

## **Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan Business Survey Report 2014**

This report has been prepared for the Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Its purpose is to provide the Group with the figures and a brief analysis of the response to the 2014 Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan Business Survey. The survey was opened in May and this report presents the results at the 5<sup>th</sup> August 2014.

### **Questionnaire Design and Distribution**

The survey was sent out to all business on the 'Cullompton Traders Association' and an on-line link was put on the 'Neighbourhood Plan' website to a 'Survey Monkey' version of the questionnaire. The Neighbourhood Plan Administrator visited most businesses within Alexandria and Kingsmill Industrial estates and the majority of business in the High Street, to encourage business owners/directors to complete the survey. Despite these efforts, the survey was completed by 28 businesses, 11 of those businesses being classed as 'stand alone' businesses. Therefore, the results of this survey cannot be considered to be 'representative' of the majority of businesses in Cullompton and the results reported here should be treated with much caution.

### **Business Profiles**

The highest percentage of business rated themselves in the 'business administration and support services', 'professional, scientific and technical' or 'retail' sector. This needs to be viewed with caution due to the small sample size of each category.

43% of businesses had been operating for more than 10 years, with new businesses accounting for only 18% of businesses in the survey.

### **Employees**

39% of businesses considered themselves to be 'sole traders' with the same proportion employing 2-10 employees. Around 10% of businesses employ more than 50 employees.

Over half of survey respondents employ less than 25% of people living in Cullompton Parish. A quarter of businesses have more than 75% of their employees who reside in Cullompton.

Only 19% of businesses indicated that their workforce suffered any particular skills gap, with a third having experienced difficulties recruiting appropriately skilled staff over the previous 12 months.

### **Business Premises/workspace**

- 28% of businesses were based from home with 39% of business premises covering 94-465 sq.m.
- 75% of businesses felt that their current workspace was likely to remain suitable for

the next 3 years. 18% of businesses felt that their premises were likely to become less suitable over the same period.

- 96% of businesses thought that they would still be in their current premises in the next 3 years or more.
- The majority of businesses felt that workspace up to 465 sq m. adequately suited their needs over the next 3-5 years.
- Whilst most businesses rated most elements of business premises as 'good', they were less satisfied with the availability, size, quality and location of land suitable for businesses.

### **Customer base**

Overall, businesses in Cullompton deliver around 50% of their services to the Cullompton area.

### **Location**

Junction 28 of the M5, the major roads leading to Cullompton and the local road network within Cullompton were all seen as a benefit to most businesses respondents.

### **Communication**

81% of businesses in the survey have their own website, whilst 62% have a Facebook page. With regards internet speed, 48% felt that their internet speed sufficient, with 52% disagreeing.

### **Local services**

Results indicate that legal, financial, hospitality and building trades were the most commonly used services by Cullompton Businesses.

### **Improvements for existing/encouraging new businesses**

A Cullompton relief road, and better road network generally, was what most people considered the most beneficial to local business. Encouraging more tourists and visitors was also considered to be an important factor.

The poor overall image of the High Street was considered to be the biggest barrier to businesses moving into the Cullompton area, or existing businesses expanding. Traffic in the Town was also considered to be a constraint. Improvement in these areas was also considered to be the most important elements to improve to attract more local businesses to the area.

### **Neighbourhood Plan Policies**

<b>About Neighbourhood Plan policies:</b>			
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>don't know</b>
Should existing employment locations be protected from changes of use?	8	11	7
Should more latitude be given for change of use?	17	0	9
Should we be allocating more land for employment & business purposes?	17	4	4

Should we allocate more employment sites outside of the built up area?	15	6	4
Should we allocate more retail space outside the town centre?	8	15	2
Should we encourage the preservation of historic buildings?	25	1	0
Should we encourage changes to opening hours?	19	3	4
Should we encourage a night time (evening) economy?	16	7	1

- Around a third of respondents thought that more latitude should be given for ‘change of use’, with around the same number believing that more land should be allocated for employment and business uses.
- 68% felt that more land should be allocated for employment which fell outside the built up area.
- 60% of businesses believed that we should not be allocating more retail space outside the town centre.
- Most respondents wanted to encourage the preservation of historic building.
- The majority of respondents were in favour of changing opening hours and encouraging the night time economy.

### **Benefits to local businesses**

The proximity to the M5 was considered to be the biggest benefit to businesses based in Cullompton.

### **Marketing**

It was generally considered that Cullompton needed to be marketed in a more ‘positive’ manor, as there tends to be a lot of ‘negativity’ regarding Cullompton when speaking with local people. It needs to be marketed as a ‘thriving market town with a great history and a great future’. This will not only attract more businesses into the area but also attract much needed visitors.