

Tenants Hall Community Engagement

A Report On The Engagement Session Held
For The Consultation Of Bristol City Council's
Land Disposal Of Tenants Hall

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Context

Bristol is a prosperous city, but the ongoing housing crisis coupled with the cost-of-living crisis is creating a dire situation for many. Demand for new housing is only increasing, yet house prices and rent are high in Bristol and affordable housing developments have slowed considerably. There are substantial problems of deprivation in parts of Bristol, and the neighbourhoods that do not share the city's prosperity often have insufficient housing of suitable tenure. This division tends to continue to occur along racial lines, with racially minoritised people more likely to be homeless, more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation and less likely to own their own home.

As the governments race disparity audit data shows, there are variations in the levels of home ownership between those in 'white' and 'non-white' ethnic groups in every region. However, at 70% and 40%, these variations are larger in the South West than elsewhere. Those living in the South West who are not in the 'white British' groups are three times more likely to be renting than 'white British' people (48% vs 16%), which is, again, a larger disparity than any other region. While most (56%) of homeless households in the City of Bristol are 'white', almost a quarter (24%) are households in the 'Black' group, with 6% or fewer being other ethnicities. In the South West, 'other than white' households are four times more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation than white households (8% vs 2%). These disparities are larger in the South West than those in several other regions.

Land Release Programme

Bristol City Council has recently adopted a policy to dispose of selected sites for use in development of affordable housing by community led housing (CLH) groups. There are six sites being offered during this land release programme, one of which is Tenants Hall, the former Barton Hill Tenants Association Club building.

The Bristol Somali Community Association has been campaigning for nearly three years for the council to act on the Tenants Hall. The building was once a social club but was closed around ten years ago. The council recently won a government grant of £200,000 from the Brownfield Land Release Fund to help meet the costs to clear the site and demolish the building. This will create an opportunity for a community-led project to replace it with around eight affordable flats and a new community space.

Community led Housing

Community led housing is a growing movement of normal people acting and managing housing projects that build the affordable homes. While community-led housing does not provide the answer to all the problems put forward by the housing crisis, it does provide an effective way to create additional choice, improve aspirations and empower communities. As Community Led Homes note:

- Homes that are genuinely affordable to rent and buy means communities aren't displaced, young people can have security, village shops and schools remain open. And the prices in CLH projects are protected in perpetuity, future generations will benefit from them too.
- Homes that are designed by local people are built with their friends and neighbours in mind, not profits. They'll be high quality and truly consider what people really need to be able to live happily and independently.
- Housebuilding has been dominated by a few traditional methods for too long, and their failure means normal people are bearing the brunt. Community led housing is for everyone. It's built with people in mind, everyday life, the environment, a more sustainable future.

Types of community-led housing projects might include:

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Co-housing | A design methodology used by intentional communities to create spaces that promote connectivity and togetherness. |
| Housing Co-operatives | A housing organisation that is controlled, managed, and owned by its members. |
| Community Land Trusts | Legal entities set up by communities to provide and protect assets of community value like genuinely affordable housing. |
| Self-help Housing | Empty properties are refurbished and brought back, often creating opportunities for training and volunteering. |

Source: [Community Led Homes](#)

Tenants Hall Community Engagement Session

As part of the process to bid for the building, Bristol Somali Resource Centre (in the support of Black South West Network, Community Led Homes West and Bristol Community Land Trust) held a public engagement session on the 16th of June 2022. Key to the planning of the event was to maximise the engagement of attendees. This was done by creating different routes for community residents to participate in the discussion, including:

- The main discussion and Q&A
- A survey
- Group table discussions
- Building a prototype neighbourhood with Lego
- 'What is strong, what is wrong?' poster
- Voting with a dot sticker on a poster

In addition, Abdullahi provided interpretation for the event to ensure that all those in attendance could understand and engage with the conversation in the language they felt most comfortable with. More than 100 people participated, including local organisations and groups such as Barton History Group, St Luke Church, Wellspring Settlement, Barton Activities Group, and Eastside Community Trust. The conversation began with a brief introduction to the Tenants Hall land release programme by Abdullahi before Susan Cataldi outlined the benefits of community led housing initiatives.

The community were then asked what they believe the space is needed for. Many points were raised but some key desired features identified in the discussion were:

- A café
- A youth club
- A singing group
- Kitchen facilities
- Events space
- An exercise group or classes
- A Mother/Toddler/Child group

Tenants hall has historically been important to the community and the conversation around what to do with the space has been ongoing for around two years. Now the land release programme will allow the community to address some of the housing and community needs within the new building. Community

members noted that they have always wanted to be a part of the process but were dubious about whether their ideas would genuinely be listened to. The architects noted that having the input of the community would help them to ensure the space meets the needs of those who are going to use it.

Attendees were also given an opportunity to ask a Bristol City Council representative their questions about the land release programme and the plans for the site. Bryony explained that the Council has a process in which community groups who have good ideas can make requests for pieces of land. While any community group can bid for the site there are some restrictions, including the requirement for housing to be included in the development. She also explained the rationale behind deciding to demolish the existing building versus renovation, which included issues around health and safety and the cost-benefit-analysis of demolishing and rebuilding versus an expensive renovation project. The demolition process is due to start before the end of the year.

Audience Question:

1. There were concerns over the disruption to the residents. Will there be different methods of communicating when demolition will start?

Bryony reversed the question and asked what the best way was to ensure communication of the demolition work was adequate. Audience members then replied with:

- Letters to residential properties surrounding Tenant's Hall
- Through the magazine Up Our Street
- WhatsApp groups
- Posters in Barton hill

2. How long is the lease?

At least 250 years, but the idea is that the community group would have to work with a housing association who won't get involved unless there is a longer lease. The site is a health hazard and is more value for money by demolishing and rebuilding. The preferred bidder does not take ownership immediately but enters into an agreement. Once planning permission is secured, ownership transferred.

3. Why wasn't the first attempt successful for BCLT 4 years ago?

The Council previously wanted to sell the site. It was a good deal, but BCLT was trying to figure out how to raise the funds.

4. What needs to be the status of the winning group?

The group must be a formalised/constituted group

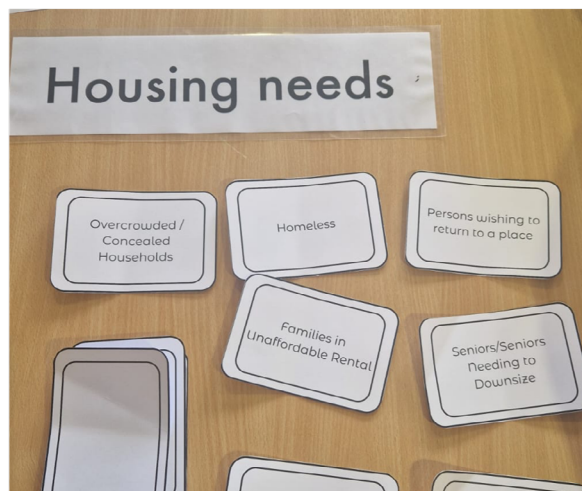
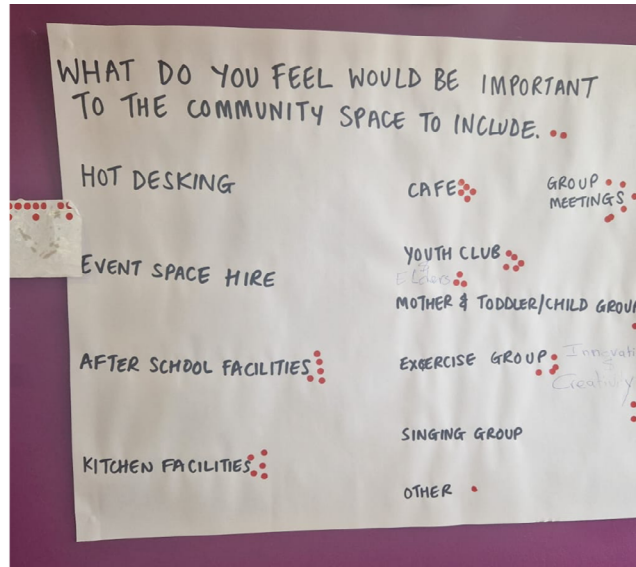
5. While we are glad to see this consultation is part of the process, it is notable that the decision to demolish was not up for consultation.

There is potential for the Bristol stone from the current building to be used in the new building.

6. Are there restrictions on the housing?

- It must be affordable housing which will be allocated in the council's allocation policy.
- In saying that, we could include a policy where we prioritise people in the geographical area.

After a break for refreshments, participants were invited to engage in a variety of feedback opportunities. This included: a survey, group discussions of what residents feel are great existing features of the community and what they would like to see change; describing the kinds of things they would like to see on the site using Lego; discussing the housing needs of the community using cards; categorising issues



Of those who attended the event, 35 responded to the survey. As with BSWN's housing research in 2020 which looked at the housing needs and aspirations of racially minoritised people in Bristol (including the role of community-led housing in addressing those needs), this survey included 11 questions covering several themes such as knowledge on community-led housing, housing needs, and desired community space facilities.

A positive trend when comparing the research carried out in both 2020 and the survey can be seen when looking at responses to the first question: have you heard of community-led housing? When we asked this question two years ago, many had never heard of it whereas 65% of survey respondents this time indicated familiarity. While we cannot directly compare the data from these two pieces of work (for several reasons), we can infer that, at least in this community, awareness of community-led housing has increased when compared to data from a focus group carried out with a similar population in 2020. This awareness is coupled with interest in the model, where 89 per cent stated that they would be interested in receiving further information about community-led housing. In fact, 79 per cent stated that they would be interested in actually being a member of the community-led housing steering group.

Figure 1: Have you heard of community-led housing?

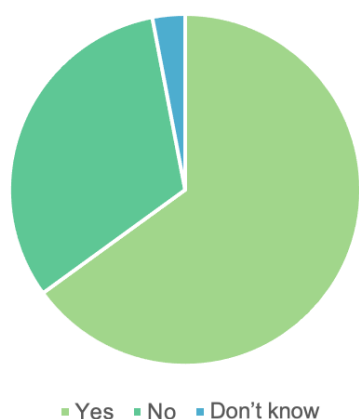
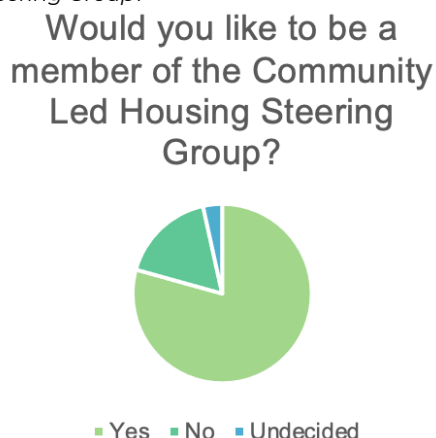
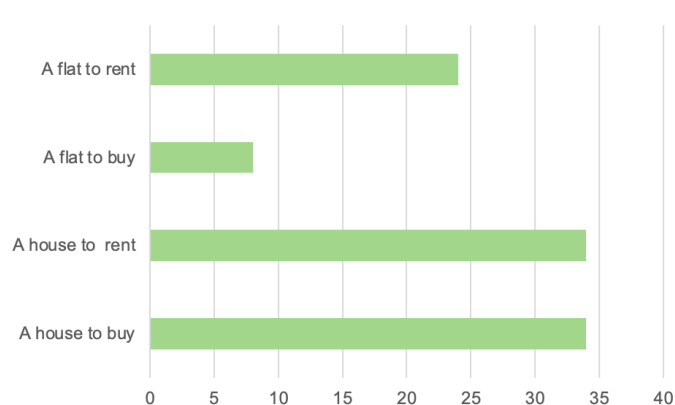
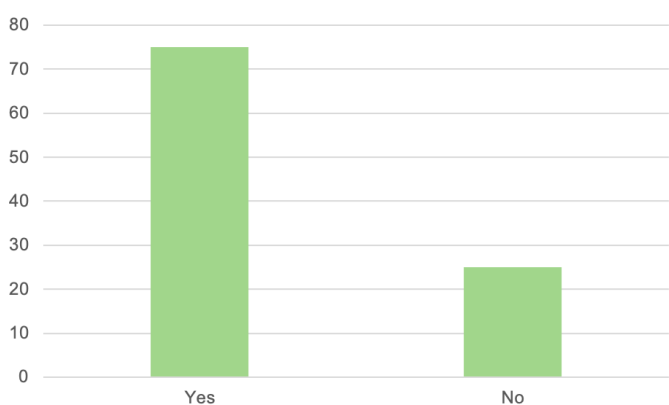


Figure 2: Would you like to be a member of the Community Led Housing Steering Group?



As shown in figure 3, 75 per cent of survey respondents answered yes when asked: Are you or any of your family in housing need? This is reflected in the national data which shows that racially minoritised people are more likely to be homeless and are more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation. As many noted 'overcrowding' as an issue in other parts of the engagement session, it is not surprising that houses are preferred to flats. In the discussion, one attendee noted that they "have 14 people in a 2-bed home. This is stressful for parents. We've had to turn the living room into a bedroom which means there's no relaxation or communal space. This effects our children's academic learning".

Figure 3: Are you or any of your family in housing need?



It is important that any community-led housing initiative does not cause displacement of existing community residents and, where possible, allows for communities to remain in the geographic area. This is reflected in the answers in figure 5 and 6 which show that most (75%) individuals would prefer to remain in Barton Hill and feel that those who live in Barton Hill or have family there should be prioritised for new homes.

Figure 5: Where would you or your family member like to live?

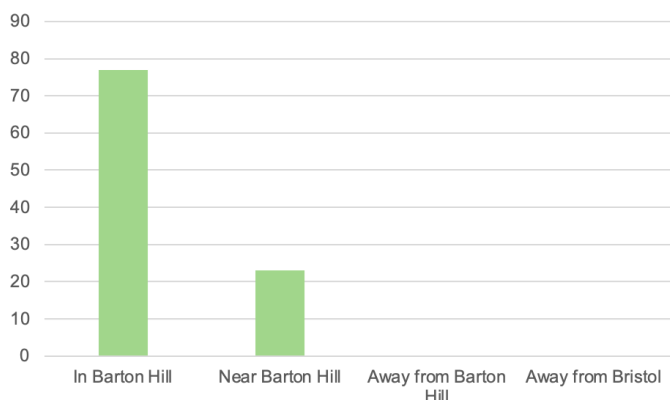
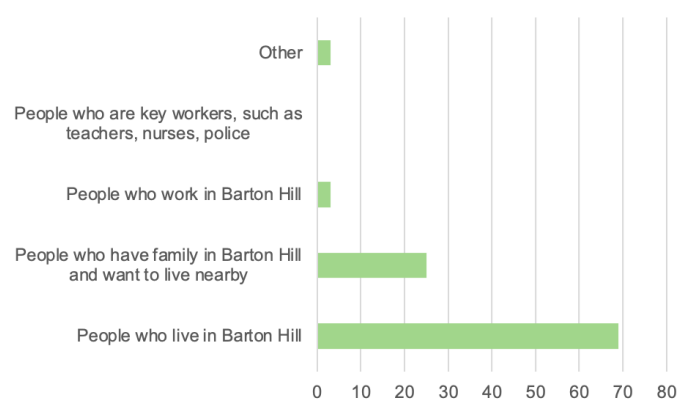


Figure 6: Who should the homes be for?



The overwhelming majority of participants agreed that more space for community activities is required in Barton Hill for a variety of activities such as events (24%), a café (23%), a meeting space (21%), a youth club (21%), a mother and child group (20%), an exercise group (20%) – see figure 7. While event attendees talked about the need for flexibility of the space to ensure access by different community groups, a booking system will be necessary to guarantee that access. This will of course require the space to be chargeable to some groups and/or in some circumstances will need to be chargeable to pay for use of the booking platform as well as a receptionist and caretaker. Attendees also focused on construction elements such as ensuring “space for prams and changing facilities” and facilities outside of the building such as “parking”, “traffic lights and zebra crossings”.

This desire for community space is reflected in the ‘What is strong? What is wrong?’ activity where participants focused on the lack of space for a variety of community activities including:

Strong

- There are places to go if you need something BSRC
- Togetherness
- Parents could put on own activities if they had space

Wrong

- Diversity not inclusivity
- Lack of facilities for children with additional needs e.g. Autism
- Have to travel long way for facilities e.g. Vench, youth facilities
- More facilities like the vench
- Increase with children with additional needs
- Need more community space
- Lack of things to do for children
- No local youth club/events
- Want local people able to live in their community
- Need baby changing facilities
- Could we prioritise disabled children in allocations

- Need a zebra crossing
- Need to work in partnership with local anchor orgs to ensure facilities are complementary
- Need outside space, need community gardens
- Need good cooking facilities
- Lack of facilities for young people

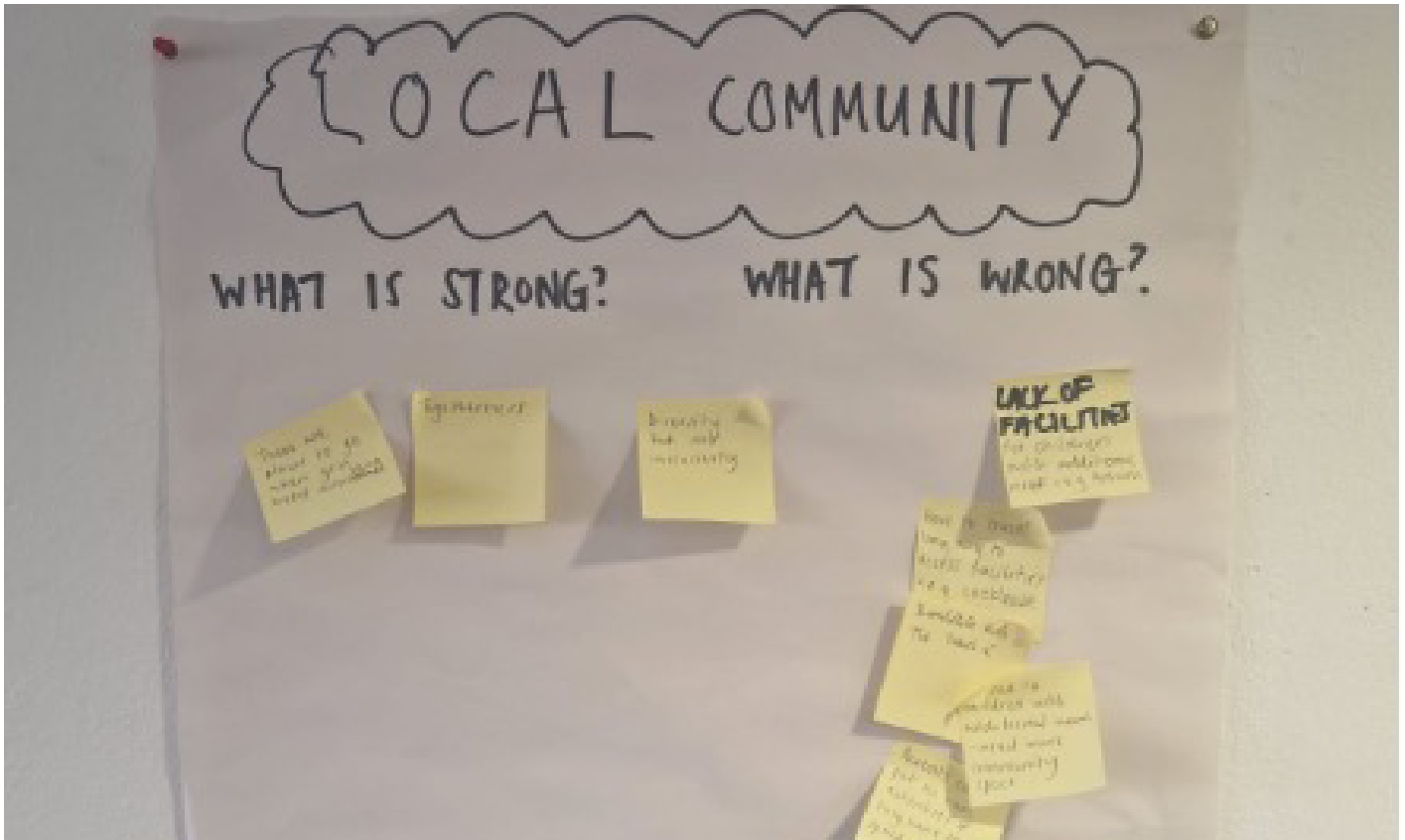


Figure 7: Is there a need for more space for community activities in Barton Hill?

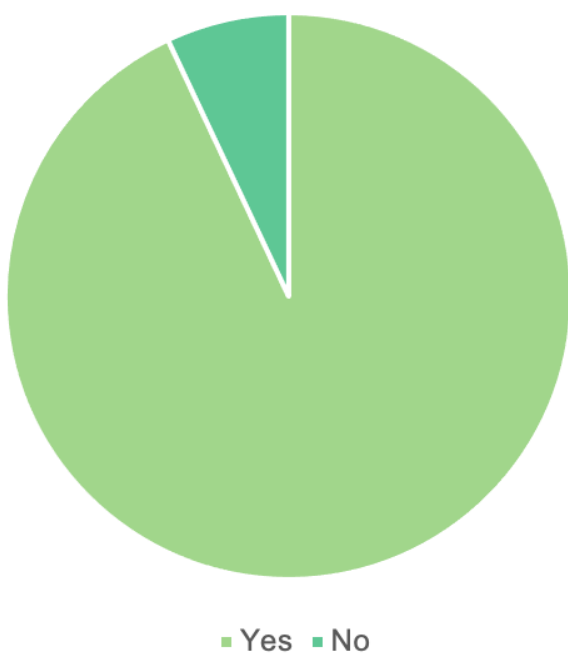


Figure 8: When would you or your family ever need to use a larger room than those in your home?

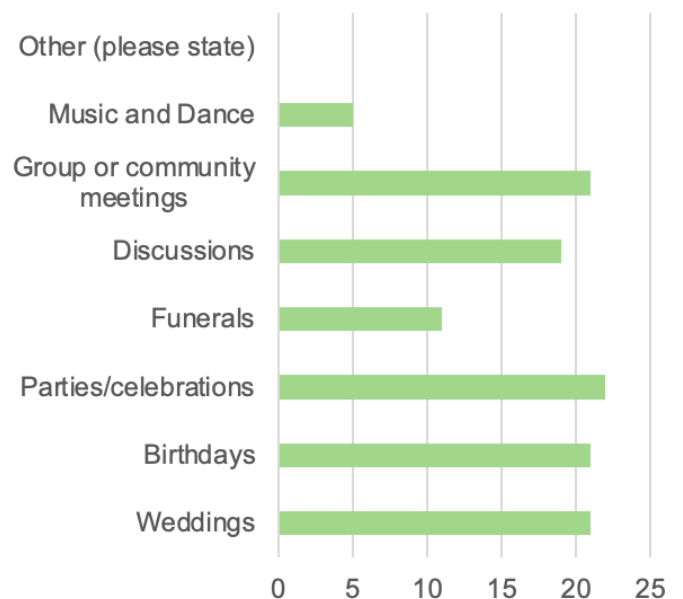
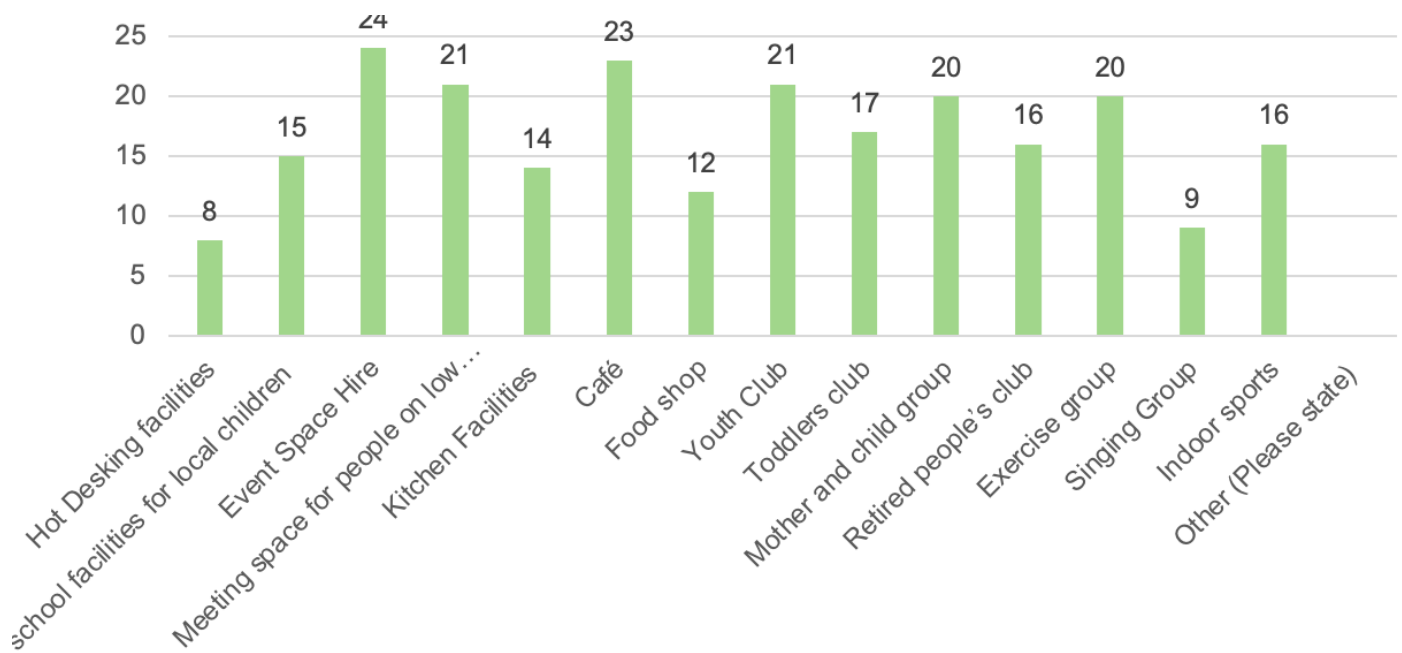


Figure 9: Which would be your preferred facilities?



The discussion ended with attendees reiterating the importance of having a space for social activities. The importance of having a space “just to chat because someone might be going through the same thing that you are and that relieves stress”. Having a shared community space is not a panacea and will not solve all the community’s issues but as one participant noted, “having the space to speak to someone who understands me is important. It can’t solve all our problems but it’s an access point. It’s a small building but a little goes a long way.”

The event was recorded by an illustrator, Drew Sinclair and [can be viewed here.](#)

This event was supported and planned by:



Bristol Somali Resource Centre

The Bristol Somali Resource Centre (BSRC) is a community-based organisation which supports people who are socially and economically disadvantaged in particular but not limited to people of Somali origin and heritage living and/or working within Bristol. BSRC provides free and impartial information, advice, and guidance on a range of issues including welfare, housing, immigration, schools, and employment.



Black South West Network

BSWN is a Black-led racial justice charity organisation based in Bristol who support the development of dynamic, independent, and strong racially minoritised communities, businesses, and organisations to flourish whilst challenging systemic barriers.



Community Led Homes West

CLHW is a community led housing support and advice hub based in the West of England. They help communities of interest throughout the project from finding land to sourcing finance, to connecting with experts and procuring supplies.



Bristol Community Land Trust

BCLT is a form of community-led housing, set up and run by ordinary people to develop and manage homes as well as other assets important to that community, like community enterprises, food growing or workspaces.

A very special thank you to everyone who helped plan and facilitate the event, to those who made and delivered the fantastic food, and to Drew for providing us with such an incredible record of the day. Most of all, thank you to all those who gave up their time to attend and give us their views on such an important topic.

