00 for Community.

Key Findings from the Community Choices Consultation

The consultation generated a diverse range of suggestions, with several clear themes emerging from residents' responses.

1. Strong Support for Youth Investment

A significant proportion of submissions focused on providing more opportunities for young people. Suggestions included:

- Establishing a Youth Voice and Community Leadership Project.
 - Youth-led grant funding.
 - Creative workshops (e.g. zine making).
 - Additional recreational facilities such as pump tracks, outdoor table tennis and gaming spaces.
 - Public art and improvements to existing youth facilities, including the skate park.
- This demonstrates a clear desire for young people to be both beneficiaries of projects and active participants in shaping their community.

2. Improving Access to Green Spaces

Residents expressed strong support for making parks and open spaces more accessible and engaging, including:

- Community gardens.
- Reflection gardens.
- Walking routes and trim trails.
- Boardwalks to improve year-round accessibility.
- Nature trails and interpretation boards.

Many respondents highlighted the importance of encouraging residents to spend more time outdoors while improving accessibility for all.

3. Community Connection and Reducing Isolation

Many suggestions centred on creating opportunities for people to come together, including:

- Community events.
- Pantomimes and seasonal activities.
- Silent discos.
- Circus skills workshops.
- Additional seating and picnic benches.
- Book swap boxes.

These proposals recognise that relatively small investments can help reduce loneliness and strengthen community relationships.

4. Environmental and Nature-Based Projects

There was considerable enthusiasm for projects promoting biodiversity and environmental awareness, including:

- Bee trails.
- Pond and wildlife education.
- Community growing projects.
- Nature action plans.
- Community orchards and edible planting.
- Wildflower and pollinator initiatives.

Residents showed a strong appetite for projects that combine environmental improvements with education and community participation.

5. Health and Wellbeing

Many responses linked projects directly to improving physical and mental wellbeing through:

- Walking and exercise opportunities.
- Outdoor fitness equipment.
- Mental health awareness initiatives.
- Gardening and food growing.
- Accessible activities for people of all ages and abilities.

Health and wellbeing featured consistently across almost every submission.

6. Inclusive Spaces for All Ages and Abilities

Respondents emphasised that Community Choices funding should support projects that are welcoming and accessible, particularly for:

- Young people.
- Older residents.
- Families.
- People with SEND.
- Residents with limited mobility.

Inclusive design and broad community benefit were recurring themes.

Overall Conclusion

The consultation indicates strong public support for projects that:

- strengthen community connections;
- improve parks and open spaces;
- invest in young people;
- enhance health and wellbeing;
- promote biodiversity and sustainability; and
- create accessible, inclusive spaces for residents of all ages.

A notable finding is that many of the suggestions overlap across multiple themes, demonstrating residents' preference for projects that deliver wider social, environmental and wellbeing benefits rather than serving a single purpose.

This provides a strong evidence base for prioritising multi-functional community projects through the Community Choices budget.

Alignment with the Community Led Action Plan 2026–2029

The themes emerging from the Community Choices consultation closely support the priorities identified within the Community Led Action Plan (CLAP) 2026–2029.

This demonstrates that the Community Choices programme provides an effective mechanism for delivering resident-led improvements that contribute directly to the Council's strategic objectives.

Community Choices Theme	Alignment with Community Led Action Plan
1. Putting Young People First	Directly supports the <i>Kind & Caring</i> and <i>Safe & Friendly</i> priorities by expanding youth activities, improving community connection, creating diversionary opportunities and increasing participation by young people. The proposal also reflects the Youth Engagement findings, which highlighted the need for more engaging recreational opportunities and improved awareness of youth services.
2. Improving Green Spaces	Supports the <i>Green & Sustainable</i> priority through community gardens, wildlife initiatives, outdoor recreation, tree planting and encouraging greater use of parks and open spaces for wellbeing.
3. Community Connection	Directly contributes to the <i>Kind & Caring</i> priority by promoting accessible community spaces, reducing isolation, supporting wellbeing and encouraging residents to participate in local events and activities.
4. Environmental & Nature Projects	Delivers the Action Plan commitment to maintain and expand wildlife and biodiversity projects while linking environmental action with community wellbeing and volunteering opportunities.
5. Health & Wellbeing	Supports both the <i>Kind & Caring</i> and <i>Green & Sustainable</i> priorities by encouraging physical activity, outdoor recreation, mental wellbeing and healthier lifestyles through accessible community facilities and events.
6. Inclusive Spaces	Aligns with the Action Plan's commitment to improving community connection, accessibility and ensuring public spaces are welcoming for residents of all ages and abilities, particularly young people. The youth consultation specifically identified the need for more inclusive park features and community activities.

Delivering the Community Led Action Plan

The Community Choices programme presents an opportunity to translate the Community Led Action Plan from strategy into delivery.

Many of the ideas suggested by residents—including youth-led projects, community gardens, outdoor wellbeing initiatives and improvements to parks—directly support the priorities identified through the wider parish consultation.

By using Community Choices funding to deliver projects aligned with the Community Led Action Plan, the Parish Council can:

- demonstrate that resident feedback is directly influencing investment decisions;
- strengthen delivery of the Council's strategic priorities;
- increase community ownership of local projects;
- encourage greater resident participation in future engagement exercises; and
- provide measurable outcomes against the objectives contained within the Community Led Action Plan.

This approach ensures that Community Choices becomes not only a participatory budgeting exercise but also a practical delivery tool for achieving the Council's long-term vision for Haydon Wick.