Annex A

Community Engagement Advice

A B C D E F G

Test Valley
Borough Council

Importance of Engagement

What is community engagement?

Community Engagement is a broad term that covers a whole range of activities that encourage and enable individuals and communities to be involved, at the level they want, in what is going on in their area. This ranges from simply giving the community information, to working in partnership with the community in developing services in their local area. Community Engagement should be a positive experience for those carrying out the engagement and those being engaged with. Community engagement is not a tool to be used at the end of a process when a decision has already been made as there is no longer the opportunity for the community to have any influence in the outcome.

Benefits of community engagement

Engaging with communities is not just about meeting legal duties. Genuine and effective community engagement has benefits for groups, societies and local people.

- Enhanced wellbeing and increased levels of satisfaction through local people being genuinely involved in decisions.

- Increased local ownership and enhanced local pride if people feel valued and included, they are more likely to participate.

- Increased dialogue and communication between local people and organisations. Working in partnership will allow better relationships and trust to develop between policy makers and local people.

- Increased openness and accessibility.

- Promotion of social inclusion.

- Increased sustainability – Sustainable change can only happen if communities are involved from the start.

- Responsive services that meet local need.

Planning your community engagement approach

The purpose of your engagement will help determine the appropriate level of engagement and who needs to be involved, at each stage of engagement there will be different consultation approaches which will be appropriate in particular circumstances and will achieve different results. Matching methods to people or groups will increase the effectiveness and success of any engagement activity.

Community Engagement works best when it is an ongoing process which allows relationships and trust to build and strengthen over time. Engagement activities should be planned with this in mind. Different participants may want to engage at different stages; some may wish to provide advice to co-designing the process from the outset, while others may only have the time to undertake certain aspects of the engagement or only want to take part in a project aimed at delivering something they have an interest in. All engagement and participants should be encouraged as they may go on to share their experience with others.

Resources

For communities undertaking a community led project there is funding towards the costs of producing of a document from the Test Valley Community Planning Grant which can help towards the costs of community engagement:

- £2,000 for parishes with a population over 5,000

- £1,500 for parishes with a population over 1,000 but under 5,000

- £1,000 for parishes with a population under 1,000

Further details and an online application form to apply for this funding are available at: **www.testvalley.gov.uk/cpgs**

We encourage communities to get us involved at the earliest possible stage in the development of their plan. There are a number of ways in which we can support and help you to develop your approach to community engagement. The Community Engagement Officer covering your area will be able to provide more detailed information and support to enable you to decide what type and level of community engagement will suit the needs of your community: **www.testvalley.gov.uk/ceofficers**. Please feel free to contact your Community Engagement Officer to discuss how to support you in this process.

Identifying Stakeholders

In order to get the best outcome from community engagement, it is vital to understand who the stakeholders are.

To do this local community networks should be involved in identifying community stakeholders, their particular interests and needs and how best to engage with them. This could be through informal networks, social venues or local organisations that work with a number of different groups as well as the more formal stakeholders. Your Community Engagement Officer can assist with this alongside your borough councillors.

Inclusiveness is a key principle of community engagement therefore it is important that engagement activities reflect your entire population. There will be groups in your community who are traditionally more difficult to engage and as a result their views are seldom heard. There are also the individuals who are referred to as the 'usual suspects' – those who regularly are involved in consultation or community activity. It is important to ensure that both groups are engaged with in the most appropriate way and aren't marginalised as a result of their involvement (or lack of) in community activities.

The neighbourhood planning team has the details of all Statutory Consultees that would need to be engaged with through the preparation of any of the documents your community is considering preparing; we can provide this to you when you are preparing your consultation.

Communication

An important part of any community engagement activity is good communication. Whatever level of engagement you are looking to achieve; informing, consulting or involving, good communication skills are vital. To get the most out of your community engagement activity, it is worth thinking through the key skills that are required and the behaviours that will help to encourage, support and enable individuals to participate in ways that suit them.

Communication techniques can be divided into the direct and indirect. Direct method means face-to-face, letters, email or telephone conversations with individuals. Indirect methods could include leaflets, advertising, radio programmes, articles in newspapers and press reports and posts on social media. These are indirect because they do not involve any direct contact between the person giving the message and the person receiving it.

To get the most from community engagement, it is good to use a range of methods and techniques to achieve the widest possible participation. The three main types of engagement are **INFORM**, **CONSULT** and **ENGAGE**, below are some examples to consider.

Inform	Consult	Engage
Fact sheets	Street stalls	Workshops
Newsletter	Surveys & questionnaires	Planning for Real exercise
Websites	Web based consultation	Community events & marketplaces
Displays	Consultation documents	Asset Based Community Development
	Public meetings	Deliberative events such as Citizens Assembly

Some examples of community engagement techniques can be seen in the appendix 1.

Some members of the community may feel apprehensive about being involved in large public meetings and expressing their views in a public arena, especially if they do not have a great deal of experience in that style of meeting. This should be considered when organising every stage of consultation on your community-led approach, ensuring everybody is capable and comfortable with participating in the process is going to be key, therefore including a mix of consultation techniques will be important.

Effective communication skills for engagement

Facilitation – Facilitation is used to help encourage and enable individuals to participate in a variety of situations. A good facilitator will make things easier, enhance people's willingness to get involved and result in a positive engagement experience.

Listening – Showing you are interested in what people are saying and why they are saying it. This creates a trusting and supportive atmosphere. Participants should feel that they have been listened to and that they have been understood.

Questioning – Ask the right questions, of the right people at the right time, in the right way. This will keep discussion moving. Good use of questions will help to bring structure to the engagement activity. We have provided guidance to writing consultation questions in appendix 2.

At the end of any stage of consultation there will almost certainly be some issues that stand out as a high priority to those who got involved. It is a good idea to communicate the 'headline' results back to the wider community. Tell them what issues provoked the strongest response and on what issues people had high levels of consensus. You won't be able to tell them at this stage what you will do as a result, but it is important to maintain regular communication and to let them know that their voice has been heard.

Overcoming challenges with community engagement

Accessibility

A vital component of any community engagement is accessibility for all to ensure that all voices are heard and that your data is representative of your whole community. You can do this by:

- Considering the timing of the engagement, holding events at various locations and times to ensure all demographics can attend.

- Where funding allows, consider compensation to cover the financial constraints for community members who are having to take time away from work to engage or those who have experienced high travel costs.

- Offer additional support to those who may need it – for example, the use of interpreters, appropriate language, materials translated to other languages, use of visuals, as well as making the venues wheelchair accessible.

- Offer the option of hard copies of consultation to support those who have no internet access of don't feel comfortable with technology.

- Consider the make-up of your community – for example, do your community members live in the area or regularly travel through it? Are they homeowner, renters or experiencing homelessness.

Practicalities of consultation and engagement

From the planning, through to delivery and final reporting and evaluation stage it is important to consider capacity, including volunteers carrying out the engagement and the logistics of a successful consultation. Some tips for this include:

- Make use of online engagement platforms (e.g. SurveyMonkey) to help with administrative burdens on staff.

- Breaking down your audience via demographic, location and other factors can help you keep track of any parts of the community you haven't reached. You can also make use of tools such as SurveyMonkey that allow your users to only submit once to help ensure equity of your quantitative data.

- Your community engagement strategy and resourcing need to allow enough flexibility to respond proactively and reactively to community needs and the direction of the feedback.

- Help to gain trust with your community by ensuring proper governance that provides transparency for the community and accountability for everyone involved.

- Try to balance the need for participation with what's an acceptable level of engagement for your whole community to keep their interest and avoid consultation fatigue.

Feedback and Evaluation

One aspect of community engagement that can discredit the process is lack of feedback to participants. It is important to inform them of how their views have been taken into account, the broad findings from the process and what has happened as a result of the engagement. This will take the form of a consultation statement.

You should set out at the start of any period of engagement when and how feedback will be provided, and what form this will take. When and how you feedback to participants will depend upon the nature of the engagement. If feedback isn't given, participants may think that taking part is a waste of time, or that they have been ignored, and won't know if their contribution has made a difference.

Make use of evaluation forms to gather information from participants about the event or meeting. This will capture how people felt at the event or meeting when the information is fresh in their mind and provide you with an opportunity to ask specific questions about particular elements of the consultation.

In the case of community led housing the need for evaluation of your consultation is taken one step further as it will be essential as part of the application process for the applicant to demonstrate that there is community support for the scheme. This makes community consultation and the documentation of the process all the more important as if it is considered that there has not been a sufficient level of consultation and subsequently there is not clear evidence of support then the development cannot be considered as being community led.

Consultation Statement

When it comes to submitting your community-led document it would be beneficial if it is accompanied by a consultation statement (sometimes this is also a requirement if the final document is to be formally adopted by TVBC). This should be written and prepared as the document progresses to show changes over time and as a result of any comments received. See appendix 3 for an example of a table to fill out after each consultation, to be included in your final consultation statement.

Appendix 1
Enagement Techniques

There are a range of techniques that you can use throughout the different stages of your project to capture the views, opinions and ideas of your community.

Inform

Fact Sheets/Newsletters

- Provide information about a local area or particular project in a paper or online format. - These can be delivered to each property within an identified project area, or Parish or can be circulated in other ways.

Method

- Define the goal of your newsletter, what type of newsletter content will serve the goals you want to accomplish?

- Pick your newsletter format, will the newsletter be digital or printed?

- Draft your content and design your newsletter, start with a strong opener, use simple language and pay attention to sentences that are too long and break up long chunks of text using headers and eye-catching graphics.

- Determine your distribution strategy and deliver your newsletters, if your newsletter is digital be sure to comply with privacy regulations and email best practices

Advantages	Limitations
• If distributed regularly, can build community awareness and understanding	• May not be accessible to people with low levels of literacy or visual impairments
• Effective means of developing and sustaining interest through a community	• People may not take time to read it
• Can be developed in a format that appeals to a target group	
• Cost effective	
• A useful complement to other forms of engagement	

Inform

Social Media

- Provide information about a local area or particular project in an online format.
- This can be used as a standalone process or as part of a wider engagement activity
- Allows for messages to be easily shared to a wider audience easily

Method

- Create a social media content plan, stay organized and focused on your goals, that will guide your efforts. Posting regularly can ensure your content engages your audience
- Consistency in messaging is key for groups looking to make an impact on social media
- Incorporate visual elements, social posts with photos, videos, and other visual elements consistently get more engagement than posts without them
- If you want to build trust and establish relationships, you need to engage with your audience on social media. By responding to comments, participating in discussions, and asking questions, you can help create a relationship with the community

Advantages	Limitations
• The same message can be shared across multiple different platforms • Can reach a large number of people • Cost effective • Can create debate and exchange of views • Less time consuming than attending a workshop or meeting	• Some techniques may require a moderator to manage comments, this can be expensive and time consuming • Excludes those without access to the internet or are not signed up to a particular platforms

Inform

Websites/pages

- A variety of web-based processes are available to choose from which gives people the opportunity to get involved at different levels

- Websites provide a way for organisations to provide information to the public

- Online methods can be used as a standalone process or as part of a wider engagement activity

Method

- Decide whether there is a need to create a new website or to add a relevant page to an existing website. A new page on your website could vary depending on what you want to communicate.

- Include elements such as an About page, FAQ page, Contact page and Policy page. Tell the story and explain the site's reason for existing and ensure interested parties can get in touch

- Run a quick user experience check and ensure your web-offer is presented in the way you want, ensure it loads quickly and correctly across different devices and internet connections

- A website isn't a static asset; it needs regular maintenance and updates

Advantages	Limitations
• People can choose a convenient time and place to participate • Particularly useful got those who may be homebound e.g. elderly, carers, parents with young children • Can create debate and exchange of views • Cost effective • Can reach a large number of people • Less time consuming than attending a workshop or meeting	• Some techniques may require a moderator to manage comments, this can be expensive and time consuming • Excludes those without access to the internet • Needs to be publicised to generate activity • Needs a dedicated person to maintain content

Inform/Consult

Street Stalls & Displays

- Use of highly visual materials to get a particular message or information across a range of audiences
- Displays are normally set up in local community areas like community centres, shops, village fetes
- Useful for informing the public and stimulating discussion on issues

Method

- 'Pop-up' portable banners are particularly useful in these circumstances as they can be used at different locations
- Be sure to consider how your proposed display will look when it is up and running, the amount of space your display will require and whether it will draw attention to the message you are trying to convey?
- Be aware of any effect your display will have on residents, workers, shoppers
- Be sure to obey any conditions the council may have on pavement or street displays, find information on markets on our website Test Valley | Markets

Advantages	Limitations
• Can collect the views of large numbers of people	• Can generate a large amount of data
• Interactive	• Requires advanced planning and preparation
• Engages and generates interest	• Requires several facilitators to engage with people
• Can reach people who may not normally participate	• Event may be affected by weather conditions
	• If people can't attend on that day, they will miss it
	• Cost of creating/printing displays

Consult

Surveys & Questionnaires

- Most widely used consultation method

- Undertaken to identify needs and views of a large number of people in a standard format

- Surveys can be completed through face-to-face interviews, self-completion written forms, over the telephone, or electronically over the internet or email

- Often best to use a short and concise questionnaire where people's views on an issue are being sought

- Good way of collecting quantitative and qualitative information from local people at a certain point in time

- Surveys often best used as part of a programme of other methods, by themselves they can sometimes be limited

Method

- When compiling the survey ensure the questions do not include a positive or negative bias — words that consciously or unconsciously lead the respondents toward a certain kind of answer.

- The main stages involved are; defining the sample size and type of information required; deciding on the type of survey to be used (postal, drop and collect, telephone or interview); survey design; piloting the survey; undertaking the survey and post-completion analysis of the results

- - Surveys can be completed through face-to-face interviews, self-completion written forms, over the telephone, or electronically over the internet or email

Advantages	Limitations
• Can gain the views of a large number of people	• Need to be well designed and coded to get 'usable' answers
• Useful for obtaining quantitative date	• Large questionnaire surveys are time consuming and labour intensive
• In principle data can be compared over time or with results from elsewhere	• Information may be limited
• Useful for identifying and evidencing need	• Do not offer any real sense of community engagement or provide an opportunity for people to exchange views
	• Can contribute to 'over-consultation' if public are surveyed on a number of occasions

Consult

Public Meetings

- Provide an opportunity to consult large numbers of people. open to all, offering an opportunity for people to ask questions and discuss issues
- Often opportunities for participants to set or influence the agenda and to ask questions
- As part of a series of events they can be a valuable way of sharing information and demonstrating openness and transparency

Method

- Arrange and publicise the meeting widely and start on time, ensuring speakers can be heard by all attendees either with or without audio equipment, also ensure somebody is taking minutes
- Make sure there is an agenda and that it's followed. If anything extra comes up which needs to be discussed, put it down as an action
- Make it clear that debate is welcomed but personal abuse will not be tolerated
- Draw a line under each topic of discussion to keep things moving and after each agenda point, summarise any key decisions, opinions or actions
- Remain calm if the discussion develops into a dispute or if someone heckles, don't get involved in a slanging match and don't be afraid to say you don't know
- At the end of the meeting thank attendees and let them know the date of the next meeting or what the next steps will be

Advantages	Limitations
- Enables large numbers of people to have their say	- Unlikely to be representative, not everyone has the time or inclination to attend
- Provides an opportunity to explain processes, give information and gather feedback	- Attendance is often low unless people feel personally or deeply concerned
- Demonstrates openness and transparency	- Some people are likely to be inhibited from speaking in a large group
- Can attract publicity or can be used as a launch event	- Traditional formats can limit audience contribution and lead to conflict
- Enables participants to develop networks	- If confrontational it may lead to poor media publicity
- Face to face meetings humanise organisations and authorities in the public eye	

Consult

Consultation Documents

- Regularly used for formal consultation by local authorities and other government bodies to seek formal responses from statutory consultees

- A document which allows whoever is consulting on a particular issue to set out in detail the whole of a situation and set specific questions

- Provides an opportunity to provide detailed background information on a particular proposal or issue

- If carrying out a document-based consultation process, it is a good idea to offer a web-based alternative that enables participants to navigate directly to the parts of the document that are relevant to them

Method

- Describe what the consultation asks for views on and who might be interested in responding. Keep the content in the present tense and avoid jargon and if you have to use unfamiliar terms, explain them.

- Be sure the consultation is well advertised with clear timeframes to ensure people know when they need to respond by.

- Ensure it is clear how people can respond whether this is email, letter or online

- If you are asking for personal information be clear in the consultation why you are collecting this and make sure you comply with GDPR requirements

Advantages	Limitations
• A written document allows the consulters to set out in detail the whole picture and ask specific questions • A document can also be used to explain complexity and provide background information • Web based processes allow comments on documents and responses to questions to be displayed in full	• The sheer size and detail in a document can have a negative effect on the people being consulted • People are reluctant to read long documents • A large number of responses can be labour intensive to collate and analyse

Consult

Web based consultation

- As well as being used to provide information the internet offers a range of opportunities for individuals to engage in decision making processes

- Online consultation is one tool which should be considered as part of a range of other consultation tools

- Interactive websites can support consultation by enabling people to get involved online. This could be by completing online surveys, taking part in a poll or participating in online discussions

- Discussion forums provide the public with an alternative method of getting their views on particular issues. By monitoring discussion boards, we can get a better insight into the thoughts and ideas of people who may not participate in other ways

Method

- The use of diagrams and illustrations rather that text is preferable. The number of questions should be kept to a minimum and every question asked should serve a specific purpose

- Advertise and share the location of the consultation web pages to ensure the greatest number of respondents

- Ensure continuous engagement throughout the preparation of a community-led document; anyone can respond to the online consultation with efforts made to ensure all groups with a potential interest in the topic are made aware of the opportunity to comment

- Materials and activities should be adjusted to suit your needs and take into account any adaptations needed or changes to evidence

Advantages	Limitations
• A range of online tools are available	• Participation is limited to those with access to the internet
• Cost effective	• Resources required to analyse information gained
• Can reach a wide audience quickly	• Resources required to set up and mediate discussion forums
• Gives more choice to individuals as to when and how they can participate	
• Anonymous nature may increase participation	

Consult

Citizens Panels

- An opportunity for people to regularly come together to connect with likeminded people, to identify and address issues within their community.
- Representative sample of people from a local area who sign up to be involved in various consultation activities
- Provide a 'ready-made' sample of people to consult or engage with

Method

- The panel will be made up of approximately 8 to 12 members. All efforts should be made to ensure there is a balanced and diverse membership which reflects the community

- A campaign should be organised to recruit participants where interested people can sign-up using a form. If the panel is already established and seeking to recruit new members, the panel should advertise their vacancies using social media and local resources

- To elect a Chair, applicants should pitch their justifications to fellow panel members, explaining why they would be suitable, when all pitches have been completed panel members vote for their preferred Chair.

- Agendas for future meetings will be agreed by the Chair, the panel should meet on average every 6 weeks; but frequency may be altered at the discretion of the panel

- It is recommended that there must be at least 4 members present to approve a decision. Meetings may still occur if there are fewer than 4 members; however, no final decisions can be made

Advantages	Limitations
• Using the same panel numerous times reduces recruitment costs	• People on the panel become more knowledgeable (and therefore less representative) than the general public over time
• People agree to be on the panel thereby increasing response rates	• A turnover of the panel may reduce the validity of tracking over time
• May allow for some measures of changes over time	• Information provided may mean responses are not an accurate reflection of opinion among the less informed
• Provides a ready-made sample of individuals to consult with	
• The composition of panels can be made representative of the local population	

Consult

Maps and Flags

- The use of maps and flags is another visual tool and can be used to obtain a variety of information.
- A variety of aspects can be mapped including land use, community assets, facilities, and transport options to develop a snapshot of an area.

Method

- Use a large map of the parish or village and then make flags by using cocktail sticks with labels around them at one end.
- Place the map on a notice board, polystyrene, or cardboard, so the cocktail stick flags will have something in which to embed.
- Community mapping can be used to map where people live that come to an event, by asking residents to place a flag on the map of where they live.
- Alternatively, they can be asked to write on the flag, positives or negatives of a particular area of a village and place on a map.
- Discussions should be facilitated to help people explore issues, build consensus or identify areas of conflict.

Advantages	Limitations
• Can help people see and understand their community in different ways • Useful way to engage people of all levels of capability. • Used to gain a range of information and feedback • Good visual tool	• Few resources required • Limited as to what you can record on the flags. • Need to transfer info collected on flags recorded after the session

Consult

Talking Wall

- This is an informal way to consult with community members, people can write down their thoughts, ideas about their community, parish and its facilities on a 'wall'.

Method

- Ask people to write their ideas/answers to a question on post it notes or bricks (pieces of paper) and then stick them on to a wall.

- The answers can be left as they are or can be moved around to show groups or themes emerging.

- 'Talking walls' answers/comments can also be written directly onto the wall or paper.

Advantages	Limitations
• Supports creative thinking	• Because it is participatory,
• Useful for people who think visually- people see the effect of moving or removing ideas	• it can feel a bit chaotic
• People can write short or more detailed answers	• You need sufficient materials
• Answers can be drawn - useful if writing is an issue	• Takes time to transcribe answers if you want to keep a record of the consultation. You could take a photo of the wall as a record.
• Can be quick - useful to capture people's views as they go past e.g. in a reception	
• Answers/ideas can be anonymous, less confrontational way of obtaining feedback.	
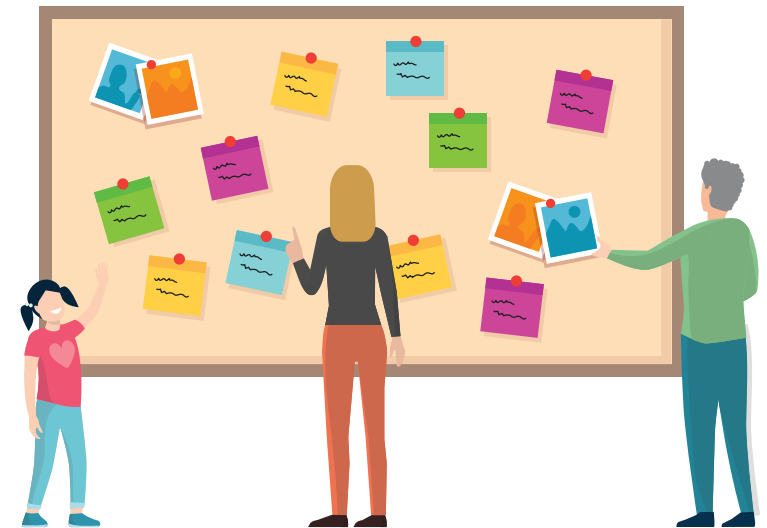
Engage

Planning for Real

- Practical technique involving a 3D architectural model of an area which is used to help participants decide what improvements/changes need to be made to their local area.
- Local residents are involved in creating the model
- The model can be displayed in public venues to generate interest and discussion
- Cards/cut-outs that represent services and physical assets are made available so individuals can place appropriate suggestions and changes on the model itself
- These details are then fed back to people, discussed further and prioritised at public meetings or small group discussions

Method

- A large 3-dimensional model of a neighbourhood is constructed, preferably by local people, using cardboard cut-outs for buildings pasted onto a base plan fixed to polystyrene or cardboard.
- The model is used at pre-advertised sessions held in various locations in the community.
- Participants place suggestion cards on the model indicating what they want to see happen and where (eg playground, parking, standpipe, tree, shopping).
- The cards are sorted and prioritised to establish an action plan which is followed up by working groups.

Advantages	Limitations
• Adds variety to consultation and can engage people who might not otherwise get involved	• Can generate ideas which are not possible to implement
• It is accessible to people of all abilities and backgrounds	• Preparing for the event can be time consuming
• Can build a sense of community ownership of the process	• The card count can be seen as conclusive and may cause conflict particularly if there is a disagreement
• Can help people see and understand their community in different ways	

Engage

Workshops

Workshops and focus groups allow people to discuss their ideas in an open and relaxed atmosphere

- Can take a variety of different formats, depending on the topic for discussion

- They can be designed to exchange information; to discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of an idea or project; and to obtain ideas for a way forward for a project

- They can be specifically geared towards prioritisation and the production of an action plan

- A smaller focus groups can be designed to specifically concentrate on a single issue or a programme of topics

Method

- Complete a check-in and go over any ground rules

- Define the purpose of the workshop and set a clear goal, this doesn't have to be numeric or even a binary "yes or no" type of question. Remind the participants that the work doesn't end when the workshop ends.

- Prepare for the unexpected, the workshop might take a completely different turn from what you may have expected, you will need to stay open minded.

- Don't just relying on text-based documentation; pictures and videos are a great way to document the findings, encourage the participants to document progress in their own personal style.

- Assess goal completion, did you achieve the goal set for the workshop? Complete a check-out, communicate any next steps and ask for feedback.

Advantages	Limitations
• Encourages active discussion in a welcoming environment	• With small groups, it is difficult to be sure all stakeholders or interests are represented
• Time and resource efficient way of identifying and clarifying key issues	• Workshops can be dominated by articulate and confident individuals if not carefully facilitated
• Conflict can be more easily handled in a small group	• Requires experienced facilitators, such as your community engagement officer
• Can be designed for a specific purpose	
• Can be directly targeted at excluded or 'hard to reach' groups	

Engage

Community Fairs/Events

- Provide a fun, informal atmosphere that will attract a wide-ranging audience

- Provides various opportunities to inform and engage participants about local issues using different methods

- Should incorporate a range of activities and events to cater for the broadest possible audience

- As well as distributing information, a fair provides a range of opportunities for consultation and involvement

- Community events work best if a number of organisations in the community get together to run one

Method

- Be clear about what you want the event to be, what you want it to achieve, and its size and scale

- Find out what bookings, permissions and licences you need and think about common sense safety, access issues and insurance

- Identify how best to publicise the event

- Plan the day in detail, organise the team and share out the work, do there be enough time, materials and people for setting up and clearing away

- It's always worth having a brief discussion as a team after the event, to talk through what went well and not so well on the day, learning lessons for the future

Advantages	Limitations
• Can reach a large number of people • Allows for different levels of engagement • Can allow for creativity in the ways in which people are engaged • If a number of organisations get involved, the range of activities can be increased and generate more interest	• It may not appeal to the people who most need to be reached • Can be expensive and require a lot of resources • May not be well attended

Engage

Asset Based Community Engagement

- Uses maps and photographs of an area or specific location to illustrate how people view their area; what they like or dislike or improvements they would like to see

- Practical way of finding out what assets exist in a community

- A variety of aspects can be mapped including land use, community assets, facilities, transport and business to develop a snapshot of an area

- Increases understanding of assets in its broadest sense; not just about the physical assets but the people, groups and skills that exist in a community

Method

- It may take some time to get together a willing group who also fully represent the diversity of the community, but this group can then meet with people living in the area to find out their ideas, and what people can contribute

- Asset-based work with communities starts by reflecting on assets already present, and how they currently operate: 'what are they?' and 'what do they do?'

- Produce a map of community assets, allowing connections to be made and ties strengthened between the community and their assets

- Groups are encouraged to feed back all information on community assets they find out about during the course of the exercise

Advantages	Limitations
• Stimulates discussion • Can build a sense of community ownership • Can help people see and understand their community in different ways	• Can generate ideas which are not possible to implement • It may be difficult to interpret participants ideas • Participants need to be familiar with the local area

Engage

Citizens Juries

- A group of citizens who are representative of the general public meet to consider a complex issue by gathering evidence, deliberating and reaching a decision
- Jurors can hear from and ask questions of experts and 'witnesses' before they reach their decision
- After they reach a decision, the jury will present their recommendations/decision to the public or local authority
- A high level of skill is required as participants are often asked to analyse complex issues

Method

- Gauge who might be interested in taking part, then carefully selecting the jury from this list so that its makeup reflects census data for the area (gender, age, socio-economic group, ethnicity)
- The jury consists of 12 to 24 people who meet for two to five days and are paid a small sum for their time
- To avoid bias, it is important that an independent organisation is involved from the start to get involved in fielding any questions for the jury and selecting appropriate expert witnesses on the topic being discussed.
- Jurors will hear from expert witnesses, cross-examine them, deliberate together and finally give their verdict.
- The jury will actively investigate the evidence and give their verdict on the matter before them which will come in the form of recommendations in the form of a written report.

Advantages	Limitations
• Empowering experience for those involved	• Representativeness of the jury may be compromised due to small numbers
• Can result in obtaining informed community opinions on complex issues	• Issues are often complex, and require extensive preparatory work
• Helps to identify solutions to problems	• Could exclude individuals with low literacy or non-English speakers
• Participants gain an in depth understanding of an issue	• The sponsoring body has to be prepared to accept the results or else the process loses credibility
• Enables decision makers to understand what the public thinks	

Guide to writing consultations questions

Framing Your Questions

- **All questions should be clear and unambiguous**
- **Avoid leading questions**
- **Make sure only one question is being asked**

Types of Question

Consider whether questions should be closed questions or open questions.

Closed questions typically deal with facts, are easy to answer and quick to answer e.g. "have you had visited the local pub in the last 12 months?" or "are your bins collected on a Wednesday or a Thursday?" They are easy and quick to answer because you can provide clear, unambiguous choices from which respondents can select their answer.

- Closed questions also include more than simple "yes" or "no" options and you may find some of the following question types useful within the survey mix:

- Likert scale: where responses are provided using a linear scale, this type of question provides more in-depth data than a simple Yes/No question and generally has four points (for example Agree Strongly, Agree, Disagree and Disagree strongly)

- Semantic differential: where responses are provided using a value plotted between two extremes. This type of question allows for a more expressive response and can be used to identify how people feel about a certain issue

- Net Promoter Scale: again, this plots a value on a scale but rather than this being between two extremes such as excellent or terrible, this uses a numeric scale generally from zero to ten (where, for example, zero is Never and ten is Always)

Open questions such as "how did you feel about your contact with the Parish Council?" hand control to the respondent and can generate long and detailed responses. Remember that every response to an open question has to be read in full and all elements of the answer need to be considered before arriving at a view of opinions being expressed. Further, entirely free text can be ambiguous, hard to understand or open to interpretation.

It may be helpful to offer a list of commonly expected responses to an open question from which respondents can select any that are relevant. It is important to also include an option for "something else" where respondents can then add further views they feel are not covered in the predetermined list of options.

Remember

- The starting point for writing effective questions is to identify your objectives clearly and specifically; what information is needed and for what purpose. This starting point informs the question composition and format. What exactly do you need to know? Why? How will you use the information?

- It is likely that you will wish to use a mixture of closed and open questions in most surveys or consultations. If a survey relies entirely on closed questions, it is usually good practice to add a single open question at the end of the survey to allow respondents to make any additional comments that are important to them

- If you are asking for personal information, be clear in the consultation WHY you are collecting any personal information and make sure you comply with GDPR (general data protection regulation) requirements.

Keep questions short and specific. Be clear what you are asking about

Example 1

Q1. Do you agree with the plans the Parish Council has for the Recreation Ground? Please tick one box

Completely agree	
Slightly agree	
Slightly disagree	
Completely disagree	
Please explain your answer (write in below)	

✘

This question is:

1. **Vague and hard to answer. People may agree with some parts of the plan and disagree with other**

2. **Check – will the answers be useful to you?**

3. **Check – do you have the time/resources to analyse answers to the open question?**

Example 2

Q1. The Parish Council has suggested the following plans for the Recreation Ground, and these are explained in detail on the Council's website. Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with each:

	Completely Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly disagree	Completely disagree	Not sure
Replace the goal posts on the football pitch					
Extend the Sports Pavilion to add new changing rooms					
Resurface the Tennis Courts					
Fence in the Children's Play Area					
If you disagree that the Parish Council should progress these areas of our work, please give your reasons (write in below)					

✔

These questions allow you to measure agreement for each proposal and collect specific information on reasons for disagreement

Example 3

Q1. The Parish Council has outlined the following plans for the Recreation Ground. Please tell us which are most important to you. Please rank the possible priorities in order where 1 is most important to you and 4 is least important to you.		
	Ranking (1 to 4)	
Replace the goal posts on the football pitch		✓
Extend the Sports Pavilion to add new changing rooms		
Resurface the Tennis Courts		
Fence in the Children's Play Area		
Please tell us why you picked your 1st choice (please write in)		

This question allows you to find out what aspects are most and least important to people. This type of question is especially useful when combined with classification groups: you can look at the most important overall, most important to men or to women, most important to those with cars or who use public transport; most important to different age groups etc.

The open question can provide additional evidence to justify prioritising one aspect over another.

Make sure you only ask one question

Example 1

Q2. How happy are you with the content and frequency of the Parish newsletter?		
Completely happy		
Quite happy		✖
Not very happy		
Not at all happy		
This asks two separate questions: one about the content and one about frequency. People may be happy with one but not happy with the other and therefore will be unable to answer.		

Example 2

Q2. Please tell us to what extent you are happy or unhappy with the following:					
	Completely happy	Quite happy	Not very happy	Not at all happy	Don't know / Not applicable
The contents of the Parish newsletter					
The frequency of the Parish newsletter					

Make sure you construct your question clearly

Avoid double negatives

Do you think the bus service is not too infrequent? Yes / No	✖
Do the buses run often enough? Yes / No	✔

Avoid leading questions

Do you agree with the Parish Council that it is better to cut down on waste to landfill sites? Yes / No	✖
Do you think that the Parish Council should aim to cut down on waste to landfill sites? Yes / No	✔

Avoid raising expectations and try not to ask obvious questions

Example 1

How often would you like your bin to be emptied? Please write in:	✖

This would be a good question to ask only if there are unlimited resources and your objective is to create high levels of satisfaction with the frequency of bin collection or even offer a tailored service in line with individual needs

Example 2

How happy would you be if the shop opened at 9am instead of 8.30am?	✖
Very happy	
Quite happy	
Not very happy	
Not happy at all	

This would be a good question only if you needed to confirm that most people

would not be happy with a reduced opening time of the shop.

If you want to find the most popular option for change...

Example 3:

We can make savings through more efficient emptying of dog waste bins, while still maintaining health and hygiene standards. Please tell us which of the possible options presented on page x would be you're most favoured option. Option 1 Option 2 Option 3 Please say why this is your favoured option (please write in) **And which would be your least favoured option?** Option 1 Option 2 Option 3 Please say why this is your least favoured option (please write in)	✓

Consider how you would reach a decision on the route to adopt if equal proportions chose each of 2 options.

Make sure your options match your question

How satisfied are you with the organisation of litter picks?	✘	
Completely **agree**		
Slightly **agree**		
Slightly **disagree**		
Completely **disagree**		
How satisfied are you with the organisation of litter picks?	✓	
Completely **satisfied**		
Slightly **satisfied**		
Slightly **dissatisfied**		
Completely **dissatisfied**		

Make sure you give people an opt-out answer
(but also remember to use routing to take out any people who would not be able to answer the question)

How satisfied are you with the community facilities in the area?	
Completely satisfied	
Quite satisfied	
Quite dissatisfied	
Completely dissatisfied	
Don't know / not applicable	
Some respondents, perhaps those who are housebound, might not be able to answer this question. You should give an opt-out answer such as don't know / not sure / not applicable.	
In addition, you might want to find out whether the person answering is answering from experience or simply hearsay. You might, therefore, ask first:	
Do you use the recycling facilities in your area? Yes / No	
Those answering no could be asked to say why, rather than being asked to rate the satisfaction of a service they do not use	
In the case of potentially sensitive questions, it is helpful to include an option of "I prefer not to say"	

Decide what type of data you want from the question

Closed questions

Do you want a simple: x% said yes and y% said no	Simply use tick boxes: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know
Do you want to measure something like awareness, satisfaction, agreement Use a suitable tick-box scale	For example: To what extent do you agree that the Parish Council should prioritise spending on landscaping? Completely agree Slightly agree Slightly disagree Completely disagree Don't know
A 4-point scale (2 agrees / 2 disagrees) stops people sitting on the fence. There may, however, be times when a mid- point is needed and so a 5-point scale should be used	For example: To what extent do you agree or disagree that recycling should be prioritised over black bin collections? Completely agree Slightly agree **Neither agree nor disagree** Slightly disagree Completely disagree Don't know

Do you want very detailed measurements? An increased rating scale may be more useful	For example, looking at contact with the Parish Council: Please rate your satisfaction with the speed that we answer your queries. Please use a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is not at all satisfied and 10 is completely satisfied
Gauging feelings: use a sliding scale for measuring things like changes in happiness use smiley faces or other similar pictorial methods rather than tick boxes. Online surveys typically use a slider.	For example, attitudes to the area: Please use the sliding scale to show how happy you are in general to be living in the Parish: ☺ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ ☹

Do you need to ask an open question?

You may want to ask about services used, how people spend their time, or other questions with multiple possible answers

You could ask an open question (i.e. allow people to write in their answer)

However open questions are very labour intensive, open to interpretation and non- specific

In online surveys, you can also allow people to tick as many of the options as you like, or restrict them to one or 'pick the top three' as relevant and appropriate

What was the purpose of your visit to the Community Shop? Please write in	What was the purpose of your visit to the Community Shop? Daily essentials (milk, bread, eggs, etc.) Frozen food (meat, fish, pizza, etc.) Hygiene products (soap, toothpaste, etc.) Cleaning products (washing liquid, bleach, etc.) Special occasion (Cakes, sweets, birthday card etc.) Something else (please write in what)

There are times when an open question is best (e.g. to ensure respondents feel they have been given the opportunity to say everything they wish to say).

For example, please use the space below to provide any other information you think would be useful to us in deciding what improvements should be made to the village hall

Consultation Statement Template

Consultation Stage	Engagement Method	Who was consulted	Who responded	Summary of Comment Received	Project Group Response	Action
1- Initial consultation event	Stall set up at village fete asking the public to complete a survey on recent events in the village	Community wide consultation	46 responses	• Concerns raised about recent power cuts • Recent heavy rain saw the main road into the village flooded and some cars stranded • Trees falling across roads prevented people getting around the village and an ambulance was unable to reach a call out	Off the back of consultation decided to proceed with a community resilience plan	Feedback will be taken into consideration as part of first draft of document