

Youth and Education

This commentary is based on the questions answered by householders besides the responses from the separate questionnaire which was offered to all young people in the village aged from 11 to 18 years old. After the individual questionnaires were collected responses were sought from groups. Detailed replies were received from The Cabin Pre-School, Woodcote Youth Development Group, Woodcote Primary School, Langtree School, The Oratory School and Woodcote Community Library. More information was gathered at the Consultation Day and was used for the final analysis. All the original documents are held and may be accessed on request.

Woodcote benefits from two pre-school groups, primary and secondary state sector schools and an independent Catholic boarding and day school.

When specifically asked, the Cabin Pre-School said they were always fully subscribed as Woodcote is a popular village for families to live in. What they really needed was a dedicated parking space for their parents as they are based in a Portacabin on the Primary School site. This causes a real problem for parents and their young children at the beginning and end of sessions. The Cabin Pre-School aims to create a nature garden close to their building within the next year.

The Primary School also needs more space for new buildings because of its increasing intake. The school field is unavailable for younger pupils during much of the summer term as the secondary school has exams. This is plainly unacceptable now sports and exercise are thought of as being so important for developing children.

Langtree School intends to continue to update its facilities and is currently working on the Sports Hall. Lack of resources is holding them back in their modernisation programme. They would like to offer more opportunities to local people to use their facilities, especially as they have been granted specialist arts status in the last year. Langtree uses the school site, the Village Hall and the Community Centre. They are looking forward to offering adult and community education courses and to hosting a weekly Lunch Club for older residents which will incorporate the current school meals service

There is currently discussion over the proposed fencing around the schools and the development of an Astroturf pitch.

The Oratory School emphasises that local people use their swimming pool, sports centre and golf course as part of the school's commitment to the community. Both Langtree and Oratory are concerned about residents walking through their grounds with regard to child protection issues and dog fouling.

The library is unusual within the county as it is in joint use by Langtree School and the public of Woodcote. It is well used by people of all ages. The Librarian said they have a very supportive readership and the library is used by many young children from schools and pre-schools, not only in Woodcote but from other local villages. On the village consultation day many people said how good the library service was and how helpful the staff were. There were requests for more opening hours, especially on Wednesdays.

The consultation day also highlighted how pleased people were with the new play equipment that had been supplied in two separate places thanks to the initiative of a group of local parents.

The Youth questionnaire was answered by 168 young people aged from 11 to 18. Of these 158 were in full time education and 8 in full time employment. Fewer were involved with clubs and organised

activities than not and most had never used the Youth Centre. On the other hand, when asked if young people should help to run the Youth Centre, 76% of them thought this would be a good idea.

Families generally agreed that they would support school holiday activities for 5 to 18 year olds but when asked if they would help with such schemes 23% said they would and 77% refused.

Most activities enjoyed by the young population were sports based but 6% attended a place of worship in Woodcote regularly and 23% went occasionally.

Of the young people responding, 60% used the library, even if only sometimes, for books and 33% used the computer facilities. Far more used the internet at home (94%) than any other activity.

The other strong area of agreement among 11 to 18 year olds came when 88% of them felt that both the countryside around the village and the natural features within it should be protected.

Adults in the village mostly found library hours acceptable and selection of books useful although only 6% of them claimed to use the computers there. The library was a successful outcome of Woodcote's 1983 Appraisal and it opened in 1991. At the time of the last Appraisal (2000) there were proposals to install computers for public use on a payment basis. At that time 31% of young people said they would pay for computer usage and 45% for the internet. Adults showed limited interest then and still use the computers far less than young people even though computer usage is now free of charge. The library still runs special slots for "silver surfers" to learn to use the equipment which might encourage more people to take this up.

14% of adults who participated in the last two Appraisals in 1991 and 2000 attended local community education courses. In 2007 this has shrunk to 4% who said they had done so over the last year although 74% of respondents thought that Community Education should have an important role in village life and 48 people offered to run a course.

At the consultation day there were many comments about the lack of courses since the County Adult and Community Education department had withdrawn office facilities from Woodcote altogether and was now operating only two activities per week in Woodcote as opposed to the many offered for villagers of all ages in past years. Langtree School intends to run courses to make use of the school space and equipment out of official school hours but it is time consuming to facilitate a varied programme.