

AGENDA 10, Enc iii) Community Feedback Summary

Resident Concerns

Flag Displays and Public Property:

- Multiple residents report unauthorised Union Jack flags erected on lamp posts and public property
- Concerns that these displays are being used to intimidate rather than show genuine patriotism
- Requests for council action to remove flags from public assets
- Recognition that flags on private property are a different matter

Impact on Community:

- Reports of residents, particularly those from diverse backgrounds, feeling unwelcome
- Concerns about Ashington's reputation and image for visitors
- Worry that a minority is being allowed to define the town's character

Organisation Responses

Strong Support (Multiple Organisations):

- Several community groups fully endorse a public statement as necessary
- Agreement that strong leadership is needed during difficult times
- Recognition of council courage in addressing the situation

Qualified Support with Concerns:

- Some organisations support the principle but have reservations about approach
- Concerns about emotionally charged language potentially increasing division
- Worry that the statement shows no acknowledgment of any legitimate grievances
- Questions about rushed timeline

Process Concerns:

- Request for a collaborative approach with community leaders
- Preference for consultation before issuing
- Concern about speaking on behalf of organisations without prior discussion
- Fear that not supporting could damage relationships with council

Frontline Impact Reports

Staff and Service Delivery:

- Organisation staff feeling unsafe and targeted for their work

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- Difficulty supporting participants who are being directly affected
- Staff being tracked on social media and confronted in public
- Some organisations censoring materials to avoid becoming targets

Service Users:

- Participants reluctant to attend services due to intimidation
- Young people afraid to attend groups or school
- Some families considering leaving Ashington
- Increased targeting of marginalized groups (women, LGBTQ+, ethnic minorities)

Operational Changes:

- Organisations conducting additional risk assessments
- Some services being cancelled due to safety concerns
- Marketing materials being modified to avoid attention
- Difficulty in accurate incident reporting

Mixed Community Views

Opposition to Flag Removal:

- Some residents view flags positively and oppose their removal
- Pride in national symbols when displayed appropriately
- Preference for spending resources on community improvements rather than removal

Concerns About Division:

- Fear that strong statements could increase rather than reduce tensions
- Worry about moderate voices being pushed to extremes
- Questions about who defines community values and when flag display is "appropriate"

Key Themes

Need for Unity: Broad agreement that community leadership and unified response is necessary

Process Matters: Strong preference for collaborative consultation rather than top-down approach

Safety First: Real concerns about escalating tensions and protecting vulnerable community members

Balance Required: Recognition that addressing extremism while not alienating moderate concerns is challenging