



Walworth Town Hall

Public consultation report

February 2014

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1. Introduction

- 1.1** On the 25 March 2013, the Walworth Town Hall at 151 Walworth Road suffered a major fire resulting in significant water and fire damage throughout the building. The Grade 2 listed Town Hall building comprised of the Walworth One Stop Shop, the Cuming museum, the council chamber and council office space. Both the Walworth Town Hall and neighbouring Newington Library buildings have been closed to the public since the fire occurred and whilst the Council's contractors secure both buildings and identify the extent of damage.
- 1.2** In July 2013 the Council's Cabinet approved a report outlining a high level strategic vision for the town hall building that would see the building rebuilt and modernised accommodating the following facilities :
- An enhanced Newington Library space
 - A space for the display of the Cuming collection and potentially a Southwark museum
 - A flexible space that could be used for a variety of purposes including community and civic events, exhibitions and performances
 - Facilities for marriage, civil partnership and citizenship ceremonies undertaken by the Southwark registrar's service
- 1.3** Following the Cabinet approval a consultation strategy, drafted by the Regeneration North team, was approved by the Cabinet member for Regeneration and Corporate Strategy, Councillor Fiona Colley. The Walworth Town Hall project team officially began the public consultation and engagement for a period of two months from the 1st October to 30th November 2013.

2. Purpose of consultation

2.1 The purpose of the consultation was to identify the level of public support for this high level vision through inviting all residents within the Elephant and Castle opportunity area to participate in the process by submitting their thoughts on the future of the Walworth Town hall. The results of which would aid the council in developing a more detailed and informed project brief to inform design and planning for the development of the site.

2.2 The opportunity to comment was provided through a freepost postal questionnaire sent to all resident and commercial properties within the Elephant and Castle Opportunity Area, an online questionnaire promoted on the Southwark Council website and through a series of community meetings with identified stakeholder groups.

2.3 A stakeholder database was created including:

- 8,403 local residents and commercial addresses within the Elephant and Castle opportunity area
- local interest groups identified by members of the SE17 and SE1 community engagement team
- ward councillors for East Walworth, Newington and Faraday .

2.4 The local interest groups identified by the community engagement team included:

- The Walworth Society
- The Latin American Community
- Garland Court Resident Association
- Wansey Street residents
- Southwark Youth Council
- Southwark Young advisors
- Local Primary schools
- Globe Academy secondary
- Walworth Academy secondary

The stakeholder database also included community and advocacy groups in SE17 and SE1 and internal council officers:

- Walworth Bangladeshi Community Association
- Kurdish & Middle Eastern Women's Organisation
- Southwark Pensioner Forum
- Borough, Bankside and Walworth Community Council
- Library users
- Cuming Museum Heritage Managers
- TRA's within the Elephant & Castle Opportunity Area

2.5 The consultation strategy focused on asking two key questions;

- Do you support the council's high level vision for Walworth Town Hall?
- And which facilities, from the approved strategic vision, you would most like to see in the rebuilt Town Hall?

Those completing the questionnaire were also offered the opportunity to provide further comments or suggest alternative facilities which they thought should be provided in the town hall building.

3. The overall consultation results

3.1 A total of 424 completed questionnaires were returned through the postal and online surveys and also stakeholder group meetings. Of the 8403 questionnaires Southwark Council sent out 202 were returned, which is a response rate of 2.4% which is at the lower end of the 2% to 4% target range.

Question 1: Do you support the high level vision for the Walworth Town Hall?

3.2 Chart 1 below shows that 78% of the 424 responses support the high level strategic vision as agreed by Cabinet. This is a significant level of support however when focusing on those respondents who actually chose to answer the question either Yes or No, therefore stating a preference either way for the vision, the level of support actually increases to 94% as shown in Chart 2 below.

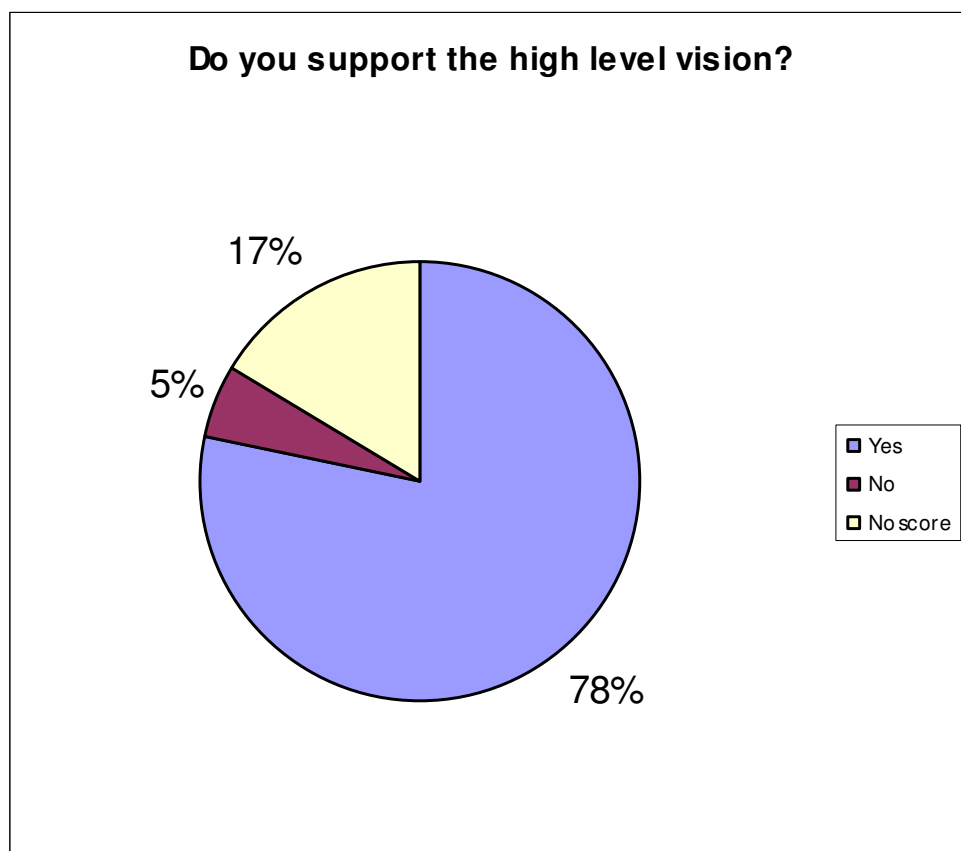


Chart 1: Results for the question 'Do you support the high level vision for the Walworth Town Hall?'.

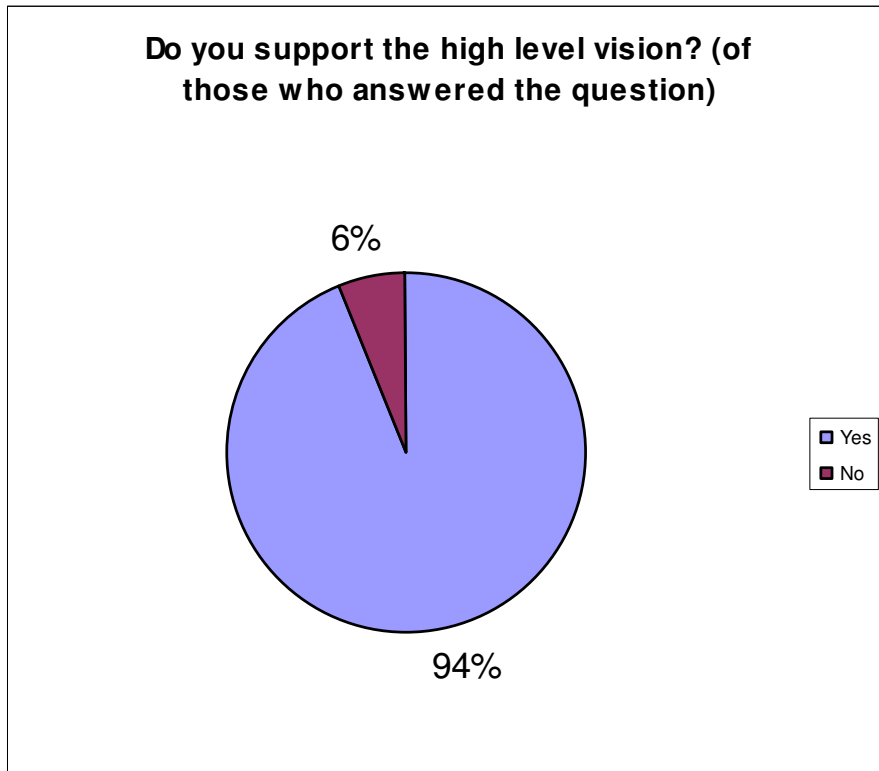


Chart 2: Percentage of those who answered the question ‘Do you support the high level vision for the Walworth Town Hall?’

Question 2: Please rank in order from 1 – 5 the facilities you would most like to see at the rebuilt town hall

3.3 Having received 424 completed questionnaires the highest score that any of the five options could achieve would be 2120 based on each respondent scoring 5 and stating that they ‘strongly support’ the inclusion of that option within the rebuilt Town Hall building. Chart 3 below shows the total scores that each facility received with both the enhanced library and museum receiving the highest scores indicating greatest level of support.

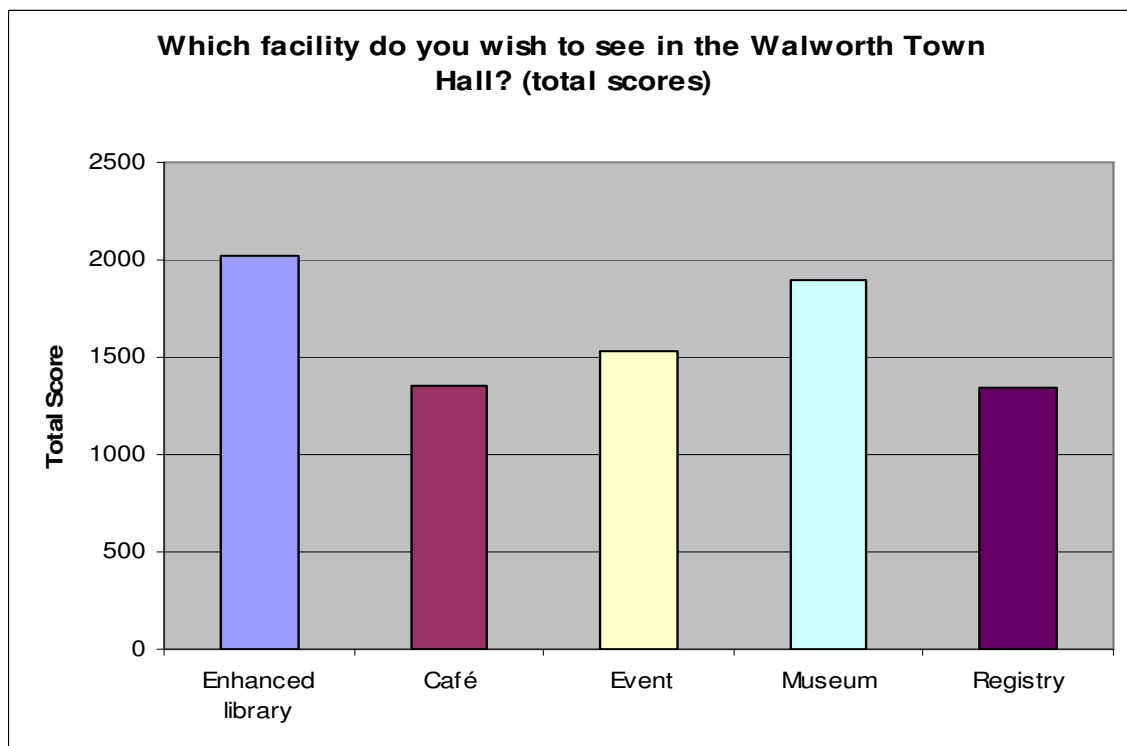


Chart 3: Total score for question 'Please rank in order from 1 – 5 the facilities you would most like to see at the rebuilt town hall.

3.4 When examining the average scores, in Chart 4 below, it shows that respondents scored over four for both the library and museum showing that there is significant support for these two facilities within the new building. Furthermore when examining the remaining three facilities within the strategic vision the scores show that on average there is not a negative attitude towards any proposals within the brief. If respondents were particularly against the inclusion of any of the facilities then the average score would be around the one or two figure.

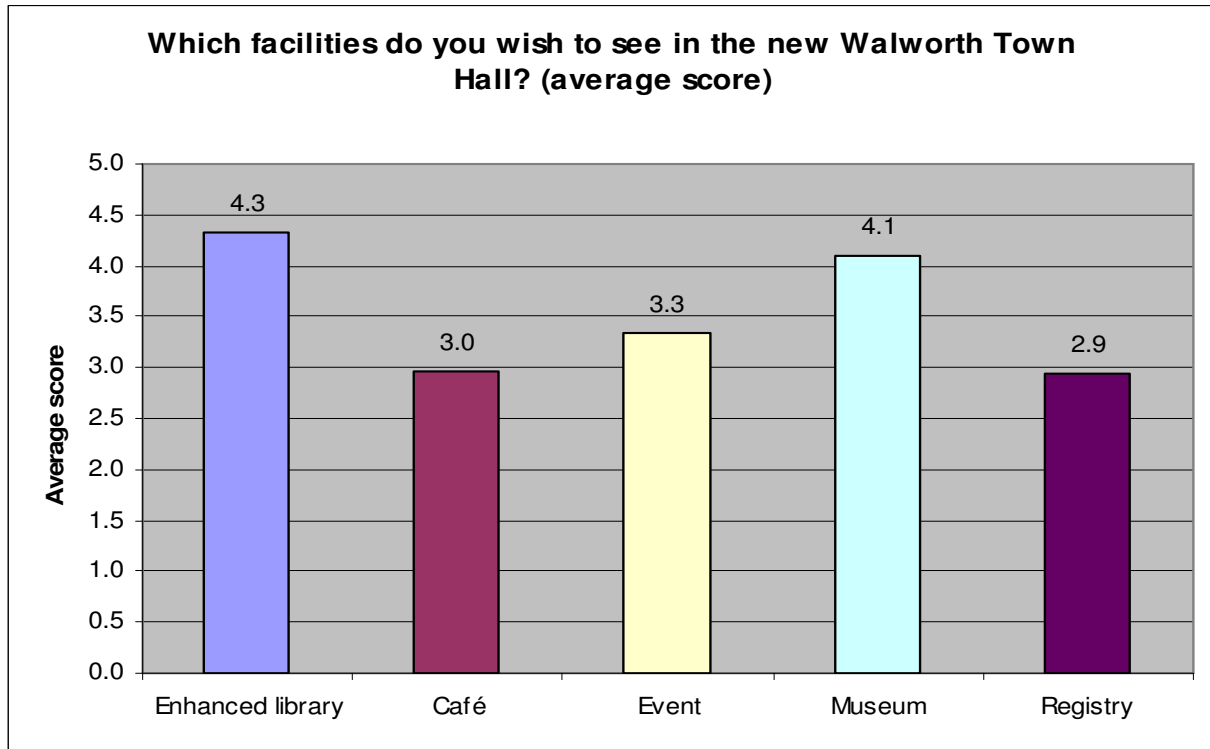


Chart 4: Average score for each facility listed in the questionnaire.

4. Analysis of Postal Questionnaire and Online Survey results

4.1 A total of 366 questionnaires were received either by post or the online survey representing 86% of all questionnaires received. Due to this significantly high percentage the below results are very similar to those for the overall consultation as above with an enhanced library and museum receiving the most votes.

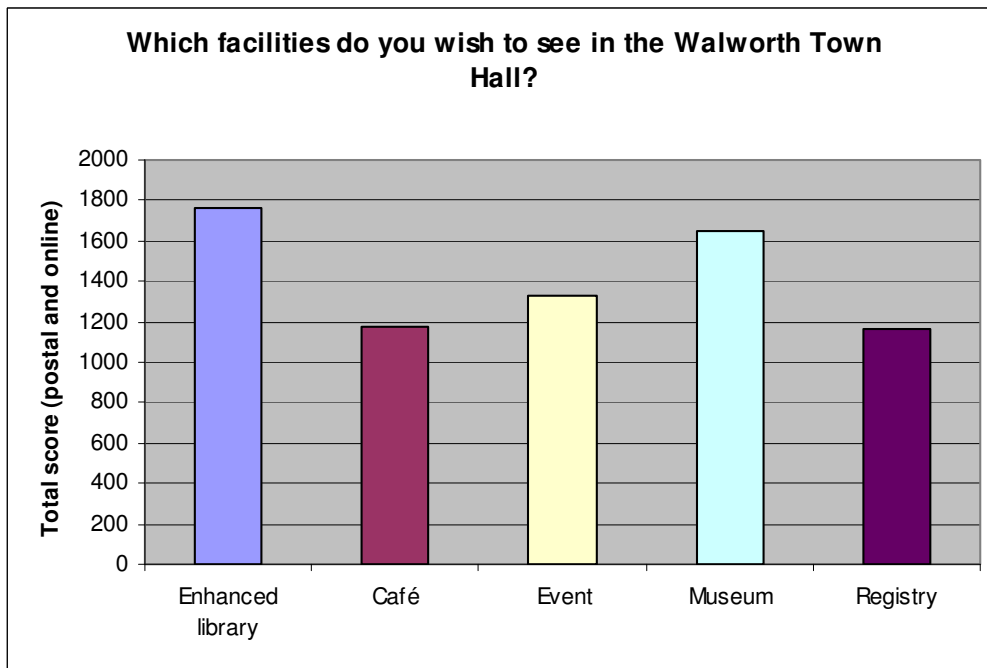


Chart 5: Total cumulative number for each facility listed in the questionnaire.

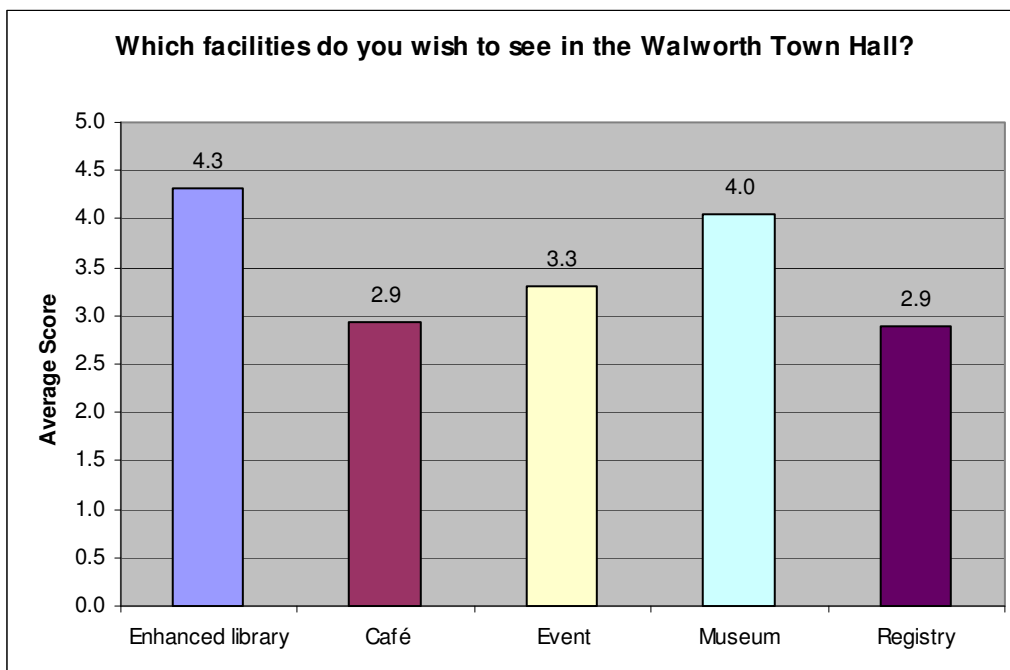


Chart 6: The average score for each facility listed in the questionnaire.

5. Other suggestions made

5.1 Those completing the questionnaire were also provided the opportunity to make further comments or suggest alternative facilities which they thought should be provided in the town hall building. The following is a list of the common suggestions received:

- Educational space (Reading, revising, early learning)
- One Stop Shop (Southwark offices for Southwark residents)
- Youth Centre
- Citizen's advice bureau
- Business centre (public services, Business training courses, learning centre, evening course centre)
- Local theatre/ film space
- Language centre (language courses, interpreting and translating department,
- Mental Health drop in
- Housing
- Activities for Mother and baby groups, under 5's and after school clubs
- An enhanced Children's library
- Disability advice centre
- Internet, Wi-Fi, printing, photocopying services
- ICT (ICT training help and advice about how to use computers (terminals for internet users and students)
- Meeting space (local community meeting space, longer opening hours, evening space, more communal seating, further community use)
- Council assembly room, archive collection, heritage books and services

6. Results of Stakeholder group meeting

6.1 The following summarises the meetings and events that the project team attended during the consultation period.

6.2 Borough and Bankside and Walworth Community Council meeting - 2nd October

A presentation was made to the attendees of the meeting and questionnaires were distributed, however most attendees had already received it in the post that day given that they lived within the Elephant and Castle Opportunity Area. Several key questions were raised by both councillors and members of the public that were:

- 1) What was the funding mechanism for the rebuild project?
- 2) Can the provision of youth facilities be considered?
- 3) What were the plans for the long term future of the Newington library building?
- 4) If the Newington Library was to remain closed, will an interim library will be provided?

6.3 Community Conversation at East Street Market - Saturday 2nd November 8am – 3pm

The project team, joined by the council's Community Engagement team, had a market stand at the market. Visitors to the market and also the local traders were asked to discuss their views of the Walworth town hall and requested that they complete a questionnaire. We also handed out the Walworth town hall FAQ which gave more in depth details on the Cuming museum collection and services, the condition of the building and the consultation purpose and process. 42 questionnaires were completed with the detailed results listed below.

6.4 Of those who answered, 90% supported the council's vision and 10% did not.

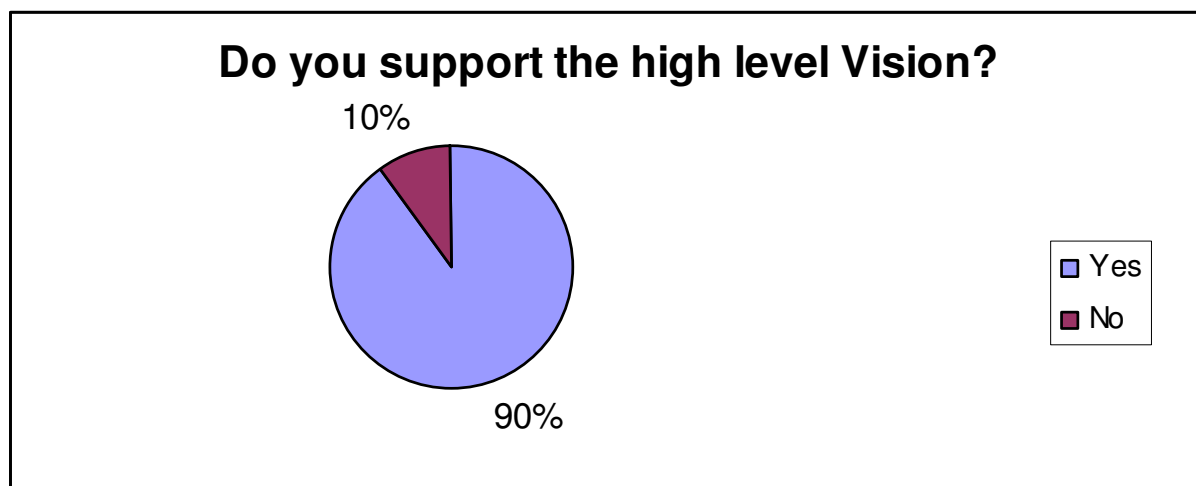


Chart 7: Community Conversation question 1 response results

6.5 When analysing the average scores from the community conversation event (as shown below in Chart 8) there are high levels of support for both the inclusion of the library and museum facility with both having an average score of over four. On average there was neither a positive or negative response towards the cafe, event space or registrar service with all spaces having an average score of three. These results mirror the same patterns of the overall consultation responses.

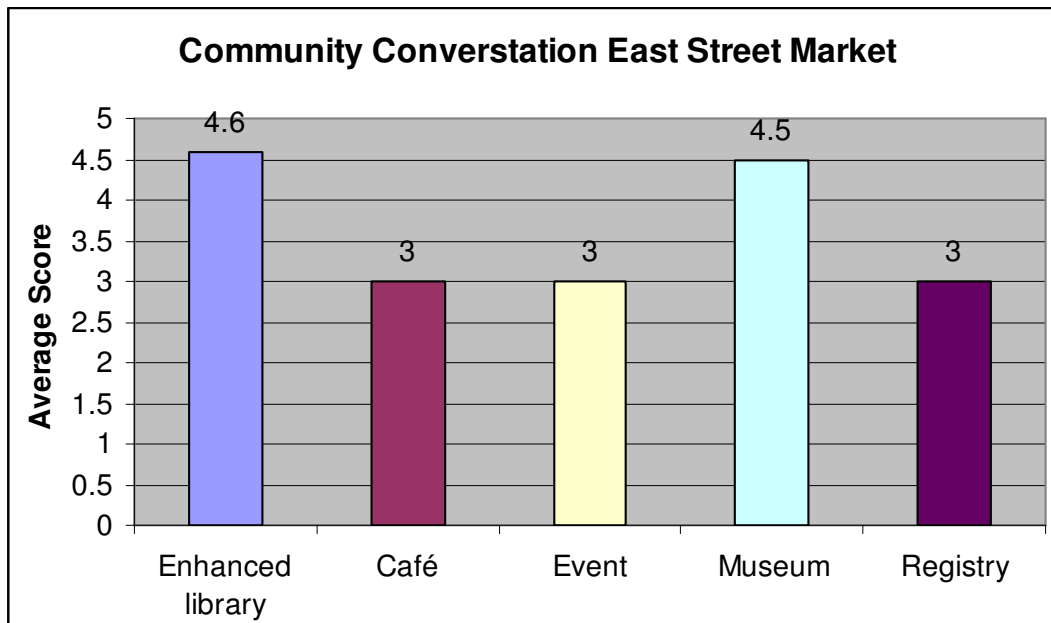


Chart 8: Community Conversation average response results

Walworth Society group meeting - 7th November @ 7pm

6.6 The Walworth Society are a local community group interested in the conservation and local heritage and history. As the Walworth Town Hall is a Grade 2 listed building it was important to engage with this group to ensure their views and comments are obtained. The meeting was attended by the Regeneration North Project Director and Project Manager and a presentation was made and questionnaires were distributed. No completed questionnaires were handed back at the meeting, however we did receive an informed summary email of the groups feedback by the Chair following the meeting:

6.7 Walworth Town Hall

- Walworth Society are supportive of the aspiration of a world class cultural and community hub at the heart of the Elephant & Castle.
- Supportive of the retention of the Walworth Town Hall as the primary location for this facility
- Group want to be consulted further on the detailed design brief for the facilities particularly library - hard to determine whether they support an enhanced library without knowing what the enhanced library would be.
- Group suggest a wider meeting is held with senior politicians and leaders of council to discuss the future of the town hall, library and community facilities that are to be provided within the Heygate masterplan.

6.8 Newington Library

- Concerns raised about the future of the library building however especially if library service moves in to the Walworth Town Hall.
- Newington Library viewed as an important historical and community asset which must not be lost.
- Support for any design process to incorporate the Newington Library building

Wansey Street and Garland Court residents meeting - 29th November @ 7pm

- 6.9** The meeting was attended by 5 residents of Wansey St / Garland Court and Cllr Martin Seaton and 3 questionnaires were completed and returned (see results below). Through the discussion at the meeting it was identified that in principle all were supportive of the proposal to provide a high quality cultural and community space at the Walworth Town Hall. All were not particularly concerned that the One Stop Shop was not included in the brief and agreed that the existing library building was not fit for purpose as a modern facility however services that it provided were well used.
- 6.10** Group did not feel a cafe was an important feature given the proximity to existing cafes on Walworth Rd. Residents were also concerned that a cafe would in fact end up as a wine bar / licensed premises for which residents of Wansey St would suffer the consequences (noise, litter etc) whereas the space that a cafe would occupy could be used to provide enhanced community facilities.
- 6.11** In addition there was a specific concern that a larger facility would result in more staff and therefore increased parking on an already busy Wansey St. There was a particular concern about the potential operational impacts that will result from an enhanced Town Hall and the proximity between the town hall building and Garland court, and potential overlooking issues at Ground Floor. The residents of Wansey Street and Garland Court wished to be kept up to date throughout the process, especially ahead of key decision making so that they can have the opportunity to comment and provide feedback before subsequently being told it is too late.
- 6.12** The three people who completed the questionnaire all stated that they agreed the vision for the Walworth Town Hall. Unlike the overall responses for the consultation strategy, the Wansey St residents scored the library and event space the highest with average scores of 5. All facilities except for the cafe, were all scored highly with an average score of over four.

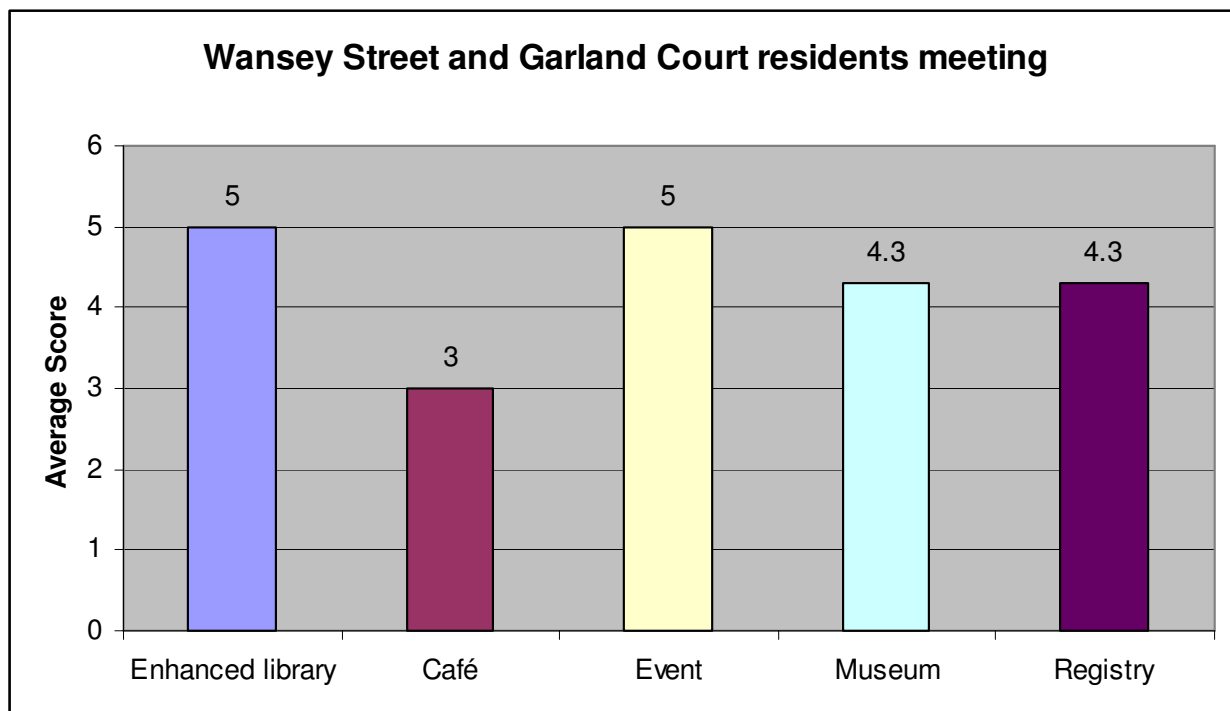


Chart 9: Wansey Street and Garland Court residents meeting average response results

6.13 Cuming under 5's play session - 14th November @ 10am

The under 5's play session was attended by members of the Regeneration North project team and there were 10 parent/carers, out of which 5 people filled in a questionnaire. Of the 5 which answered the question, 60% agreed with the high level vision for the Walworth Town Hall. One person left no comment and one person wrote unsure. Overall, the level of support for the vision was high with a general interest in the process of rebuilding the Town Hall.

6.14 The average scores, shown in the Chart 10 below, show high scores given to the library, event and museum space. When discussing the new town hall with the respondents there was particular interest in the new town hall providing space which can be made into a fun children's learning/educational space, local history space and a quiet area for children's play sessions. Furthermore the registrar service received a higher average score than compared to the overall responses and this can be attributed to the fact that the parents saw benefit in having a local registry service.

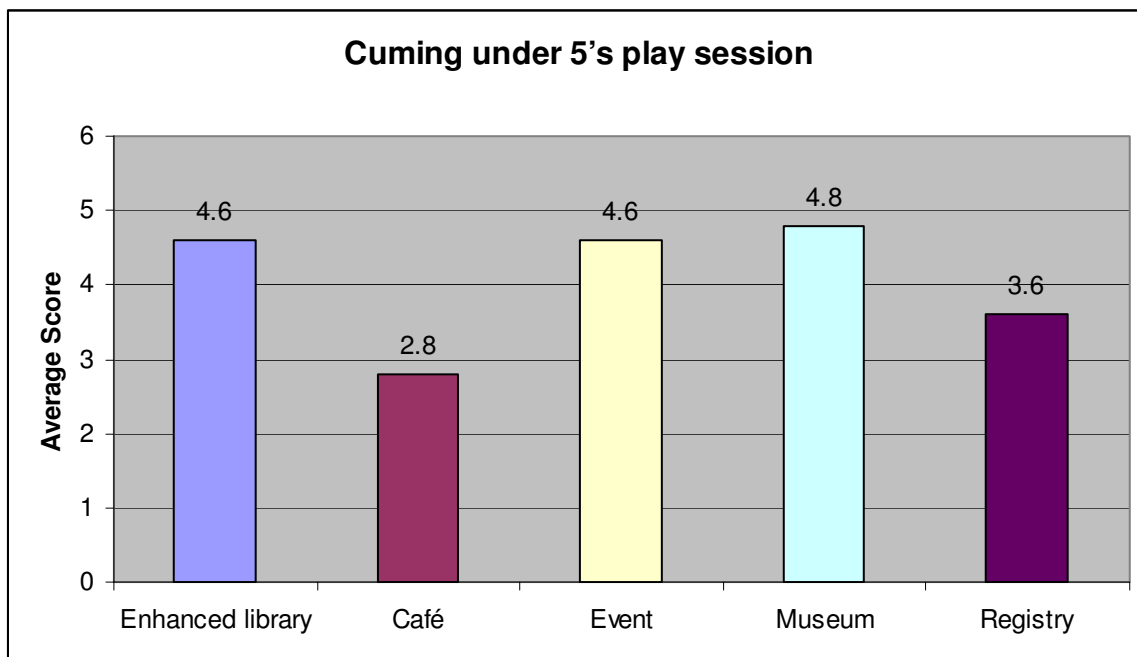


Chart 10: Cuming under 5's play session average response results

6.15 Latin American community meeting -19th November @ 7pm

The Latin American community meeting was attended by the Head of the Regeneration North who firstly explained the Southwark Council regeneration plans for the area and also focused on the vision for the rebuild of the Walworth Town hall. He explained how the fire affected the Cuming Museum, the Newington library and the listed town hall building as well as the council chambers. The attendees suggested that the new building should incorporate a communal space to act as a hub for Latin American community, as at the moment they don't have a proper public place in London where they can host regular meetings, share information, and cultural exchanges.

Lina Usma the meeting chair explained that most of the attendees received the questionnaires in the post and have returned them via the FREEPOST label.

6.16 Southwark Youth council meeting - 28th November 2013

The Senior Project Manager from the Regeneration North project team attended a meeting with the Southwark Youth Advisors attended by 8 youth panel members attended all of whom completed the questionnaires. The verbal feedback received at the meeting was primarily focused on the desire for a new purpose built youth centre / facility within the Walworth area. The panel members believed this could be provided within the rebuilt town hall building and could be a place where young people could meet, socialise and also have access to youth support services such as training, employment advice, after school activities and ICT training.

6.17 From the completed questionnaires 90% of the respondents supported the council's vision (one person leaving no comment). The completed questionnaires resulted in the registry office and cafe actually being scored the highest which is unusual given that at no point during the discussion any vocal support for these were raised. In comparison the enhanced library scored quite low with an average score of 2 indicating low level of support. However, in the meeting there was verbal support for this as there would be educational opportunities for young people within an enhanced library. Therefore there is the distinct possibility that the respondents misinterpreted the scoring system however a good level of detailed feedback was received from attending the meeting and the group will continue to be engaged throughout the design and planning stage.

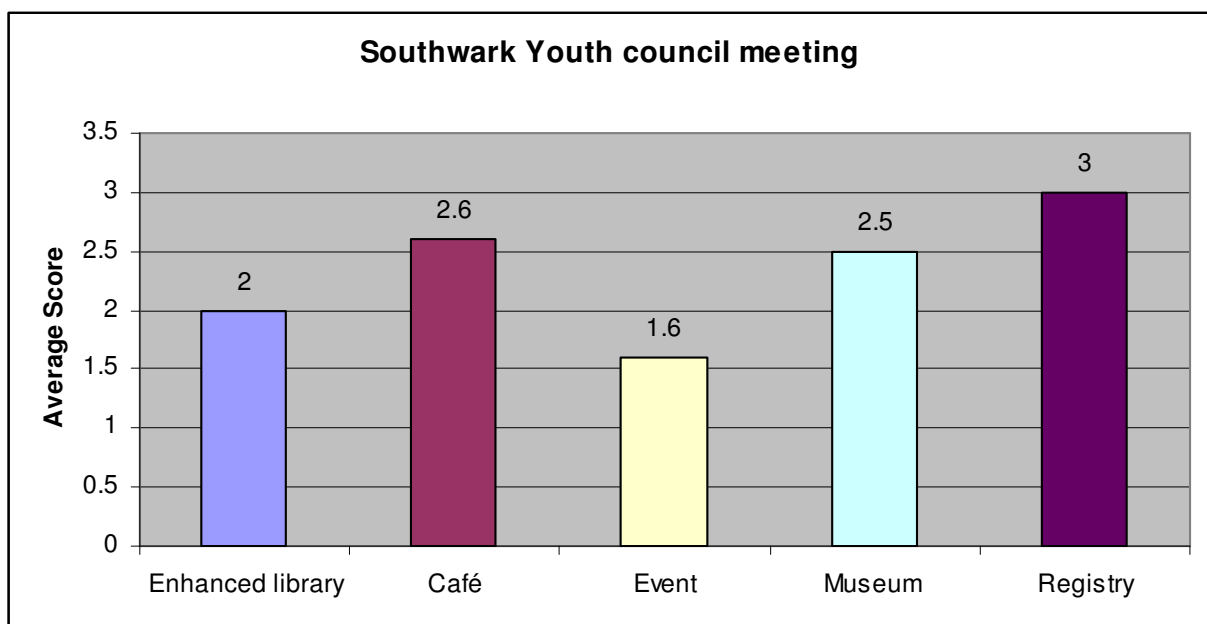


Chart 11: Southwark Youth council meeting average response results