

Appendix 6 : Best Value Review

East Grinstead Town Council

Report to 2nd Meeting of Best Value Review Group: Street Furniture and Floral/Grounds Maintenance Services in East Grinstead Town Centre Wednesday, 16th October

1. At the last meeting Members asked that a consultation exercise be undertaken to establish the views of residents, visitors and, if possible, our twin towns with regard to the quality of the town centre planting and our street furniture within the same area. Three specific questionnaires were drawn up and agreed with the Chairman of the Review Group. These are attached as Appendix A (residents), Appendix B (visitors) and Appendix C (Twin Towns).
2. The twin town questionnaires were taken out by the Town Mayor during a twinning visit to Verbania early in September and further copies were sent to each town by the Chairman of the Town Twinning Association. To date none of the forms have been returned. Similarly, the Tourist Information Officer, Simon Kerr, has not been able to elicit any response from tourists in the time available. It is hoped to obtain views during the autumn and winter. It has however been possible to obtain a number of views from the public and to date 62 questionnaires have been returned. Half of these were returned following the East Grinstead in Bloom presentation evening and a small number of Councillors and Town Council's staff have also obtained some completed questionnaires. Questionnaires are available in a number of locations in the town and have been sent out to a number of clubs and organisations. Hence we expect to get more returns in due course.
3. We have analysed the results of the residents' questionnaire and there has been some consistency in the findings. Generally comments have been favourable, although there have been some objective critical assessments of areas that have already been identified by the Review Group and by the Town Council as needing attention. The responses to each question are summarised in the following paragraphs.

Question 1 - "What is your overall impression of East Grinstead Town Centre?"

A large number of comments were received. These are detailed below:-

High Street excellent. Has avoided the developers. Has shops with character. London road dreary/drab - can flowers help these characterless buildings? Queens Walk - redevelop it.

Good - pleasant - especially the High Street.

The High Street is attractive but London Road and the southern end of the High Street lack decoration.

An attractive High Street, especially the flowerbeds in bloom, but some attention required e.g. the Town Council noticeboard badly needs redecorating; the red brick pavement edges by Broadleys; pigeon droppings on pavements; some lower shops/office walls are splattered and/or dusty/dirty.

Very variable - High Street is generally good but the impression degenerates towards Station Approach.

Fairly tidy, but the colour seems to be concentrated at the top of the town by the War Memorial rather than spread evenly.

Great potential. High Street is great. London Road is drab.

The War Memorial area is well planted and attractive.

Bypass needed urgently. A lot of shops are empty. Homebase in a dreadful location, adds to congestion already there.

Pleasant in the High Street and East Court - poor in London Road.

Pretty good - it would be nice to have a few outdoor cafes like in Europe and less litter.

Tidy.

Its potential lies unfulfilled. More flowers would enhance roads, streets etc.

Reasonable - shame about levels of vandalism

Very colourful.

Good (5)

Could be better

It looks well cared for and fairly tidy overall. The increasing number of empty shops are a worry for maintaining a tidy High Street.

It's OK - could do with more colour/greenery in London Road. Fairly clean and tidy.

Very Good (4)

Excellent (2)

Colourful but uncoordinated. Wonderful flowers. Could sometimes be tidier.

Pleasant, friendly.

Very colourful near War Memorial. Shops on higher level have a very good display of baskets.

More EG in Bloom baskets added to the look. It's improving. The planting by the Council of hanging baskets has not been of the usual high standard.

Generally very attractive.

A very nice small town.

Quite good

There is a huge litter problem. Vandalism is appalling.

Very colourful.

Very colourful and quite clean. Lovely choice of shops

Could be better. Memorial really best bit.

Could be better. Too many cars parked in London Road at most times during day. More trees would enhance appearance as would paved areas along length of London Road.

The High Street conservation area has a lovely "old town" feel to it. The town is rather let down by the "unloved" look of Railway Approach and the very tatty area around the back of Queens Road/Martells etc.

Reasonably good.

Very colourful and welcoming in the High Street. Not much colour in London Road - hanging baskets hardly noticed.

Generally I feel that there is too much litter, however that is not too much of a problem in comparison to other towns.

Pleasant overall, could do with less flyposting, more litter collections and an "attack" on chewing gum stuck to the pavements.

The flower beds in the High Street are excellent.

A bit tiny in the centre but pleasant.

High Street is very good, very attractive, but needs a "Starbucks" style coffee shop. London Road is unattractive and could be any town.

Quite attractive.

Drab.

Quite tidy most of the time.

I think it is quite clean and nice, although there are not a lot of flowers.

It aint great, but it's not bad.

High Street is very nice. London Road plain and unwelcoming.

I have noticed that there are parts of the town with a lot of graffiti.

I like it. There area is usually quite clean with very little litter and the shops are adequate for most needs.

Do not have one.

Clean and busy.

Quiet little town.

Question 2: "What do you think of the standard of floral decoration in the Town Centre?"

Again the comments have been generally positive, detailed below:-

High St. generally good at War Memorial & terrace. London Road - cannot recollect any flowers. Queens Walk - only mushrooms will grow here.

Very good.(11)

Very good in some areas. Sackville College, end of the High Street and London Road are very disappointing.

Flowerbeds are excellent. Hanging baskets on shop fronts also good, but lamppost baskets poor this year.

Flowerbeds in High St. are colourful. Baskets not very prominent this year.

High in places but minimal in other places.

Average.

Room for improvement in the lower High Street (McKays area).

Good in parts.

I always admire the working results of the gardeners.

In summer it is very nice.

Weak - some businesses do try. Needs more.

Improving.

Good.(5)

Very good. This summer it made the town centre look welcoming.

High Street flowerbeds excellent. More businesses need to make a contribution. Flower baskets on lamp posts very poor this year.

Excellent.(4)

Really good.

*Very very good.
High.*

Always looks very nice.

Very good near memorial.

East Grinstead in Bloom did very well. The beds were very well planted too. We have a long way to go with London Road.

Pleasing - but the colour scheme by the war memorial is not good.

Could be more "spectacular".

Could do with more baskets.

Spectacular, some hanging baskets not quite up to standard.

Good on roundabouts.

Definitely getting better but more greenery/shrubs in London Road would help appearance. Old part of town extremely nice.

The High Street beds always look beautiful and the hanging baskets elsewhere. Would be nice to see more in the London Road and on central railings as at Three Bridges station.

Acceptable - good.

Very high standard this year, a profusion of flowers and colour in the High Street - rather sparse elsewhere.

I feel that this is a good view point that adds colour to an area of heritage.

Very good considering the size of the town and areas available to be decorated.

Can't see a lot.

High Street - excellent. London Road - poor.

Nice by the station, but the rest is poor.

I think it would be nicer. There is one place where there are lots of flowers and it's great opposite Barclays Bank).

Only noticed war memorial decorations in town centre, station is very nice underneath new sign.

Very nice.(2)

Very nice. The memorial is well kept.

I like it a lot.

Question 3: “How would you score this on a scale of 1-5 where 5 is high?”

Altogether 60 of the 62 respondees scored the standard of floral decoration in the Town Centre. The total marks given were 215½ giving an average mark of 3.58. Given that 5 was high this is not an unfair assessment and yet it is one that leaves considerable room for improvement.

Question 4: “Are you aware of the East Grinstead in Bloom Campaign to decorate the Town Centre with flowers? “

61 responded to this question. 46 were aware of the East Grinstead in Bloom Campaign whilst 15 were not.

Question 5: “If yes, do you consider East Grinstead in Bloom to be a worthwhile initiative?”

Of the 55 respondees to this question all 55 considered East Grinstead in Bloom to be a worthwhile initiative.

Question 6: “The Town Council currently grant aids East Grinstead in Bloom £1150 per annum. It also spends a gross amount of £2550 on purchasing plants and materials for its own Town Centre planting activities. The total of this spending equates to £0.15 per resident per year. Do you consider this to represent good value for money?”

A total of 55 respondees answered in the affirmative. No-one considered that the initiative does not offer value for money.

**Question 7: “If yes would you support an increase in the budget for this service of:
+10% Yes/No +25% Yes/No +50% Yes/No”**

In total 53 of 62 respondees were prepared to support an increase in the budget for this service. Of these 26 would support an increase of 10%, 11 would support an increase of 25% and 16 would support an increase of 50%.

Question 8: “On which aspect of the service would you like to see any increased funds spent, i.e. more hanging baskets, enhanced planting of roundabouts, additional street planters, new planting and anti-litter campaigns, other (please specify)?”

Possibly because the respondees were led on to give certain responses because of the examples quoted in the question, every answer given focused on one or more areas highlighted. A total of 38 comments were received suggesting that there could be enhanced planting of roundabouts, additional street planters and more hanging baskets. Interestingly a number of respondees commented that London Road is less attractive in floral planting terms than the High Street and a small number of respondees commented critically about the absence of any floral planting in Queens Walk. A further 38 comments were received about anti-litter campaigns and the need for increased litter collections.

There was some significant criticism of the standard of street sweeping and litter collection in the Town Centre and some respondents commented about areas further out including along twittens and in the vicinity of East Grinstead railway station. Three respondents asked for more litterbins in the Town Centre. One respondent commented about chewing gum on the pavement and the habit of some licensees of not bringing glasses in overnight from outside tables. This was felt to be one of the reasons why there is a lot of broken glass in the streets early in the mornings. One respondent commented adversely about dog fouling.

Question 9: “What do you think of the standard of our street furniture - seats, litterbins etc?”

There was no consensus response to this question. Comments ranged from poor to mediocre, average and OK to good and very good. Some respondents said that there are not enough bins, whilst others felt that bins were plentiful. Two respondents did not like the advertising bins, although others said that they are clean and they have proved popular with some businesses. Such bins are not permitted in the High Street. A number of respondents said that there is a need for seats in London Road and Queens Walk.

Question 10: “How would you score this on a scale of 1-5 where 5 is high?”

59 of the 62 persons who returned forms gave a scoring to the standard of the Town’s street furniture. A total mark of 188 points was given, averaging 3.19 per respondent. Again this was not disappointing yet it leaves room for improvement.

Question 11: “What are the three best things about East Grinstead Town Centre?”

A wide range of good things about East Grinstead Town Centre were highlighted by the respondents. These are listed below and the number following each item indicates the number of times it was mentioned in response:-

High Street buildings/medieval architecture/historic nature of the Town Centre	(39)
Flowerbeds throughout the Town but particularly adjacent to the War Memorial Gardens	(26)
St. Swithun’s Church and adjoining areas	(4)
Sackville College	(4)
Hanging baskets in the Town Centre, particularly High Street	(8)
New lighting columns	(1)
South side walkway and trees	(2)
Cleanliness/low level litter/tidy streets	(7)

Middle Row	(1)
Friendliness/people	(2)
Library	(4)
Chequer Mead Arts Centre	(3)
Cinema	(4)
Compact shopping area/easy walking access	(3)
Shops on the south side of the High Street	(1)
Reasonable shops/good and increasing variety of shops	(12)
Independent shops	(3)
Shop presentation - not too jazzy	(1)
Can purchase most things for family and household (except for fashion)	(2)
Central	(1)
Attractive in parts	(1)
East Court	(1)
Private gardens	(2)
Wide variety of restaurants	(1)
Ship Inn	(1)
Memorial Gardens at East Court	(3)
War Memorial	(1)
Lack of obvious crime	(1)
CCTV	(1)
Not too crowded	(1)
Greenery	(1)
General open feeling	(1)
Wide pavements	(1)
Convenient parking	(1)
Help Point	(1)

Facilities including bins and seats (5)

Question 12: “What are the three worst things about East Grinstead Town Centre?”

A wide range of worst things about East Grinstead Town Centre were highlighted by the respondees. These are listed below and the number following each item indicates the number of times it was mentioned in response:-

Queen’s Walk	(2)
London Road	(7)
Car parking in High Street	(1)
Night-time disorder in the Town Centre	(3)
Traffic	(13)
The Atrium	(6)
Lack of police presence	(3)
Ugly litter bins	(2)
On street/illegal parking	(6)
Poor footpath condition	(2)
Pigeon droppings	(1)
Lack of parking	(11)
Lack of flagship store	(1)
Lack of general chain stores	(1)
Not enough attractive shops/or sufficient diversity	(4)
Number of empty shops	(6)
Too many charity shops	(3)
Not enough good restaurants	(1)
Litter	(16)
Pollution from motorised vehicles	(1)
Undesirables monopolising seats on south side of the High Street	(1)
Excessive parking fees	(5)

Vandalism/broken glass	(2)
(Miserable) people	(2)
Grey skies and grey pavements	(2)
Nightclubs	(7)
Glass left outside pubs	(1)
Pools of vomit at weekends	(1)
Dog mess	(2)
Graffiti	(3)
Chewing gum on pavement	(5)
Cigarette ends	(4)
Gangs of youths	(1)
Speeding cars	(1)
Poor leisure centre	(2)
Flyposting	(1)
Conservation area spoilt by public area	(1)
Garish colours of shops	(1)
Scientologists handing out leaflets on Saturdays	(1)
Poor design of buildings	(1)
Narrow pavement outside Lloyds Bank	(1)
Lack of food shops	(1)
Too many food outlets	(2)
More CCTV requires	(1)
Not enough greenery	(1)
Proliferation of building societies in London Road	(1)
Lack of a central piazza seating area or park for workers to sit out and eat at lunchtimes	(2)
Colour of Bar Kuba	(1)
Pub culture	(3)
A bit small	(1)

High rates	(1)
High Street should be pedestrianised	(1)
Town	(1)
Rundown or badly maintained buildings	(2)
“I do not notice anything good or bad”	(1)

Question 13: “Are there any specific initiatives that you believe the Town Council or other public authorities could undertake to improve the feel of the Town Centre and make it more attractive to visitors and tourists?”

The respondees come up with a wide range of suggestions, details as follows:-

Increase Police Presence	(3)
Pedestrianise High Street/ London Road	(6)
Implement Town centre enhancement scheme	(5)
Bear down on nightclubs	(1)
Improve Queens Walk	(6)
More/Better Parking provision	(5)
Increase affordable parking	(7)
More street sweeping	(7)
Upgrade Town Council notice board	(1)
Attract better quality shop	(1)
Increase %age of shops given over to retail	(1)
More litter bins	(1)
Introduce a Farmers Market	(1)
Develop London Road and Station Road	(1)
Install speed bumps around Town Centre to deter “boy racers”	(1)
Improve directional signage	(1)
Build a by-pass	(1)
More hanging baskets in London Road	(1)
Encourage more large traders to erect hanging baskets	(1)

Improve public conveniences	(1)
More Christmas lights	(1)
Planting troughs on pavements	(1)
Park and Ride	(1)
Ensure business rates are affordable	(1)
More welcoming Town entrance	(1)
Involve local groups with planting and maintenance	(2)
More tea rooms and restaurants, fewer pubs	(1)
More roundabout planting	(1)
More outdoor seating areas outside cafes	(1)
Provide an interesting “Whats On/You are Here” notice board	(1)
A nice square	(1)
A Heritage Building project	(1)
Clean street signs	(1)

Question 14: “Are there any other comments you would like to make about these services?”

Only a small number of those who completed the consultation forms made any comments in response to this question. Those received were as follows

- :* They are generally very good;
- * Good use of money that would otherwise be spent on failing initiatives/buildings;
- * More expert help required with East Grinstead Council planting;
- * M.S.D.C. should be made to enhance town by removing rubbish i.e. Beeching Way and areas around;
- * Important not to hassle motorists so that they no longer visit the town;
- * Sympathetic planning design and use of colours required;
- * By-pass a necessity;
- * Apply same rules to public areas in the Conservation Area as to the private shops and dwellings;

- * Simon Kerr works hard to promote tourism;
- * Library has excellent facilities (2);
- * Traffic congestion deters shoppers/customers;
- * Clear grass cuttings/weeds away as these create a poor impression;
- * East Grinstead in Bloom requires more volunteers;
- * Reduce lorry deliveries to shops during the day, and
- * Town's magistrates should impose less derisory sentences for loutish, destructive behaviour.

Question 15: "Would you like to become involved in East Grinstead in Bloom as either a volunteer helper or as a committee member?"

Regrettably no new volunteers have come forward to date as a result of the consultation.