

Community asked for their views

Almost 5000 houses in Midsomer Norton will be receiving a questionnaire later this week to enable them to have their say on all aspects of the town and the community.

This is the first time Midsomer Norton has had such a detailed residents' consultation, focused on the town. The results will be used to create a Community Plan as well as contributing to the Placemaking and Neighbourhood plans for the town.

Why have a plan? Since being elected the Town Council has been working hard to tackle some of the urgent issues facing the Town, within existing policy frameworks. However, for Midsomer Norton to move forward as a community it is vital that the direction of travel reflects the view of as many residents as possible.

The questions included in the survey were all put forward by community groups within the town in a process which has taken over 12 months to draw together. The questionnaire was piloted in August with 200 houses and covers all aspects of town life from community group participation, economic development and green space facilities to the town environment and facilities for young people.

Whilst in the past there have been many consultation workshops and promises – the big difference this time is not just the Town Council's determination to move things forward but the range of opportunities currently opening up.

The survey, whilst being funded by the Town Council, is being carried out by an independent team of volunteers representing all community groups under the banner of the Midsomer Norton Forum. As well as emphasising that the results will be acted on the Forum is also seeking to manage expectations as to what is actually possible.

Volunteers are delivering the questionnaires to every house later this week which can be returned to 15 collection boxes located in businesses, churches and community buildings in and around the town ranging from Tesco and Sainsbury's to the Dolphin pub in Welton and Midsomer Norton Methodist Church. There will also be assistance for anyone seeking help in completing the questionnaire in the form of a help line.

"In order to ensure as many different views as possible are collected, we're asking that the questionnaires are filled out with as many members of the household present and giving input – rather than it being the views of a single member", said Jenny Hillman, Chair of the Midsomer Norton Forum.

All questionnaires need to be returned by Tuesday 31st October – then the results will be aggregated and none of data will be attributable to a single residence.

For those who take the time to return the questionnaire, there is a lucky draw with the chance to win a first prize of £100 and a second prize of £50. For further details or help in completing the questionnaire please ring the Midsomer Norton Town Council office on 01761 418701.