Town Centre Project:
Rother Views Residents Survey Results Summary
14 April 2011

Methodology

1. The survey was sent to all households in Rother in February 2011 in the residents' magazine Rother Views. The deadline in the magazine for returns was 31st March 2011. Residents were given the option to cut out and post the survey or to do the survey online. Results were still being received in small numbers after the deadline and all responses up to 14th April are included in this report. At the time of writing 379 responses had been received.

Summary of Headline Results

Age of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Adj.percentage
0 - 10	1	0%
11 - 21	0	0%
22 - 32	1	0%
33 - 43	19	8%
44 - 54	29	13%
55 - 65	74	33%
66 - 76	63	28%
77 - 87	33	15%
88 - 98	5	2%
99 - 110	1	0%
Total	226	100

2. Only 60% of the respondents gave their age. Six out of ten people who gave their age said they were aged between 55 and 76. All but 8% of respondents were aged 44 and over.

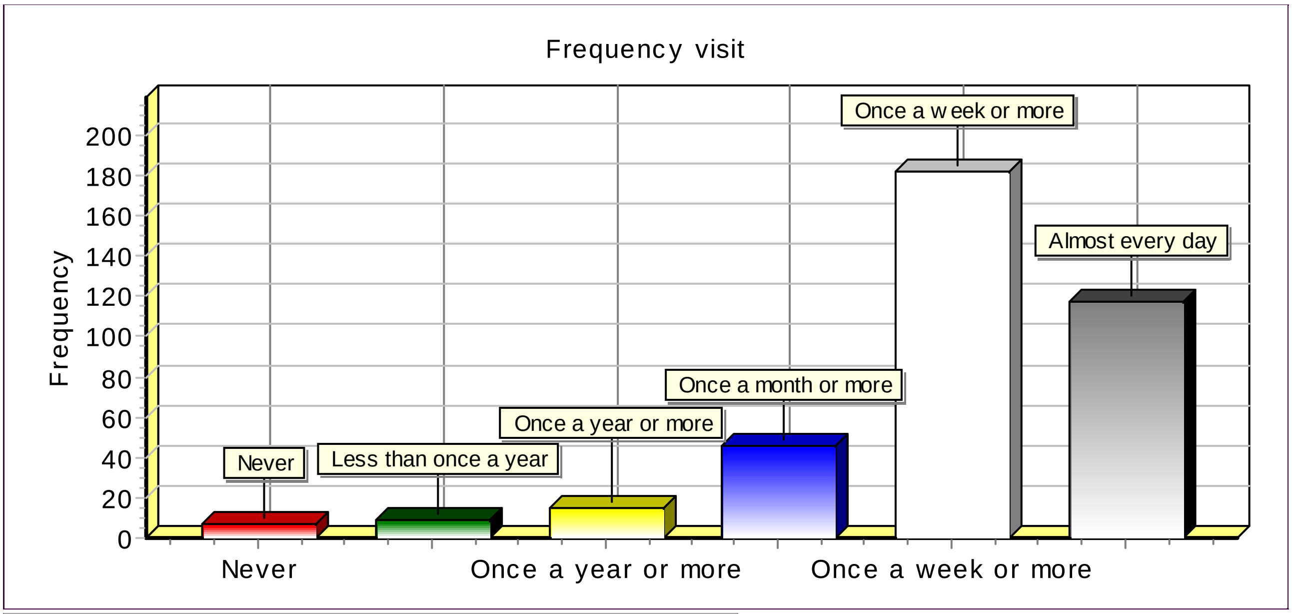
3. This is not unusual when using written surveys, because they are a preferred method of consultation for older people but younger people do not tend to take part. In order to engage people under the age of 30 it is best to use other methods such as interview surveys and social networks or media. Young adults are a seldom heard group.

Where Respondents Lived

4. As we might expect, 83% of those who answered the survey live in Bexhill. A further 14% live elsewhere in Rother.

Geography Analysis Full	Frequency	Adj.percentage
Bexhill	124	34%
Bexhill Wards East of Town Centre	22	6%
Bexhill: Wards North of Town Centre	41	11%
Little Common & Cooden	60	17%
Collington & West of Town Centre	25	7%
Town Centre	30	8%
NOT ROTHER	7	2%
OTHER TOWN/VILLAGE IN ROTHER	52	14%
Total	361	100

How Often Respondents Visit Bexhill Town Centre



Frequency visit	Frequency	Adj.percentage
Never	7	2%
Less than once a year	9	2%
Once a year or more	15	4%
Once a month or more	46	12%
Once a week or more	182	48%
Almost every day	117	31%
Total	376	100

5. As we can see from the chart, just under 8 out of 10 respondents (79%) visited the town centre once a week or more often. This might reasonably be explained by the factors that most of the respondents were Bexhill residents, most were of retirement age and active users are more likely to respond to surveys than those who do not visit.

6. The full report will contain further analysis of frequency of visit broken down by geography and age.

Reasons for Visiting the Town Centre

7. Respondents were asked what they did on their last visit to Bexhill's town centre. This gives us an idea of the main uses that visitors have for the town centre and the most popular venues and facilities.

8. As the table below shows the main reason for visiting is shopping, given by nearly 2 out 5 respondents. This is followed by visits to banks and building societies and other financial services given by one out of five respondents. The third most popular activity is a visit to some form of catering establishment. Most of those who responded to this question selected multiple activities. It was not unusual for a person to undertake 3 or 4 different activities on the same visit.   For example, shopping for food and clothing combined with a visit to the bank and stopping for a coffee.

9. The category for health services (used by 4% of respondents) includes doctor and dentist appointments, as well as appointments with opticians, the chiropodist and osteopath.

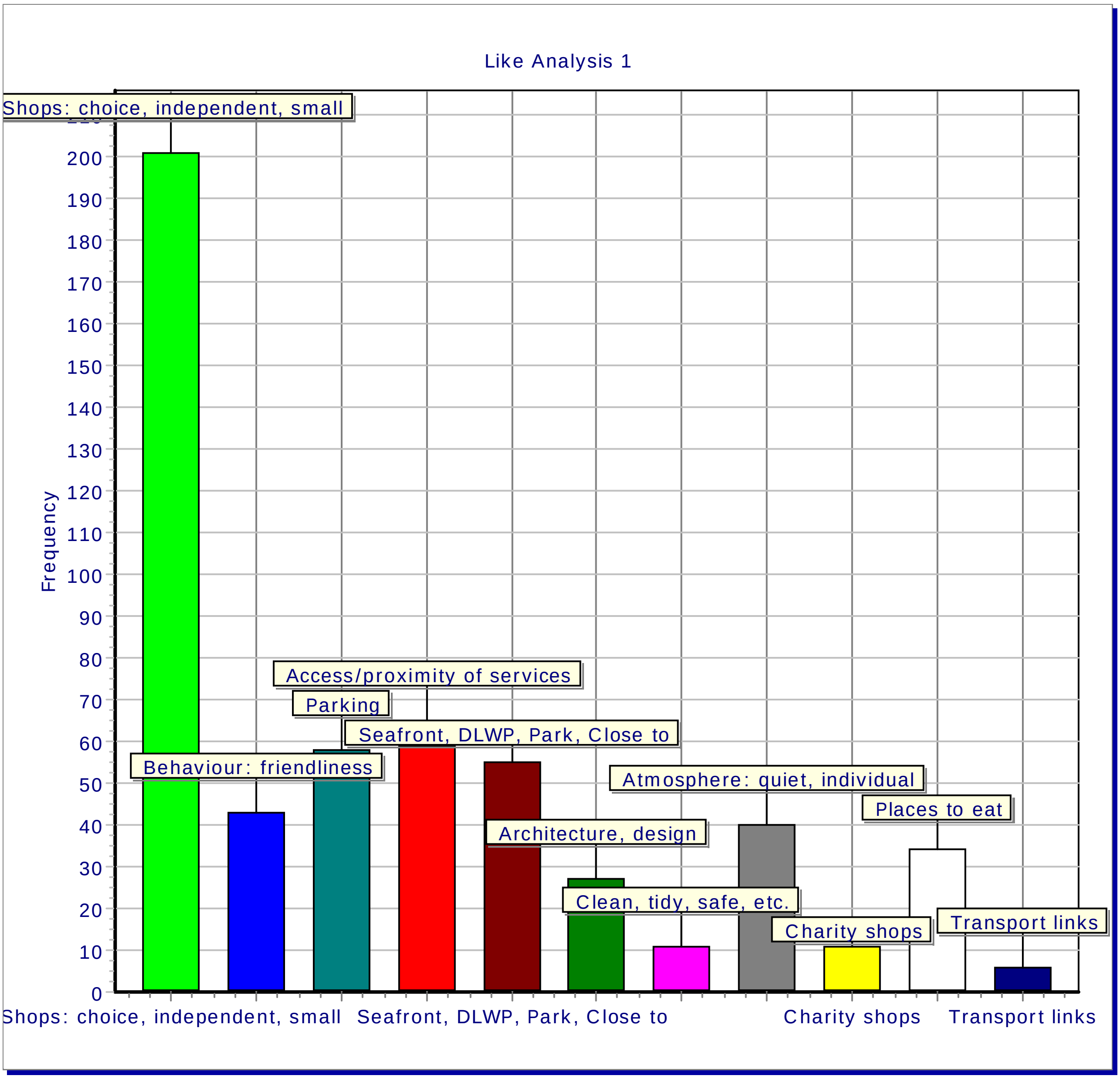
Reason Visit Analysis 1	Frequency	Adj.percentage
SHOPPING	254	38%
Bank/Building Society etc	125	19%
library	46	7%
Post Office	32	5%
Charity Shops	18	3%
Restaurant/Cafe/Takeaway	58	9%
Walk/Exercise/Leisure/Park/Gym	30	4%
Meeting Friends/Family	12	2%
hairdresser	14	2%
seafront	16	2%
Club/Society/Church	9	1%
Health Services	25	4%
DLWP	12	2%
Transport	6	1%
Work/business owner	11	2%
Council/Town Hall	6	1%
Total	674	100

What Respondents Like Best About Bexhill's Town Centre

10. The main benefit in asking this question is to discover what makes Bexhill special and why people would visit. This might prove useful for future marketing. Clearly the very nature of the shopping on offer is the biggest draw. Over a third of the respondents said that what they like the most was the large amount of independent traders, family run shops and the choice of shopping available that is provided by having less chain stores and more individual shops.

11. In equal second place we have free and widely available car parking. Much praised is the layout of the town centre firstly because it is compact, accessible, level and within a small grid of streets all the range of services are available. This was combined with its close proximity to the seafront and what is on offer along the seafront. Several respondents had combined accessing shops and services with using seafront facilities from the Pavilion's exhibitions and cafe to going for a walk along the promenade.

12. Of course, there is a correlation between the question about why people visit and what they like about the town centre. Most people would not visit the town centre if they did not like what they had chosen to visit. This is why it is important to use more than one research source before drawing a conclusion on what the town centre has as a unique selling point. It will be interesting to compare this research to research with residents of neighbouring towns who are not reliant on the offer in Bexhill as their nearest services and facilities and who also have to travel further and make a greater effort to seek out what attracts them.



Like Analysis 1	Frequency	Adj.percentage
Shops: choice, independent, small	201	36%
Behaviour: friendliness	43	8%
Parking	58	10%
Access/proximity of services	59	10%
Seafront, DLWP, Park, Close to	55	10%
Architecture, design	27	5%
Nothing/wouldn't recommend	21	4%
Clean, tidy, safe, etc.	11	2%
Atmosphere: quiet, individual	40	7%
Charity shops	11	2%
Places to eat	34	6%
Transport links	6	1%
Total	566	100

What Respondents Want Improved in Bexhill's Town Centre

13. Almost every respondent made at least one suggestion for improvements for the town centre. Over 100 people, 24% of respondents on this question, made environmental suggestions that could be in the control of Rother District Council. These included the appearance of shops, especially empty shops, improved public toilets, litter and litter bins, suggestions for planting and trees, and similar suggestions.

14. Car parking, particularly on street parking was the focus of many suggestions. Most respondents had a comment regarding car parking, including enforcement of current regulations and the re-designation of restricted parking areas. However, more car parking provision was also a very popular suggestion. The location for that was varied but many respondents suggested re-instating short term car parking in Devonshire Square, usually associated with what is perceived to be significant under use of the area as a resource to the town.

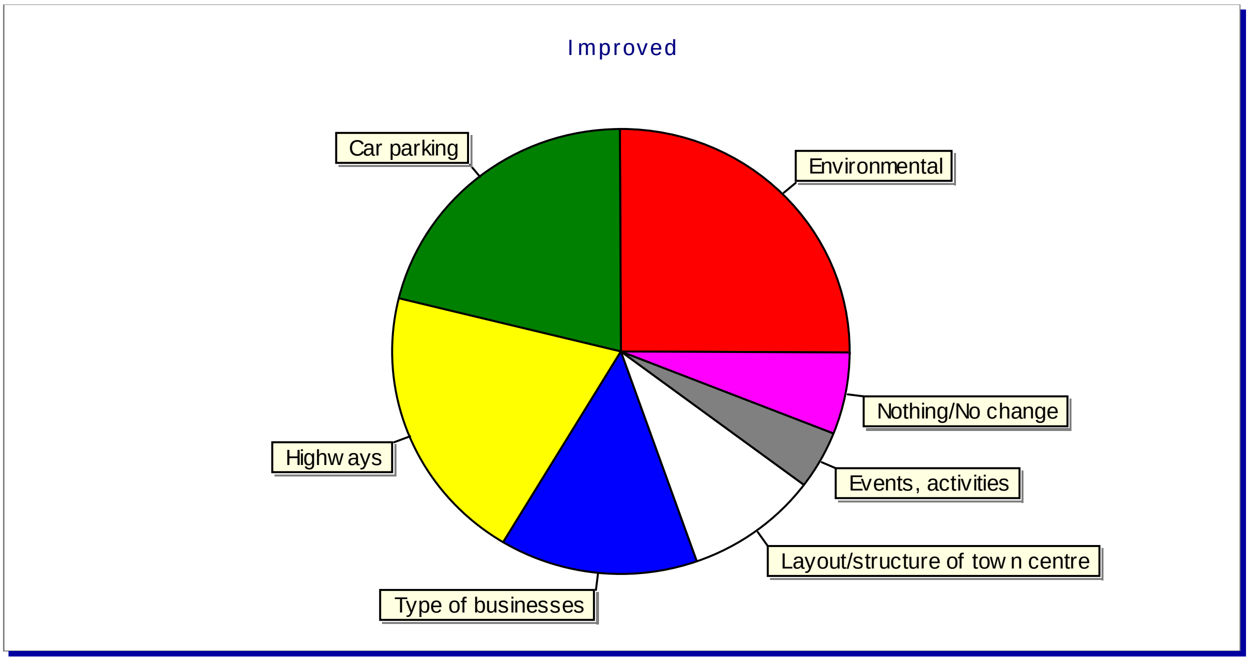
15. All Highways suggestions are matters for East Sussex County Council's Highways service. This includes changes to Devonshire Square but also a number of requests for improved pavements, traffic flow and filled potholes. It also includes some suggestions regarding snow clearance and salting pavements.

16. There were a lot of suggestions for businesses. This included requests for less: less charity shops, less estate agents, less restaurants and cafes and requests for more: more independents shops, larger stores, specialist and named traders and a tourist information centre.

17. Those speaking of the structure of the town centre more frequently suggested pedestrianisation of all or part of Devonshire Road or Western Road. There were many comments about creating a cohesive overall design of the main shopping streets either through the shop fronts, paving, use of colour and so on. There were also some comments on the seafront and its design.

18. The main activities and events suggested were a market of some form, but other suggestions included regular late night opening and more use made of the De La Warr Pavilion with complementary activities between the town centre and seafront/leisure areas.

19. We had a number of comments that nothing needs to be improved. Some of those were from residents who were satisfied with the town centre as it was. However, most were from residents, mainly from the rural areas, who believed the Council proposed major expenditure and were opposed to spending any money. Some respondents suggested that any proposed expenditure should be transferred to their town or village (e.g. Rye, Robertsbridge, Camber.) Several respondents challenged that Bexhill had any significant need for further investment in comparison to other parts of the district.



Improved	Frequency	Adj.percentage
Environmental	118	25%
Car parking	98	21%
Highways	95	20%
Type of businesses	66	14%
Layout/structure of town centre	44	9%
Events, activities	20	4%
Nothing/No change	28	6%
Total	469	100

Conclusion

20. The survey was designed to give a wide range of residents an initial opportunity to have their say about the future of the town centre and provide some initial research and gauge the level of interest in the project. In that respect it has met its objectives. The vast majority of respondents were residents and not business people. There is an extensive amount of agreement among respondents about what is worthwhile about Bexhill's town centre as well as what needs improving. It is also clear that most people feel that no major infrastructure change is required. Small to medium sized changes would bring benefits. However, most of those who answered were already significant users of the town centre. It would be interesting to balance these views with those who don't use the town centre to find out what would change their minds to become regular users. This survey did not answer that question, although admittedly that was not its purpose.

21. A full report will follow shortly with full analysis and specific comments from respondents. Extract reports will be available for the car park review and for ESCC's Highways.