

Chichester District Council's Essential Guide to Consultation

Consult v. 1 *tr.* Seek information or advice from (a person, book, watch etc.). 2 *intr.* (often followed by *with*) refer to a person for advice, an opinion, etc. 3 *tr.* seek permission or approval from (a person) for a proposed action. 4 *tr.* take into account; consider (feelings, interests, etc.).

Why consult?

There are often occasions when services at Chichester District Council (CDC) will need to find out what people think. This could include the evaluation of projects, feedback on new ideas and measuring customer satisfaction. The people whose opinions we need could be users of our services, non-users and stakeholders. Effective, meaningful consultation is the best way to find out what people think.

Sometimes consultation is a statutory requirement and services have little choice about whether to consult and how to do it. But even when it is not prescribed, it is still a useful insight into the views of local residents, which is difficult to achieve any other way. Asking for public views as part of decision making will help you successfully tailor services to meet local needs - how can you find out what people want from a service without asking them? Consultation is a key part of involving local people in the decisions that affect them. It informs local decision making and underpins the Council's commitment to listen and respond to the needs of the community we serve.

It is important that the public have confidence in our consultations. They need to trust that we are carrying out effective consultations and listening to the results. This guide is designed to help you as you begin a consultation project. It should give you some things to think about in the very early stages of project planning and some ideas about how the Communities Team can help you deliver a consultation project.

Consultation at CDC

The Communities Team at CDC includes officers who can offer a complete consultation support package. There are two Consultation Officers working on a job share basis:

Rachel Lord (Thursdays and Fridays)
Email: rlord@chichester.gov.uk
Phone: 01243 53 (4623)

Jenny Westbrook (Mon, Tues and Wed)
Email: jwestbrook@chichester.gov.uk
Phone: 01243 53 (4623)

As well as consultation support the Communities Team can also offer support with local information including statistics and information gathered from the Parishes in the district. These are often useful as background information when undertaking consultation projects. Below are the officer contacts for these areas:

Statistics - Matt Gover

Email: mgover@chichester.gov.uk
Phone: 01243 53 (4730)

Community Facilities Audit - Shona Turner

Email: sturner@chichester.gov.uk
Phone: 01243 53 (4796)

All these functions are managed by the Community and Partnerships Support Manager:

David Hyland

Email: dhyland@chichester.gov.uk
Phone: 01243 53 (4864)

How can the consultation officers help you?

If you think you might need to consult and are starting a project that impacts on the community or specific sector please come and talk to us first. This guide gives details of how we can help you plan, deliver and analyse your consultation project and make sure it meets your requirements and reflects best practice. Part of our role is also to co-ordinate consultation projects across CDC. This avoids duplication of effort, encourages services to work together where possible and stops residents being consulted multiple times over a short period of time.

Some things to think about before you start:

Existing consultation results – Before you start planning a consultation, you should check what consultation on your subject has been done before. The consultation officers have a database of all consultation carried out by CDC since 1998 and we can help you find any information we already have that is relevant to your project.

Who to consult with – Stakeholder mapping is important to make sure the right people get to have their say. Consultations should be tailored to your target audience and you should consider the needs of groups that are harder to reach. Consultation Officers can advise on this and help you reach the right people.

Time planning – Designing and testing a consultation will take at least 2-3 weeks. In most cases, the consultation should be open to the public for a minimum of 4 weeks and should make allowance for holiday times (summer, Christmas, Easter etc.). The analysis of results and writing of reports will also take a minimum of 2-3 weeks and the more time there is available for this, the more detailed the final report can be. Come and chat to us as early as you can to avoid rushing the consultation and give people enough time to respond.

Complete a consultation checklist –The checklist will help you think through every aspect of your consultation project carefully. It also provides us with the information we need to help you plan and deliver your project. A copy of this can be found at the end of this guide.

Have an open mind –There is no point in consulting when decisions have already been made. Be honest about what you can deliver; in some circumstances, it is better to 'inform' people about something that will have to change rather than raising their expectations by

'consulting' them about something they cannot influence. Consultation works best when those consulting have a genuinely open mind and can be influenced and informed by what their consultees have to say. On page 6 of this guide, you will find further information about what can go wrong if you don't keep an open mind.

The Consultation Process

The Consultation Officers can help with the entire consultation process. This section gives you a quick overview of common consultation techniques and key milestones in the life of a consultation project from designing the project to analysing results.

1) Selecting a consultation methodology – There are many different consultation methods to consider, we can help you choose the best one for your target audience.

- **Postal surveys** – We can help you design an attractive and engaging questionnaire, which asks the right questions. We have Snap Survey Software to help us produce professional looking paper questionnaires and a freepost envelope licence to encourage responses.
- **Web Surveys** – Snap Survey Software can generate a link to an electronic survey that can be placed on any website. We have a central place on the CDC website where all current, electronic consultations are placed. This page has a 'friendly URL' that we use in all promotion of the survey (www.chichester.gov.uk/consultations). Web based surveys designed in Snap can include interactive question styles using graphics, images and maps to make questionnaires more interesting and user-friendly. Take a look at our demonstration survey here: <https://www.snapsurveys.com/wh/surveypreview.asp?k=139203182949>
- **Email Surveys** – Snap can also help deliver surveys by email – ideal if you know email addresses for your intended audience (those who have signed up for a service for example). Invitations to complete the survey can be sent by email and responses coded to allow us to track who has responded and send reminders to those who haven't. An email survey can include the same interactive question styles used in web surveys.
- **Poll surveys** – A quick and simple one question poll on the CDC website homepage. Talk to us if you would like a question added.
- **Focus groups** – Focus or discussion groups can be targeted at specific groups on specific issues. They are not representative of the whole community but can give a lot more detail than surveys. We can help design the discussion questions, attend events and facilitate groups to make sure the discussion stays focused and you get the answers you need.
- **Interviews / Vox Pops** – Vox Pops are brief interviews with people selected at random, usually taking place in the street, asking for views about a particular issue. Respondents are either filmed or photographed along with a quote from the individual about the subject matter. This type of method is particularly fun for young people to take part in or to deliver themselves. The Interview technique can also be used for one-to-one interviews carried out in a more formal, pre-arranged setting.

2) Promotion of consultation – It is important to promote your consultation exercise as widely as possible so you get a good response level. This is particularly important with web based survey, or any methodology where potential respondents are not personally invited to take part (i.e. by being sent a postal survey or being invited to join a focus group). We can help promote your survey by:

- Sending details to a list we hold of more than 200 residents who are happy to take part in consultation and can be contacted by post and email.
- Emailing details to members of West Sussex County Council's E-Panel with a connection to Chichester District.
- Promoting your survey on CDC's social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter).

3) Analysis – Once a consultation has happened, we can offer support with the processing of the responses received. For an electronic survey, this can be as simple as clicking a button to download responses but for many methodologies the data gathered can be complex and often in vast quantities. We can offer support with most forms of data entry.

Once all data has been input, our Snap Survey Software helps us to review and analyse results in a timely and efficient manner. Analysis can be tailored to your requirements and we are happy to chat through what you would like. If you need to find out the views of a particular age group, gender, and/or those living in a certain area of the district, we can help you ask the right questions to get the analysis you want.

4) Reporting - We can offer headline results, summary reports or full, detailed analysis reports including recommendations for next steps and Power Point presentations. It is important to decide on what style of report you need. Talking to the Consultation Officers will help you determine what is best for your project.

5) Feedback - Once the project is finished, you will need to feedback results and outcomes to the various interested parties. We can help you with this. People who take the time to respond to our consultations will be put off doing so in the future if they don't feel that their responses have been listened to.

We have a regular slot in 'Initiatives' magazine where we tell residents what we have done with consultation results and our pages of the website include a regularly updated summary of things we have learned from consultation over the last year. We also publish results of individual consultations on our website; this could be full reports, lists of representations or executive summaries.

It is important to show how the results have influenced decision making. Although you don't need to implement every suggestion made through consultation, you should be prepared to back up any decision taken that goes against the majority view. It is therefore important to be open and transparent throughout the whole process.

Demographic and Equality Monitoring

Collecting demographic or equality information is essential for many consultation projects and, at the very least, is useful for analysis of responses. This information includes, but is not limited to, the age, gender and ethnicity of respondents. A full list of demographic questions (based on Census questions and the 'Protected Characteristics' given in the Equality Act 2010) can be found at the end of this guide.

There are 4 main reasons why you should consider including these questions when planning your project:

- Consultation projects are an opportunity for services to collect demographic information about their service users, or those who do not use their services. How would you know that a particular group has trouble accessing your service if you don't ask for this information?
- Collecting this information and comparing it to Census data helps determine whether your consultation respondents are representative. For example, Census data will tell you that the gender split in Chichester District is 47.8% male and 52.2% female. If your consultation is aimed at all Chichester District residents and responses to demographic questions tell you that your respondents are 70% male, you will know that the opinions of males are over-represented in your sample.
- Collecting this information allows other responses to be analysed according to demographic groups. For example, if a survey about leisure centre usage also captures information about a respondent's age, provided you have enough responses, you will be able to analyse your results to find out how a particular age group are most likely to use leisure centres.
- You may need to focus on a particular need and audience; therefore certain demographic questions are important to answer your questions. For example, if you need to find out the opinions of people with a disability, you will need to ask your respondents whether or not they have a disability in order to identify which opinions have come from your target group.

You will not usually need to include all the equalities monitoring questions in every consultation project. You should think carefully about what is relevant for your service, what information you will use and who your target audience is. Responses to equalities monitoring questions are always treated anonymously and individual respondents must never be identified. The questions are optional for respondents. The Consultation Officers can help you with some standard wording to include reassuring potential respondents about how their information will be used.

More information about the Equality Act and the duties it places on Local Authorities can be found here:

<http://intranet.chichester.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=10246>

What can go wrong?

If consultation good practice is not followed, at worst CDC could be at risk of Judicial Review. This is where the Council's decisions are subject to review (and possible invalidation) by a Judge. Judicial Reviews can be focused on the consultation exercise itself and / or the process of Equality Impact Assessment.

Below are the Gunning Principles; the criteria against which a consultation's lawfulness is often assessed:

1.	Consultation must be undertaken at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage
2.	It must include sufficient reasons for particular proposals to allow those consulted to give intelligent consideration and an intelligent response
3.	Adequate time must be given for this purpose
4.	The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account when the ultimate decision is taken

If you involve the Consultation team in your project as early as possible we will help to ensure your project meets the required criteria.

And finally...

Whenever we need to seek the views of the public, good quality, meaningful consultation is the best solution. A well designed consultation project will make it as easy as possible for people to give their views and feel confident they are being listened to. It will also ensure that the information services need is collected in the best way, leading to data that is reliable and informative. The Communities Team can help you with every stage of your project and have access to practical tools to make things much easier. We look forward to working with you on your consultation projects soon.

Consultation Project Checklist

Please think about these questions before starting your consultation project with the Communities Team.

Name:	
Service:	
Consultation Title:	
Consultation deadline:	

1. Why are you doing this consultation?	
2. Who do you want to consult with?	
3. What are your main objectives for this consultation?	
4. Have you checked existing consultation results that relate to this project (Please ask Communities Team for more information)	
5. Is this consultation a statutory requirement and do you have certain guidelines to adhere to?	
6. What do you plan to do with the consultation results?	
7. How are you going to feedback the results?	

Suggested demographic questions

Are you...?

Male
Female

Prefer not to say

What is your age group?

Under 16
16 - 24
25 – 34
35 – 44

45 – 54
55 – 64
65 +
Prefer not to say

How would you describe your ethnic group?

White – English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British
White – Irish
Gypsy or Irish Traveller
Any other white background (please state):

Mixed - White & Black Caribbean
Mixed - White & Black African
Mixed - White & Asian
Any other mixed / multiple ethnic background (please state):

Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British - Chinese
Any other Asian background (please state):

Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Any other Black background (please state):

Arab

Prefer not to say
Any other ethnic group (please state):

What is your religion?

Buddhist	Jewish
Hindu	Sikh
Muslim	No religion
Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)	Prefer not to say
Other religion (please state):	

What is your sexual identity?

Heterosexual	Gay – woman
Gay – man	Other
Bisexual	Prefer not to say

Do you have any long-term illness, health problem or disability, which limits your daily activities?

Yes	Prefer not to say
No	

If you are female, are you currently pregnant or have you been on maternity leave within the last 12 months?

Yes	Prefer not to say
No	

Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?

Yes	Prefer not to say
No	

What is your legal marital or same-sex civil partnership status?

Never married and never registered a same-sex civil partnership
Married
In a registered same-sex civil partnership
Separated but still legally married
Separated but still legally in a same-sex civil partnership
Divorced
Formerly in a same-sex civil partnership which is now legally dissolved
Widowed
Surviving partner from a same-sex civil partnership

Is there anything else about your personal circumstances that we would need to know about to better understand your answers?