



## **AVDC Neighbourhood Planning Consultation Toolkit for Town and Parish Councils**

**Involving the community is central to neighbourhood planning and key to the changes being brought in by the Government in planning future local housing and employment needs.**

Local communities are being encouraged to have more control and local people to have a say in what they want in their own community or parish. This includes everyone, from young people and the elderly, to commuters, businesses, individuals and families.

So town and parish councils need to involve their communities in the neighbourhood planning process in order to find out what their community *thinks* about more housing, employment opportunities, open spaces, and so on.

This toolkit is designed to support town and parish councils when they undertake any consultation in their communities, specifically for neighbourhood planning. It includes Ten Top Tips, practical guidance in holding an event, example questions and analysing your results and giving feedback.

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### **SECTION 1 - TOP TEN TIPS**

Use these ten top tips as a quick guide to consultation. They cover the essentials you should consider when planning any consultation.

There are many different ways of consulting the community. Page 5 lists the key methods used in neighbourhood planning, but there are many more you could consider, included in an A-Z of Consultation Methods included in appendix A.

There is no specific requirement for you to choose one method over another, so pick the method/s that you think will work well in your area.

## TOP TEN TIPS FOR CONSULTATION

- 1. Think about your community and residents.** Do they have regular meeting places? Are they mobile? Do they have access to computers and the internet? Are there any literacy issues within the community? Plan your consultation so that everyone has the opportunity to participate.
- 2. Ensure equality of opportunity to participate** by overcoming barriers that some individuals or groups may face. Recognise any special needs of your community and select any venues and communication methods with care. Acknowledge diversity and actively ensure your consultation is as inclusive as possible.
- 3. Make sure the aims of the consultation are clear,** and decision makers are all agreed – be clear on what you are trying to achieve. It helps when explaining it to others and ensures consistency.
- 4. Planning your questions.** What information are you looking for – what do you *need* to know? Who is responsible for acting on any outcomes and are you able to use the results to make decisions? Ensure you have the capacity to evaluate and analyse results effectively.
- 5. Make your consultation easy to understand.** Be empathetic when drafting questions, writing in a way that people are comfortable with and that they will understand. Group relevant questions into short sections and keep the flow in a logical sequence.
- 6. Ensure you have set aside enough time** to draft, conduct and analyse your consultation. You may need to adapt as the consultation progresses too, eg if your schedule changes, let people know about it.
- 7. Ensure that you comply with the Data Protection Act** when handling personal details. Personal questions will help your analysis for neighbourhood planning ensure you include household size, housing type and geographic location as well as the usual age, gender etc, eg postcode, village and street names. A list of usual categories are included as an appendix. The responses to these questions should not identify who the respondents are, unless of course you wish to invite them to further consultations.
- 8. Ensure your observe and display any copyright for maps,** including Ordnance survey-based maps.
- 9. Thank people for their contributions. Don't forget to let them know what you learnt and what you will do as a result.**
- 10. Analyse your consultation process. Have you achieved what you set out to do?** If not, why not and how could you have done things differently?

## **SECTION 2 - PREPARING YOUR CONSULTATION**

### **When, who, how and where to consult?**

#### **2.a. WHEN TO CONSULT**

The length of time needed will vary depending on:

- what method/s you choose
- the time of year, and
- the level of response that is being sought.

Best practice suggests you should plan for up to 6 to 12 weeks for your programme, depending on the 'how', ie the method/s you use.

Note: Whilst it would be usual to allow three weeks to reply to a simple questionnaire, stakeholder groups need time to discuss their reply and may only meet monthly, so allow them longer.

#### **Checklist**

1. Think about the time of year. What else is happening? Try to avoid major holiday times such as Christmas or key school holidays.
2. Check if other local events or occasions are planned that you might:
  - a. clash with diluting the level of interest and responses, or
  - b. use to communicate effectively with a already established audience.
3. Be clear about when decisions will be taken - and plan back from that.
4. Offer a range of dates and time of day/evening for events as some elderly residents may not wish to be out at night or commuters not able to get to a day time event. Using a combination of both will ensure that you are attempting to reach everyone.
5. Use a project planner to develop a realistic timetable, see section 7.
6. Make sure you build in sufficient time for analysing what you learnt, identifying any key themes emerging.
7. Allow time for feedback and evaluation.

#### **2.b. WHO TO CONSULT**

Recognising the mix of people that makes up your community, will help to ensure everyone has the opportunity to 'engage'. Whether they do or not can reflect on how 'inclusive' your consultation plans are (though some people are just not interested no matter how much the outcome may affect them in future years).

The more imaginative and creative your plans are, the more interested people will be, want to get involved, making your consultation more robust.

Naturally, the people who live in your parish are those whose views are most important. Generally speaking, it is relatively easy to get mature adults to participate

in consultation. Grouping residents and businesses into 'stakeholder' groups, helps to identify who else you need to think more carefully about what methods you should select to ensure their views are obtained. Some methods are better than others at including the majority of these groups.

**Typical stakeholder groups include:**

- Schoolchildren (aged 5-16)
- Young people (aged 16-30)
- Older people
- Commuters (people living in the community but working outside)
- Housing estate representatives
- Community groups and societies
- Single parent families
- People with physical needs
- People with learning needs
- Faith groups (from a range of different faiths)
- People employed in the community
- Local businesses
- Black and minority ethnic groups
- Travellers and gypsies
- Families
- Migrant workers

**2.c. HOW TO CONSULT**

The range of consultation methods that are particularly suited to neighbourhood planning includes:

- Self-completion questionnaires
- Public meetings
- Focus groups
- Stakeholder seminars
- Open days
- Exhibitions

Several methods may have to be used to get the whole community involved.

To gain the attention of your target audience and obtain a response from all stakeholders, you should communicate with them by methods they are used to and if possible, allow them to respond by a method of their choice.

**Selecting the best method**

Ask yourself the following key questions below to guide you to the right method:

**Checklist to identify the best method**

1. What am I trying to find out?
2. From whom do I need this information?
3. How would they like to respond?
4. What information do they need before they can respond?
5. Do we need something besides a simple exchange of information?
6. How will I record this information?
7. What resources do I need and have?

## 8. How much time do I need and have?

Check the A to Z of Consultation Methods in the appendix E for a list of other methods, their strengths and weaknesses.

### **Quantitative or Qualitative consultation methods?**

**Quantitative methods** – are usually based on a representative sample of people who will give you an accurate picture of the population. If you want to know *'how many people think'*, the quantitative method should be used.

Quantitative data is generally collected through offering a 'multiple choice' of responses which make it easier to carry out statistical analysis. Analysing quantitative data involves 'number crunching' – results are usually expressed as percentages and frequencies.

Most frequently used quantitative methods include:

- Self-completion questionnaire
- On-line questionnaire
- On-street face to face questionnaire
- Referendum / poll
- Public meeting

**Qualitative methods** – have more to do with attitudes, views and opinions and the reasons *why people feel the way they do*. If you want to know *'why'*, then a qualitative method is required.

Qualitative research typically involves group discussions or in-depth interviews to gain information, but is less about the number of people involved and more about the type of information you are trying to get. Analysing qualitative data takes longer as it involves grouping those strands of opinion that are related to one another.

The most frequently used qualitative methods are:

- Focus groups
- Developing parish plans
- In-depth interviews /face to face
- Community meeting
- Exhibition event
- Workshop or group discussion
- Questionnaire - 'open' questions
- Open day event
- Stakeholder meetings
- Road show
- Documentary consultation
- 'Mad, sad, glad' boards
- Forums - area, local, web
- Photo survey

For other consultation methods in more detail check appendix xx A – Z of Consultation Methods or visit <http://www.communityplanning.net/inde.php/>

### **2.d. WHERE TO CONSULT**

If you are holding an event, consider different consultation venues to help you reach the whole of your community. Using different locations may give more people the opportunity to join in, and you will get better intelligence as a result.

### **Checklist of possible venues**

1. Community centre / village hall
2. Schools
3. Pubs
4. Places of worship
5. Shops / Post office
6. On-the-street
7. Drop-in events
8. Public meetings
9. Community days / Village fetes / Summer festivals
10. Focus groups / Workshops
11. Existing community clubs & societies

**See section 4 for more detail in planning and running a consultation event**

## **SECTION 3 - DEVELOPING QUESTIONNAIRES**

### **3. a. Questionnaire design**

Before designing a questionnaire, think about your objectives and consider the key points you want answered and whose views you want to hear.

Questionnaires may be used to support an exhibition or open day, or used on their own. However you use them, you must give people some background so they know 'why' you are asking them for their views.

You can back it up with a leaflet explaining the background, exhibitions and displays, web links and further contact information.

#### **Checklist**

1. Keep the subject matter relatively simple, remembering that other forms of research may be better suited to the kind of questions that you want to ask or the target audience you wish to contact.
2. Using multiple-choice or ranking options is easier for both respondents to answer and data entry.
3. Make sure the questionnaire is logically planned, formed in sections that flow naturally from one to another.
4. Use a simple explanation to provide context to complex questions or different subjects covered by the survey.
5. Keep your questions and the overall questionnaire as short as possible, if you keep the subject matter to the neighbourhood plan, this shouldn't be a problem.
6. Pilot the questionnaire. Ask someone not involved in it's design to test how long it takes to complete – if it's over 15 minutes it maybe off-putting to some. A single questionnaire on it's own may not be able to answer all you need to know, but provide good data to base further 'qualitative' consultation upon. Piloting also acts as another proofing check.

7. Add in a confidentiality statement, to reassure participants of your security / data protection.
8. The questionnaire should always end with a *thank you* and the close date for replies.

### 3. b. Question type

#### Open ended/closed answer questions

In 'open ended' questions respondents write in their own answers, whereas in 'closed' questions respondents choose from a list of possible answers.

**Closed answer questions** – typically choosing from a list of options is easier and less expensive to analyse than open answer questions. Aim to make as many as of your questions 'closed' answer as you can.

Rating scales can be used in 'closed' questions, so you can get a mean score, as well as count the percentage, eg '*How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with affordable housing in Greenvale*'

Very satisfied	5
Quite satisfied	4
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3
Quite dissatisfied	2
Very dissatisfied	1
Don't know/not sure	0

Note: When designing questions, it is essential to provide an equal number of negative and positive options on the list.

**Open ended questions** - only use open answer questions where they add value to your overall survey. Ideally, they should only be used to probe specific closed answer questions, eg '*And what makes you say you are satisfied/dissatisfied with affordable housing in Greenvale?*' (Please write in) .....

It is both time consuming and costly to analyse open ended questions so don't ask them unless this is the only or best way to get the information you need.

**Classification questions** - These questions are used to help with analysis and identify what groups of interviewees feel about different issues.

Remembering that any classification questions asked give personal information of the responder, so only ask those categories that you will use the replies in analysis.

In community led consultation, the classification questions you should ask are:

- Age
- No. in household
- Housing type
- Occupation
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Postcode, and
- Street/village.

Using these demonstrates that you have been inclusive in your consultation and therefore that your results are robust.

### **3.c. Question wording**

A clear and concise survey will improve response rates. Developing the wording of questions is very important.

#### **Checklist**

1. Avoid using jargon and use everyday language wherever possible.
2. Write in short sentences of no more than 15 words.
3. Use multiple choice questions wherever you can – it's easier for respondents to tick a box than think how to phrase their comments - and its easier to analyse.
4. Keep the questions short.
5. Do not ask questions that might be hard to answer, e.g. participants will have difficulty imagining where they might be living in ten years time.
6. Route respondents to different parts of the survey if answers are not applicable.
7. Avoid leading questions, such as 'Do you agree.....'.
8. Avoid vague phrases such as 'Do you use the bus service regularly' – 'regularly' is subjective. Instead, list a variety of time scales, such as daily, weekly, twice monthly and so on, in closed answer format.

### **3.d. Increasing response rates**

Making it easier for people to get involved results in a better response rate.

If promoted well, distributed and collected by hand, response rates for self-completion questionnaire will usually be very high. Typically the effect of this 'personal touch' increases returns to around 75-85% complete and return questionnaires.

Door to door collection, supplemented by collection boxes in local outlets such as shops, pubs and places of worship will help the response rate as it reminds people to complete it if they haven't already.

Creating awareness in the weeks running up to your questionnaire launch ensures that the community know about your plans. Village and parish newsletters are an

ideal way to 'tease' local interest, e.g. a small feature titled 'Look out for next months issue for your local neighbourhood planning survey'.

### **Checklist for collecting questionnaires**

1. Use existing delivery networks eg village/parish magazine distributors, or use word of mouth or advertising to recruit a team of people to distribute and collect.
2. Encourage volunteers to speak to every householder, not just to push the envelope through the door.
3. Indicate clearly when the questionnaires will be collected (usually within three weeks for households; longer for stakeholder groups), or provide an envelope for return.
4. Alternatively, consider buying a licence for a Freepost address to return questionnaires. This often happens in larger communities, but return rates will be lower than household collection.
5. Think about how you will gather information from people with poor literacy and numeracy skills. Consider arranging for someone who can help fill in the forms?
6. Keep a clear record of where questionnaires have been delivered and collected to ensure you have covered the area.
7. If yours is a larger community, you might need to appoint a coordinator and split the area with a team of collectors who report to the overall team leader. If this is the case, provide collectors with identification cards or badges and a crib sheet so they can answer questions e.g. 'What is Neighbourhood Planning?' 'Is it confidential?' Organise a team briefing event when the process is outlined to all collectors, explaining how important it is to make several attempts to collect the questionnaires.

### **3.e. Analysing your responses**

#### Checklist

1. Merge the responses from any paper and online questionnaires, by inputting any paper replies into your chosen software programme. Whilst doing this you can check the returns for accuracy (eg have people put in two ages?).
2. It doesn't really matter if all questions aren't answered. Some people may feel uncomfortable answering some questions – a good reason why you should include a 'Don't know/not sure/can't remember' option to prevent this putting people off completing it.
3. Using survey software makes analysis easier; how you interpret the findings requires more skill.
4. Start by looking at the basic statistics and percentages around which you will develop your findings, eg 25% are aged under 30, and so on.

5. The next stage is to 'cross tab', looking for trends in your data by analysing two questions together. For example, knowing that just under half of parishioners agree that it would be more convenient if local shops were open later, you can say how important this is for certain age groups.

(Note: A quick 'word of mouth' search in the early planning stage of your consultation may identify if there is anyone in your parish with experience in producing questionnaires, undertaking market research or with experience of data collation, input and analysis that may be able to help).

### **3.f. Feedback and reporting**

You don't need to use all of the feedback in your report. Only use statistics to *support and evidence* the conclusions you have come to, ie those that have informed your findings and any decisions moving forward.

Select those most relevant and important and organise into summary tables and graphs. (You can provide the full data set as an appendix rather than in the main report body if you wish).

#### **Checklist**

1. Make sure that what you have concluded is supported by the data.
2. Ensure you feed back the results to residents in a timely manner.
3. Let people know what you found out, as well as what you are going to do with this information. This will make sure that people do not think that their contributions 'disappeared into a filing drawer' and help continue raising the profile of your task.
4. If using other consultation methods in addition, don't be tempted to merge the results, they are not comparable, but complementary. However you can present them side by side.

## **SECTION 4 - PLANNING AND RUNNING AN EVENT**

As with all forms of consultation, planning is key to holding a successful event.

Although events may take many forms, the same process underpins all. This section aims to provide guidance on how to organise and run an open event including.

- Public meeting
- Seminar
- Open day
- Exhibition

Where you decide to hold your event is important. Community buildings are perhaps the obvious choices although not always the only option and not all communities

have one. Is there a local school, scout/guide hut, sports pavilion, or does the local pub have a spare room that could be used instead?

Hire a venue with good access and capacity, that caters for those with disabilities, and preferably with public transport and parking nearby?

There are a number of ways in which an open day can be used in the action plan process:

- Generate general community awareness
- Inform people of the benefits and the processes involved
- Attract volunteers to sign up for working groups
- Identify issues that the community feels are important to its collective future
- Use the event as part of the overall consultation process
- Identifying people's views on the draft action plan
- Launch the Neighbourhood Plan
- Report progress on various actions as they develop

#### **4.a. Formal events**

Formal events, such as public meetings or seminars, are more structured, and often include presentations. Introduced and managed by someone acting as chairman, they usually involve speakers and experts. .

Public meetings are usually more successful in attracting a range of people at the weekend. Whilst weekday evening meetings may be convenient for commuters, others such as elderly members of the community or single parents may not wish to attend at night.

##### **Checklist**

1. Choose speakers who are comfortable speaking in front of an audience. Can the 'chair' handle hecklers and keep their cool under pressure?
2. Do you need audio/visual aids, microphones and a roaming microphone to take questions from the floor in a public meeting? Have the correct equipment, and ensure you set up and test it *in advance*.
3. Plan in any breaks and discussion between community members
4. Bring a note taker or get the event filmed or recorded to ensure you don't miss any comments and body language used by those who contribute. You should advise people that you intend to tape the event for data collection purposes only.

#### **4.b. Informal events**

Informal events such as open days and exhibitions have a more relaxed environment that encourage people to have their say in a less conspicuous way. These typically

can run from morning to night, making it easy for people to 'drop in' at a time that suits them, therefore people with time constraints are more likely to attend.

Less formal events give people the opportunity to look around, find out what's going on, meet attendants and ask questions in relative privacy. You get more time to network with stakeholders as well as engaging with people on the issues.

### **Checklist**

1. If you are planning to stage an exhibition, select the best location for it to be seen by everyone.
2. Consider using case studies, they can help to illustrate what could happen.
3. Think about who will erect, dismantle and man your event?
4. Prepare an information leaflet highlighting the key points for people to take away.
5. Draft a short questionnaire to pick up the key issues you want to know, otherwise it can be difficult to capture what people think.
6. Draft a rota of attendants throughout the day with more people planned to cover the evening.
7. Be aware that the time and choice of day you decide to hold your open event on may affect who will be able to attend. Perhaps you could hold your event over two half days?

### **4.c. Utilising existing community events**

Think about taking your consultation to the public, rather than the public coming to you. Think carefully about where people already meet and try to make best use of these opportunities.

If the timing of your consultation coincides with that of a popular local event such as a village fete, local society event or community club, it maybe possible to 'piggy back' that event and you'll be instantly guaranteed an audience.

Be creative and make your stand or activity as interesting and eye catching as possible to ensure people notice it. And remember to have a team of people to answer questions and look after your display.

### **4.d. Publicising an event**

Publicity is essential if people are to attend an event.

Inviting local organisations and authorities gets them involved from the start, creating good working relationships and benefiting you in the long term when addressing future actions.

There are lots of different ways to publicise an event, but timing is key to its success.

### **Checklist**

1. Find out the print deadlines for local newsletters/newspapers and advertise in them. If you've missed the print deadline, you may still be able to insert an A5 flyer within its distribution.
2. Find out what other events are being held in advance that you can use to hand out invitations for your event.
3. Ask local shops and pubs to display a small poster ,or a postcard if they don't have much space. Also promote the event with posters on local public notice boards, community centres and in sports pavilions.
4. Ask the local schools to hand out a flyer with pupils.
5. Make sure your community website has large feature on your event on the homepage.
6. Don't forget to ask a local radio station if they'd like to come and do an interview at your event. They are always looking for local news stories - you may get some free publicity in advance too.
7. Plan the event well in advance to maximise peoples' availability, and try to avoid clashing with local events, sports matches and popular television programmes!

#### **4.e. Equipment**

Make a list of all the equipment you are likely to need. This will depend on what you have planned and may include:

- Large-scale map of the area
- Exhibition boards
- Leaflets and questionnaires
- Flip charts and coloured pens
- Display boards
- Laptop computer, projector and screen
- Tables and chairs
- Extension cables
- Name badges
- Paper, pens
- Blu-Tack, stickers & sticky note pads
- A camera (take pics to include in your final plan)
- Attendance sheets

#### **4.f. Insurance**

Investigate if you need to get public liability insurance, which protects your council from claims by members of the public for death, illness, loss and injury caused by negligence. This may already be covered by the venues' existing public liability insurance or it may be possible to arrange one-off cover.

In most cases if you are hiring or borrowing equipment it will be covered against loss or damage by the owner, but check this is the case. If needs be you may have to get separate insurance.

#### **4.g. Attendance lists and contact sheets**

Attendance lists and contact sheets are useful - at an initial meeting you may be looking to attract volunteers or, if you are nearing the completion of your plan, looking for 'Champions'.

Remember to include a statement of intent at the top explaining that people's details will only be used for the purpose of the exercise.

Records of the type and volume of interaction over a period may be used as evidence to justify a Neighbourhood Plan

#### **4.h. Maps**

Providing a large scale map for people to place a sticker on or cocktail stick in to illustrate where they have travelled from will allow you to identify the localities that have not been well represented and may require additional consultation.

Maps can also be used in the same way for people to highlight areas of concern, e.g. where they feel there are particular traffic issues, or perhaps a good location for a new youth shelter.

**It is important all maps are referenced and include copyright protection.**

**4.i. Flip charts/Question boards:** Flip charts can be used as discussion boards, with people posting comments (using sticky note pads) that can be discussed more widely within a public meeting or seminar.

Alternatively, three boards can make an instant 'Mad, Sad, Glad' board at an open day event. People post comments using sticky note pads under the heading that describes best what they feel or what features they like/dislike about the area.

Using sticky note pads means people can write their comments in relative privacy and you can lift them and group into 'themes' easily.

#### **4.j. Facilitators**

You will need at least one facilitator to lead focus groups or seminars, on the day, as well as several others for group work. Ideally you would have one facilitator per table as well as a 'roaming' person.

Facilitators will need to be objective and make certain that the event works towards its objectives, ensuring that the most articulate or the loudest people do not dominate the event and everyone has an opportunity to participate.

Facilitators are also useful for question boards, linking comments being made and encouraging people to write down their opinions that may have otherwise gone unwritten.

#### **4.k. Photographs**

Take a camera along, but if you intend to use the photographs for publicity purposes you should explain what the photographs will be used for and ask for written consent from people who attend.

Alternatively, invite the local newspapers for publicity photographs.

In addition, you can use photography as a form of consultation on its own. Invite a group of people to do a photo survey, going around their neighbourhood, individually or in teams, taking photos of places and images of the things they like, dislike etc. After sorting they can be used as part of a wider discussion, just like written comments can.

This is a more interesting way to get young people to get involved. By using their own digital camera/mobile phones and sending the results in electronically keeps costs down too.

#### **4.l. Post event**

Keep people informed and let people know how the event went. Produce a write-up and send it to those that provided contact details.

Send a summary of the day (with photographs) to the local community newsletter / newspaper and on the community website.

### **5. SURVEY SOFTWARE**

Using any survey software to create your questionnaire will make the 'number crunching' much easier for you, and it helps analyse results.

There are several online survey software companies to choose from. AVDC has paid the 'Survey Monkey' Pro Plan license fee to enable parishes and town councils that may not already have access to survey software to use for their neighbourhood planning exercise. Using survey software should make composing and analysing questionnaires much less time consuming and less expensive to conduct.

If you choose to use Survey Monkey, you don't need to install anything or read up manuals, as the software is online and easy to follow. As the survey is hosted online, it's easy to send the survey link by email, via Facebook, as a pop-up on your website, posting on AVDC's website, and publish the link in parish newsletters. You can also print a downloadable paper version. Contact [ValePlan@aylesburyvaldc.gov.uk](mailto:ValePlan@aylesburyvaldc.gov.uk) if you want to know more about how to access this.

In addition AVDC have created some sample questions, that cover the key issues in neighbourhood planning, see appendix C. Councils are invited to use this, add in or omit questions as appropriate, editing to personalise to suit their locality.

AVDC aim to be as helpful as possible to support councils in their consultation, from advice and assistance on any stage of conducting a questionnaire, to holding an event. Any lessons learnt will be shared with others.

You will need to plan for time to input findings from any paper versions of the online survey, as well as interpreting the findings.

Follow the link to find out more about at <http://www.surveymonkey.com>

## **ANNEX A :**

### **A-Z OF CONSULTATION METHODS TO SUIT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING**

#### **Community group and societies**

Utilising existing events and groups, such as youth or faith groups, residents associations, fetes and festivals, school open days and other social clubs, is a really good route into engaging residents.

Visiting people where they are already gathered, helps to break down the barriers to involvement. For example, a single mum has time to answer a few questions at a mother and toddler group, but may not be able to make an evening meeting; or a 70 year old man can hear and share opinions at a older peoples' coffee morning, but feel intimidated at a public meeting.

Try to get people involved by making it fun. Similar to an open day in format, have an action plan stand with flipcharts, post-it notes, maps and a photo wall for people to make suggestions and comments - remembering to take flipcharts, marker pens, post-it notes and sticky dots with you.

#### **Community meeting**

This is where individuals gather to hear about or discuss a local issue that enables a community to find out and express their opinion on a particular issue.

Differing from a public meeting, a community meeting is usually designed to offer a two-way flow of information. With views normally captured through questions, feedback forms and comment boxes.

This is a relatively quick and inexpensive method of engaging with people, though meetings need to be well managed to avoid confrontation when discussing controversial subjects. You may find you need to attend several meetings, depending on the area you cover, and have a note taker to record comments and provide the necessary follow up.

Through 'questions and answers' sessions, a local meeting can help clear misunderstandings and facilitate understanding of the nature of local views and allow decision makers to hear them at first hand.

### **Exhibition /open day**

Some people find open meetings intimidating, so organize an open day so that people can drop in to leave suggestions in an informal way. Views can be left about how they see the housing and growth issues in:

- a suggestion box
- a graffiti wall or with post-it notes
- maps where people can identify hot and grot spots, or
- a mini questionnaire supporting an exhibition

In an open day you can ask community groups to take stands, covering topics such as traffic, education, leisure, environment, heritage, business, as well as housing.

Invite the whole community to walk around, enjoy refreshments, read other people's comments and add their own. This is a good networking and influencing opportunity.

Suitable venues, depending on what facilities are in your locality, could include:

- village or town hall
- community centre
- pub
- school reception area or
- sports pavilion.

### **Face to face - door knocking / interviews on the street**

Make time to visit people, whether in the home or at clubs and societies, to explain what you're doing and ask for their opinions. Have a draft short questionnaire ready record their views or ask them to complete a few questions.

### **Focus groups**

Once you've got some basic data from your community, you can run smaller groups with up to 10 people to focus on one particular issue or geographical area.

Having a facilitator present is essential to keep the discussion on target, and a note taker to record comments and emerging themes.

### **Mad, sad, glad boards**

This is generally used at an open day, workshop or other event where people are encouraged to jot comments on post-it notes and post them onto boards with these three headings.

Collecting the communities views in this informal interactive way gets residents in all age groups likes and dislikes in a simple easy to organise and less expensive way.

You can also do something similar using a map of the area and hand out two colours of post-it notes; one for positive thoughts about locations in the area; the other to collect negative views for people to pinpoint. Sometimes it can be the smallest thing that can trigger huge comment.

### **Online social networking**

Networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are actively used as a by a predominately younger age group. Many councils have already set up accounts with both these and other networking sites. However, experience shows there are few young people actively using our social network sites and therefore expected numbers responding to consultation carried by this format would be very low.

They may be useful however to encourage younger people to get involved if actively publicised in any promotional materials and press releases.

### **Online/web surveys**

Web based questionnaires are a cost effective means for capturing the views of everyone at a time that suits them, particularly young people who are less likely to fill in a paper questionnaire.

Use a website to keep the community updated on progress and news of the progress and news of the action plan. An online questionnaire can be used to gather more feedback. You can run a paper version of a web based survey to mirror it so findings can be merged successfully.

Posting your questionnaire on-line, gives it wider coverage. Using this method means people can access it and reply online at a time that suits them. It saves a huge amount of time and resource on data input that paper questionnaires entail, and it's easy to post any supporting documentation without the need for expensive colour printing.

### **Public meetings**

Often the most effective way to inform the community about plans, that can be presented in a structured way, and can be supported with slide show and video. Guest speakers, other experts and a chair are essential to talk, answer questions and manage the meeting well.

You can capture views by raising questions, show of hands, feedback forms and comment boxes.

Sometimes it can be difficult to handle hecklers at a public meeting, either the odd highly talkative participant and sometimes, local politicians.

Public meetings are not a reliable means of judging a communities response, as it may fail to reach some 'hard to reach' communities, eg non-English speakers and can be intimidating to a surprisingly large number of people.

### **Road show**

If you have a larger area to cover, you should consider running several open days/ exhibitions across the area. This means that everyone gets the same opportunity to participate in their locality. This is particularly useful in larger town such as Buckingham and Aylesbury.

### **Self-completion questionnaires**

When carefully planned, designed and piloted, questionnaires can be a useful tool to get views from the community. Simply mailed to residents or distributed via parish newsletters, you should restrict the length of time it takes to complete a self-completion questionnaire to a *maximum of 10 minutes*.

Whilst you can include, pictures and maps within the questionnaire, it is more expensive to print pages of colour maps. Self-completion postal questionnaires miss the opportunity for interactive discussion and explanation.

We have consultation software for parishes to use to set up their own questionnaires, both on-line and paper. See Online/web surveys, above.

## **Seminar**

This provides a formal opportunity to meet, and present information on an issue, to debate and exchange views with a small number of people, often stakeholders.

A seminar may be broken down into topics and group discussions, allowing a large amount of information to be provided to an interested audience, using audio-visual support if preferred.

Seminars suit complex issues and are useful for building relationships with stakeholders, allowing a high degree of interaction through question and answer sessions - views are normally captured by noting the questions raised, feedback forms and comment boxes are also available.

## **Suggestion boxes**

Boxes and slips of paper can be placed in pubs, shops, at parents evenings, at the doctor's surgery...anywhere that you can get more of the community involved!

## **Text messaging**

People may offer suggestions or pictures by sending in a text message. Build up an issue or 'Graffiti wall' at an event. This helps people begin to unpick issues and offer potential solutions.

For other consultation methods in more detail visit  
<http://www.communityplanning.net/index.php>

**ANNEX B :  
PERSONAL CLASSIFICATIONS FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING  
QUESTIONNAIRES**

**About you**

To aid analysis of consultation results, we would like to know a bit more about you. Those categories marked \* are essential.

All individual responses will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be used to monitor the local authority's services. The information you give will have no relevance to any other contact or business you may have with us and will not be linked in any way to you as an individual.

\*1. Postcode

\*2. E-mail address .....

\*3. Are you male or female?

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX

Male .....       Female .....

\*4. What age group do you belong to? PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX

- 5-11 years
- 12-17 years
- 18-24 years
- 25-34 years
- 35-44 years
- 45-54 years
- 55-64 years
- 65 and over

\*5. In which of these ways does your household occupy your current accommodation?

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX

- |  |   |                         |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| Owned outright .... <input type="checkbox"/>                   | Buying on mortgage.. <input type="checkbox"/>               | Other (PLEASE WRITE IN) |
| Rent from Housing Association/Trust . <input type="checkbox"/> | Rented from private landlord ..... <input type="checkbox"/> | .....                   |

**\*6. Which of these describes your household size best?**

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX

- |  |                          |   |                          |
|--|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Single young person .....  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Two young adults sharing.....   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Single older person.....   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Two older adults sharing .....  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Single adult with children living at home.....                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | Two adults with children living at home.                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Single adult with children living away from home most of the time..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Two adults with children living away from home most of the time ..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**7. Which of these activities best describes what you are doing at present?**

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX

- |  |                          |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Employee in full-time job (30 hours plus per week) .....   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Unemployed and available for work....      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Employee in part-time job (under 30 hours per week) .....  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Permanently sick/disabled.....             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Self employed full or part-time ...  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Wholly retired from work.....              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| On a government supported training programme (e.g. Modern Apprenticeship/ Training for Work) ..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Looking after the home.....                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Full-time education at school, college or university .....   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Doing something else (please write in).... | .....                    |

**8. To which of these groups do you consider you belong to?**

<b>White</b>	<b>Black or Black British</b>
British..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Caribbean..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Irish..... <input type="checkbox"/>	African..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Any other White background (PLEASE WRITE IN)..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Any other Black background (PLEASE WRITE IN)..... <input type="checkbox"/>
.....	.....
<b>Mixed</b>	<b>Asian or Asian British</b>
White & Black Caribbean..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Indian..... <input type="checkbox"/>
White & Black African..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Pakistani..... <input type="checkbox"/>
White & Asian..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Bangladeshi..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Any other mixed background (PLEASE WRITE IN)..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Any other Asian background (PLEASE WRITE IN)..... <input type="checkbox"/>
.....	.....
Chinese..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Other ethnic group (PLEASE WRITE IN)..... <input type="checkbox"/>
.....	.....

**9. Do you have any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity?**

(Long-standing means anything that has troubled you over a period of time or that is likely to affect you over a period of time) PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX

Yes.....  No.....

**10. Does this illness or disability limit your activities in any way?**

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX  
Yes.....  No.....

**11. Name and address (should you wish to receive feedback)**

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

## ANNEX C: Example Questions

The following pages set out some example questions that provide possible ways of asking about the issues related to new development. They are not exhaustive and are given to provide ideas and spawn thoughts on how questions regarding development could be asked. They are not a prescription that says you should necessarily do it this way but give some examples of how they could be asked and are aimed to help to guide you on different types of questions and what they could say. The questions are also written in the form of a self completion questionnaire, however they could be delivered (with some rewording) to work in other forums – for example through focus groups.

Each question is accompanied with a brief description or detail as to why the question is worded or framed in a particular way, or there may be comments about each question and what the purpose is. These sections are always **greyed out** and are there to help you make the question specific to your community. The questions themselves always start with the letter Q. Where some personalisation of questions by the parish/town council are suggested a set of square brackets ( eg [ ] ) are included. All questions are written so that they can be easily analysed using computerised inputting wherever possible through programmes such as 'survey monkey'; which the council has available for use by all communities.

### **Scoping Questions**

The questions below are a number of scoping questions that have been developed to help get the person answering the questionnaire into a thoughtful frame of mind. These set the scene and start the respondent to get into a thoughtful mind frame. If questionnaires start too abruptly with detailed and contentious questions, there tends to be a 'gut reaction' response rather than necessarily a thoughtful one. We would advise you to have at least one of these types of questions at the beginning of the questionnaire or the start of any discussions.

Q how long have you lived in [*insert name of place*] parish?

Under 1 year

1 – 5 years

5 – 10 years

10 years +

Or you could try ....

Q Which of the following attracted you to live in [*insert name of place*] ? (Please tick as many as apply)

Q Which was your main reason ? (Please circle one option)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good environment   | <i>your town/village– for example Milton Keynes, Bicester, London etc]</i> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good school catchment  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clean and tidy                         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good local facilities (e.g. shop, pub or GP surgery)                           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cost of housing                        |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strong sense of community  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good transport links                   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Peaceful / quiet   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other please write in                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Easy access to other places [ <i>list specific places that are relevant to</i> | .....]   |

Or you could try ....

Q What are the most important issues to you when you decide on somewhere to live ? (Please tick as many as apply)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low level of crime                         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Peaceful / quiet  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nice environment                           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Easy access to other places [ <i>list specific places that are relevant to your</i> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good school catchment                      | <i>town/village– for example Milton Keynes, Bicester, London etc]</i>   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good transport links                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other please write in   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good facilities (e.g. GP, shops, pubs etc) |   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cost of housing                            |   |

Or you could try .... (note that this question does not have a 'centre' grade – this is so it forces respondents to make an active choice, rather than ticking the middle option)

Q Please indicate for each of following what you think about [*insert name of place*]? (tick only one box for each row)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
It has a nice environment				
It has good facilities				
It has low housing costs				
It is quiet / peaceful				
It has good transport connections				
[ <i>insert your own examples about your place.....</i> ]				

Or you could try ....

Q. Generally speaking, how do you feel about living in [*insert name of place*]? Please rate how you feel where 1 is *not at all good* and 10 is *very good*.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
It has a nice environment										
It has good facilities										
It has low housing costs										
It is quiet / peaceful										
It has good transport connections										
[ <i>insert your own examples about your place.....</i> ]										

## Housing Development

The following questions are aimed at getting peoples responses about potential new homes. These are not simple issues for people to grasp and we need to try and get as much information in terms of how people really feel, as well as making sure that they are at least partly informed about the issues. These questions are aimed at doing this.

[*insert name of place*] has grown by [*insert number of homes from fact pack*] new homes over the last 5 years, and there are [*insert number from fact pack*] homes with planning permission but that are not yet built.

[*insert number of affordable homes*] of these were affordable homes, and there are [*insert the number of people on the housing register from the fact pack*] people in our local community on the housing waiting list still waiting for homes.

Q Thinking about the above statement, over the next 20 years to 2031 do you agree that there will be a need for more homes in [*insert name of place*] ? (tick only one option)

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree not disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure Don't know

Q Thinking about a possible number of new homes (irrespective of their type) in [*insert name of place*] for the next twenty years, which of these do you think is appropriate [*insert name of place*] ?. (tick only one box)

None    less than 10    10-25    26-50    51-100    more than 100

If new homes have to be built in [*insert name of place*], should these be of a particular type? (tick only one box per row)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure/don't know
General market homes					
Affordable homes					
Homes for rent (for anyone)					
Homes for rent (for people from [ <i>insert name of place</i> ] only)					
Retirement/sheltered homes					
Smaller homes (e.g. 1 – 2 beds)					
Larger/Family homes (e.g. 3+ beds)					

## Employment Development

The following questions are aimed at getting peoples responses about potential new places of employment. These are not simple issues for people to grasp and we need to try and get as much information in terms of how people really feel, as well as making sure that they are at least partly informed about the issues. These questions are aimed at doing this.

Looking at the people who live in [*insert name of place*], around [*insert figure of employed as a % from fact pack*] are employed. They travel to a number of places to work including:[*insert where people travel to information from fact pack*].

When new homes are built about half of jobs for those people come from 'employment sites' for example industrial estates and offices. The remaining half come from other employers such as services, schools, shops, healthcare etc.

Q Thinking about the above information, over the next 20 years to 2031, do you think that there will be a need for more places of employment in [*insert name of place*] (tick only one option)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure/don't know
[Insert name of place]					
Aylesbury					
Buckingham					
Elsewhere in Aylesbury Vale					
Elsewhere within 10 mile radius of where I live					

Q Thinking about the possible number of new of jobs for each new home built (irrespective of their type) in [*insert name of place*] over the next twenty years, which out of the following options do you think would be best (please tick only one box)

- None
- 1 job for 1 home
- 2 job for 1 home
- more than 2 jobs for 1 home
- don't know

Q If there is new employment development in what type do you think would suit *[insert name of place]*? (Please tick only one box per row)

	Yes	No	Possibly	Don't know
*Small employment buildings				
**Large Employment Buildings				

(\*small means less than 10 people working there)

(\*\* large more than 10 people working there)

Q If you answered 'yes' or 'possibly', where should any future employment developments be located? (Please tick only one)

- separate to existing homes
- integrated with new homes
- alongside existing employment
- I don't think there should be further employment development in *[insert name of place]*

## Infrastructure

One of the issues that people often want to talk about is infrastructure. The following question is aimed at finding out if, and if so, what, infrastructure people think your community needs.

People have raised concerns in the past that new homes and jobs mean that existing infrastructure and facilities will be over stretched and that they are not available for people who already live in *[insert name of place]*.

(By infrastructure and facilities we mean everything from transport and roads, to the leisure facilities, local amenities such as shops and schools, as well as ensuring key services such as water and sewerage systems can cope).

Whilst new developments can mean things get used more, it can also bring with it funding that helps to minimise these becoming issues for existing people. It can enable local investment that people want, for example in a facility, roads or utilities.

New homes and businesses mean that there are more people in one place, which can also mean that services in an area might get more support. For example, more people living or working in a village might mean there's more custom at an existing shop and more children attending the local school, hence keeping it open.

Thinking about these issues, please indicate which of the following you think might apply in *[insert name of place]* ? ( Please tick only one box per row)

	We need more of this now without new development	We have enough of this now, but will need more with new development	We will not need anymore of this with development	Don't know
Local shops				
Local school				
Built leisure facilities				
Parks and play areas				
Local health (eg GP) facilities				
Core utilities (gas, electricity, water)				
Broadband				
Community facilities for all to use				
Parking capacity				
Road capacity				
Rail capacity				
Bus capacity				
Emergency services (eg Police, Fire Ambulance etc)				
<i>[insert your own examples that are locally relevant]</i>				

## Phasing

This question is about all development and trying to find out how people would prefer it to take place.

Bearing in mind we are looking at a period of up to 20 years from now, it is possible to phase development over this time.

Phasing can help to limit the feeling of impact on the community, and spread the opportunity to meet housing need over the time period. However it can also mean that the possible disruption of building occurs over a longer period, and if the new development brings with it new infrastructure this might not be provided until all the homes are built.

Q With this in mind, do you think that new homes these should be :

- Available all in one block at the beginning
- Phased to provide some now and some later on
- Phased to provide a regular pace across the 20 years
- Only release all homes and/or employment towards the end of the 20 years

## Other Issues

There is probably a need to capture other comments that people may have. This can help in spotting other issues that you or AVDC might need to address.

This can present difficulties in analysis when questionnaires are returned. One way of getting around this might be able to develop a similar list of pre coded answers as set out in some of the other questions, but develop this after you have the responses back.

Is there anything else related to new homes or new employment that you think we should take into account when thinking about your response ?

**ANNEX D:  
SAMPLE - PROJECT PLAN**

Title ..... Date.....to .....

Activity	w/c	2/4	9/4	26/4	3/5	10/5	17/5	24/5	31/5	7/6	14/6	21/6	28/6	5/7	12/7	19/7	26/7	2/8	9/8	16/8	23/8	30/8	6/9	13/9	20/9	
<b>BRIEF</b>																										
Discuss and agree objectives		X	X																							
Discuss and agree process and methodologies		X	X																							
Agree timings			X																							
<b>QUESTIONNAIRE</b>																										
Draft questions				X	X																					
Agree questions					X	X																				
Finalise questionnaire format						X	X	X																		
Pilot questionnaire								X																		
Agree findings from pilot									X																	
Finalise questionnaire																										
<b>FIELDWORK</b>																										
Draft introductory letter									X																	
Distribute questionnaires										X	X	X	X	X	X											
Collect questionnaires																X	X	X								
<b>DATA &amp; REPORTING</b>																										
Data input																	X	X	X							
Analysis & reporting																			X	X						
Report topline findings internally																				X	X					
Detailed analysis																					X	X	X			
<b>PUBLICITY - pre</b>																										
Parish newsletter				X				X	X																	
Press release to local media										X	X															
Community website				X					X	X	X															
<b>FEEDBACK &amp; POST PUBLICITY</b>																										
Discuss findings within parish / town council																					X	X				
Summarise findings for parish newsletter / local media																						X	X	X		
Respond with findings to those who asked for feedback																									X	
Exhibition of findings																									X	X
<b>Misc. e.g. hols</b>																										

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**ANNEX E :****A to Z Consultations Methods**

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## Most commonly used methods listed

<b>Title &amp; method</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Self-completion postal survey	Postal surveys are the most common form of quantitative approach. They involve mailing out a questionnaire to respondents for them to complete and send back. Can be by sample or representation of the whole population. Designed to gather and compare information. Self-completion surveys can also be conducted face-to-face, at meetings, or on-line.	<p>Inexpensive and easy to conduct with large numbers.</p> <p>Respondent can fill out the survey in their own time.</p> <p>Gives a stronger indication of the views of high-interest participants – over-represented people who have strong views, both for and against. (This doesn't necessarily invalidate the results but care must be taken to avoid assuming that any self-completion questionnaire captures the views of a whole audience rather than the respondents).</p> <p>Relatively easy to survey people who have difficulty getting about and across the district.</p> <p>Surveys should be returned by Freepost.</p>	<p>Questions should be simple and easy to understand. Questionnaires need to be piloted, adding to the time and resources involved.</p> <p>Responders self-select, so responses may not be representative of the whole population, unless the results are 'weighted' to balance. Response rates for self-completion postal surveys can be quite low, typically 5 - 20%, but can be increased by offering incentives or reminder mailings.</p> <p>Translation and large print statements should be included for participants with special needs, such as visual impairment or where English is a second language.</p> <p>Unless the consultation is on a topic of particular interest, the</p>
On-line survey / E - consultation	A structured set of questions available on-line (usually in the form of a short	Relatively inexpensive, quick, easy to arrange, available 24/7.	

Title & method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
	<p>questionnaire).</p> <p>Designed to gather and compare information.</p> <p>Requires an on-line presentation of the subject and publicity to promote it.</p> <p>Are particularly useful for internal use as many council staff have access to a computer and are a 'captive audience' at work.</p>	<p>Cuts out the need for data in-putting because it is done automatically as people respond.</p> <p>Can be a useful means of testing the water or piloting a self-completion questionnaire.</p> <p>Can be used in conjunction with other survey types.</p> <p>The questions asked can be tailored to the person completing the survey.</p> <p>A useful part of a consultation website if it is a focal point for relations with stakeholders or the public and response rates will improve as web use increases.</p> <p>Tend to attract younger and more economically active people who can be difficult to reach by other survey methods.</p> <p>Are most effective in interactive format, allowing the respondent to complete on-line, with inapplicable questions filtered out as a respondent completes the questionnaire. (Rather than downloading a paper version to return by post/email).</p>	<p>numbers completing on-line surveys tends to be small.</p> <p>Not everyone has access to the Internet so responses may be limited.</p> <p>More vulnerable to being skewed by interest group campaigns.</p> <p>Attention spans on-line tend to be shorter, so fewer questions can be asked.</p> <p>Difficult to prevent multiple responses from the same person using different email addresses.</p> <p>Relatively inaccessible except for people who are already frequent visitors to your website.</p> <p>On-line surveys are seldom representative of the whole population.</p>
Telephone survey	<p>Allows questions to be asked speedily, and under close supervision and can use a tightly controlled sample that is drawn from the target audience.</p> <p>Market researchers often use computer aided telephone interviewing (CATI) to</p>	<p>Offers a cost effective means of sampling a large population in a controlled and scientific manner.</p> <p>Telephone surveys can guarantee the necessary response rate.</p>	<p>High refusal rates and unsolicited calls can worry residents, particularly the elderly.</p> <p>Only trained interviewers</p>

Title & method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
	<p>ensure consistency and accuracy of the data records.</p> <p>If there is to be a voice recording of an interview, respondents must be informed about this at the beginning of the interview.</p>	<p>Relatively quick and easy to conduct.</p> <p>Easier to contact housebound or elderly participants.</p> <p>More complex surveys can be designed relative to postal questionnaires.</p> <p>Data can be entered for analysis whilst conducting the survey.</p>	<p>should be used.</p> <p>Excludes those without a telephone, or participants who are ex-directory.</p> <p>No visual prompts.</p> <p>Telephone surveys need to be conducted in the evenings to ensure representative response.</p> <p>If there is to be a voice recording of an interview, respondents must be informed about this both at the beginning of the interview.</p> <p>Language barriers.</p> <p>Telephone surveys should last no more than 10-15 minutes</p> <p>Relatively costly.</p>
Face to face survey	<p>Face-to-face surveys are either conducted in the street or at a participant's home.</p> <p>Usually involves selecting a carefully controlled sample - quota - of the target audience and visiting them in their own homes.</p> <p>Can be used for smaller consultations – such as changes to a local facility – where there is a clearly defined local</p>	<p>Face-to-face interviews allow more complex issues to be explored and the use of visual aids.</p> <p>Service users or members of the public can be involved interviewing other service users or their peers.</p>	<p>Requires trained interviewers.</p> <p>Time consuming and labour intensive.</p> <p>Community needs to be sampled at different times (i.e. days, evenings and w/e's) to</p>

Title & method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
	<p>population in the surrounding area and it is feasible to visit them.</p> <p>They can also be conducted on-street with interviewers selecting a sample or inviting passers-by to respond.</p>		<p>ensure adequate cross sample of responses.</p> <p>Street surveys may exclude sections of the community with long-standing illness or disability.</p> <p>Home surveys may exclude some, eg the elderly and women, who may not feel comfortable to opening their doors to strangers.</p> <p>Language barriers may need to be overcome.</p>
Service-users surveys	<p>Face-to-face interviews with, or questionnaires given to, service users.</p> <p>Can be exit surveys e.g. planning applicants, benefits applicants, one-stop-shop users.</p> <p>Can be repeated every one, two or three years to build a profile and enable comparisons over a period of time.</p>	<p>Targets service users while they are using the service, and can give an informed opinion.</p> <p>Useful for assessing reactions to changes in services by concentrating on those who have experienced use of the service before and after changes.</p> <p>Inexpensive, especially where there is a “captive” group of respondents e.g. at housing benefit interviews.</p>	<p>Omits people who do not use the service and who may be the most dissatisfied because the service does not meet their needs.</p>
Focus group	<p>Focus groups are the most established form of qualitative research.</p> <p>Essentially, focus groups are informal</p>	<p>Relatively quick and easy to arrange.</p> <p>Useful for providing insight into issues.</p> <p>Helps get behind the views of a target group and understand their motives and desires.</p>	<p>Requires an experienced facilitator otherwise difficult to keep discussions focused and avoid issues of confidentiality and minimise possible conflicts.</p>

Title & method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
	<p>one-off discussions of a theme or subject.</p> <p>A trained facilitator or moderator takes a group of between 6-10 individuals through a series of themes or topics. The moderator facilitates discussion and steers the conversation.</p> <p>Sessions typically last about an hour.</p>	<p>Provides an opportunity to hear explanations, reasoning and new opinions.</p> <p>A good means of tapping the pulse of a target audience and getting an idea about their strength of feeling on an issue.</p>	<p>Video and audio recording may be regarded as intrusive and sinister.</p> <p>It is often difficult to 'read' a free-form discussion.</p> <p>Analysis may be complex and time consuming.</p> <p>Results are often regarded as subjective or even slightly suspect.</p> <p>Consensus may not be reached.</p> <p>Can be expensive.</p>
Mystery shopping	<p>Provides management information on processes and/or quality of service, in order to aid training and retraining plans, improvements in service and increase customer satisfaction etc.</p> <p>The objectives and intended uses of the results should be made clear to staff (including the level of reporting if at departmental / location or individual level) particularly if mystery shopping is to be used in relation to any employment terms and conditions.</p>		
Stakeholder meetings	<p>A regular meeting with key stakeholders to discuss developments in their area of interest.</p> <p>Membership can be drawn from key stakeholders, a geographic area or a specialism (such as education, transport etc)</p>	<p>Offers a means of getting information across to an interested audience.</p> <p>A strong symbol that the Council is serious about involving interested parties in decisions on an issue.</p> <p>Allows a high degree of interaction through question and answer sessions</p>	<p>Restricted invitation and/or self-selection of attendees mean they are not usually representative.</p> <p>Time consuming to arrange and may be costly to set up.</p> <p>Difficult to sum up views except</p>

Title & method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
Exhibition	<p>An opportunity to see what is going on or proposed, meet staff and ask questions.</p> <p>Views normally captured by feedback forms and comment boxes.</p>	<p>etc.</p> <p>Good method of opening up to a key audience, explaining what's going on and plans for the future.</p> <p>Visual aids encourage people to take part and communicate.</p> <p>Where staffed may help build relationships with a key audience and provides an opportunity for one-to-one discussion and questions.</p>	<p>by formal votes that may oversimplify complex issues.</p> <p>Requires a significant investment in staff time including availability on the day (can be out of hours).</p> <p>Can be costly and (if staffed) requires a significant investment in staff time.</p> <p>No guarantee that the target audience will attend, so requires considerable publicity.</p> <p>Difficult to capture what people think.</p>
Art, drama and poetry workshop	<p>Group activity using artistic media to express views on an issue.</p> <p>Almost any medium can be used including collage, drama, film or poetry.</p>	<p>Using alternative media can help engage otherwise disinterested or hard to reach groups.</p> <p>A refreshing alternative to traditional methods.</p>	<p>May not be taken seriously by decision-makers.</p> <p>The fun of being involved can quickly turn to disappointment if decision-makers do not appear to listen (essential to get sign up from decision-makers prior to use unless the activity is spontaneous).</p>
Chat room, on-line forum or on-line discussion	<p>An on-line meeting where people can discuss, question and answer.</p> <p>Can be open or moderated.</p> <p>Can feature a council spokesperson or decision-maker.</p> <p>Chat rooms and forums are generally established/regular on-line venues.</p>	<p>Allows consultees to participate from the comfort of their home.</p> <p>May attract young people.</p> <p>Very flexible method. Questions can be posted, themes set, new streams developed, guests invited, and interviews given.</p>	<p>Difficult to attract sufficient participation quickly enough to make them viable or interesting.</p> <p>Difficult to sum up what people had to say (but see on-line surveys).</p>

Title & method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
Citizens jury	<p>A small panel of non-specialists invited to meet and examine a complex issue. Involves them calling for people and papers, hearing presentations and evidence, questioning witnesses and experts and then reaching a conclusion. Usually held in public like a public inquiry.</p> <p>Can be used for very complex or controversial subjects, especially where members of the public may have pre-formed opinions, e.g. new road developments, travellers' sites, the location of incinerators, or assisted living mental health homes.</p> <p>Participants can be made aware of all the issues.</p>	<p>Provides an insight into people's views long before a formal consultation could be concluded.</p> <p>Some people are able to express themselves more clearly and confidently on-line where they can be anonymous.</p> <p>An interesting way of involving people in decision making.</p> <p>Flexible in respect of the numbers and time involved.</p> <p>Particularly useful for contentious issues where the decision maker does not have a preferred outcome but would like to generate a broad consensus.</p> <p>Demonstrates a commitment to involving people in decision-making.</p>	<p>Requires a considerable amount of time for planning and technical know-how.</p> <p>May exclude people who are visually impaired or have no access to the internet.</p> <p>Expensive in terms of staff time, payment of jury and an experienced facilitator is needed</p> <p>Time consuming and resource intensive (though only for a short time).</p> <p>May set a precedent about how much involvement stakeholders have and how much say they get in the outcome.</p> <p>No guarantee that the results will be acceptable to those affected.</p> <p>No guarantee that results will be conclusive or workable though generally sensible proposals do emerge.</p> <p>Requires strong staff support to maintain a good relationship with panellists otherwise their response rate and interest decline rapidly.</p> <p>Over time panel members acquire more information than the rest of the public, so their</p>
Citizen panel	<p>A group of people selected using various demographic criteria to reflect the broader population.</p> <p>Around xxx members in Bucks CC panel we are able to use, subject to scheduling.</p> <p>Depending on the consultation task, the panel may be sent self-completion</p>	<p>A fast and generally reliable method of obtaining an opinion.</p> <p>Panel questionnaires are returned in higher numbers than a general survey.</p> <p>Samples of the panel may be used to gain insight into the views of sections of the community.</p> <p>Acts as a focal point for consultation</p>	

Title & method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
Community meeting	<p>questionnaires by mail and/or members may be invited to join focus groups.</p> <p>Gathering of individuals to hear about or discuss a local issue. Enables a community to find out and express their opinion on a particular issue. Usually designed to offer a two-way flow of information. Views normally captured through questions, feedback forms and comment boxes.</p>	<p>work.</p> <p>A relatively quick and inexpensive method of engaging with people. Allows an important local issue to be presented in a structured way and supported by audio-visual aids. Through questions and answers a local meeting can offer a good opportunity to clarify misunderstandings. Can help understand the nature of local views and allow decision makers to hear them at first hand.</p>	<p>responses become less typical (generally panels need renewing every 3 years – this can be by thirds each year). Non-members may feel ignored. Meetings need to be well managed to avoid confrontation when discussing controversial subjects. Tend to be time consuming for staff to attend several meetings and provide the necessary follow up. Difficult to formally capture the views expressed.</p>
Conference or assembly	<p>A formal opportunity to meet, present information on an issue, debate and otherwise exchange views with a large number of people. May be broken down into workshops and group discussions. Feedback forms and comment boxes may be used to capture views.</p>	<p>Offers a high profile means of getting information across to an interested audience allowing the use of audio-visual support. Flexible arrangements during the conference allow for specific aspects to be looked at in depth and various means of gauging opinion to be used. A good symbol that the Council is serious about involving interested parties in decisions on an issue. Allows a high degree of interaction through question and answer sessions etc.</p>	<p>Limited attraction to the general public. Attendance may vary and disappoint if the issue, venue or publicity fails to create interest. Restricted invitation and/or self-selection of attendees mean they are not usually representative. Time consuming to arrange and may be costly to set up. Difficult to sum up views except by formal votes that may oversimplify complex issues. Requires a significant</p>

Title & method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
Feedback form and comment box	<p>Pre-printed reply slip or card with a few short questions and space for any other comments.</p> <p>Commonly used for service users or attendees at meetings and events.</p> <p>Returned by post, over the counter or to comment boxes.</p>	<p>One of the simplest methods and easy to understand.</p> <p>Quick to arrange and inexpensive.</p>	<p>investment in staff time including availability on the day (usually out of hours).</p> <p>Consultees rarely see the results of feedback forms and may question their effectiveness.</p> <p>Lack of deadline undermines any sense of urgency.</p> <p>Seldom seen as anyone's top priority.</p>
Forum	<p>A regular opportunity to meet and present information on an issue, debate and otherwise exchange views with a local community.</p> <p>Works well as a local event or an event where participants have a lot in common.</p> <p>Enables a community to find out and express their opinion on a particular issue.</p> <p>Views normally captured through questions, feedback forms and comment boxes.</p>	<p>A good symbol that the Council is serious about involving local people in decisions on an issue.</p> <p>Allows important local issues to be regularly presented.</p> <p>Through questions and answers a forum can offer a good opportunity to clarify issues.</p> <p>Can help understand the nature of local views and allow decision makers to hear them at first hand.</p> <p>Helps demonstrate good faith and accessibility. Puts a public face on 'bureaucracy'.</p>	<p>Meetings need to be well managed to avoid confrontation when discussing controversial subjects.</p> <p>Limited attraction to the general public. Attendance may vary and disappoint if the issue, venue or publicity fails to create interest.</p> <p>Difficult to sum up views except by formal votes that may oversimplify complex issues.</p> <p>Requires a significant ongoing investment in staff time.</p>
Interview	<p>An interview is a structured one-to-one discussion around a set of questions</p> <p>Usually conducted on a sample of a larger population.</p> <p>Designed to gather information and gain some understanding of the answers.</p>	<p>Interviews are a very flexible method of gathering information from a small population.</p> <p>They allow supplementary questions to be asked so getting behind initial answers to identify reasons and motives.</p>	<p>Interviews may require an experienced interviewer – hence added expense.</p> <p>Interviewees may not be representative of the whole community.</p> <p>Analysis is complex and time</p>

Title & method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
Local community group	<p>May be conducted face-to-face, via the telephone or on the internet.</p> <p>Views captured by audio or video recording and notes.</p> <p>Meetings of established and independent local organisations.</p>	<p>A good way of ‘getting out into the community’ without the cost and uncertainties of setting up your own meetings.</p> <p>Can build a good relationship with community groups and recruit their help in disseminating and capturing information about what local people think.</p>	<p>consuming.</p> <p>The quality of the information gained depends on the knowledge of participants.</p> <p>Groups are often small and unrepresentative.</p> <p>May be difficult to attend as many meetings as required to really get to know the area.</p> <p>Difficult to capture the views expressed and to assess and balance all the views identified.</p> <p>May create expectations that are difficult to deliver.</p> <p>Difficult to sustain a good relationship with a large number of groups.</p> <p>May create expectations that may be difficult to manage.</p> <p>Politicians and managers may be unwilling to meet local demands.</p> <p>Can be resource intensive over the longer term.</p> <p>Over time it can just become ‘part of the bureaucracy’ rather than adding anything new.</p> <p>Difficult to sustain when there are insufficient issues to discuss.</p> <p>Usually difficult to engage people from a sufficiently wide</p>
Neighbourhood forum	<p>Regular meetings where local representatives or the general public can have their say about decisions or things that are happening.</p> <p>Designed to offer a two-way flow of information.</p>	<p>Provides a focus for local consultation.</p> <p>Enables a community to express their opinion on local issues.</p> <p>Can build a good relationship with a community and increase participation.</p>	<p>Can be resource intensive over the longer term.</p> <p>Over time it can just become ‘part of the bureaucracy’ rather than adding anything new.</p> <p>Difficult to sustain when there are insufficient issues to discuss.</p> <p>Usually difficult to engage people from a sufficiently wide</p>

Title & method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
One-to-one meeting	<p>A direct meeting between the consultee and the decision maker.</p> <p>Usually used with key stakeholders.</p> <p>Recorded through a note of the meeting.</p>	<p>Probably the best and simplest method of consultation.</p> <p>Simple to arrange, highly flexible.</p> <p>Quick and suitable for addressing almost any subject in the desired depth.</p>	<p>variety of backgrounds.</p> <p>Works well only with a limited target audience or a few key stakeholders.</p> <p>Can be time consuming depending on the number involved.</p>
Open day	<p>An opportunity to look around, find out what is going on, meet staff and ask questions without the distractions of a normal working day.</p> <p>Views normally captured by feedback forms and comment boxes.</p>	<p>Good method of opening up to a key audience, explaining what's going on and plans for the future.</p> <p>May help build relationships with a key audience.</p> <p>Provides an opportunity for discussion and questions.</p>	<p>Non-attendees may feel left out.</p> <p>Requires a significant investment in staff time.</p> <p>No guarantee that the target audience will attend. Attendees are unlikely to be wholly representative.</p> <p>Very difficult to capture what people think.</p>
Public meeting	<p>Gathering of individuals to hear about or discuss an issue.</p> <p>Enables the public to find out and express their opinion on a particular issue.</p> <p>Usually designed to offer a two-way flow of information.</p> <p>Views normally captured by questions, show of hands, note of questions, feedback forms and comment boxes.</p>	<p>A traditional and relatively inexpensive method of engaging with people.</p> <p>Allows an issue to be presented in a structured way and supported by audio-visual aids.</p> <p>Through questions and answers a meeting can offer an opportunity to clarify misunderstandings.</p> <p>Can help understand the nature of people's views and allow them to express them to key decision makers.</p>	<p>Need to be well managed to avoid confrontation when discussing controversial subjects.</p> <p>Sometimes difficult to handle hecklers, the odd highly talkative participant and sometimes local politicians.</p> <p>Not a reliable means of judging a public response.</p> <p>May fail to reach excluded communities e.g. non-English speakers and can be intimidating to a surprisingly large number of people.</p>

Title & method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
Referendum/Poll	<p>A formal poll generally on a straightforward issue offering a choice of a limited set of options (typically YES or NO).</p> <p>Can be undertaken by post, by phone or on-line (traditional ballot boxes and polling stations tend not to work as well outside of elections).</p> <p>Not strictly a consultation method since the decision is determined by the results of the poll.</p>	<p>Provides a clear result from a straightforward generally accessible method.</p> <p>Provides people with an opportunity to participate, and the high profile of the poll may stimulate debate.</p> <p>Useful for assessing whole population views on major policy options – e.g. proposed Council tax increases.</p> <p>On-line and phone polls are relatively inexpensive and quick to set up therefore the views of a large number of people can be obtained efficiently and quickly.</p>	<p>Can only be used for single issues. Can only give “yes/no” answers or choice of limited number of options.</p> <p>Polls by post are costly and those by other means are less representative.</p> <p>Can oversimplify complex issues or trivialize consultation.</p> <p>Little guarantee that results will be representative or acceptable to affected parties.</p>
Road show	<p>A mobile exhibition providing an opportunity to see what is going on or proposed, meet staff and ask questions. Views normally captured by feedback forms and comment boxes.</p>	<p>Good method of taking an issue to the people that it affects.</p> <p>Can help build relationships with a local audience.</p> <p>Provides an opportunity for one-to-one discussion and questions.</p> <p>Visual aids encourage people to take part and communicate.</p>	<p>Requires a significant investment in staff time.</p> <p>No guarantee that the target audience will attend.</p> <p>Difficult to capture what people think.</p>
Seminar	<p>A formal opportunity to meet, present information on an issue, debate and otherwise exchange views with a small number of people.</p> <p>May be broken down into topics and group discussions.</p> <p>Views normally captured by note of questions, feedback forms and comment boxes.</p>	<p>Allows a large amount of information to be provided to an interested audience and allows the use of audio-visual support.</p> <p>Suits complex issues and useful for building relationships with stakeholders.</p> <p>Allows a high degree of interaction through question and answer sessions etc.</p>	<p>Limited attraction to the general public. Attendance may vary.</p> <p>Difficult to sum up views except by formal votes that would over-simplify complex issues.</p> <p>Restricted invitation and/or self-selection of attendees mean they are not usually</p>

Title & method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
Site visit	<p>A tour, inspection or familiarisation visit to an area or site by decision makers. Stakeholders can be invited to add to the information gained. Usually quite informal. An established mechanism in most planning departments. Not effective as a formal consultation method but a useful way of getting background information.</p>	<p>Simple to arrange at no cost. A good way of building a relationship with stakeholders allowing them to let decision makers know what they think in an informal way. Establishes that decision makers are accessible and interested. May help reassure residents about environmental concerns and anxieties. Provides an opportunity to clarify issues personally.</p>	<p>representative. Requires a significant investment in staff time. If too many attend it can be difficult to hear and communicate with all attendees. Vulnerable to the vagaries of the weather (though bad weather underlines the commitment of the decision makers). Poor means of formally capturing the views of stakeholders.</p>
Text messaging (SMS)	<p>Usually involves allowing consultees to respond by text. Information is usually provided by traditional means – posters may be particularly useful. Where a significant number of mobile numbers are known the invitation to participate can also be sent by text.</p>	<p>A new way of engaging large numbers of people in relatively simple consultations. Particularly useful for time pressured consultees and arguably a younger audience. A quick method of getting results from a poll. A text message is quick to read and easy to reply to.</p>	<p>Difficult to provide adequate information about the question set particular by text. Unlikely to be representative. Obtaining addresses can be difficult (easier to use text messaging when addressing a national audience – a sample of addresses can be obtained relatively inexpensively).</p>
Video diary or documentary	<p>A do-it-yourself presentation by a group of consultees giving an audio-visual account of their views.</p>	<p>Highly engaging and popular particularly with young people. Vividly portrays what people think. Works well for smaller consultations or where the views of a particular group may otherwise be overlooked.</p>	<p>Not always taken very seriously by decision-makers. The fun of being involved can quickly turn to disappointment if decision-makers do not appear to listen.</p>

Title & method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
Workshop or group discussion	A structured discussion on a particular issue with members of a target group. Usually 6-12 participants.	<p>Makes a great change from a written representation or report.</p> <p>Relative quick. Easy and inexpensive to arrange.</p> <p>Doesn't usually require an experienced facilitator.</p> <p>Provides an opportunity for in-depth debate and reasoning.</p> <p>Useful for issues requiring more than a simple YES or NO answer. Helps get behind the views of a target group and understand their motives and desires.</p> <p>A good means of tapping the pulse of a target audience and getting an idea about the strength of feeling on an issue.</p>	<p>It may be difficult to sum up the discussion.</p> <p>Results are subjective and may therefore have little validity.</p> <p>Groups are seldom representative.</p> <p>It may be difficult to attract excluded groups to a general discussion.</p> <p>Results can be manipulated by the amount of information provided.</p> <p>Can be time consuming.</p>