



Cornwall Council Neighbourhood Planning Consultation and Engagement Toolkit

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Neighbourhood Planning Consultation and Engagement Toolkit

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Introduction

Involving the community is central to neighbourhood planning.

Local people 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 elderly, to commuters, businesses, individuals and families.

Town and Parish Councils need to involve their communities in the neighbourhood planning process to find out what they think about issues such as more housing, employment opportunities, open spaces etc.

Before submitting a neighbourhood plan proposal to Cornwall Council you must publicise your proposal.

This toolkit is designed to support town and parish councils to publicise and consult their local communities. It contains practical guidance on the process, including holding an event and analysing results.

Consultation basics

Getting the consultation right can make the difference between good meaningful contact and a negative response.

- 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? Plan your consultation so everyone can contribute.
- Ensure everyone can take part by overcoming barriers that some individuals have. This means selecting venues and communication methods with care.
- Be clear on what you are trying to achieve – this helps explain it to others
- Plan your questions – what information do you need to know? Consider the information that you can already find out from other sources, as you should avoid very lengthy questionnaires.
- Make your consultation easy to understand
- Set aside enough time to draft, conduct and analyse your consultation – you may have to adapt during the process
- Ensure that you comply with the Data Protection Act when handling personal information – personal questions about household size, age and gender, postcode and village and street names will help with the analysis – but responses must be handled as confidential data and stored securely
- Make sure you observe and display any copyright for maps, including Ordnance survey maps
- Thank people for their contributions and make sure you let them know what you have learnt and what you will do as a result.
- Analyse your consultation process – have you achieved what you set out to do? If not why not and could you have done things differently?

Section One - Preparing your consultation

When to consult ?

The length of time needed will vary depending on what method you choose, the time of year and the level of response you need. However best practice suggests you should plan for up to 6 – 12 weeks for your programme.

Normally you should allow six weeks to reply to a simple questionnaire, however some stakeholder groups may need more time to discuss their response and may only meet monthly and so will need longer.

Checklist :

- Think about the time of year – what else is happening and try to avoid major holiday times such as Christmas or school holidays
- Are there any other local events planned you might clash with or could use as part of your communication methods?
- Be clear about when decisions will be taken and plan back from that
- Offer a range of dates and time of day / evening for events to ensure that all groups can take part
- Build in sufficient time for analysing what you have learnt and for feedback and evaluation

Who to consult ?

It is important to recognise the mix of people in your community to ensure that everyone has the chance to engage in the process. Grouping residents and businesses into stakeholder groups will help you to identify what methods you need to use to ensure you obtain their views

Typical stakeholders groups include :

- Schoolchildren (aged 5-16)
- Young people (aged 16 – 30)
- Older groups
- 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
- People employed in the community
- Local businesses
- Black and minority ethnic groups
- Travellers and gypsies
- Families
- Migrant workers
- Voluntary bodies acting in the area

You might also want to consult other bodies whose interests may be affected by your neighbourhood plan. These include:

- Cornwall Council
- Homes and Communities Agency
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- English Heritage
- Highways Agency

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. You should communicate with stakeholders by methods they are used to and, if possible, allow them to respond by a method of their choice. (See Appendix 2 for more details)

Selecting the best method :

Use the checklist below 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 beside 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 ?

Quantitative v qualitative methods?

Quantitative methods

These are based on a representative sample of people who will give you an accurate picture of the population. This method is used when you want to know ' how many people think' It is useful for providing a snapshot of public opinions and attitudes and the results are measurable and can be used as a benchmark To calculate how many responses you need for the results to be statistically reliable use a sample size calculator such as:

www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm

Use multiple choice questions where possible as it makes it much easier to analyse and understand overall opinions in your community.

Most frequently used methods include:

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

Quantitative methods

This focuses more on attitudes, views and opinions and the reasons why people feel the way they do. It is used to explore issues in depth.

It usually involves group discussion or in depth interviews and is less about the number of people involved. It is not practical to involve all members of the target population. Analysing this type of data takes longer as it involves grouping strands of opinion.

Frequently used qualitative methods include:

- Focus groups
- Ward councillor contact
- In depth interviews / face to face
- Telephone surveys
- Exhibition event
- Public meetings
- Questionnaire – ‘open’ questions
- Stakeholder meetings
- Documentary consultation
- Forums – area, local . website
- Developing parish plans
- Community meetings
- Workshop or group events
- Open day events
- Road shows
- Photo surveys

Where to consult ?

If you are holding an event, consider using different consultation venues to help you reach the whole of your community. Often the most effective way to reach people is to piggy back on other events, meetings or gatherings that you know people will already be attending.

Checklist of possible venues:

- Community centre / village hall
- Schools
- Pubs
- Places of worship
- Shops / post office
- On the street

- Drop in events
- Public meetings
- Community days / village fetes / summer festivals
- Existing community clubs and societies

SECTION 2 - Developing questionnaires :

Think about your objectives and consider the key points you want answered and whose views you want to hear.

Questionnaires can be used to support an exhibition or open day, or on their own.

You need to give people some background so they know why you are asking them for their views. This could be through a leaflet explaining the background, exhibitions and displays web links and further contact information.

Checklist:

- Keep the subject matter simple -other forms of research may be better suited to more complex questions
- Using multiple choice or ranking options is easier for both respondents to answer and data entry
- Make sure the questionnaire is logically planned, formed in sections that flow naturally from one to the other
- Use simple explanations to provide context to complex questions or different subjects
- Keep your questions and the overall questionnaire as short as possible (remember Cornwall Council and other government bodies already publish some information at community level).
- Pilot the questionnaire ask someone who has not been involved in the design to test how long it takes to complete
- Add in a confidentiality statement to reassure participants of your security / data protection
- It should always end with a thank you and the close date for the replies

Question type :

Open ended questions – respondents write in their own answers – these should only be used where they add value to the survey – normally to probe specific closed answer questions – ie what makes you say you are satisfied / dissatisfied with affordable housing in..... Analysing open ended questions is both costly and time consuming so these should only be used unless it is the only or best way to get the information you need

Closed answer questions – this is where respondents choose from a list of possible answers. This is usually easier and less expensive to analyse and so should form the majority of the questionnaire

Rating scores can be used in closed answer 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.....

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

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

'About You' questions

These are used to help with analysis and identify what different groups of interviewees feel about different issues. Using these helps demonstrate that you have been inclusive in your consultation and your results are robust. It will also help you address any issues of inequality in your community. (See Appendix 1 for more information)

The minimum questions should be:

- Age
- Gender
- Disability
- Ethnicity

But you might also want to ask:

- Number in household
- Housing type
- Occupation
- Postcode and street / village

Question wording

A clear and concise survey will improve response rates.

Checklist:

- Avoid using jargon and use everyday language wherever possible
- Write in short sentences of no more than 15 words
- Use multiple choice questions wherever possible – it is easier for people to tick a box and it is easier to analyse
- Keep the questions short

- Do not ask questions that are hard to answer – ie asking people where they will be living in 10 years time
- Avoid leading questions such as – do you agree...
- Avoid vague phrases such as ' Do you use the bus service regularly ' regularly is subjective . List a variety of time scales instead – ie daily, weekly, twice monthly etc.

Increasing response rates

If you are doing a paper survey, promoting questionnaires well and distributing and collecting them by hand, can increase the response rates for self completed questionnaires to between 75- 80%.

Door to door collection, supplemented by collection boxes in local outlets such as shops, pubs and places of worship will also help the response rate. You can also increase awareness running up the questionnaire launch by articles in village and parish newsletters and notices on parish notice boards etc.

Checklist for collecting questionnaires:

- Use existing delivery networks – eg village or parish distributors or word of mouth or advertising to recruit a team of people to distribute and collect
- Encourage volunteers to speak to every householder, not just to push the envelope through the door
- Indicate clearly when the questionnaires will be collected or provide an envelope for return
- Think about how you will gather the information from people with poor literacy and numeracy skills – ie arrange for someone to help fill in the forms
- Keep a clear record of where the questionnaires have been delivered and collected
- If you are covering a large area consider appointing co-ordinators and split the area with a team of collectors. If so provide them with identification cards and badges.

Analysing your responses

Using survey software to create the questionnaire will make the number crunching and analysis much easier. There are a number of online survey software companies to choose from. Cornwall Council uses SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com)

Checklist :

- Merge the responses from any paper and online questionnaires by inputting paper replies electronically
- Don't worry if not everyone has answered all the questions – this is a good reason for putting in a don't know / not sure option in the survey
- Start by looking at basic statistics and percentages
- Then cross tab – looking for trends in the data by analysing two questions together – ie knowing that half the parishioners agree it would be more convenient if local shops were open later, you can say how important this is for certain age groups

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 the most relevant and important and organise into summary tables and graphs .

Checklist:

- Make sure that what you have included is supported by the data
- Ensure you feedback the results to residents in a timely manner
- Let people know what you have found out as well as what you are going to do with the information
- If using other consultation methods in addition, don't be tempted to merge the results, they are not comparable, but complementary .

SECTION 3 – PLANNING AND RUNNING AN EVENT :

Planning is the key to holding a successful event.

The main kinds of events are :

- Public meeting
- Seminar
- Open Day
- Exhibition

Choosing a venue is one of the most important decisions. This could be a community building, or a local school, scout / guide hut, sports pavilion or spare room in the local pub . Hire a venue with good access and capacity that caters for those with disabilities and preferably with public transport and parking nearby.

Consider utilising existing community events such as village fetes, local society events or community clubs – so you can take your consultation to the public rather than the public coming to you.

Formal events – ie public meetings and seminars

These are more structured and often include presentations. Normally introduced and managed by a chair person, they are usually more successful in attracting a range of people at the weekend. Weekday evening meetings may be more convenient for commuters, but may not attract elderly members of the community or single parents .

Checklist :

- Choose speakers who are comfortable in front of an audience
- Consider if you need visual aids . microphones – have the correct equipment and test it in advance
- Plan in any breaks and discussions between community members
- Bring a note taker or get the event filmed or recorded to make sure you don't miss comments. Make sure you advise people that you intend to tape the event for data collection purposes.

Informal events – open days and exhibitions

These have a more relaxed environment that encourage people to have their say in a less conspicuous way. They can run from morning to night making it easier for people to drop in at a time that suits them.

They give people the chance to look around and ask questions in relative privacy. You get more time to network with stakeholders as well as engaging with people on the issues.

Checklist

- If you are planning to stage an exhibition, select the best location for it to be seen by everyone
- Consider using case studies – they can help illustrate what can happen
- Think about who will erect, dismantle and staff your event
- Prepare an information leaflet highlighting the key points for people to take away
- Draft a short questionnaire to pick up the key issue you want to know
- Draft a rota of attendants throughout the day and evening
- Consider if you need facilitators to lead focus groups or seminars

Publicising an event

Publicity is essential to get people to attend an event. Inviting local organisations and authorities gets them involved from the start and creates good working relationships.

Checklist:

- Find out the print deadlines for local newsletters / newspapers and advertise in them
- Find out what other events are being held in advance so you can hand out invitations for your event
- Ask local shops and pubs to display posters / postcards and put posters in local public notice boards, community centres and sports pavilions
- Ask the local schools to hand out a flyer with pupils
- Make sure your community website has a feature on the event on the homepage
- Invite local radio stations / Tv to come and do an interview on your event
- Plan the event well in advance to maximise people's availability and try to avoid clashing with local events / sports matches and popular TV programmes

Equipment

Make a list of 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
- Lap top computer , projector and screen
- Tables and chairs
- Extension cables
- Name badges
- Paper/ pens. Blu tack
- Camera to take pics to include in your final plan
- Attendance sheets

Insurance

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

Also check if any equipment you hire or borrow is covered against loss or damage by the owner. If not you may need to get separate insurance

SECTION 4 –Appendices

Appendix 1

Personal Classification 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. What is your postcode

*2. What is your e-mail address

3. What is your sex?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

Male....._. Female_...

.....

*4. What age group are you? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- Under 15
- 15-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75+

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

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

Owned outright

Buying on mortgage....._.....

Rent from Housing Association/Trust

Rented from private landlord

Other (PLEASE WRITE IN)

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

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- Single young person
- Two young adults sharing.....
- Single older person.....
- Two older adults sharing
- Single adult with children living at home.....
- Two adults with children living at home. _
- Single adult with children living away from home most of the time.....
- Two adults with children living away from home most of the time.....
- _

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

8. **How do you describe your ethnic origin?** Please select the ethnic group that you feel most closely reflects your background.

- White (for example, British, Scottish)
- Mixed (for example, White and Asian)
- Asian or Asian British
- Black or Black British
- Cornish
- Other (please specify)

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.....

Appendix 2

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 community's 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 .

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.

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