

Observations on the Trull Parish Council Canonsgrove Survey documents

I appreciate very much the effort and time given to the preparation, distribution and analysis of this survey and I am not seeking to make any political point or argue for or against any of its propositions, but as a former teacher of Statistics I have significant concerns in regard to its compilation, distribution and interrogation.

The **Survey Summary** document, under 'Summary and Analysis', does not make it clear that the percentages refer to the number of responses that were deemed valid, not the parish population.

- It is assumed that it was known that the use of 'sizeable' meant an increase in present accommodation at Cannonsgrove, but this was not made clear on the survey.
- Most of the critical comments listed under 'Centrally located hub' refer to the use of Cannonsgrove, not the 'centrally located in Taunton' accommodation of this option.

On the first page of the **Survey Results** document, apart from the typo in the final line, it is not explained which totals the various percentages refer to. Also this document falsely draws only one conclusion from the many that are possible, namely that '...we can be 95% confident that between 93.1% and 100% of people in the villages are opposed to a sizeable hub at Canonsgrove.'

This would appear to be the outcome the originators sought to achieve (see later observations on bias in survey) and assumes that not selecting it as a single preferred option implies opposition to it, something respondents were not asked to indicate.

As only one survey was given to any household and only one response from any household was accepted (5 surveys were rejected as they were secondary responses), the quoted outcome does not represent the view 'of [all] people in the villages'. As the percentages are of the 219 surveys that were deemed valid, this conclusion should read:

'...we can be 95% confident that between 93.1% and 100% of one person from each of the 219 households returning a valid survey response in Trull/Staplehay did not support a sizeable hub at Canonsgrove as being the single best solution.'

But the way the survey had presented available options created a bias towards this being the least favoured. It was the only one accompanied by a negative consequence; it was the only one involving any use of Canonsgrove; it does not quantify 'sizeable'; it refers to 'a 6 mile round trip' rather than 'a round trip of less than 6 miles'; it says that such a trip is 'required' for 'essential services' without clarifying what these 'essential' services are or which of them are, or could be, provided at Canonsgrove. Would a simpler survey with one question 'Do you support the use of Canonsgrove in addressing Taunton's homeless provision?' have produced only 2 positive responses from 219? I doubt it.

An alternative conclusion could be:

'Approximately *21.5% of one person per household surveyed in Trull/Staplehay did not support a sizeable hub at Canonsgrove as being the single best solution.'

* This is (58+71+65) as a % of 900, for which there will be a 95% confidence interval which is likely to be less than +/- 6%.

Or, based on the Trull Parish population in 2011 of 2,288:

'Approximately #8.6% of the parish supported options 2,3 or 4 as offering a solution to homeless accommodation', though this % ignores population growth since 2011 which would reduce it and assumes the survey went to all in the parish.

#This is (58+71+65) as a % of 2,288, for which there will be a 95% confidence interval which is likely to be less than +/- 6%.

So the survey does not provide strong statistical support for any one solution and the survey on which it is based is flawed in its presentation. In presenting it as information to support collaborative discussion with SW&T it should include a copy of the survey sheet from which the data came and present the data without the selective, single interrogation of it - unless, perhaps as a statement such as, e.g., 'A sizeable hub model at Cannonsgrove was the least favoured single option'.

Unanswered questions

1. Was the survey distributed throughout the parish or just within 'the villages' of Trull and Staplehay? Certainly not all households in Trull received a copy. The Trull Neighbourhood Plan survey was distributed to almost 1,800 on the electoral roll.
2. If just to Trull and Staplehay, how was the boundary decided and by who? I know of one resident in Trull road who lives near Sherford Road who received a copy.
3. How many households are there in Trull Parish [or Trull/Staplehay] and what is the size of this population? It is unlikely to be exactly 900.
4. Why was each household restricted to just 1 response?

Regarding the survey as distributed

In addition to points already made:

- The survey did not state who it was from yet required respondents to identify themselves (and rejected their response if they failed to do so).
- Insufficient information accompanied the survey to provide respondents with the knowledge required to make an informed choice.
- The Housing First option was the only one which was described with a positive outcome, because 'it was felt that many would know nothing about it'. But its methodology was not explained and why was it thought that respondents would already know [more] about the other options?
- There was no information on the views of Canonsgrove residents or those who care for them.
- The survey appeared to be designed to achieve the outcome of rejection of the use of Canonsgrove in the way that the text on the reverse was composed, the way the option boxes were titled, the fact that using Canonsgrove was only one of the four options offered and only one way of using Canonsgrove was suggested.

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