

Community Consultation

The Venue

Choose a venue that everyone is happy to enter and be in.

For instance, some people may be uncomfortable about entering a pub.

Your village hall would be ideal!

Timing

Choose a time that is going to be the most convenient to the greatest number of people. Weekdays prevent working people from participating. Evenings are not convenient for older people or people with children.

An ideal time would be a Saturday, say 11am - 3pm. You can decide to run more than one event at differing times.

Too Far to Come?

Think about how you will get disabled or older people involved. Offer steering group members to pick them up and take them home, and a phone number to make arrangements.

Who else may not get involved? How are you going to make sure they are included?

Attracting PeopleProvide Food!

Offering or advertising food and other refreshments (sandwiches, pasties, tea, coffee, juice or a cream tea, for instance) is a good way to get people in and to maximise attendance.

Consultation events can be held as part of another village event which has a good turn-out such as the annual jubilee sale or fete.

Children

Delegate someone (A teacher or playgroup leader?) to run a session to occupy children while parents are involved in the consultation.

There are fun activities that enable children to also express opinions about how they view their community and what they would like to see happen.

Advertise!

Advertise the event well in advance. Lots of advertising!

Put two or more rounds of flyers through everyone's letterbox. Put a flyer up in public places; on lamp posts, in your shop, pub or post office and in your bus shelter.

A well laid out, photocopied leaflet is sufficient.

Remember to explain what parish planning is about! Emphasise that the event will be fun, there will be food etc

As they come through the door....

Have a display at the door (say, a flipchart) that tells people about Parish Planning and emphasises the community nature of the project.

Some people become wary if they feel that questioning comes from "government" at any level.

CCD can provide display material.

Ask People to Sign In

This is so that you can certify the numbers attending. Make it VERY CLEAR that;

- This is ONLY so you can certify numbers
- ALL responses are ANONYMOUS
- NO NAMES will appear in the final document

Make the direction of travel around the consultation obvious. Use arrows or cut-out footprints on the floor.



How to Ask the Questions

We have several techniques listed below, which are aimed at gathering broad information in an informal and enjoyable way:

- Map and flags
- Post-it notes
- Graffiti Wall

Your first consultation event is looking for issues rather than statistics, and these techniques will help you to do that. Contact CCD for more information on these techniques.

Physical Layout of the Questions

Questions should be on big sheets of paper (flipchart size or larger). This is to give plenty of space for people's responses.

The sheets can be stuck up on the wall or laid out on tables. On the wall makes a better display.

Hand drawn charts are fine and even preferable as they help emphasise the community nature of the event.

How People Respond to the Questions

Depending on the type of question, people are given a handful of post-it notes on which to write their comments or a strip of coloured dots to stick against their preferred answers.

Try to give each person only sufficient post-its or dots to respond to all the questions. This is to avoid ballot-stuffing!

Ideally each age group should be given a different colour so that you can gauge and report their differing responses.

...Between Consultations...

After your first consultation event you will need to look at the individual issues which have arisen, and the topic headings which they have been placed under.

From this you will be able to put together a series of questions for the second consultation. This can be done in 2 ways:

- A questionnaire
- A second consultation event

A Second Consultation Event

The second consultation event contains more structured questions that enable you to put hard numbers and percentages to the issues and concerns raised at the first event.

District and County Councils, and other statutory agencies, will want to see what percentages of local people thought about the issues flagged up if they are to take your parish plan seriously.