

Blackwell Parish Council

Community Consultation Report

Blackwell Community Centre

2025

Executive Summary

A community consultation was undertaken between September and November 2025 to inform proposals for the refurbishment of Blackwell Community Centre and to support a funding application to the National Lottery. A total of 86 residents responded.

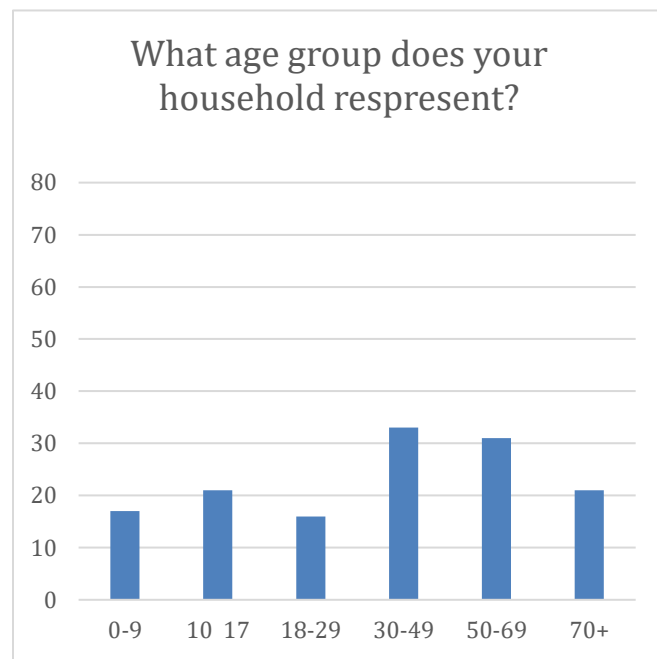
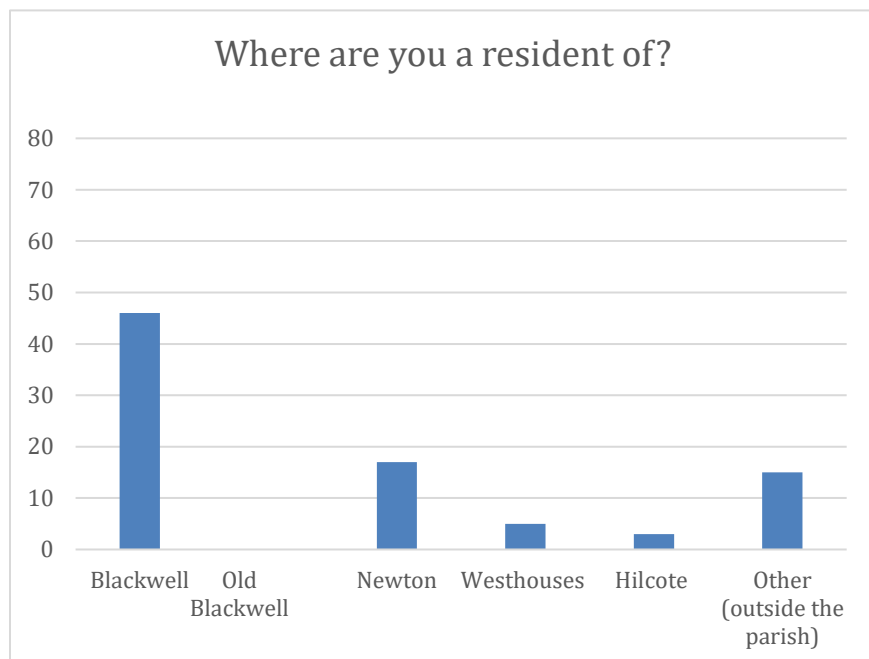
The consultation demonstrates strong community value placed on the Community Centre. The majority of respondents consider it very important to village life and indicated they would be more likely to attend events or hire the venue if it were refurbished.

Key priorities identified include improved safety and lighting, modernisation of internal spaces, greater accessibility, enhanced communication, and a wider programme of events and activities. The findings provide clear evidence of need, demand, and community engagement.

Survey Results – Charts and Key Findings

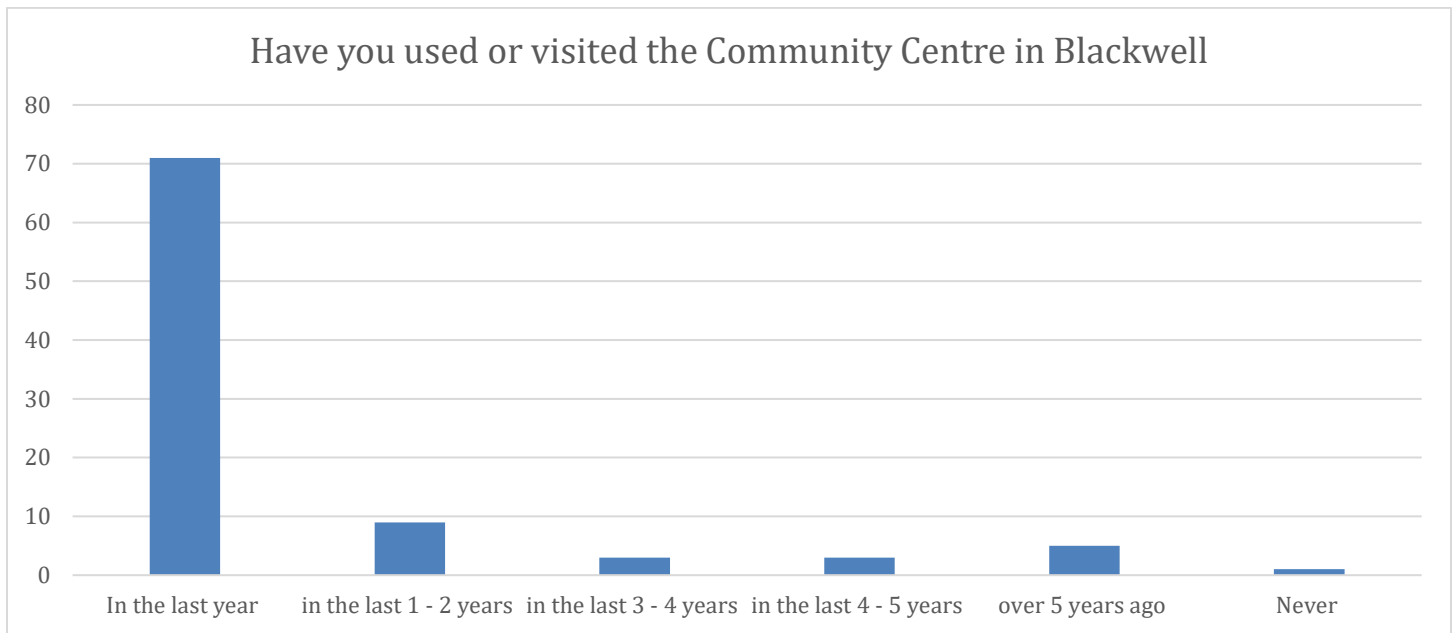
Note: 86 surveys were returned, but each respondent did not answer every question in the survey.

Demographics

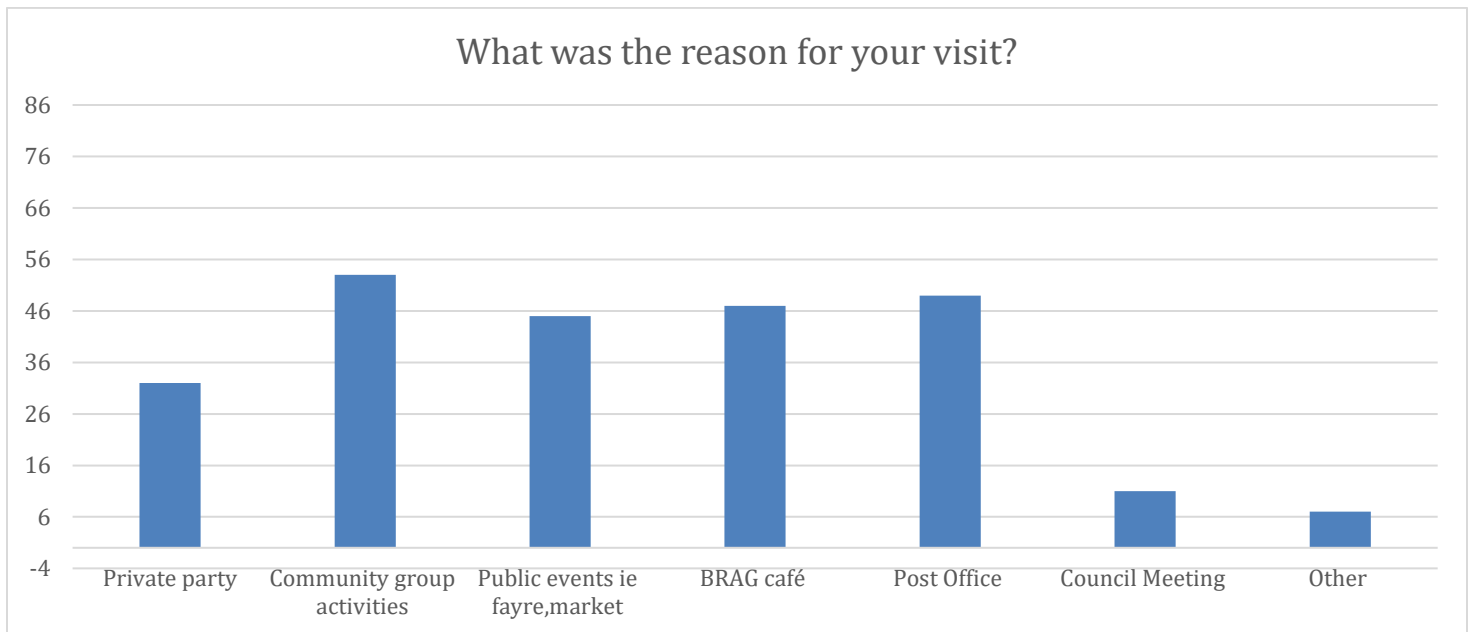


Most survey respondents were located within the Parish, however a significant proportion were from outside of the Parish, demonstrating the wide reach of the activities that are held at Blackwell. There was a good representation of all ages across the respondents.

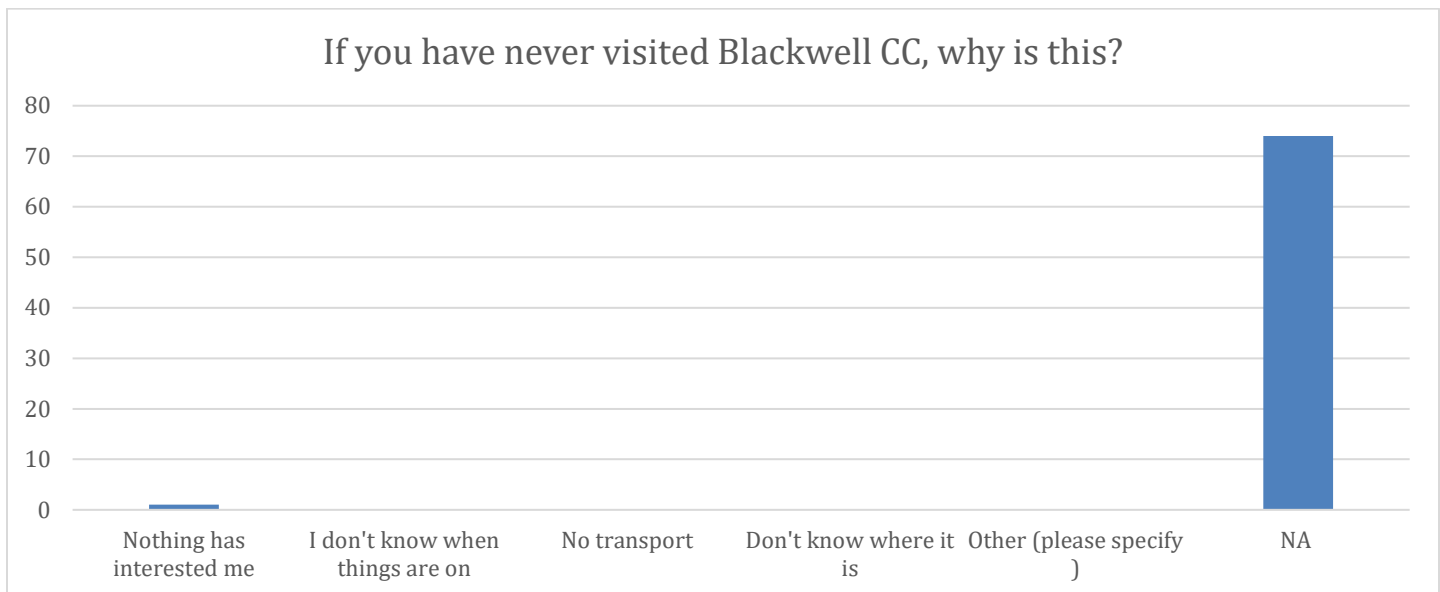
Frequency of Visits



Reason for Visit

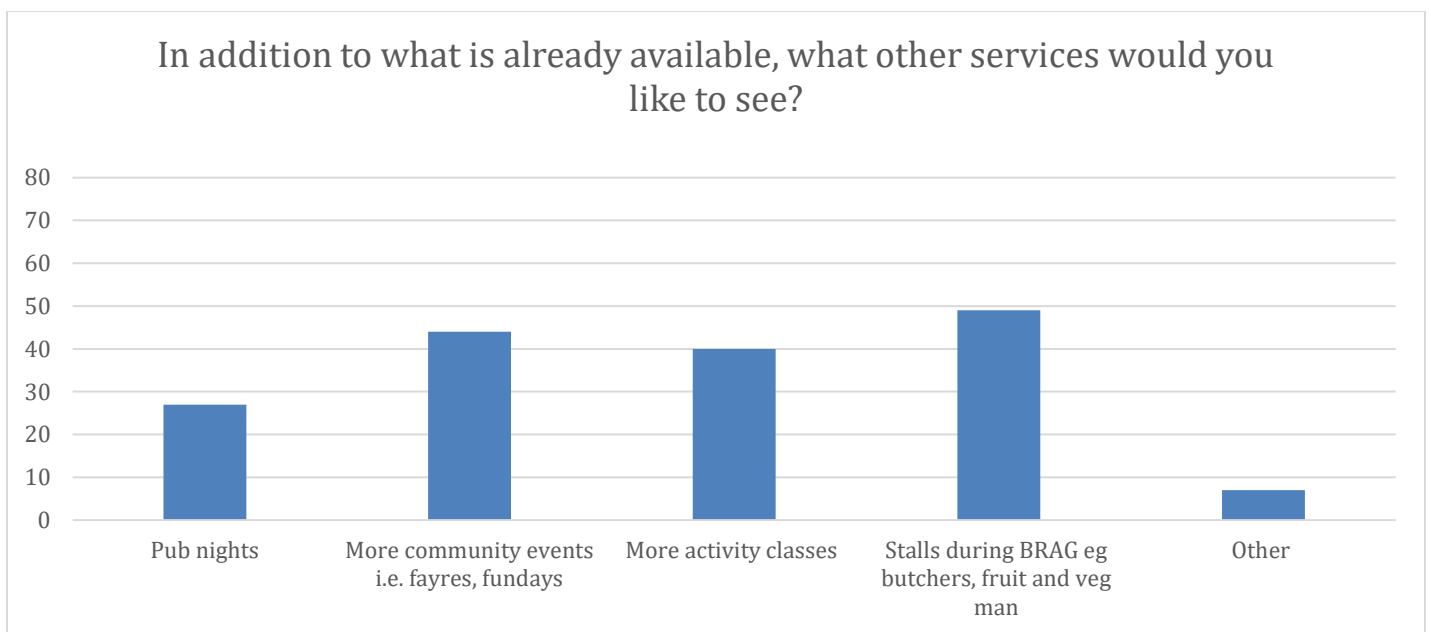


Most respondents had visited the community center in the last year. Visits are most commonly linked to community groups, BRAG café use, the Post Office and public events, demonstrating that the centre already functions as a multi-purpose community hub.



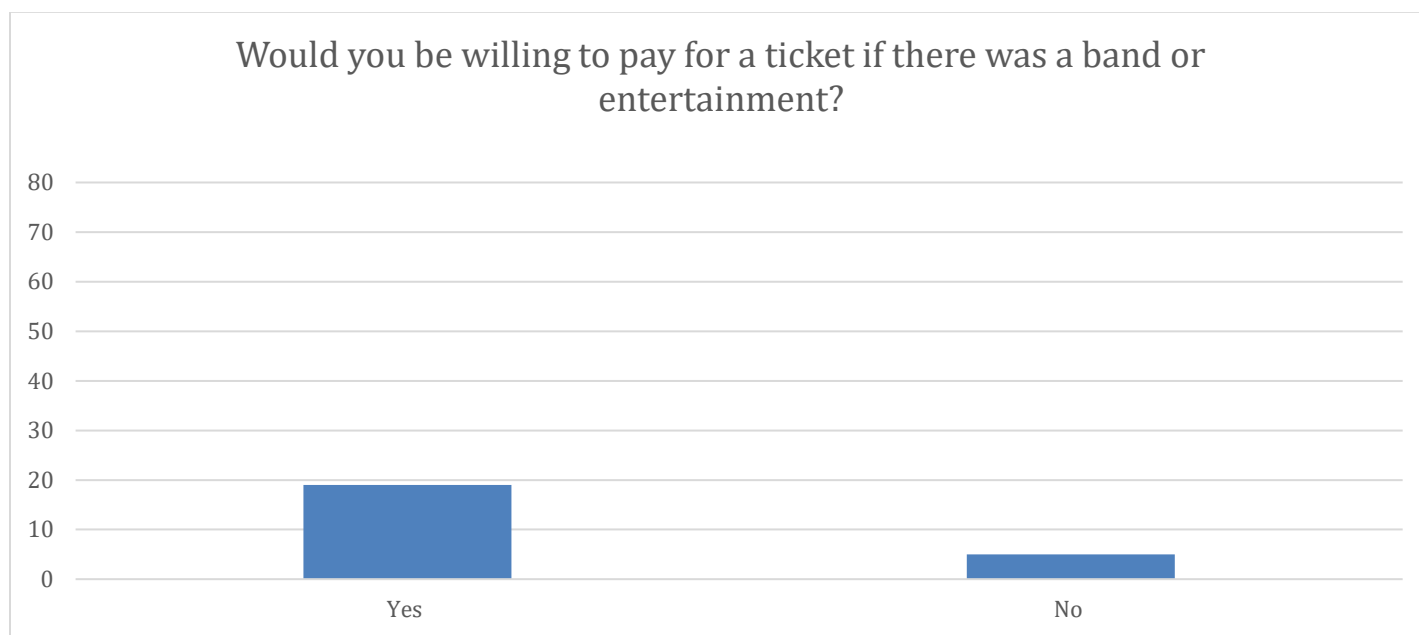
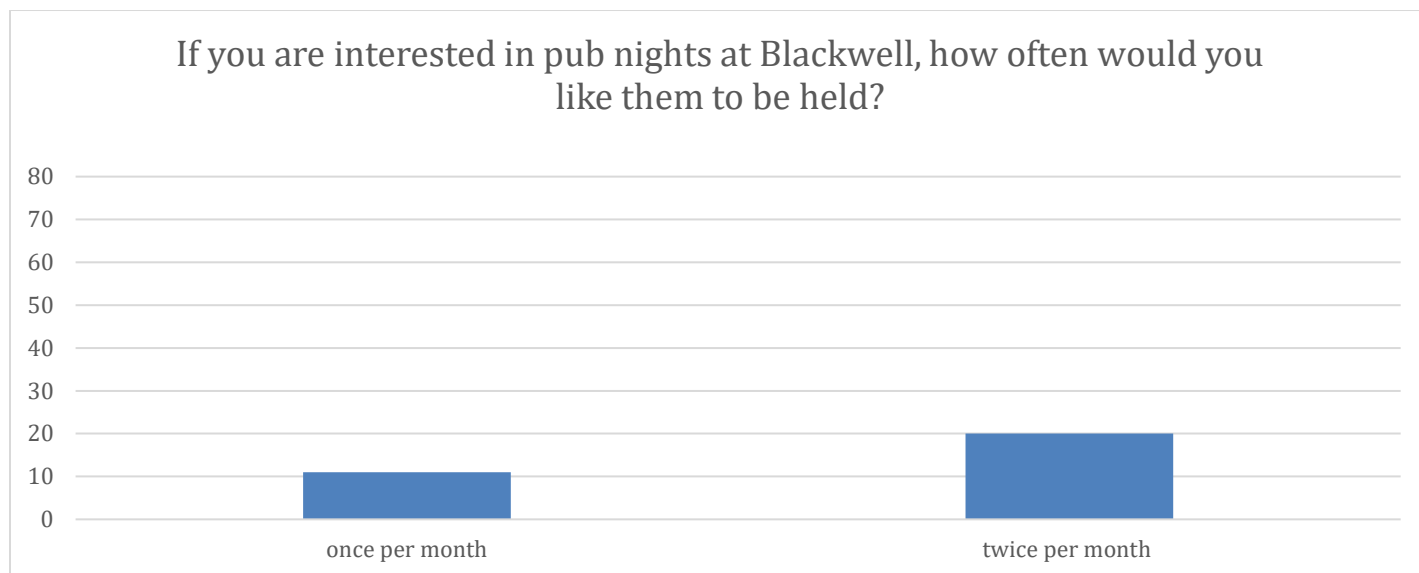
Only one person had never visited Blackwell Community Centre.

Additional Events and Services



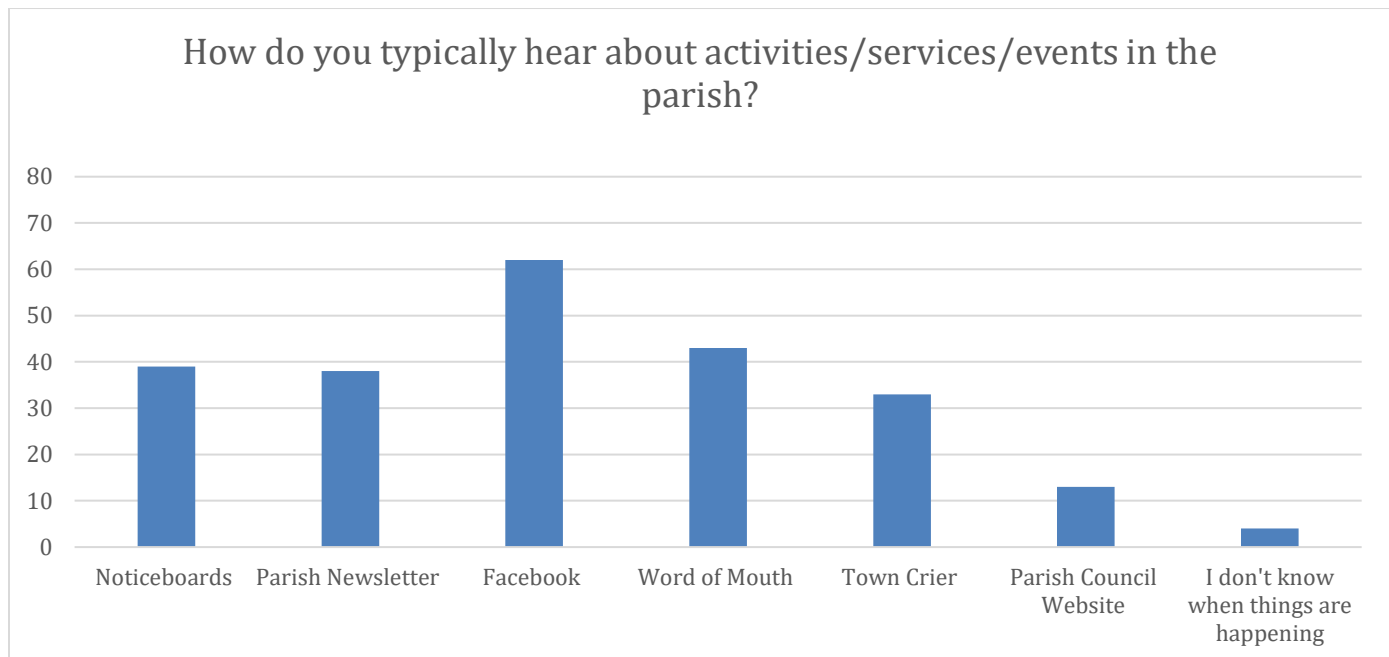
Respondents expressed strong demand for stalls during BRAG – with specific mentions in the comments about a fruit and veg man and a butchers, additional community events, activity classes and pub nights. The ‘other’ section included suggestions to hold a mental health drop in, budgeting / benefits advice services, low-cost family days, knitting/crocheting group, young adults’ groups and adult workshops. Indicating clear opportunities to increase footfall and engagement.

Pub nights



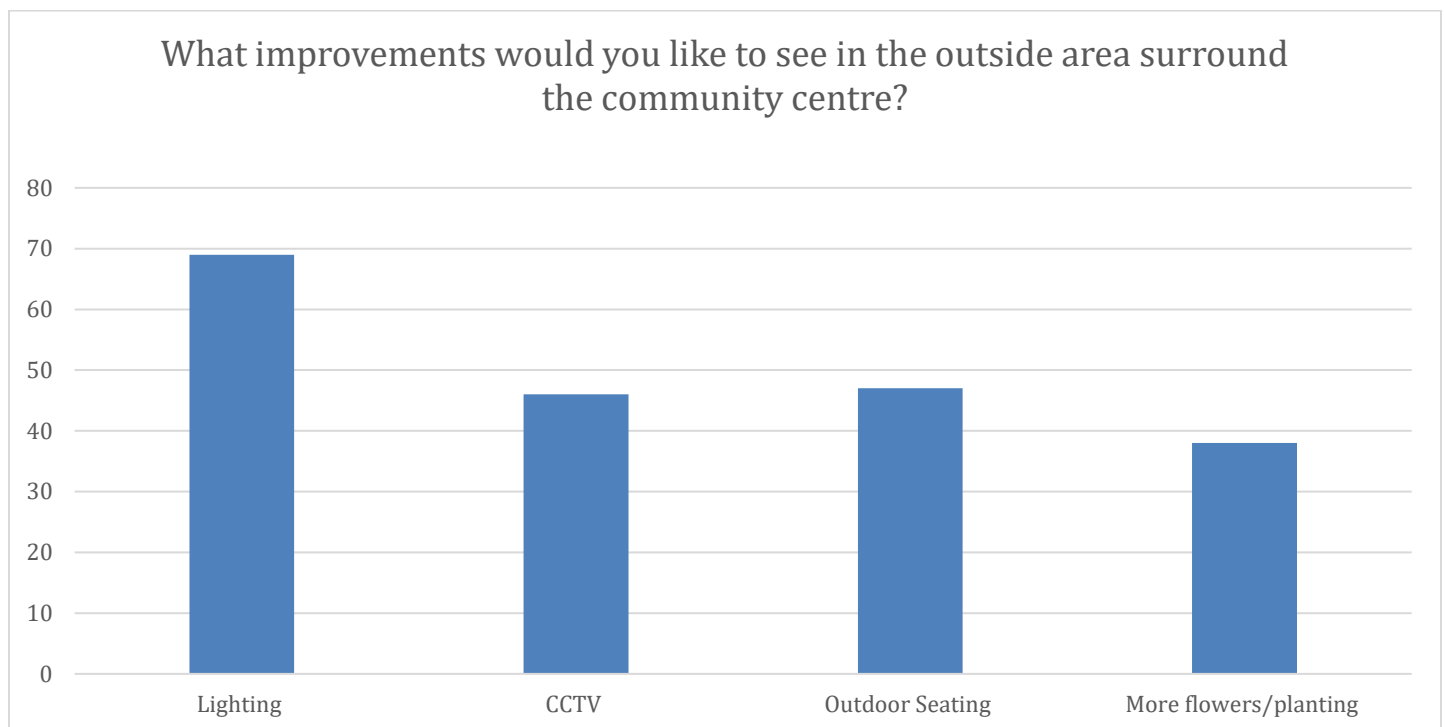
Most respondents who answered this question preferred pub nights to be held twice per month and would be willing to pay for entertainment.

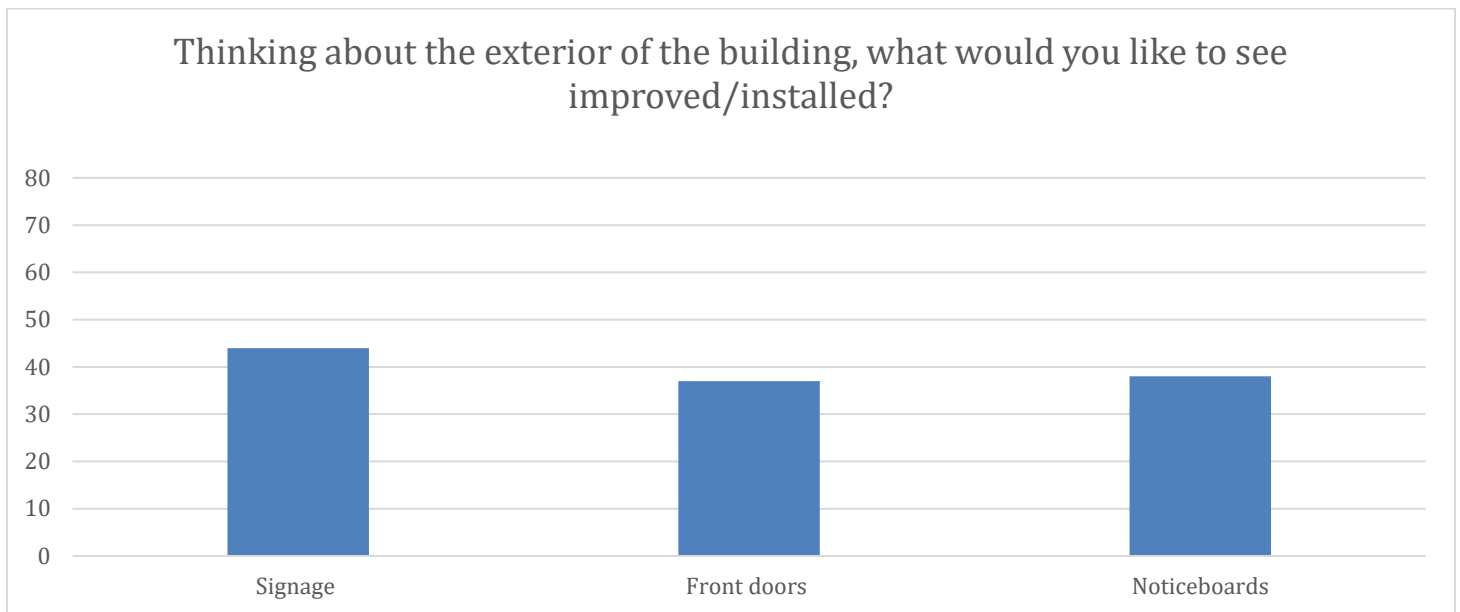
Communication Channels



Facebook is the most effective communication channel, supported by word of mouth and noticeboards. However, there was a large number of residents who said they didn't know when events were on and comments indicate that communication could be clearer and more consistent.

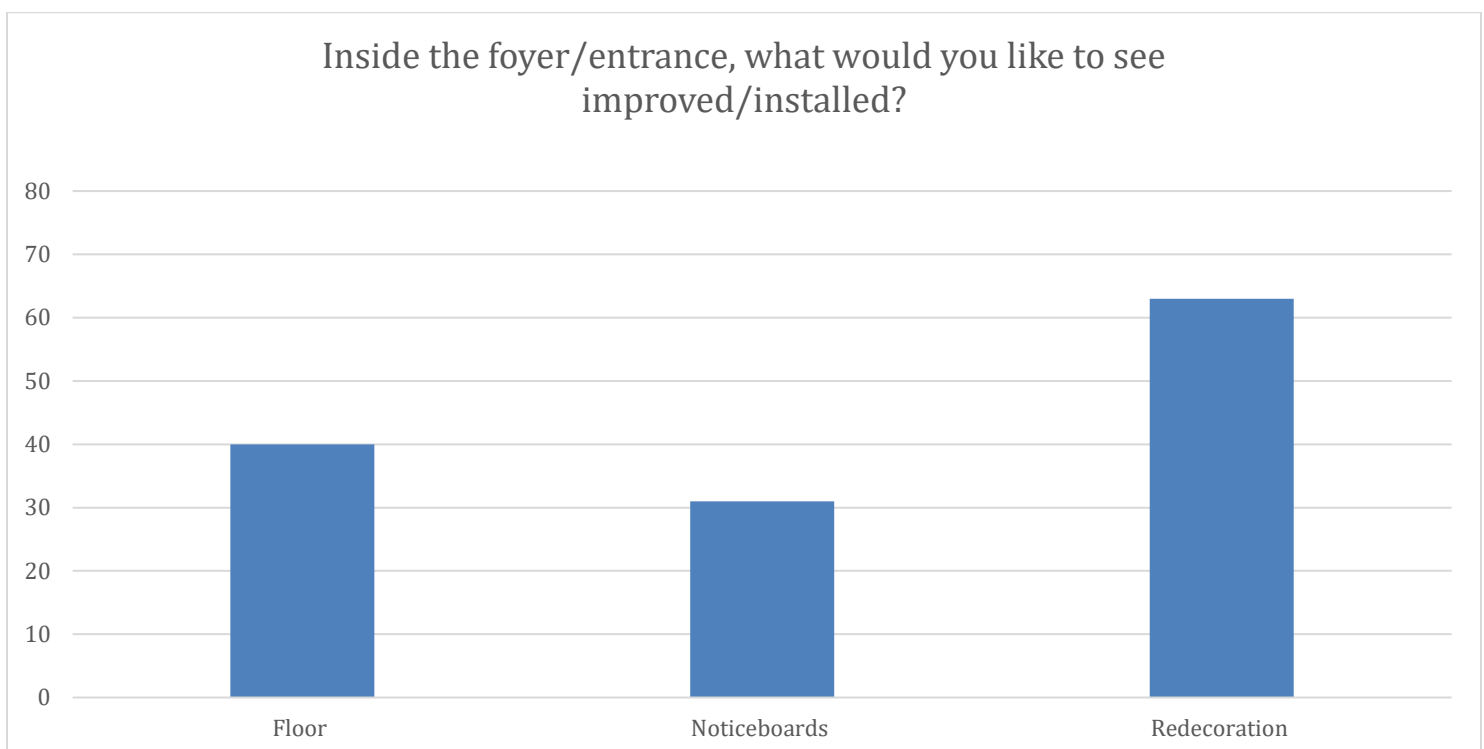
External Improvements

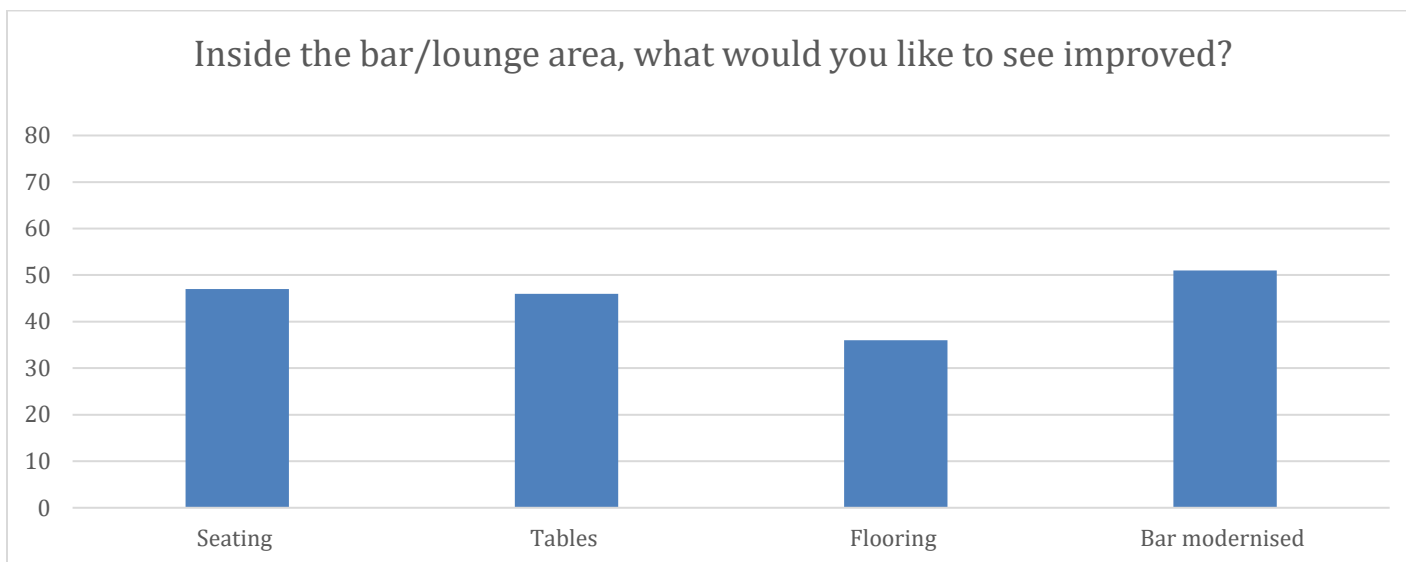
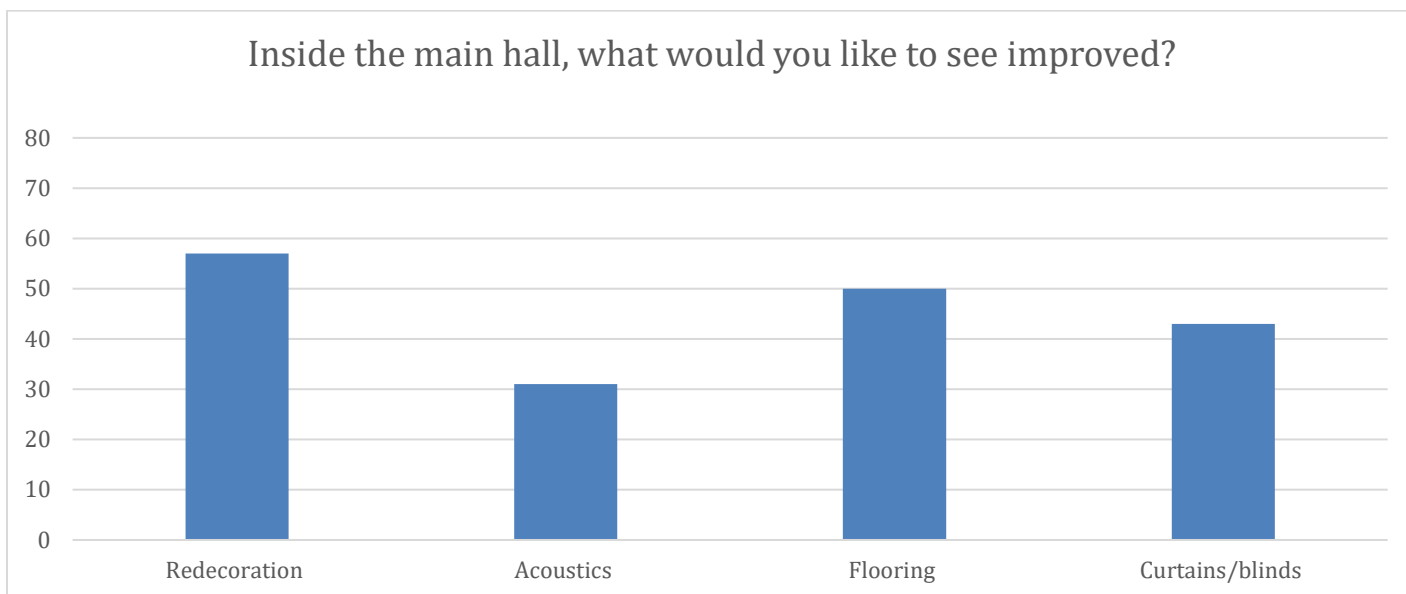




Improved lighting was voted the highest priority, highlighting safety concerns, particularly around the car park and external areas. Since the survey went out, an additional light has been installed on the front of the building and the car park will be resurfaced when Dragonfly complete the building works on the Woburn development.

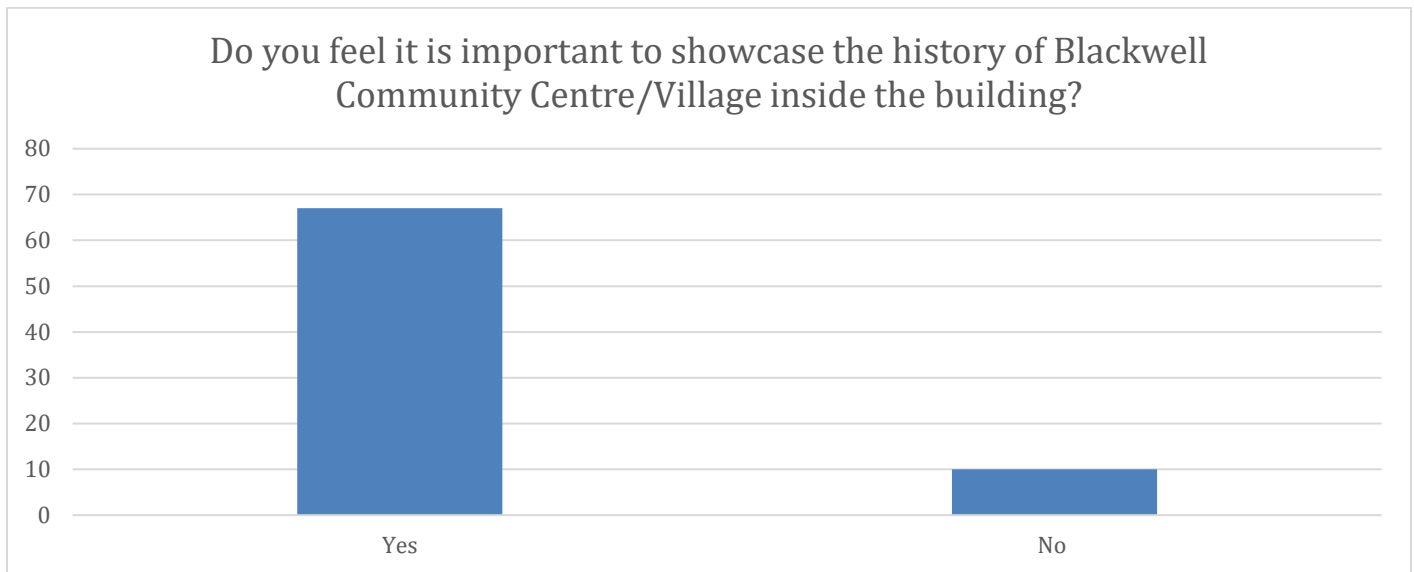
Internal Improvements





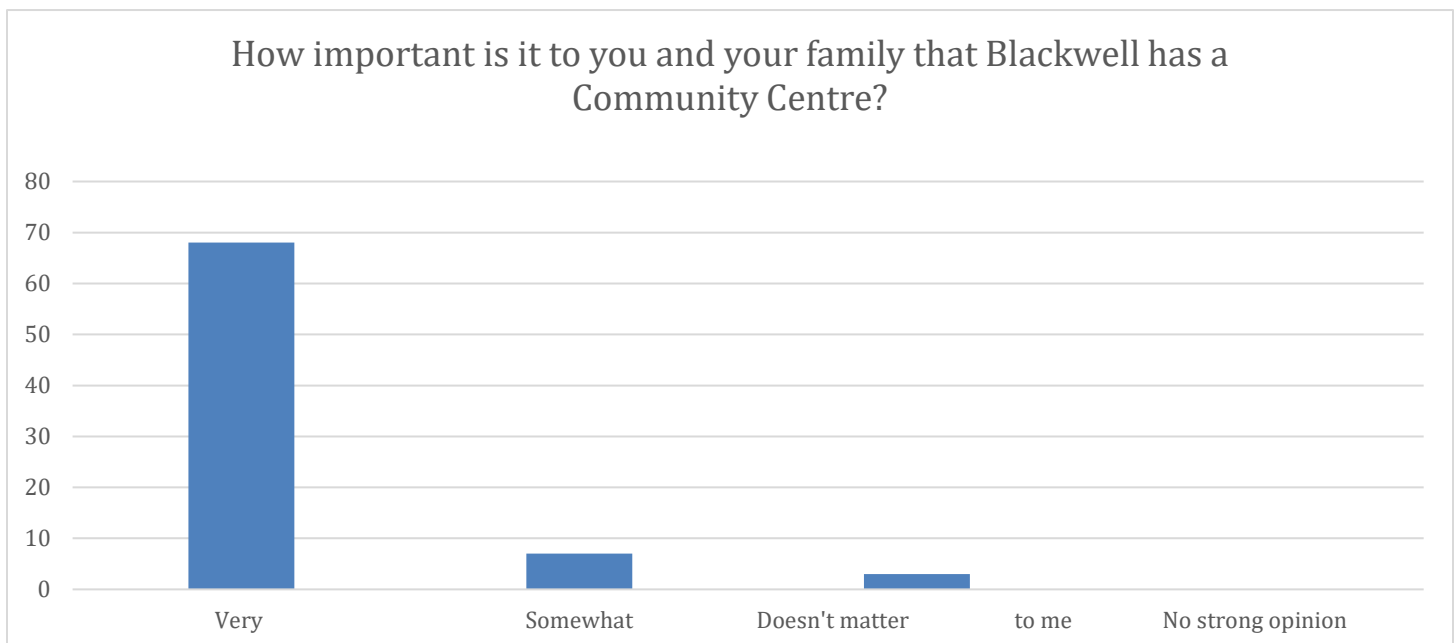
All improvements internally were popular with respondents showing a strong appetite for a more modern community centre. Additional comments mentioned that the centre looks quite tired and dated and people would be more likely to book it out for events if this work was completed.

History



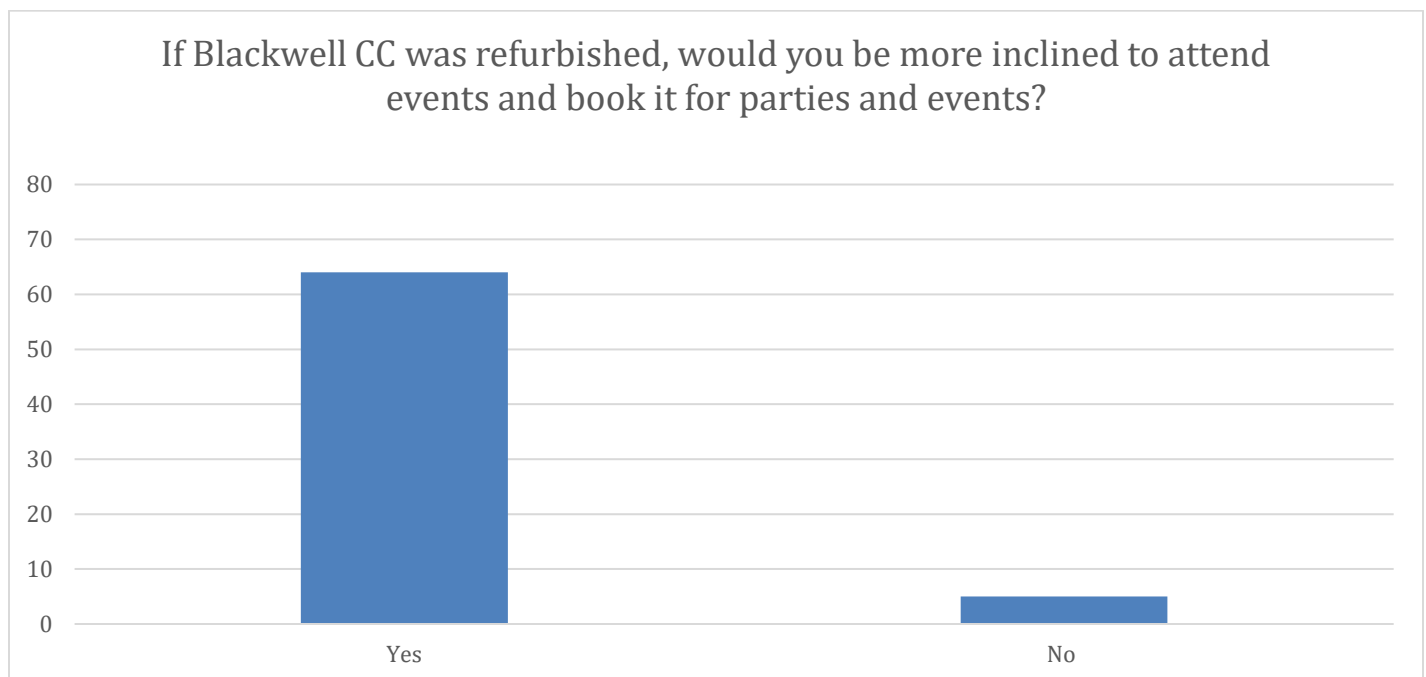
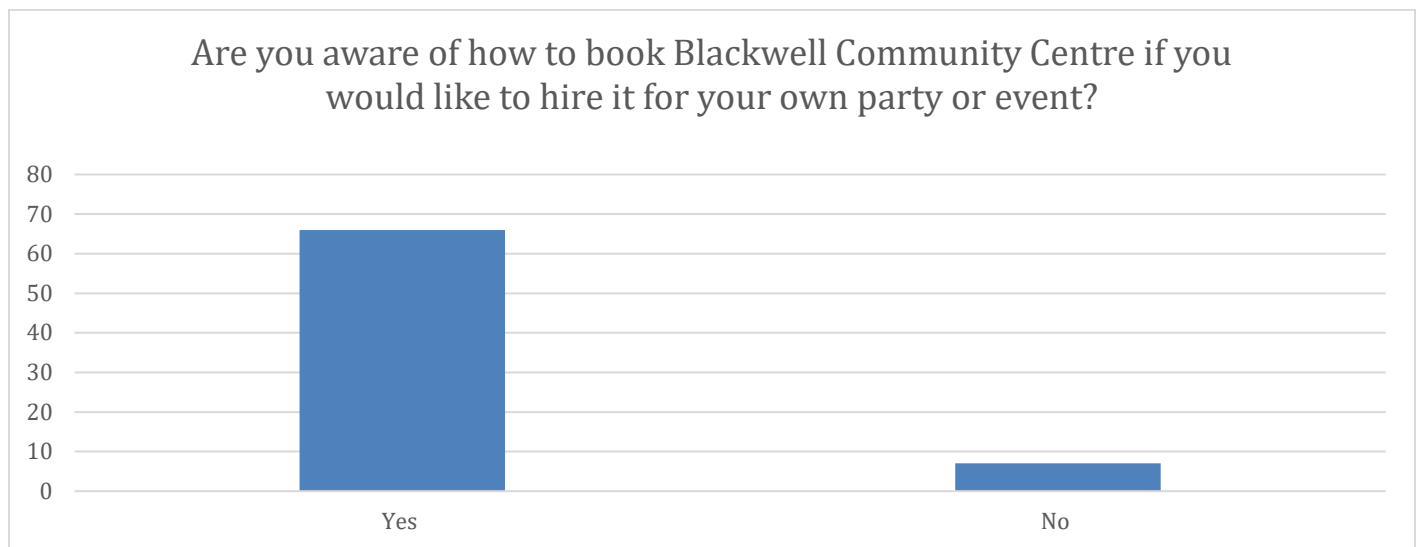
Respondents felt it important to retain the history inside the building, a comment suggested relocating them as they are not very visible at the bottom of the hall.

Importance of the Community Centre



Blackwell Community Centre is viewed as very important by the vast majority of respondents, reinforcing its role as a key village asset.

Booking



Most respondents were aware of how to book the centre if they would like to and would be more inclined to attend/book it for parties and events. This clearly demonstrates the potential of the community centre should the refurbishment be completed.

Qualitative Feedback

Many respondents described the building as tired, dated, or dingy, despite praising the friendliness of staff and volunteers. There was consistent feedback that a refreshed, modernised space would significantly increase use, bookings, and community pride.

Accessibility and Inclusivity

Specific accessibility improvements were requested, including:

- A covered mobility scooter shelter outside the building
- Improved lighting in the car park and external areas (an additional light has been installed at the front of the centre, and once the housing development has finished this will likely further improve the lighting)

- Safer, more even car park surfacing (Dragonfly will be resurfacing the car park on completion and marking out bays)
- Automatic or improved front doors.

Facilities and Equipment Requests

Respondents suggested several practical improvements to increase use and flexibility, including:

- Movie night / cinema equipment (screen, projector, sound)
- A large TV in the bar/lounge area
- Improved acoustics and flooring in the main hall
- Modernised bar area
- Larger or improved toilet facilities
- Bringing historic photographs forward to more visible areas

Activities and Events

- There was demand for additional activities, including:
- Pub nights and social evenings
- Family-friendly events with early evening timings
- Craft fairs, markets, and artisan food stalls
- Fruit and vegetable stalls and butcher vans
- Bingo nights, film nights, and live entertainment
- Support groups for young people and mental health drop-ins
- Educational activities involving budgeting, meal planning and benefits advice
- Gardening activities for children and veg tasting

Volunteering and Community Involvement

There were a few respondents who expressed willingness to help, including through fundraising, decorating, design input, and community-led projects. Some residents highlighted opportunities to involve young people through work experience or skills-based volunteering.

Clarifications Identified Through Consultation

The consultation highlighted a small number of misconceptions that should be addressed clearly:

- The Town Crier is a volunteer role and is not paid by the Parish Council.
- Blackwell Community Centre is owned by Bolsover District Council; therefore, the Parish Council cannot decide to demolish it.
- Another respondent stated that the Council should sell Hilcote & Newton Community Centres to fund a new centre in Blackwell. An explanation on the charities may be beneficial, so the community understands that Council do not own Hilcote Community Centre either, only Newton.
- One respondent did not know why we did not have the new Community Centre that was proposed a few years ago, it may be beneficial to explain this again.

It is recommended that these points, along with a summary of survey findings, are clearly communicated via the Parish Council Website and possibly the Newsletter.

The survey generated quite a few comments and few examples are listed below.

Positive Comments

“The centre provides a valuable place to meet, especially for people in the village.”

“I really enjoy my visits to the Blackwell Community Centre. Everyone is so friendly and welcoming.”

“A good refurb would make it more appealing and could attract more bookings and events.”

Negative / Critical Comments

“The place is falling apart and looks scruffy – it is in urgent need of refurbishment.”

“Lighting outside is very poor and dangerous, especially for elderly residents.”

“It feels old fashioned and not appealing for private parties or weddings.”

Recommendations

A number of priority improvements, such as new flooring, redecoration and lounge seating, have already been presented to Council for consideration as part of the National Lottery funding bid. The additional priorities identified through the community consultation, as outlined earlier in this report, will also be brought to a Council meeting to determine whether they can be incorporated into the bid or delivered through alternative means.

Some of the suggested enhancements, particularly additional activities and groups, would be dependent on external individuals or organisations willing to host or deliver them. In these cases, the Council can play a proactive role by promoting the refurbished Community Centre as a modern, accessible, and flexible venue, thereby encouraging increased bookings and attracting new service providers. The Council may also wish to explore other funding opportunities to support the delivery of specific activities where there is clear community demand.

Making the consultation results publicly available on the Parish Council website will further support transparency and allow residents and potential partners to clearly see where local demand exists, hopefully helping to increase future engagement and use of the facility.

Next Steps and Action Plan

To strengthen the National Lottery funding bid and support successful delivery of the project, the following next steps are recommended for Council to consider:

- Incorporate safety, accessibility, and modernisation improvements into the refurbishment scope, in line with consultation feedback.
- Flexible, multi-use spaces within the hall and lounge areas to maximise the Centre’s potential for a wide range of events and activities.
- Whether to involve the community further through volunteering, fundraising, and co-design opportunities.
- Develop a clear communication and engagement strategy to advertise events, maximise attendance and increase future usage.
- Explore additional funding streams that could support the delivery of proposed activities where appropriate.

Conclusion

The consultation provides strong and consistent evidence that Blackwell Community Centre is highly valued by residents and that a comprehensive refurbishment would significantly increase both usage and community engagement. Although a higher response rate would have been desirable, the feedback received was largely positive and clearly supportive of a full refurbishment of the building. Only a small number of misconceptions were identified, which can be addressed through improved communication, and the consultation also highlighted additional enhancements for the Council to consider as part of the wider project.

Importantly, the findings demonstrate a clear understanding within the community of the Centre’s role as a shared, inclusive space and a desire to see it improved to better meet current and future needs. Respondents consistently emphasised the importance of accessibility, safety, modern facilities, and flexible spaces that can accommodate a wide range of activities for all ages.

The consultation outcomes are clear, detailed and provides evidence of local need, community involvement, and future impact. Taken together, the results present a stronger case for external investment and demonstrate strong community support for the proposed refurbishment, giving confidence that the project would deliver lasting benefits for Blackwell and the wider parish.