

## PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee – Wednesday 27 November 2013

## INSPIRING AND CONNECTING - CITIZEN/CUSTOMER CONSULTATION

Report by Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This paper presents an overview of the current approach to citizen/customer consultation. It sets out proposals for **re-energising the corporate approach** to consultation and **strengthening connections** to support best practice and improve how the intelligence/data gathered through consultation is used to support on-going improvement and innovation across Services/partner organisations.

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 introduced a power of well-being and a statutory duty of Best Value and Community Planning on all Councils. Under the Act, Councils are required to consult with stakeholders and engage with community bodies to improve the planning and delivery of services by making them more responsive to the needs and aspirations of communities. The Transformation Strategy, Securing the Future Towards 2015 and Beyond (Report No 10/357 refers) identifies a commitment to improving access to complete and consistent information on service delivery, expectation and need, financial, demographic and geographic information, performance information, and evidence of impact and outcomes that will support our elected member decision making, engagement processes, re-design and planning of services and our public accountability. More recently, the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill sets a clear agenda to build on our experience of working with communities to support them to achieve their own goals and aspirations through taking independent action and by having their voices heard in the decisions that affect their area.
- 1.2 The Council's proposed approach to working with communities was set out in a paper to Council on 2 October 2013, Organised to Deliver: Implementing the Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement 2013/23 (Report No 13/479 refers). Alongside this, the Council has a range of mechanisms to consult with stakeholder groups to capture data about how well services are performing, levels of satisfaction and perceptions about how well the Council (and its partners) are delivering local outcomes. This includes the citizens' panel, Viewfinder, as well as a range of service specific methodologies.
- 1.3 With the approval of the new Community and Corporate Plans, and the launch of the Council's approach to innovation and improvement, there is an opportunity to review, re-energise and improve the approach to citizen/customer consultation.

1.4 This paper presents an overview of the current approach to citizen/customer consultation and sets out proposals to:

- **Re-energise the corporate approach** to consultation; and
- **Strengthen connections** to support best practice and improve how the intelligence/data gathered through consultation is used to support on-going improvement and innovation across Services/partner organisations and to inform a wider corporate view.

## **2. RE-ENERGISING THE CORPORATE SURVEY MECHANISM**

2.1 To inform corporate, community and locality planning and support best value, the Council is required to capture data about how well universal services are performing, levels of satisfaction and perceptions about how well the Council (and its partners) are delivering local outcomes. Further there is a need to provide normative data for Perth and Kinross as a whole which can be compared to the findings from consultation in smaller localities or with specific groups. This paper provides an overview of the Council's current corporate survey mechanism, Viewfinder, and presents four options for taking forward a model of consultation which will meet these requirements.

2.2 A range of exemplar questions for annual surveys/panel questionnaires have been developed across the local authority sector. Broadly, surveys are used to establish:

- The public's views on general and specific aspects of life, including the home and neighbourhood, health, education and employment and community safety.
- Levels of satisfaction with public services. The Local Government Customer Satisfaction Model (CSM) was adopted by the Council in 2010. (Report to Executive Officer Team, 7 September 2010, Adoption of Customer Satisfaction Model)<sup>1</sup>.
- The customer experience when contacting the Council.
- Strengthen the evidence base which will support and inform the delivery of local outcomes.

### **2.3 Viewfinder**

2.3.1 Citizens' panels are a popular consultation method to help obtain community feedback and are used by a number of Scottish local authorities to conduct research. A citizens' panel is a representative sample which is maintained and updated on an on-going basis. Panel members agree to participate in a number of surveys per annum and, as a result, response rates are generally higher than typical survey methodologies.

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<sup>1</sup> The CSM was developed by Local Authorities, in collaboration with the Improvement Service, Consumer Focus Scotland, LARIA (Scotland), the Scottish Government and Audit Scotland. The CSM provides exemplar questions and uses the five point scale. It is designed to be used by any service that seeks to measure customer satisfaction and experience.

- 2.3.2 A commitment to establish a citizens' panel for Perth and Kinross was made under the Council's Decentralisation Scheme. Following approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in 1998 (Report No 98/572 refers), Perth and Kinross Council's citizens' panel, Viewfinder, was established to provide a way for local people to give their opinion on services in their local area and influence Council decisions.
- 2.3.3 A comprehensive review of the citizens' panel was undertaken in 2007 and included benchmarking with other local authorities and an optional appraisal against other methodologies (Report to OCIP Customer and Communities Group, Corporate Consultation Methods, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2007). At that time it was decided to retain Viewfinder and conduct a residents' survey with the panel every two years while retaining the flexibility to consult with residents on a frequent ad hoc basis. Since then, four surveys have been undertaken:
- Sept 2007: Residents' survey
  - April 2010: City Centre questionnaire
  - November 2010: Financial priorities
  - April 2011: Communication and information from the Council, health and wellbeing, sport and active recreation
- 2.3.4 Viewfinder response rates have ranged from 55% to 85%. Broadly, the results of Viewfinder have therefore reflected the population of Perth and Kinross as a whole, with 95% confidence, to within  $\pm 3$  to 5 per cent. In 2012 the panel was refreshed and the sample size increased to 1,700 to account for the attrition of membership and the growth of population.
- 2.3.5 To date there have been twenty Viewfinder questionnaires covering a range of topics particularly around health and wellbeing and use and satisfaction with universal services. Partners, including Perth College, NHS Tayside, Tayside Police and Perth and Kinross Leisure, have also made use of the panel. An analysis by the most frequently asked topic is shown in Appendix 1. The last survey was undertaken in 2011.
- 2.3.6 The estimated cost to maintain the panel annually and fully refresh the panel every three years is between £1,000 and £9,000 respectively. Based on previous surveys, it is estimated that the cost per questionnaire would be approx. £6,000 per survey (printing, postage and data inputting) and an estimated £2,000 staff cost per questionnaire. The development of the panel on-line may present an opportunity to reduce costs. However, to maintain the integrity of the sample, each panel member would need to be provided with a unique identifier. This option would therefore require further exploration should the decision be made to retain Viewfinder.
- 2.3.7 The results of Viewfinder questionnaires have been reported to elected members, the results of the twentieth questionnaire reported to Council on 14 December 2011 (Report No 11/651 refers). Key findings are published on the Council website [www.pkc.gov.uk](http://www.pkc.gov.uk).

2.3.8 In addition to the panel wide questionnaire, Viewfinder can be used to sample for focus group research to further investigate the results of surveys and/or gain more depth about an issue. Around one third of the panel have volunteered to participate in focus groups. Most recently Viewfinder focus groups were used to inform the Big Listen in 2011 and to consult on kerbside recycling in 2010, Perth and Kinross News in 2009 and website user testing in 2008.

## **2.4 Options Appraisal for the Corporate Survey Mechanism**

2.4.1 An options appraisal for the delivery method of the Corporate Survey Mechanism has been carried out. The summary of options appraisal is presented in Table 1 below. Following careful consideration option three an annual or biennial survey was deemed to provide the Council with the best value for money whilst still retaining a Corporate Survey Mechanism.

2.4.2 Each option was considered against the following criteria:

- Delivery of data about how well universal services are performing, levels of satisfaction and perceptions about how well the Council (and its partners) are delivering local outcomes.
- Delivery of statistically representative/normative data for Perth and Kinross as a whole which can be compared to the findings from consultation in smaller localities or with specific groups.
- The quality of the data collected.
- The resources required including budget and staff time.
- The flexibility of the mechanism to meet multiple requirements.

**Table 1: Summary of Options**

| Delivery of data about universal service/levels of satisfaction/local outcomes  | Statistically representative/ provides normative data  | Data quality   | Resources   | Flexibility  | Conclusion  |
|---|--|--|---|--|---|
| <b>Option One: No corporate mechanism</b>   |  |  |   |  |   |
| <p>More difficult to capture information about local outcomes and universal services. Reduces the opportunity for citizens, rather than service users, to engage with the Council. More difficult to capture a corporate overview of performance.</p>                                   | <p>Limited normative data for Perth and Kinross as a whole.</p>  | <p>Potential for data quality to be variable across service specific approaches.</p> | <p>Release Viewfinder budget, £10,000 per annum. However, costs may be transferred to services.</p>   | <p>A service specific approach provides a targeted approach to sampling those in receipt of services and the potential to 'dig deeper' in relation to key issues.</p>  | <p>A range of approaches are used by Services to consult with service users on an on-going basis. However, currently the service specific approach does not enable the Council (and its partners) to capture statistically representative data about universal service/levels of satisfaction/local outcomes. Alongside a corporate mechanism, the proposals set in section 3 seek to improve both consultation practice and the co-ordination/assimilation of data/intelligence gathered to inform the corporate view. It is anticipated that as this develops, the need for a corporate mechanism would need to be reviewed.</p>                |
| <b>Option Two: Retain and re-launch Viewfinder, status quo</b>  |  |  |   |  |   |
| <p>Mechanism to undertake an annual survey to gain data on universal services and to measure perceptions about how well the Council (and its partners) are delivering local outcomes. Provides the opportunity for citizens, rather than service users, to engage with the Council.</p> | <p>Provides a representative sample. On-going ability to measure differences and assess improvement in service delivery over time.</p> | <p>Limitation of a postal survey but with high response rate.</p>                    | <p>Estimated cost of £1,000 - £9,000 respectively to maintain the panel annually and fully refresh the panel every three years. Estimated cost per questionnaire would be approx. £8,000 per survey. Any option to continue with Viewfinder would require further</p> | <p>Provides a representative sample for short focused frequent consultation to support services to inform reviews, strategies, market research and projects. However, this functionality has not been used in recent years. Data can be analysed geographically.</p> | <p>The key benefit of retaining the Viewfinder panel is that it provides a robust sample which can be used for several questionnaires per annum. However, this is only cost effective if the sample is used more than once a year. With the development of service specific approaches, the demand for panel questionnaires has been limited in recent years and the current budget limited to one questionnaire per annum. The development of the panel on-line may present an opportunity to reduce costs. However, to maintain the integrity of the sample, this option would therefore require exploration should the decision be made to</p> |

| Delivery of data about universal service/levels of satisfaction/local outcomes   | Statistically representative/ provides normative data   | Data quality   | Resources   | Flexibility  | Conclusion  |
|--|---|--|---|--|---|
|  |   |  | engagement with the current panel and potentially a further recruitment.  |  | retain Viewfinder. Further, there is the need to consider re-instating feedback to panel members about the results of Viewfinder surveys and what has happened as a result of the views expressed.  |
| <b>Option Three: Annual or biennial survey</b>   |   |  |   |  |   |
| Mechanism to gain data on universal services and to measure perceptions about how well the Council (and its partners) are delivering local outcomes. Provides the opportunity for citizens, rather than service users, to engage with the Council. Potential to run alongside an open on-line survey to offer the opportunity for anybody to give their views (care would need to be taken with the interpretation of online results as respondents would be self-selecting rather than part of the sample.) | Provides a representative sample. If repeated, a regular way to measure satisfaction, improvement and perceptions with a robust sample. | Opportunity for better data quality through interviews (phone/face-to-face). If outsourced would bring independence and release capacity of Research and Consultation Officer. | Market testing would inform the cost of this option. It is anticipated that the cost of a resident survey would be between £15,000 to £20,000 per survey. | Data can be analysed geographically. This method also presents an opportunity to boost sample size in particular client groups or to able analysis at both a Perth and Kinross and locality level. | An annual or biennial survey would give an opportunity to ask citizens about universal services and their perceptions about how well the Council (and its partners) are delivering local outcomes. Using robust sampling would give the ability to measure differences and assess improvement in service delivery over time. The method of survey would be dependent on the budget available and the statistical reliability desired. |
| <b>Option Four: Non sample based methodologies</b>   |   |  |   |  |   |
| On-line surveys continue to be a cost effective way of offering the opportunity for anybody to give their views. In addition, a range of alternative consultation methods are set out in Appendix 2. Each has a range of strengths and some can be used to engage, as well as consult, with members of the public. However, it is more difficult to capture information about local outcomes and universal services. More difficult to capture a corporate overview of performance.                          | Limited normative data for Perth and Kinross as a whole.  | Offer opportunities for engagement and empowerment.  | Can be resource/cost intensive.   | Offer opportunity for a targeted approach and the potential to 'dig deeper' in relation to key issues.   | These methods do not provide a sample of the population which would enable the results of the survey to be extrapolated to the population as a whole. It is therefore recommended that these methodologies would complement, rather than replace, a sample based methodology.   |

- 2.4.3 In summary, an annual or biennial survey would provide the Council with a mechanism to gather data on universal services and to measure perceptions about how well the Council (and its partners) are delivering on local outcomes. Use of robust sampling would give the ability to measure differences and an opportunity to boost sample size in particular client groups or to enable analysis at both a Perth and Kinross and locality level. In addition to the sample, any member of the public would be offered the opportunity to give their views by completing the survey online.
- 2.4.4 The review of the Council's magazine for residents, Perth and Kinross News, will provide additional opportunities for direct communication to residents and the gathering of feedback. With the development of an interactive, digital edition, there will be scope to include direct links to online surveys and to collect comments on individual articles. Tracking the number of people who read individual articles will provide insight into topics that are of particular interest to residents. As the database of residents requesting to receive a copy via email grows, we may be able to ask these residents if they would be willing to participate in regular sample surveys.
- 2.4.5 The Community of Practice Network (see section 3.4) would act as the Project Board with key responsibility for approving the survey and ensuring the intelligence/data gathered is used to inform service delivery and improvement. There is also an opportunity to extend access more formally across the Community Planning Partnership through the Outcome Delivery Groups and establish links with the Community Empowerment Board.

### **3 MAKING CONNECTIONS – IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

- 3.1 The Council undertakes a range of service specific consultation. A key challenge is how to support best practice and improve how we use the intelligence/data gathered through consultation to support on-going improvement and innovation across services/organisations.
- 3.2 Alongside a corporate mechanism, the proposals set out below seek to improve both consultation practice and the co-ordination/assimilation of data/intelligence gathered to inform the corporate view. It is anticipated that as this develops, the need for a corporate mechanism would need to be reviewed.

#### **3.3 Service Specific Methodologies**

- 3.3.1 A range of service specific approaches provide a targeted approach to sampling those in receipt of services and the potential to 'dig deeper' in relation to key issues. Examples include:
- The Evidence to Success survey consulted 800 parents and 8,000 children.
  - Housing and Community Care undertake a range of satisfaction surveys for example about the repairs service, homelessness, tenant's satisfaction.

- The Environment Service consult with service users when reviewing services or to inform the improvement agenda and also conduct quarterly satisfaction surveys.
- The 'Big Listen' provides a consultation and feedback method for Culture and Community Services.

3.3.2 On-line surveys are a popular method of consulting with both external and internal service users. Care should be taken in interpreting the results of on-line surveys as respondents are self-selecting and response rates can be variable. Examples of recent on-line surveys include: the tenant satisfaction survey; survey of business and enterprise customers; pupil internet safety; and the employee engagement survey.

### 3.4 Strengthening Connections

3.4.1 There is an opportunity to review and re-launch corporate support and guidance for effective consultation and to improve how we capitalise on the intelligence/data gathered through consultation to support on-going improvement and innovation across services/organisations. Key actions include the development of guidance setting out clear requirements and expectations for Services in delivering robust consultation practice through the development of comprehensive Service consultation programmes to inform service reviews, transformation and continuous improvement. This will include a specific requirement to publish key findings and ensure that the intelligence gathered not only informs service development but also feeds into a wider corporate /community planning view. To this end the guidance will set out clear expectations in relation to reporting through Business Management and Improvement Plans and the Annual Performance Report.

3.4.2 To support this, it is proposed that a **Community of Practice Network** is established with representatives from each Service and a remit to support improvement in customer consultation, promote co-ordination across and between services and ensure that data gathered through consultation is used effectively to support on-going improvement and innovation across services/organisations. It is anticipated that this group will also fulfil the requirement of the Project Board for the corporate survey mechanism and support connections with the Outcome Delivery Groups and the Community Empowerment Board. The Network would be chaired by Bill Atkinson, Depute Director (Education and Children's Services). Key actions include: an audit of service specific methodologies to identify strengths and areas for improvement and an exploration of options for developing locality based intelligence through improved co-ordination.

3.4.3 To support shared learning from consultation across the Council it is proposed to develop an **improvement/reputation tracker**. This 'dashboard' report would highlight key information including results from key questions from corporate survey mechanism, highlights and key findings from service specific consultations, key issues identified from locality forum meetings, regular customer care statistics, key complaints statistics and key social media statistics.



## 4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION(S)

4.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Approves an annual or biennial survey to replace Viewfinder.
- (ii) Instructs the Depute Director (Education and Children's Services) to review and re-launch corporate support and guidance for effective consultation. This will include the development of guidance setting out clear requirements and expectations for Services in delivering robust consultation practice through the development of comprehensive Service consultation programmes.
- (iii) Instructs the Depute Director (Education and Children's Services) to establish a Community of Practice Network to support improvement in customer consultation, promote co-ordination across and between services and ensure that data gathered through consultation is used effectively to support on-going improvement and innovation across services/organisations.

### Author(s)

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### Approved

| Name       | Designation        | Date            |
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| John Fyffe | Executive Director | 30 October 2013 |

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## 1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The undernoted table should be completed for all reports. Where the answer is 'yes', the relevant section(s) should also be completed. Where the answer is 'no', the relevant section(s) should be marked 'not available (n/a)'.

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| <b>Strategic Implications</b>                       | <b>Yes / None</b> |
| Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement           | <b>Yes</b>        |
| Corporate Plan                                      | <b>Yes</b>        |
| <b>Resource Implications</b>                        |                   |
| Financial   | <b>Yes</b>        |
| Workforce   | <b>No</b>         |
| Asset Management (land, property, IST)              | <b>No</b>         |
| <b>Assessments</b>                                  |                   |
| Equality Impact Assessment                          | <b>Yes</b>        |
| Strategic Environmental Assessment                  | <b>No</b>         |
| Sustainability (community, economic, environmental) | <b>No</b>         |
| Legal and Governance                                | <b>No</b>         |
| Risk  | <b>No</b>         |
| <b>Consultation</b>                                 |                   |
| Internal  | <b>Yes</b>        |
| External  | <b>No</b>         |
| <b>Communication</b>                                |                   |
| Communications Plan                                 | <b>Yes</b>        |

### 1. Strategic Implications

1.1 The Perth and Kinross Community Plan 2013-2023 and Perth and Kinross Council Corporate Plan 2013/2018 set out five strategic objectives:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report supports all of the above objectives.

1.2 The report also links to the Education & Children's Services Policy Framework in respect of the following key policy area: Change and Improvement.

### 2. Resource Implications

#### Financial

2.1 It is estimated that the cost of an annual survey would be between £15,000 to £20,000 per survey. However, this will be informed by market testing. These costs will be met from existing Education and Children's Services budgets.

### Workforce

- 2.2 Not applicable (n/a)

### Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 Not applicable (n/a)

## **3. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and the following positive outcomes are expected following implementation:

Residents, stakeholders and community bodies/agencies will be encouraged to participate in consultation and engagement events and surveys. Information about how to get involved in consultation will be promoted through a range of channels, including the Council's website.

### Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals. No further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

### Sustainability

- 3.3 Not applicable (n/a)

### Legal and Governance

- 3.4 Not applicable (n/a)

### Risk

- 3.5 Not applicable (n/a)

## **4. Consultation**

### Internal

- 4.1 The Executive Officer Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

## External

4.2 Not applicable (n/a)

## **5. Communication**

5.1 On-going communications will be undertaken by Services to promote participation in consultation. Specifically, a communications plan will be developed to support the launch of the corporate survey. This will include feedback to participants about how the results of the survey have been used.

## **2. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (and not containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

Securing the Future – Towards 2015 and Beyond (Report No 10/357)

Organised to Deliver: Implementing the Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement 2013/23 (Report No 13/479 refers)

Viewfinder Twentieth Questionnaire (Report No 11/651 refers)

## **3. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Viewfinder Topics

Appendix 2: Summary of Alternative Consultation Methods

## Appendix 1: Viewfinder Topics

Most Frequently Asked

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| 7<br>questionnaires | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Health, lifestyle and activity</b> (November 1999, July 2000, September 2002, February 2003, March 2005, April 2006, April 2011)</li> </ul>   |
| 6                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Arts and Culture/Museums/Libraries</b> (November 2000, May 2001, April 2004, March 2005, April 2006, April 2011)</li> <li>• <b>Council Services Information/Satisfaction</b> (April 1999, November 1999, November 2000, February 2003, April 2004, September 2007, April 2011)</li> <li>• <b>Sport and Leisure provision within Perth and Kinross</b> (May 2001, May 2002, September 2002, February 2003, September 2003, October 2005, April 2011)</li> </ul>  |
| 5                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Governance/The Council/Elections</b> (July 1999, November 2000, May 2002, Sept 2003, October 2005)</li> </ul>   |
| 4                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community Safety/Road Safety</b> (July 1999, May 2001, September 2003, March 2005)</li> <li>• <b>Transport</b> (July 2000, May 2001, April 2004, October 2005)</li> </ul>   |
| 3                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Living in Perth and Kinross</b> (April 1999, September 2007, April 2011)</li> <li>• <b>Road Maintenance/Street Cleansing</b> (April 1999, July 2000, April 2004)</li> <li>• <b>Parks and Open Spaces</b> (November 1999, May 2002, April 2006)</li> </ul>   |
| 2                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Energy Efficiency and the Home</b> (July 1999, September 2002)</li> <li>• <b>Opportunities for Learning</b> (September 2002, March 2005)</li> <li>• <b>Consumer Advice</b> (September 2003, April 2004)</li> <li>• <b>Budget</b> (January 2000, November 2010)</li> </ul>   |
| Individual topics   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Priorities for Perth and Kinross</b> (July 1999)</li> <li>• <b>Refuse collection</b> (July 2000)</li> <li>• <b>Civic amenity sites recycling</b> (July 2000)</li> <li>• <b>Council Tax payments</b> (July 2000)</li> <li>• <b>Volunteering</b> (November 2000)</li> <li>• <b>Additional Public Holiday</b> (May 2001)</li> <li>• <b>Education and Children's Services</b> (May 2001)</li> <li>• <b>Views about the Environment</b> (September 2001)</li> <li>• <b>Smoking in public places</b> (May 2002)</li> <li>• <b>Public Toilets</b> (May 2002)</li> <li>• <b>NHS Tayside</b> (September 2002)</li> <li>• <b>Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT)</b> (April 2004)</li> <li>• <b>Perth City Centre/City Hall</b> (April 2010)</li> </ul> |



## Appendix 2: Summary of Alternative Consultation Methods

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Public meetings</b></p>            | <p>Public meetings are still a common form of consultation as they are an easy way of giving out information. Public meetings are intended to gauge views and allow a debate of specific issues of interest to the public. However, the chair needs to be someone who is capable/independent/acceptable to the audience as there is the potential for them to be dominated by a small group of interested vocal individuals and if poorly managed public meetings can be open to conflict. Public meetings are also not statistically representative, and poor attendance is often the case. Also, they can only really capture qualitative data.</p>  |
| <p><b>E-Consultation</b></p>             | <p>There is considerable scope for the use of information technology in the area of consultation. Outcomes from E-Consultation can be quantitative and qualitative. The advantages of using websites is that it is very cheap and a quick way of obtaining views, its accessible to all those who have internet access and usually yield good response rates. However, it should be noted that any feedback obtained through the website would not be fully representative, as some bias will exist in terms of who has access to internet facilities.</p>   |
| <p><b>Planning for real</b></p>          | <p>A consultation method involving creative exercise (for example, the use of maps and model buildings) designed to engage the public in plan making. It takes residents through the physical planning problem and enables them to visualise options. It is a powerful method as it involves, empowers and informs residents and gives them a sense of local ownership. Many residents can take part and it catches interest of those involved. However it is very labour intensive and costly. It requires a lot of planning, preparation, time and resources.</p>  |
| <p><b>Citizens' juries</b></p>           | <p>A citizens' jury is a representative group of between 10 and 20 citizens who meet to consider a policy question in depth. The jury meets for around four days and the individuals act as jurors, listen to evidence from interested parties and cross-examine expert witnesses before making informed recommendations through a process of collective discussion and deliberation. Citizens' juries therefore enable participants to develop an understanding of the issues before giving their views. Jurors should own the process and have a genuine and equal chance to shape the discussion and final outcome. However, they are very labour intensive and there are considerable costs in running a citizens' jury, total costs are usually in the region of £20,000. Again they are also not statistically representative.</p> |
| <p><b>Deliberative opinion polls</b></p> | <p>Deliberative opinion polls involve providing a sample of the target population with background information on an issue, inviting them to participate in a discussion on the issue and taking a poll of views at the end of the discussion. The number of participants normally ranges between 100-300 people. Participants are generally given the opportunity to question speakers and are requested to complete a questionnaire at the end of the discussion. Participants may be paid a fee to attend in addition to expenses. Deliberative opinion polls enable participants to develop an understanding of the issues before they give their views and therefore have strong similarities with citizens' juries and have similar strengths and weakness.</p>   |