

**Scrutiny task group
on
public consultation**

Final report

Task group 41
April 2009



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FOREWORD



I am pleased to present this scrutiny task group report to the Co-ordination, Finance and Performance Commission and to the Cabinet.

Public consultation is an aspect of local democracy that will always attract a great deal of interest and our Council takes its remit in this regard very seriously. We recognise, however, that some of our residents expressed concerns over how the Council communicates with them, and it was therefore important that a dedicated scrutiny task group should look into these issues.

It is evident that the group took a carefully considered approach on how to structure its work and develop the final recommendations, and I would like to thank the Chair, Cllr John Coombs, and his colleagues, Cllrs Mumford, Nicholson and Porter, and Dr Michael Gold; and of course all of those who presented valuable evidence and opinion.

The Commission fully endorses the recommendations made and hopes that they will be supported by the Cabinet, so that we can improve our commitment to communicating with the public openly, efficiently and appropriately.

Councillor Sue Jones
Chair of Co-ordination, Finance and Performance Commission



INTRODUCTION



On behalf of the task group I would like to thank everyone who gave evidence to us, whether academics; partner organizations of the council; voluntary group representatives; concerned residents and, of course, Council employees; their knowledge and good humour has helped us greatly.

The Council undertakes a huge volume of consultation and we have found a deep rooted culture within the organization that, whenever something new or different is proposed, the first thought is who and how should the Council consult. Interestingly this results in a general level of satisfaction with the way the Council listens to the concerns of the many groups and individuals to which it talks.

However, some groups and residents have expressed concerns over a few of the many areas on which the Council consults and it is those that we address in our report and recommendations. We welcome the expression of those concerns as they help us to review and improve our performance in these areas.

Lastly the point of consultation is to find out views – it is not a plebiscite – and I feel it is sometimes forgotten that in our form of democracy it is up to the elected Councillors to make decisions in the best interests of the whole community not just of those who respond to any given consultation. The public have their final say over a Council every four years in the local elections.

Cllr John Coombs
Chair of the Public Consultation Scrutiny Task Group



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

BVPI	Best value performance indicator
CAB	Citizens' advice bureau
CCA	Councillor Call for Action
CPZ	Controlled parking zone
DMT	Directorate management team
Hard to reach populations	Sections of the community that are perceived as difficult to involve in public participation, usually because they are unable to access traditional consultation methods
LBRuT / RuT	London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames
LDF	Local development framework
LSP	Local strategic partnership
NFP	Not for profit
O&S	Overview and scrutiny
Participatory budgeting	Involves local people in making decisions on the spending and priorities for a defined public budget
PCT	Primary care trust
PFI	Private finance initiative
RFU	Rugby football union
Seldom heard populations	Sometimes differentiated from hard to reach, as they may be individuals who are difficult to engage because of their life style, such as younger people, or those currently with limited investment / time in their community.
SEN	Special educational needs
SIMALTO	Simultaneous Multi Attribute Level Trade Off (a mechanism for facilitating participatory budgeting)



BACKGROUND TO THE TASK GROUP

- In July 2008, the Co-ordination, Finance and Performance Commission decided that in-depth scrutiny of Richmond upon Thames Council's public consultation process was required.
- This was in part a response to mounting criticism from local resident and campaign groups but also arose because of public concerns over the consultation on the enclosure of Buckingham Fields.
- A cross-party scrutiny task group was therefore set up, comprising:
 - Cllr John Coombs (Liberal Democrat) - Chair
 - Cllr James Mumford (Liberal Democrat)
 - Cllr Suzette Nicholson (Liberal Democrat)
 - Cllr David Porter (Conservative)
 - Dr Michael Gold (co-optee).
- The group first met on 22 July 2008, when the terms of reference overleaf were agreed.
- Methodology mainly comprised a series of meetings with external and internal witnesses as listed in Appendix A. Additional evidence was gathered from desk research and from submissions from the public. The provenance of all submissions received is listed in Appendix B.



TERMS OF REFERENCE

- I. Investigation into areas of consultation where the Council has ultimate control (for example as a landowner and as a planning authority) and how the Council deals with any potential conflict of interest. This should include:
 - investigating the apparent disconnect between public perceptions of consultation and the reality (a process of consulting, not joint decision making); and consideration of the boundaries that need to be established in order for all parties to understand the process and its limitations
 - development of recommendations regarding the management of public expectations, particularly with regard to the Council's statutory obligations
 - development of recommendations on how the public might be better informed on the process as a whole.
- II. Assessment of the impact of public consultation, including identification of examples of where consultation has made a difference (eg amendment of policy / strategy directly arising from public intervention) and how these might be better publicised.
- III. Evaluation of the potential for an evaluation system for impact assessment; how consultation feeds into the performance management framework, alongside information related to national and local performance indicators.
- IV. Analysis of the quality and reliability of data generated by the current consultation system, and recommendations on how they might be improved.
- V. Establishment of the minimum levels of consultation: at what point and when does the Council start to consult? This should include:



- development of recommendations on the size of issue / likely depth of public concern that determines the requirement for consultation, ie ensuring that consultation is appropriate and proportionate; and on the optimum time for consultation to take place (eg investigation into the possibility that planning objections occur at the planning stage when it is too late)
- how to identify and involve the different sets of stakeholders
- development of approaches and mechanisms to ensure genuine and inclusive public representation; and how to reach the less vocal (or disaffected) parts of the population; making consultation less council and more public driven.

VI. Research into current practice amongst the Council's services and partners, to include:

- how consultation is done and by whom across the different service lines (eg Planning has a formula and handbook)
- clarification / justification of reasons for any fragmentation of delivery; and identification of opportunities for a more corporate approach, where appropriate
- how results are co-ordinated and, more importantly, put to good use (ensuring that there are checks and balances to review the use of consultation and feedback to consultees and the wider community)
- how Richmond upon Thames' partners are doing it, in particular Richmond Housing Partnership, which seems to succeed in reaching minority populations
- assessment of the risk of consultation fatigue.



VARIATIONS TO SCOPE

It has not been possible to fulfil all aspects of the scope, largely in relation to points III and IV, as a result of existing reviews of public consultation which are taking place at a corporate level within the Council.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A clear theme runs through the evidence presented to the task group on the need for accurate definition of what the Council is doing and aiming to achieve when it communicates with and involves the public.
 - The process of what is commonly called consultation sits, in fact, within a spectrum of communication that has been conceptualised as a ‘ladder of participation’ (see page 23). This starts with the process of informing the public on a policy or strategy that their views or reactions cannot influence, usually an action that is driven by legislative or policy requirements. When this process moves into a dialogue with the public, where views on pre-selected options are sought, it can more accurately be called consultation.
 - However, ‘consultation’ should not be confused with ‘partnership’, which is located at the far end of the spectrum. Partnership is the process by which the public’s views are sought on an open-ended basis not defined by such pre-selection, which allows the public to participate fully in the final choice of options, even if the policy itself is governed by a statutory framework.
 - **NOTE:** for ease of reference, the term ‘consultation’ is used in this report to mean the wide variety of communication that the Council has with the public.
 - Much of what any council, including Richmond upon Thames, does falls within the definition of informing, but whatever the process, the task group recommends that the Council’s purpose and relationship with the public be clearly stated. This approach will help to manage residents’ expectations of just how influential – or not – their views might be.
2. In its Corporate Consultation strategy, the Council needs to explain exactly how and when it consults the public on pre-selected options and how and when it is seeking to engage in partnership with the public on open-ended options; and also to explain why it is engaging in consultation.



3. The task group also recommends that the Council develops a strategy on how to react if, in the process of consultation, the public develops its own option in contrast to the Council's preferred range. The view of the task group is that such an option should be treated fairly and equitably alongside the preferred range and that the Council should provide resources to cost it. In this way, if the Council does eventually decide to reject it, then the reasons will have been open and transparent.
4. The outcome of public consultations (ie whether they are deemed successful or not in terms of process) can be seen to be linked to the nature of the issue in question and those who represent or petition for it. One-off issues that generate high volume response but disparate views are more likely to be problematic.
 - As a result, there are clues as to where consultation may fail; and the group recommends that the Council anticipates and pays particular attention to those processes likely to be most challenging.
 - In addition, those who are disappointed by the outcome of a consultation are liable to judge the effectiveness of the process on the outcome itself rather than its own merits.
5. Internal commitment and communication will be critical in driving through the above recommendations; all those who need to inform or consult with the public should make this distinction and incorporate a clear statement of purpose into their methodology, including what consultees might reasonably expect.
 - The task group heard from its partner, Richmond Housing Partnership, the extent to which training underpins and drives the importance of consultation both for service users and for staff. As a result, it is recommended that our own training managers look closely at the RHP model.
 - Equally important will be communication with all ward councillors (and neighbouring ward councillors as appropriate, for example regarding CPZs) to inform them of any local consultations, so they are therefore in a position to respond to and manage their constituents' expectations. The corporate diary of consultation events, currently under development, will help in this regard .



- Continuing the theme of communication, all those residents who are informed or consulted at the outset of any exercise should be kept in touch with developments, and in particular the final outcome. For those who can access the web, this would be the ideal solution but officers should be able to suggest alternatives. There are mechanisms in place for feeding back to consultees (see Environment Directorate evidence, page 28) but the findings from the task group's telephone surveys into recent consultations (see page 38) indicate that these need to be more robust.
6. The task group found that many of the concerns they heard from witnesses around 'consultation' relate to planning, and that many of the contentious issues arise when the Council is the landowner as well as planning authority.
 7. Whilst much of the borough's planning activity is constrained by the national planning framework (see page 30), this is not always apparent to the public. It would be helpful to provide evidence that the Council is acting in accordance with the national statutory planning system.
 - In addition, the potential for public perceptions of conflict of interests, when the Council is disposing of assets, should be managed wherever possible by helping residents to understand the wider good and the implicit gain rather than the local context alone.
 - This might be achieved to some extent by making residents aware of the principles underlying the Council's asset management strategy.
 8. At a more specific level, the task group recommends that the planning committee considers greater flexibility of planning hearings with the aim of making them more equitable. At present, Richmond upon Thames allows, on an entirely discretionary basis, two speakers for and against householder applications and three speakers for and against non-householder applications, all of whom are allowed three minutes each. There may be opportunity to make this structure more flexible, for example, the order of speakers might be changed for a trial period, so that each side fields a representative on an alternating basis. This would address the anecdotal evidence heard by the task group that some objectors leave the meetings feeling that they have had no redress.



9. The task group also believes that there is a case for clearly stated guidance on the process of notifying those immediately affected by planning applications, not only to provide criteria for officers, but also to ensure the public is kept aware of these processes and what might be expected from them.
- In addition, criteria for initiating a consultation should not be produced on a ‘one size fits all’ basis, but rather tailored according to the size and nature of the consultation in question.
10. The objective of the Finance Directorate’s consultation is frequently educative; small numbers of the public are given the opportunity to understand the context of budget setting and how services are prioritised; more of these consultations might be undertaken in order to increase this ‘learning’ aspect.
11. In general, Richmond upon Thames has an articulate and vocal population, but the Council is keen to hear the views of all, including those who are ‘hard to reach’ or ‘seldom heard’.

The group recommends that the Commission considers some further work on developing guidance for local amenity groups to help them become properly representative of and accountable to their community, thereby including these other voices.



SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of consultations and their relationship with the public should always be clearly stated.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate strategy should explain how, when and why it consults the public on pre-selected options and how, when and why it is seeking to engage in partnership with the public on open-ended options.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council should develop a strategy on how to react if, during consultation, the public develops its own option in contrast to the Council's preferred range, and to ensure that such options are treated fairly and that the Council should provide resources to cost it.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those undertaking consultations should anticipate and pay particular need to those likely to be the most challenging.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council's training managers should look closely at the RHP training model.
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any local consultations should be communicated to all ward councillors (and neighbouring ward councillors as appropriate).
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents who are informed or consulted at the outset of any exercise should be kept in touch with developments, and in particular the final outcome.
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the Council is both landowner and planning authority, it should provide evidence that it is acting in accordance with the national statutory planning system.
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents should be helped to understand the wider good and the implicit gain when the Council is disposing of assets.
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater flexibility should be introduced into planning hearings, and the task group suggests that, for a trial period, speakers for and against applications should be alternated.
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly stated guidance, for the public in addition to officers, to be provided on the process of notifying those immediately affected by planning applications. Thought should also be given to tailoring criteria according to the circumstances of the consultation in question. The group recommends that a common sense approach is taken regarding the depth and reach required for each consultation.
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More 'educative' consultations should be undertaken.
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Commission should consider further work on developing guidance for local amenity groups to help them in their representative role.



SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS IN RICHMOND UPON THAMES

12. Public Consultation has been a long established policy within the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. First introduced in the early 1980s, it has developed and utilised diverse methods and approaches to involving the public either as individuals or as representative(s) of groups, communities, or of specific groups, communities, or of specific interests or issues.
13. Some of the mechanisms used by the Council to consult are satisfaction surveys, Citizens' Panel, focus groups, conferences and public meetings, consultative groups and area forums, partnerships and community networks, Communications and Information Vehicles (eg Arcadia).
- The Citizens' Panel for example comprises 1,200 residents who mirror the demographics of the borough population in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic group and with approximately equal numbers in each Ward. The panel has been used on average four times a year since 1999 and consulted for their views on a variety of services.
14. Amongst the wide range of consultations in recent years there are some notable examples, including work with Children and Young People (Hear by Right), Childcare, Young People and the Youth Service, in the review of services for People with Learning Difficulties, CO2 and Parking, Streetscene, Waste Management, provision of toilets, focus groups with minorities in the borough. The increased emphasis on listening to and involving local communities is leading to greater community engagement activities along with public sector partners in the borough.
15. There are also wide varieties of areas where statutory consultations are required. Examples include Local and Strategic Planning (Local Development Framework, Development Control), Education (school reorganisation, openings and closures, admission arrangements), Highways and Transportation (public rights of way, traffic calming schemes, pedestrian crossings, matters related to road modifications), Public Protection (entertainment licensing, dog fouling, street



trading), Business Rates. Much of this is carried out by letters, leaflets, public notices, public meetings and exhibitions.

16. The Council's first Consultation and Participation Policy and Strategy was agreed in 2000. This was updated and agreed by Cabinet in March 2007 following an extensive review.



SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing resources, assets, people - derived from volume of consultations undertaken and development of specialist expertise • Generally an interested / engaged public in Richmond upon Thames • Examples of successful consultations, eg Sheen Lane Centre; positive feedback from customers on Mortlake CPZ consultation • Use of results of satisfaction surveys to improve services leading to, for example, high levels of satisfaction with Environment Services • Effective use of consultation to educate the public about the Council and its services • Involvement of residents in budget consultation (which will become increasingly important as budgets come under greater pressure) • Current review of corporate strategy, with view to becoming more focused and cohesive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public perceptions; exposure of reputation • Lack of definition / clarity around what the public might reasonably expect from process of informing or consulting • No visible criteria on the statutory or voluntary requirement for consultation that public can access and understand • Fragmentation of methodology • devolution to assorted officers; potential impact upon their core activities; lack of expertise in consultation (not core skill) – potential impact upon costs • Limited resources • Varying levels of understanding of the importance and rigours of consultation across the organisation and no single guidance publication which staff can refer to • No standardised sign-off process within departments • Reach (challenges of extending beyond the ‘frequently heard’, ie with hard-to-reach or seldom heard populations) • Pressures of timescales / deadlines leading to haste / expediency
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning around public perceptions • Keeping public informed throughout • Further development of the corporate approach, as appropriate • Use of technology to reach a wider (and younger) audience • Increased working and constructive engagement with local groups on controversial topics • Instilling the concept of consultation across the organisation, partners and third parties • Policy and legislation (eg Communities in control); drive to increase public participation in local democracy creates further opportunity for public consultation • Increased partnering, via LSP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to act upon findings of current initiatives around consultation / continuing negative publicity • Increasing effects of vocal minorities • Under-utilisation of existing expertise • Lack of clear protocols and roles (training) • Consultation fatigue / disaffection • Budget pressures • Continuing disposal of property assets, particularly given the economic climate; public response will have to be carefully considered, including thorough and timely consultation • Constraints of local government and statutory obligations



THE CONTEXT OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CONSULTATION



“Excellent! So that’s all agreed, then! All we need do now is draft the consultation document.”

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PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CONSULTATION (2)

"I think people have always been cynical about consultation because they know perfectly well that they have no power."

"If you consult people without letting them have any power to do anything, it's awfully tempting to use it as a method of making what you want to do seem popular and a democratic decision when in fact it's nothing of the sort".

(Sir Antony Jay, creator of Yes Minister)

“Politicians (are) partly to blame for the cynicism.

"They don't close the feedback loop with people and tell them what's happened as a result of the consultations they've taken part in. If you do that in a proper adult way people do respond to it."

(Bobby Duffy, deputy managing director of Ipsos Mori)

(Quotes reproduced by kind permission of the Today programme, BBC Radio 4 – broadcast 19.9.2008)



DEMOCRACY AND CONSULTATION

17. Modernisation of government policy aims to put more power in the hands of communities.

18. In a presentation given to the task group by Dr Philip Whiteman of the Institute of Local Government Studies (INLOGOV) at Birmingham University, he defined the shifting dynamics of the 1980s and 90s in terms of their impact upon the increasing need for the involvement of 'ordinary citizens':

- falling electoral turnout
- greater consumerism, exemplified by an interest in shaping services, rather than receiving what is on offer
- diversity of population, requiring inclusion but creating difficulties in how to engage with different groups, for example, Oldham's failure to engage with its changing population is thought to have contributed to community tensions
- the challenge for local government in the split between purchaser and provider; as service delivery changes, consultation becomes more complex
- the need for 'place shaping'; standard metrics for consultation do not necessarily meet the brief and consultation needs to be based around the services in the local area plan.

19. Why do we consult? Dr Whiteman referred to the specific drivers of consultation:

- the importance of non users in addition to users of services
- the need to convey the development of strategy often in the face of a challenging financial climate
- the need to evaluate performance.

20. In addition, there are contextual drivers, arising from the UK's model of government, ie local administration rather than local government, set within a centralised framework of objectives that have to be met, creating the paradox of 'local' services conforming to centralised directives. These drivers include:

- belief in the value of local consultation



- the need to reach a consensus, giving rise to the need for councils sometimes to act as mediator between vocal local groups
- the move towards greater participation and buy-in from the public, and the need to balance this against the risk and repercussions of raising expectations
- methodologies to win public support, eg citizens' juries.

21. Finally, instrumental drivers of consultation include statutory / legal requirements and proactive measures to guard against future consequences of strategy / policy development.



POLICY DRIVERS OF CONSULTATION

22. The key drivers of consultation, both statutory and voluntary, are shown below.

<p>Strong and Prosperous Communities Councillor Call for Action (CCA)</p>	<p>Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007: LINKs</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ More power to citizens and communities to have a bigger say in the services they receive and the places where they live. ✓ Under CCA, frontline councillors will have a central role in calling to account the work of agencies throughout the local area when there are concerns or persistent problems, ie the first point of contact <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Councillor takes up communities' concerns 2. Councillor asks Executive to take action 3. Councillor asks O&S to investigate 4. O&S committee considers, rejects or makes recommendations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Act introduces Local Involvement Networks (LINKs), networks of local people and groups that will ensure local communities can monitor service provision, influence key decisions and have a stronger voice in the process of commissioning health and social care. ✓ Includes obtaining local views on needs for and experiences of local care services, making such views known and recommending how local care services could or ought to be improved.
<p>Communities in control white paper</p>	<p>Performance indicators: The Place Survey</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A commitment to shifting power away from existing centres of power into the hands of communities and individual citizens', eg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helping people become more active; providing more access to information • increasing the chance to influence council budgets and policies • enabling greater accountability thro' O&S • enabling swift and fair redress • making it easier to stand for office • more ownership of local services & assets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Place Survey will replace BVPIs and supply the data by which a number of national indicators will be measured. ✓ The national indicators will measure how well Governments' priorities, as set out in the Comprehensive Spending Review, are being delivered by local government and local government partnerships over the next three years ✓ They form an important part of the new, streamlined local performance framework.
<p>Statutory requirements, eg Town and Country Planning Act</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Article 8: Publicity for applications for planning permission ✓ Article 10: Consultations before the grant of permission 	



DEFINITIONS OF CONSULTATION

23. Formal definitions of consultation point to dialogue and communication as cornerstones of the process. If, in the public's perception, these criteria are not met, there is a danger that the whole of the consultation process is undermined.

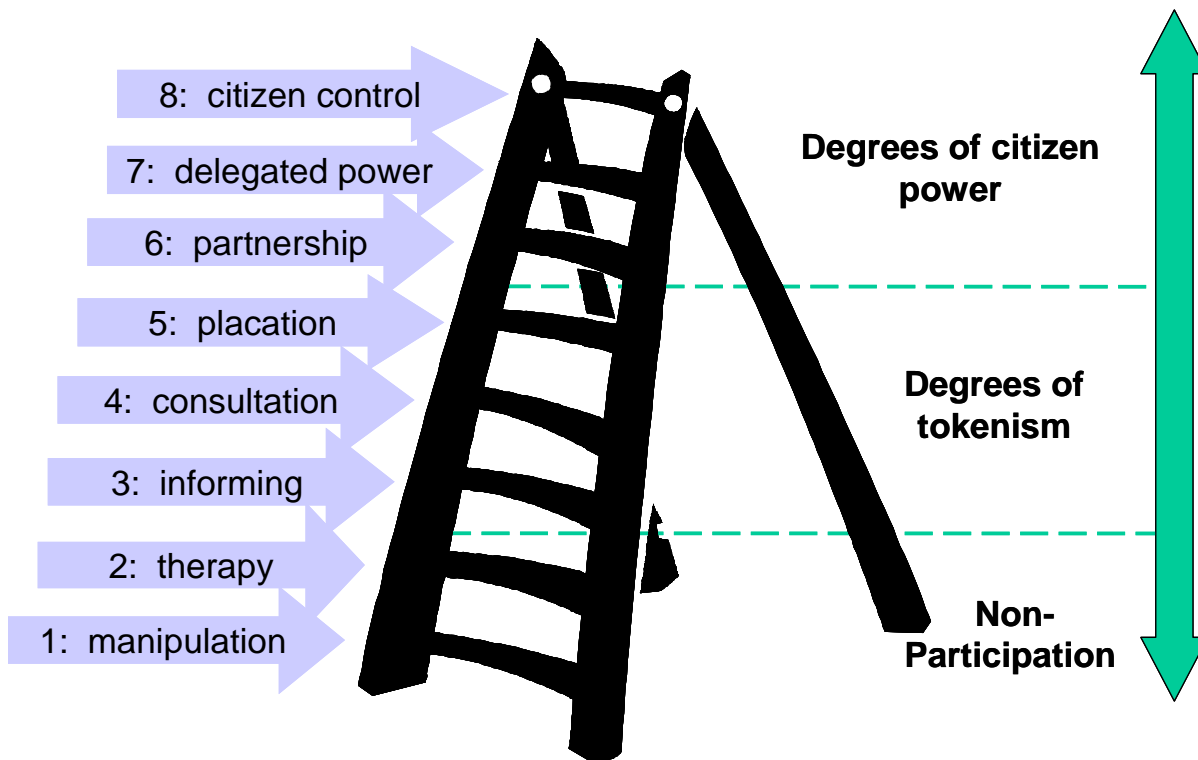
<p>The broader context</p> <p>The Audit Commission (extract from <i>Listen Up - Effective community consultation, 1999</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation has been defined as a process of dialogue that leads to a decision • The notion of consultation being a dialogue implies an ongoing exchange of views and information, rather than a one-off event. • Dialogue also implies two or more parties listening to and taking account of one another's views. This definition also highlights the importance of consultation being closely related to decisions: there is little value in agencies consulting over policies or services that they have no plans to review. However, the notion of consultation 'leading to' a decision is important too. The results of consultation are an important input to decisions, but having consulted the public does not free authority officers and members from their duties to offer advice on, and to make, decisions. • Authority members need to consider a range of factors when making decisions, and the outcome of consultation is only one of these factors, albeit an important one.
<p>A member of the public supplied the following definition of consultation as applicable to the police and other public bodies</p> <p>(<i>Lord Justice Webster, Regina v Secretary of State for Social Services ex parte Association of Metropolitan Authorities, 1986</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "In any context, the essence of consultation is the communication of a genuine invitation to give advice and a genuine consideration of that advice. In my view it must go without saying that to achieve consultation, sufficient information must be supplied by the consulting party to the consulted party to enable it to tender helpful advice. Sufficient time must be given by the consulting to the consulted party to enable it to do that, and sufficient time must be available for such advice to be considered by the consulting party. Sufficient, in that context, does not mean ample, but at least enough to enable the relevant purpose to be fulfilled. By helpful advice, in this context, I mean sufficiently informed and considered information or advice about aspects of the form or substance of the proposals, or their implications for the consulted party, being aspects material to the implementation of the proposal as to which the Secretary of State might not be informed or advised and as to which the party consulted might have relevant information or advice to offer."



THE LADDER OF PARTICIPATION

24. Whilst formal definitions of consultation exist, as shown on the previous page, in reality the process sits within a wider range of communication with the public.

25. Sherry Arnstein (a planning theorist), wrote in 1969 about citizen involvement in planning processes in the United States, and described a ladder of participation with eight steps.



1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manipulation and therapy are both non-participative. The aim is to cure or educate the participants. The proposed plan is best and the job of participation is to achieve public support by public relations.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing is an important first step to legitimate participation. But frequently the emphasis is on a one way flow of information, with no channel for feedback.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another legitimate step, demonstrated by attitude surveys, neighbourhood meetings and public enquiries. Arnstein felt this was window dressing
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placation allows the public to advise or plan ad infinitum but retains for power holders the right to judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the advice.
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership redistributes power through negotiation between citizens and power holders. Planning and decision-making responsibilities are shared, eg through joint committees.
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens hold a clear majority of seats on committees with delegated powers to make decisions. Public now has the power to assure accountability of the programme to them.
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens handle the entire job of planning, policy making and managing a



	programme, eg neighbourhood corporation with no intermediaries between it and the source of funds.
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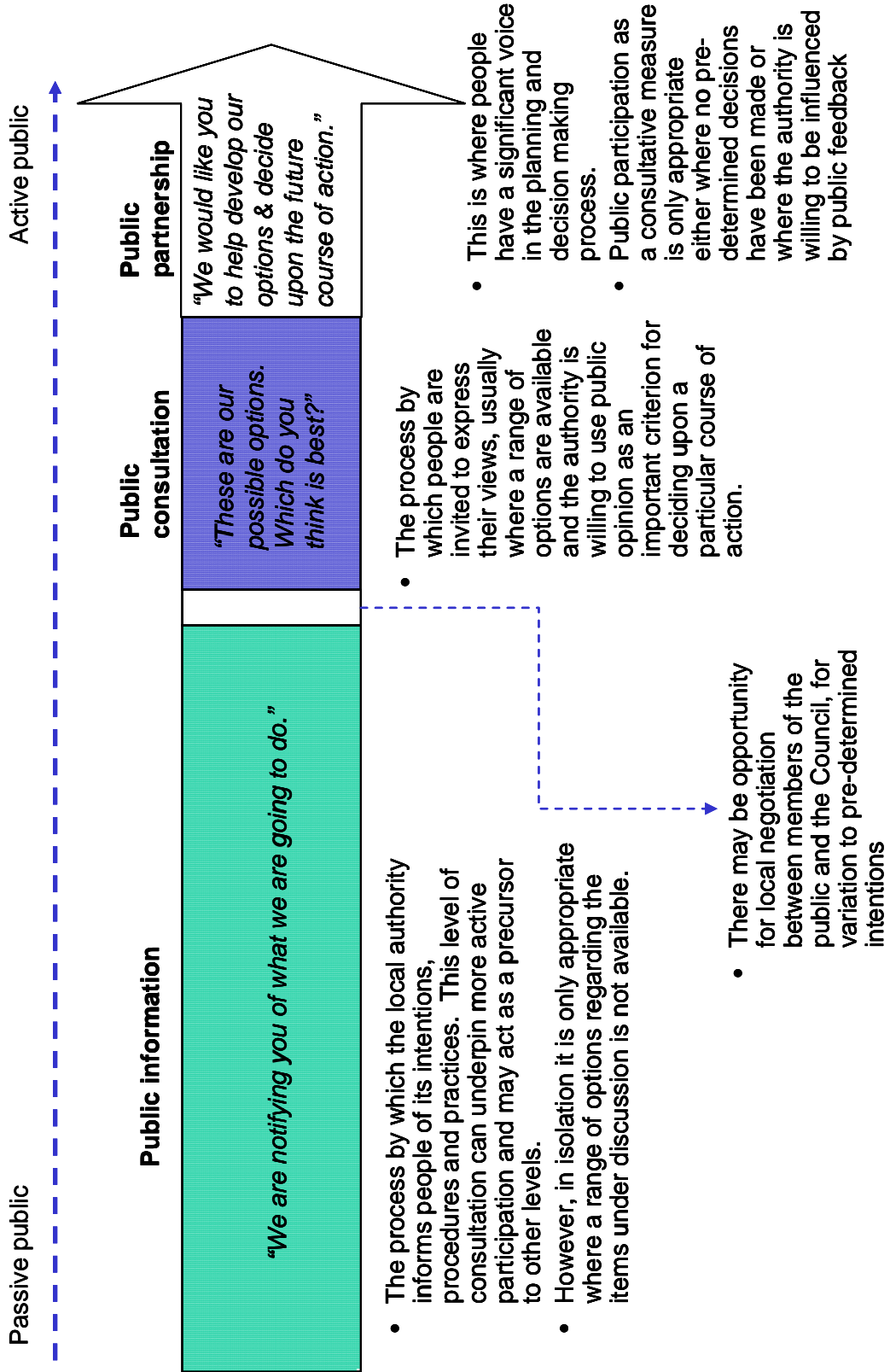
Source: adapted from The Guide to Effective Participation by David Wilcox

26. At present, some of what Richmond upon Thames does under the banner of consultation (in its broadest sense) might be more accurately defined as information (see diagram overleaf, showing a slightly simplified relationship between the passive and active public spectrum).

- It should be borne in mind, however, that from a statutory perspective there are occasions when informing is all that is required.

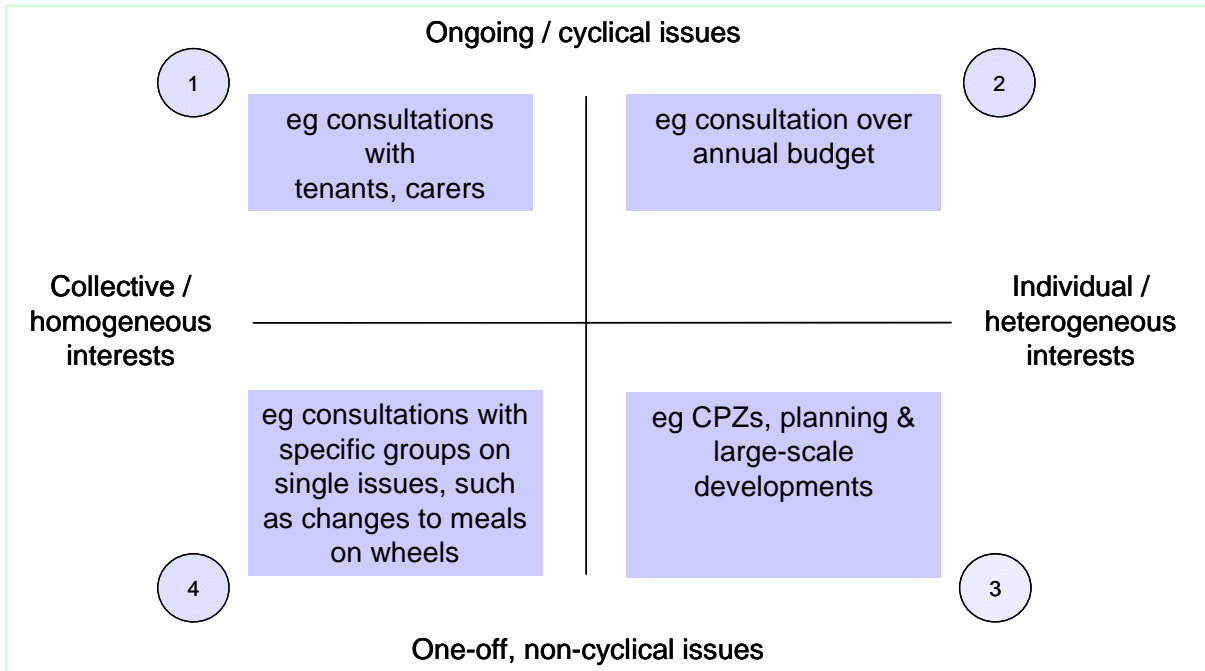
27. The task group believes that the key to making consultation in Richmond upon Thames transparent and better understood by its residents is clearer definition and fuller explanation of exactly what the exercise sets out to do.





CONSULTATION: FACTORS INFLUENCING SUCCESS

28. The schematic below demonstrates how the nature of the issue in question and those who represent or petition for it may influence the success or otherwise of a consultation exercise. It is not intended to reflect the whole 'reality' of consultation, but merely highlights certain aspects that are worth considering. For example, it helps to diagnose the aspects of an issue that might make it more or less complex for the Council to handle.



29. Quadrant 1 illustrates ongoing consultations with established collective groups with representative structures, which might occur with housing tenants, or carers, or wherever there is a long-term need for dialogue with a group of people with shared aims and issues. Consultations with this cohort should stand a good chance of obtaining high response rates, as a relationship with the individuals builds up, together with an understanding of the context.

30. Quadrant 2 represents cyclical issues such as the old-style road shows designed to present budget options. During these road shows, consultees tended to be

small in number and were unrepresentative of the wider community. Today, budget consultations involve focus groups and the Citizens Panel. The latter provides a response that is statistically representative of the whole population, though interests within that population are, of course, likely to be extremely diverse.

31. Quadrant 3 exemplifies the case of one-off, possibly contentious issues, where the local community may lack a coherent, representative voice. This may be because there are divergences in local opinion (eg over the need or scope of CPZs) or because interest groups coalesce on an ad hoc, informal basis (eg in the case of large-scale planning applications). Such situations may create environments in which the process of consultation becomes particularly complex.
32. Moving round to quadrant 4, consultations here may still tackle one-off policy changes or initiatives, but will involve established interest groups with representative structures
33. It is apparent to the task group that many of the recent concerns expressed around public consultation (see following chapters) have emerged from quadrant 3, particularly when there may be perceived conflicts of interest relating to the realisation of Council assets.
 - These are occasions when consultations need to be handled sensitively and with absolute clarity. Local residents need to understand whether they are being informed or consulted, and whether their views will genuinely be taken into account.
 - These are also the occasions when consultation is most likely to be confused with partnership. The Council needs to clarify from the outset (eg Twickenham riverside) whether it is seeking opinions on pre-selected options or whether it is going to accept options put forward by the community.



SELECTED EXAMPLES OF CURRENT PRACTICE IN RICHMOND UPON THAMES

THE ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

34. This directorate provides a diverse range of services, many of which are subject to public consultation, and go beyond the statutory obligation to consult. These range from policy development (in Planning, Parks, Licensing, Transport Planning, Waste and Air quality) to new scheme proposals for Public Spaces (managed by Urban Design, London's Arcadia, Highways, Parks, and Transport Planning); specific change of use of parking space outside property; Controlled Parking Zones; planning and licensing applications; service development for waste and recycling; and safety education.
35. A growing number of customer satisfaction studies is undertaken on many of the above services, some of which are statutory (eg The Place Survey that has replaced the previous triennial residents survey and survey of applicants for Planning Permission).
36. The directorate recognises the challenges associated with consultation and, given that many of its consultations deal with issues affecting a heterogeneous section of the population and which are potentially controversial, the task group appreciates that these may well run into the sort of difficulties described on page 26.
37. In 2006, its process was reviewed, and findings included:
- consultations are resource intensive
 - there is no one solution to fit all, because of the diverse nature of the directorate
 - internal processes exist but use of them is patchy
 - choice of consultation methods depends upon the subject being consulted on and its target audience
 - it is important to make the sample as representative as possible. RuT has its hard-to-reach / seldom heard groups; these can just as easily be those



constrained by time as those who find it difficult to access consultations.

The website is found to be a useful medium here

- a question re over-consulting - could consultation be more co-ordinated?
- feedback to consultees could be improved, despite the mechanism for reporting back through the website and libraries
- a large amount of valuable data accumulates and it is important to evaluate and use these data effectively; it is acknowledged that database management could be improved if adequately resourced.

38. Strengths in consultation were identified as:

- good materials
- high response rates (30-40%)
- some very thorough processes, eg
 - LDF consultation on Planning Policy development and Planning Consultations as outlined in the 'Statement of Community Involvement' adopted June 2006
(http://www.richmond.gov.uk/statement_of_community_involvement)
 - the Public Space Design Guide section on procedure lists the 16 different types of schemes undertaken in the public realm and outlines when to 'consult', 'inform' or 'badge' (site specific or re-usable signs to inform the public about the work taking place)
(http://www.richmond.gov.uk/spg_psdg_chpt3.pdf)
 - officers in the directorate who carry out ad hoc consultations and customer surveys can refer to the Environment Directorate Consultation Officer Guide for practical advice plus access to recent consultation materials. Use, however, is patchy as it has not been made mandatory since inception in 2007.

Potential conflicts of interest between planning consultation and Council status

39. The task group has looked at the issue of consultation within the planning service in particular, largely as a result of the potential conflicts of interest when residents



are consulted over a planning or development issue where the Council is landowner and planning authority.

40. If there is substantial conflict, Chinese walls are used, as recognised within planning law. There is a powerful incentive to observe all correct protocols before any decision is made, in order to prevent the issue going to judicial review, and incurring significant financial penalty to the Council.
41. Nevertheless the task group has concerns that the measures undertaken to ensure neutrality may not be clear enough, with the result that the public finds it difficult to believe in the impartiality of these consultations. In order to ensure that conflict of interest is avoided and in the interests of clarity, the public should be made aware of which officers are responsible for which roles, in the interests of clarity.
42. Moreover, this lack of understanding can lead to an interpretation of Council disposal or re-development of assets as a revenue generating exercise at the expense of public interest.
43. This perception emphasises the need not only for clarity in the consultation process but also for explanation of measures taken to ensure impartiality, together with explanation of how revenues will be spent to the benefit of the wider community.

Planning applications and appeals

44. Much of the discontent is apparently around planning applications. Statutory requirements are observed (Article 8 of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995, specifies the minimum publicity to be given to a planning application and Articles 10 and 11 specify the minimum statutory consultation), but have limitations in practice. The Council is obliged to deliver the planning service within the national planning framework, based upon a planned system that governs how all planning authorities formulate policy and make decisions.
45. However, this is not immediately apparent to residents, and the following comment from a councillor is not untypical and once again emphasises the need for transparency:



– *“I’m having real problems at the moment with three sets of residents over planning cases where they felt that they hadn’t been given adequate notice - and therefore lost the opportunity to object - and where parking has been an issue. On the first, I have spoken to (the officer), and I have an assurance that notices and letters were sent out. The problem seems to be that statutorily no more than a site notice is required, and while the Council does send letters out, this is to no more than the immediate neighbours……. If we are going to go beyond the statutory minimum, it would be helpful to have proper criteria, and criteria that actually have a clear logic. On the parking issue, the majority of the borough doesn’t understand our policy, and it would be helpful to have a simple guide available. Whilst this isn’t strictly a consultation point, it is information, which would probably help people to understand the issues.”*

- The task group recommends that the criteria under which planning notification is carried out are stated clearly and made available to the public.

46. There is comprehensive information on the Council’s website on planning consultation, covering:

- planning consultation, comments and applications
- finding out about applications
- how we consult on planning applications
- objecting to or supporting a planning application
 - includes ‘taking your views into account’ and ‘letting you know the outcome’.

Extract from ‘How we consult on planning applications’

- It is a legal requirement to publicise all planning applications either by letter or by site notice. It is the practice at Richmond upon Thames Council to publicise more widely than is required. Not only do we seek to consult adjoining neighbours affected by a proposal by letter but notices are also published in the local paper and/or displayed on or close to the site (for at least 21 days) for many applications. These include those which would affect the character or setting of a listed building, or the character of a conservation area, or which in the council's opinion are likely to have implications for more than the immediate neighbours.



We also consult neighbouring borough councils where appropriate and also consult directly any properties in other boroughs that are directly affected by the proposal.

47. Despite the statutory obligations to publicise and inform, the freedom to speak at planning committee meetings is entirely at the discretion of the local authority, as is the number of speakers and their allocation of time. Richmond upon Thames allows two speakers for and two against householder applications and three speakers for and three against non-householder applications, all of whom are allowed three minutes each.
48. The task group heard several suggestions that planning applications should be made more equitable towards the objectors, who speak first. Whilst there is little scope to change the order of the hearing, there is opportunity to alternate individual speakers, which might help to address public concerns.
49. There is no indication that Richmond upon Thames's Planning Committee is any more punitive or lenient regarding the upholding or dismissing of appeals, as the track record is in line with the national average. In 2007-08, 135 planning appeals were determined, 34% of which were upheld, broadly in line with the national average quoted by the Planning Inspectorate of 35% for the same period. The running total for 2008 – 09 is similar, at approximately 35% upheld as at the third quarter.

THE FINANCE DIRECTORATE

50. Finance Directorate consultations perform a role in keeping the public informed about what the Council does, and how it spends its money.
51. They are based on two main customer survey methodologies.
- **Citizens' panel**
 - The panel are asked for their views on the level of Council Tax and priorities for investment.
 - This approach is particularly useful for longitudinal identification of trends.
 - **Focus Group**



- An external research company hosts a discussion evening with about 12 residents, at which officers give a presentation, outlining what the Council does and how it spends public money. The objective is:
 - To undertake consultation exercise to explore the expectations of residents in terms of assessing levels of understanding of council finances
 - Measuring expectations and how these compare to current financial picture
 - Residents' service priorities and what they are prepared to pay for these.
- this method achieves an 'educational' outcome, for example, members of the public learn the cost of an SEN residential placement or hear about council services of which they were previously unaware.

52. These methods have been used since 2001, with the result that there is a developing understanding of the position of Richmond upon Thames as the lowest funded borough in London, and consequently a greater appreciation of the value for money rating (of 4).

53. The success of these methods, within the limitations of their function of informing, may indicate that similar methodology be used more widely across the Council.

54. It is difficult to evaluate effectiveness of budget consultation as the issues are profound but the Council uses it to confirm that it is sharing priorities with the public (eg care of the elderly, education, street cleaning).

How might consultation change?

55. A more co-ordinated approach with consultation under one umbrella could still leave scope for a more detailed approach for finance with different consultation tools.



CORPORATE CONSULTATION STRATEGY IN RICHMOND UPON THAMES: UPDATE

56. The Council's first Consultation and Participation Policy and Strategy was agreed in 2000. This was reviewed in 2006 and Cabinet agreed an updated Consultation and Participation Strategy Policy and Strategy in March 2007.

57. The task group heard how, as at January 2009, progress had been made in the following areas.

- The corporate strategy aims to develop an overarching approach to consultation, although delivery still needs to be on a departmental basis.
 - *“There is too much unfocused consultation at present; we need officers and others to think more creatively about consultation, working with others internally and joining up consultation with partners and taking a more strategic approach about how the consultation is received by the community.*
 - *Ideally we would like an annual cycle of consultation – reflecting the key decision-making points, such as priority and budget setting with specific service consultation linked to that, in a more managed routine way rather than a piecemeal approach.” (Assistant Director, Commissioning Corporate Policy and Strategy)*

58. However, central capacity for consultation has been very limited, at just one post.

The centralised role is intended to take responsibility for or to address:

- corporate consultations such as the Place Survey and Citizens' Panel
- quality assurance issues, including frameworks and methodology for consultation
- developing and supporting a coherent programme
- developing partnership work in respect of community engagement and consultation, making it more cohesive.

59. A consultation diary for internal and LSP consultation activity has been drafted, giving an immediate view of what is taking place and what is planned. Partners are also keen to deliver more effective approaches to consultation, and maximise the outcomes from wider community engagement, not just specific consultations.



60. The process for department management teams' contribution to and use of the diary has been set out, stressing the importance of evaluating the impact and of feedback.

61. Development of the diary has highlighted issues around:

- the high volume of consultations undertaken.
- whether they are in fact consultations in the true sense or, for example, service reviews or audits
- and the potential for IT solutions.

62. In addition, a more simplified consultation toolkit is being developed, to provide guidance to departments and officers. This will set out the shared principles of consultation, and statement of intentions.

In addition to targeting the 'hard to reach' populations, efforts will be made to involve the 'rarely heard', those who consistently do not respond, for example these might possibly be younger people who at present are not intensive users of local services.



THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION IN RICHMOND UPON THAMES: CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

SUCCESS STORIES

63. The following example indicates how a successful public consultation can influence a re-development and allow the Council to respond with flexibility. In this example, there could have been potential for discord, given its 'single issue' nature and the range of service users and other stakeholders. However, consultation was conducted at an early stage, and used a methodology that targeted all interested parties.

Sheen Lane Centre

- This is East Sheen's largest urban public space with a campus-type environment. A broad range of public facilities wrap around the public space, including a library, health centre, community police, CAB, day care and councillors' surgeries.
- Issues: original planters and a defunct water feature were considered by the community as ugly and cluttering up the space and a deterrent to effective use. The appearance of dereliction attracted litter and encouraged misuse of the area. A wide range of users wanted to use the space for community events or just as a large space to relax in.
- Objectives of the scheme: to make the Sheen Lane Centre a more useable space by enhancing the appearance, improving access and increasing personal security.
- Environmental improvements were made to the access levels, lighting and signage.
- Consultation took place over three weeks based on an exhibition and site posters and feedback forms in the centre; it engaged diverse groups of the users of the area. Many issues which came up informed the final design of the scheme.
- The community involvement in this scheme ensured a very high level of collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders. This includes all the services



surrounding the space as well as the users of the centre and local amenity societies and ward councillors.

Changes made as a result of the consultation

- ✓ Having seen the sample of the surface originally proposed on display at the exhibition, there was concern that it would be difficult to push buggies and wheelchairs across this surface. Natratex was selected instead of Heritage sealed gravel.
- ✓ The Council doubled the planting area on the side of the Health centre and PCT and front of library.
- ✓ A planting scheme was developed with the contractor but was shared with interested parties.
- ✓ Benches were repositioned.

Customer satisfaction surveys

64. As part of the task group's work, a programme of telephone interviews was carried out with participants in recent consultations:

- Mortlake CPZ consultation
- Twickenham riverside consultation
- planning hearings.

Response to the telephone surveys was varied, depending largely upon respondent availability and recall of the consultation process.

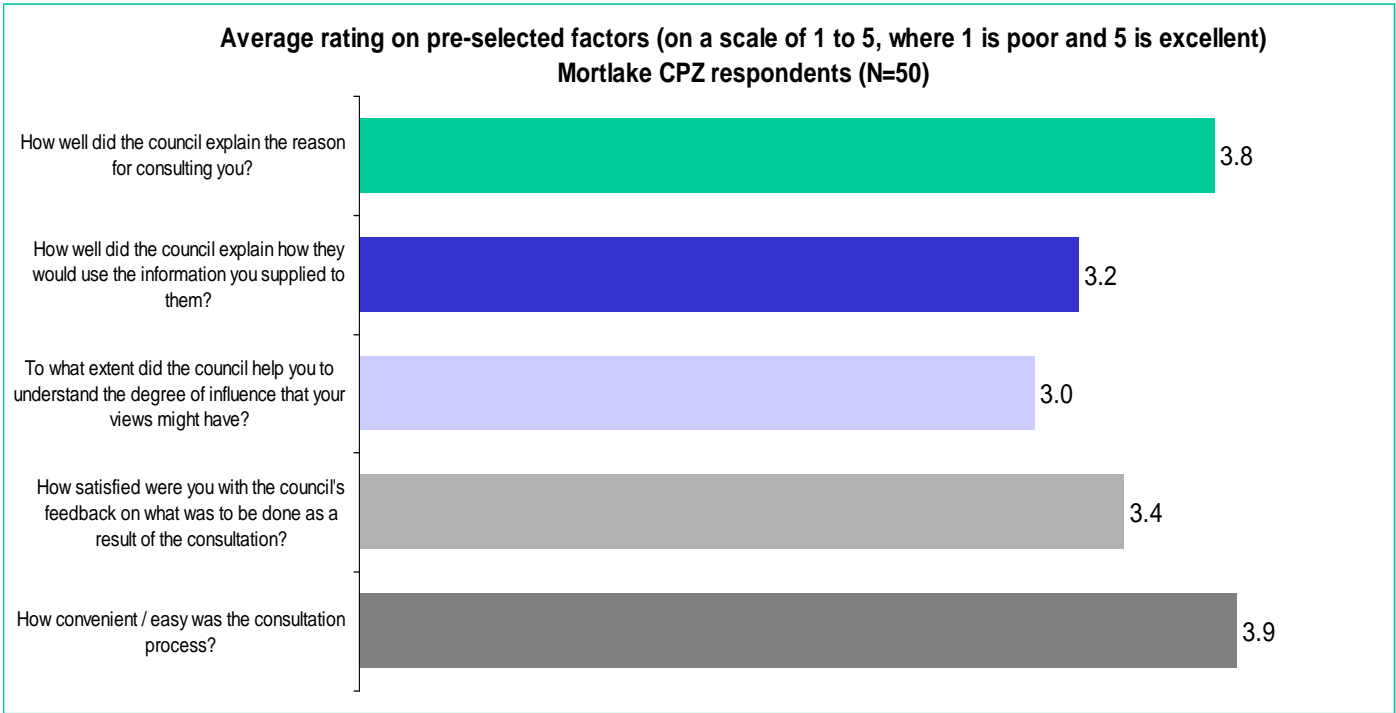
- 50 interviews were completed on the Mortlake CPZ as compared with 11 on Twickenham riverside and 13 on planning hearings.
- Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction on five pre-selected key elements of the way in which the consultation had been conducted; this was on a scale of one to five, where one is very poor and five is excellent. Any ratings of three and higher can be considered to be above average
- **NOTE: detailed analysis can be found in Appendix C.**

65. Since the Mortlake CPZ survey had a good response rate (from both supporters to and opposers of the scheme - an even split), the key analysis is shown below.



CPZs almost inevitably provoke a public response and it is unlikely that all those directly or indirectly affected will be satisfied with the outcome. However, this should not affect the efficiency of the consultation process, and this was reflected in the customer surveys.

Customer satisfaction survey: Mortlake CPZ



66. The general level of satisfaction with the consultation process is above the mid-point of the scale, with relatively good scores on the reasons given for the consultation, and on the ease with which the process was conducted.

67. However, there is an issue around how well public expectations of the consultation were managed; the lowest average score was given to the third factor, asking how well the Council helped respondents to understand just how influential their views would, or would not, be. This finding bears out the need for greater clarity in defining the purpose of the consultation exercise and the public's participation.

68. Given the comparatively low response rate, findings from the Twickenham riverside and planning hearings should be viewed as indicative only, and therefore only key messages are reproduced below, but more information is available in Appendix C.

Twickenham riverside

- Overall, and again with the caveat that this was a small sample, indications were that the level of satisfaction was below average.
- In particular, these respondents felt that they were not properly briefed on just how influential their contribution would be; they had not found the process convenient, and assessed the feedback as poor.

Planning hearings

- Again, this sample was small but overall satisfaction was more often than not above average, particularly for the support offered in the lead up to the hearing, and the feedback.
- However, once again it had not been clear to respondents how influential their statements might be; and in addition, the format and conduct of the meeting was not considered fair.



PRACTICE AMONGST PARTNERS

69. The task group heard examples of practice and views from the following partners.

These organisations differ markedly from a local authority, but both have useful messages in the importance and relevance that they attach to consultation.

PLEASE NOTE: the views expressed and information supplied here are those of the organisations' representatives giving evidence to the task group, not necessarily those of the organisations themselves, nor of the scrutiny task group.

RICHMOND HOUSING PARTNERSHIP (RHP)

70. The task group is aware that RHP's consultations might be considered relatively straightforward by comparison with the Council's. Nevertheless, there are principles and methodologies that provide useful comparisons, particularly in relation to continual efforts to extend the reach of consultation and to drive the ethic across the organisation, at all levels.

71. RHP manages 6,000 tenant and 2,000 leasehold households. Their Community Development team encourages resident involvement, ranging from those who may be struggling financially through to those who are interested in having a say in RHP.

- Key to this process is the concept of 'Ask First'; rather than formulate policy first, RHP goes to residents first, to find out what they think about a proposition, and whether they have any alternative ideas.

72. Historically, the significant amount and quality of consultation done around stock transfer set a very high standard for what residents expect.

- As a result, residents now expect to be involved in at all levels of the operation, for example, who is on the board, how finances are handled.
- Levels of resident satisfaction are high (83% satisfied).
- In addition, the Housing Corporation has very high expectations of resident involvement; RHP therefore provides every opportunity for residents to express their views.



Why RHP consults

73. The value of gaining resident insight has to be balanced carefully against the sector's instinct to act quickly to provide solutions.

- Whilst RHP finds that will always be those who regularly put themselves forward for consultation, the real challenge, particularly with regard to timing and resources, lies in reaching the others. Using strategies as simple as knocking on doors, RHP can dip in and out of minority groups, who might not necessarily attend community or resident association meetings.

RHP methodology

74. RHP seeks buy-in across the organisation, including champions at board level.

Training is key – informal methods are used such as workshops where residents explore how they would like to be consulted; and all the organisation's service lines are included, eg, IT, maintenance, finance.

75. A more formal approach is used in area panels, into which 25 resident associations feed in, acting as 'eyes and ears' for the estates.

76. RHP's aim is to gain access to a whole range of opinions; this is done by seeking consistent involvement, not just from the customary respondents; using advocates from elsewhere (eg Age Concern); and encouraging interested parties to band together as resident inspectors to carry out reality checks on services.

77. RHP's customer service ethos is such that the provenance of any individual comment can be identified and followed up, taking the opportunity to ask the individual if s/he would like to be involved, 'to help RHP fix the problem'.

How is it working?

78. 500 now attend meetings regularly (this figure roughly represents around 6% of total RHP households, assuming all come from different households. A fairly low representation is accepted, as in reality most people are content to be on the periphery).

- Some attend sporadically, and these need more support, such as developing the skills to participate.
- A specific neighbourhood project found that residents like to have contact points amongst the grounds staff, maintenance, caretaking, but that these individuals varied across the organisation; there is now a dedicated team for each estate.



The challenges:

79. Entrenching the culture of consultation in the organisation requires ongoing training and refreshing – and resources - to reinforce the message. Training opportunities can be extended to involve a wider group, other housing associations, and introduce residents to this wider population.

80. The ‘same old faces’; however, it is necessary to value their opinions, to feed back to them, and to make the link between the feedback and what is done (via website, written communication).

Future aims

81. To get the resident inspector teams (see point 76) out to other housing authorities - and potentially in the longer run, give them the opportunity to review council services

- Staff and resident training
- Systematic consultation at the earliest stage
- Terms of engagement agreed with residents on a yearly basis.

How has consultation made a difference?

82. One example of RHP’s consultations that have driven change is the restructuring of housing teams. It was originally intended to develop housing specialists in each area according to the type of tenure. However in consulting with residents, it emerged that leaseholders were using tenant housing officers for many of their queries as they had more of an estate view, by comparison with the leaseholder officers, whose expertise lay more around legal issues, right to buy etc.

- As a result, the leasehold team was disbanded in favour of patch teams who have in-depth knowledge of the estates they represent.

Conclusion

“By ‘asking first’, there is a greater chance of bringing people with you.”

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES IN RICHMOND FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES (CORLD)

83. CORLD is a key strategic organisation for learning disability, and supports all other voluntary, NFP and community organisations in the borough.



84. In common with RHP, this organisation and its members are likely to have shared views, but the issues may be more varied; some may be cyclical but others may be sporadic and / or controversial, as outlined in the following section headed 'Challenges'.

Why CORLD consults

85. CORLD states that self-determination is critical for people with learning disabilities, who have suffered huge discrimination in the past, and consultation plays an extremely important role.

86. Support is offered to members via a self-help forum (Richmond Forum) to help them understand, through consultation (underpinned by appropriate training), all the opportunities open to them, for example addressing the more visionary context for people with learning disabilities such as self-directed budgets, rather than just the traditional services such as day centres. It is hoped that the Forum may evolve into a people's parliament.

87. The Government's Valuing People strategy means that people with learning disability should be able to speak for themselves. However, CORLD feels that locally this strategy is not fully delivered and there is a danger that consultation and partnership between various organisations becomes tokenistic, sitting, in terms of Arnstein's ladder, in the area of placation, ie the real decision-making remains in the hands of the power holders.

88. CORLD perceives Council objectives regarding Valuing People as constrained by the bureaucracy of looking beyond the community and responding to central government objectives. The organisation believes that there is a need to localise services, which admittedly has resourcing implications but also implies a need for greater dialogue with the learning disabled population of Richmond upon Thames.

The challenges

89. People with learning disability should be regarded in the same way as any other community with views that need to be heard; they need greater insight, particularly whilst inherited language persists around 'mental handicap'.

90. For example, the Avenue re-build has been a hot topic for parents. This day centre closed down partly in response to the policy to move users into the community but also because it was not fit for purpose. Parents apparently did not



feel fully consulted on the perceived need for dedicated buildings for people with learning disability. Views of stakeholders have been taken into account and the new Avenue will re-open as a community resource.

91. The concerns of carers are a priority but nevertheless, CORLD feels that consultation with them is limited, good intentions are seen but little action, including from the Council.
92. There is a new generation of carers coming through, younger, who feel disenfranchised and unheard; they are a group similar to any other in that there is a core of those who make their voices heard, and a balance of those who don't.
93. Young carers need to be involved, ideally electronically, through blogging, multi-media etc. They don't have time to be trustees or to sit on groups, and innovative approaches need to be used. Blogs provide the opportunity to listen to emotive (albeit anecdotal) views.
94. CORLD feels that there are specific needs in specific communities, for example black and Asian communities are a growing group in the area, and statistically have a higher proportion of learning disability, and there will be a requirement to ensure that they feel listened to and consulted.

Future aims

95. The most important thing from CORLD's perspective is how to help a wider population understand about learning disability; the responsibility to understand rests with all those in the borough.
96. One of the most effective ways is thought to lie in developing awareness through enjoyment, to support people in a high profile way, and to correct misunderstandings about learning disability. This needs to be a two way process.
 - *"Citizens need to understand, and the sector needs to promote community understanding."*
97. Regarding developing good consultation in the future, CORLD would like to see organisations responding to change and moving away from tokenism, for example in 10 years' time, a person with learning disability would become a manager of Mencap, rather than a service user with little opportunity to be heard.



How has consultation made a difference?

98. An example of consultation that had a positive outcome was a consortium where mental health and elderly organisations consulted with a number of others around the difficulty of getting funding from the Council, thereby assisting officers in developing their understanding of self-directed support.

Conclusion

- *“With the right support and consultation, people with learning disabilities can dictate and determine their own lives.”*



THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION IN RICHMOND UPON THAMES: CHALLENGES

WHERE HAS IT GONE WRONG AND HOW CAN IT BE IMPROVED?

99. Prior to and during the work of the scrutiny task group, there have been significant expressions of concern from the public around the transparency of the Council's consultation process in relation to specific issues.

100. Some of the evidence submitted to the group is shown below. It has not been possible to reproduce all representations to the task group in the interests of brevity, but they are listed in Appendix B.

Richmond Forum for Older People (letter dated 4.11.08 2008)

- Changes to the Meals on Wheels service:
 - *“Were those who have been receiving Meals on Wheels given a choice over this change of service by Richmond upon Thames Council? Or was the decision made without even consulting the people it most affects?”*
 - Adult and Community Services respond that a scrutiny task group on welfare meals took evidence from a number of service users, carers and a wide range of representatives from voluntary organisations and key strategic organisations representing older vulnerable people.
 - Three service users and a carer participated in the tender evaluation process for the award of the new contracts.
 - All service users attending Council run Intensive Day Centres were surveyed regarding the proposed changes to the service and a possible increase in charges. The majority supported the proposals and indicated that they would be prepared to pay more if the meals were improved.
 - All current service users have been written to with an explanation of the process of change from a hot meals to a frozen meals service and clients of the Intensive Day Centres given information about the changes to day centre meals to add better value and nutrition by having fresh vegetables in addition to heated frozen meat or fish dishes.
 - The Council will be working with *Apetito* the successful tenderer to ensure that every customer is visited to review and re assess individual needs for support to heat a frozen meal. The Council will also be releasing a "Good Eating" leaflet for older people on good nutrition; and an information sheet on "Alternatives to Community Meals". This is to ensure that service users have better information to make judgements on the meals selected and the additional nutrition that is needed to reach the minimum recommended standards. Specific information about the timing and process of the transfer, and



	<p>the introduction of the necessary freezers and heating appliances will be released and sent to all current customers once these have been finalised with Apetito.</p>
<p>Rugby on Twickenham Green (e-mail dated 11.11.08)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to proposals that Thamesians Club should play approx six matches a year on the green: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>“Residents have just been consulted about an ice rink on Twickenham Green and are amazed to find out that they have not been consulted about the additional rugby and the impending agreement (between Council and RFU).</i> – <i>If public consultation is given for one event then it should be given for another. To consult only one interest group (Friends of Twickenham Green) does not constitute a fair consultation. Those living around Twickenham Green were not even made aware of the situation and were certainly not consulted. Residents’ groups have not been informed about the situation.”</i> • The Parks and Open Spaces department comments that the rugby matches are a long established activity (15ys+) and the only change in this has been that the council has entered a written agreement with Thamesians Rugby Club about their use. It is not usual to consult on the hire of sports pitches, and the Friends of Twickenham Green were not consulted although they did choose to express an opinion.
<p>Richmond Terrace Gardens (e-mail dated 29.10.08)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration of the gardens: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>“The initial public consultation in 2005 was so flawed as to be of little value</i> – <i>What the Council should have done, of course, was to hold a further consultation on the detailed plans as soon as they were drawn up. However, since 2006, the Council has used the Terrace Gardens Advisory Group, of which I have been a member since its inception, as a fig leaf to hide the shame of the Council's lack of consultation.”</i> • The Parks and Open Spaces department comments that consultation in 2005 was carried out by a professional consultancy firm who has been praised by the Heritage Lottery Fund for its standard of work in regard to consultation. • The comment above is an individual’s opinion, and is not representative of the general feedback we have had about this project or the way in which the public input was managed.

101. With regard to the Terrace Gardens, specific comments were made on the design and subsequent use of the questionnaires:

- limited, closed questions, offering no opportunity for expressing opinions
- ambiguous, leading questions
- focusing on the negative rather than positive, ie what people dislike about the status quo rather than what they value



- small and self-selected sample
- incomplete analysis.

The consultation process today...



Do you think that the development plan is -

- A. Very good.*
- B. Incredibly good.*
- C. Extremely good.*

INKCINCT

Cartoon kindly donated by INKCINCT



Richmond United Group (RUG)

102. RUG is a collective of local campaign and community groups. A number of the constituent members feels that the Council's consultation process is not timely, not thorough, is dishonest, and, referring to Arnstein's ladder of participation, essentially deserves the label of tokenism.
103. RUG has written to all councillors asking for openness, transparency and effective consultation, and has drawn up a charter as reproduced below.

RUG's Community Consultation Charter requests that Richmond upon Thames Council should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate a meaningful, ongoing commitment to democracy• Ensure openness, be open to scrutiny, accountability, transparency and meet the standards laid down in BS8900 : 2006• Make sure it always consults and informs residents affected by its decisions of the nature of its plans• Only hold full, honest, open and effective consultations with residents on its proposed actions and do not restrict alternatives• Choose to pursue policies only where there is demonstrable support and which improve the quality of life of local people and do not take away valued amenities• Respect residents' criticisms and respond positively to their concerns and suggestions• Act on public opinion whether reflected in petitions, votes at public meetings, representations by interest groups, amenity groups, residents' associations or individuals• Consider and review the effects on the quality of life and act on the expressed views of the community• Yes to. DEMOCRACY, no to Autocracy. The residents of Richmond upon Thames Borough must have a process where the councillors and officers are publicly accountable.
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104. In addition, the group drafted a set of planning recommendations (recently updated), to which the Council has responded in full, explaining the constraints under which it, and all local authorities, must operate, and addressing RUG's points on policy and practice. (The response is available upon request.)
105. Examples of poor consultation as defined and presented by RUG to the task group include:
- Sherland Road / Shacklegate Lane garages
 - *“Without any consultation with residents, the Council decided to sell the garage site and street scene area in Sherland Road, Twickenham we were told there would be an opportunity to air our concerns at the pre-*



planning consultation residents were only given one date to attend the presentation so many who work full time ... were unable to attend.”

- *“Decisions are taken behind closed doors before the consultation process has even started. The Council is simply not interested and makes no attempt to compromise or work in partnership to address residents’ views ...”*

- Gifford House

- *“In 2001, the LBRuT entered into a PFI contract with Care UK for care for the elderly. Two sites were identified for disposal residents found out about the Gifford House disposal at the end of 2004 (when it closed).”*
- *“In June 2006, LBRuT accepted the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). Residents thought this was an opportunity to become involved in the decision-making process but Care UK refused any pre-application consultation with residents LBRuT said it was Care UK’s decision”*
- *“There is concern that the pre-application consultation for Gifford House mentioned in the planning statement of October 2008 is inadequate and will not be more than information giving Residents had hoped for a greater degree of involvement in the consultation process.”*

Conflicts of interest between consultation and Council status

106. It was evident from the RUG presentations that many representatives felt that, when the Council is landowner, as in the example of Sherland Road and Shacklegate Lane garages, disposal has been a ‘done deal’ and consultation, although carried out, was done after the event.

107. In its formal response to the planning recommendations suggested by RUG, the Council pointed to the overview role played by national statutory planning system and the Courts and how this ensures impartiality.

- *“The Local Government Ombudsman (who is sometimes asked by third parties to investigate claims relating to the propriety of Council planning decisions about its own land) has not found the Council wanting and has upheld the principle that the Council makes its planning decisions on purely planning grounds.”*



Conclusion

108. There were common factors running through the evidence presented to the task group by both RUG and other local amenity groups:

- the more extreme expressions of dissatisfaction usually occur when there is a large scale, single issue that divides opinion, as in quadrant 3 of the matrix on p 26 and this pattern provides some guidance as to when and where problems regarding consultation might occur
- lack of clarity around whether the exercise is informing or consulting leads to confusion with certain members of the public as to the degree of influence their views will have
- there is difficulty in reconciling the interests of the Council as a landowner and / or developer with the interests of local residents; measures can be taken to help residents understand the issues more fully, including the Council's asset management strategy and its alignment with corporate objectives.
- some of the broader benefits that might be stated to the public include:
 - the relationship between asset management, including disposal of land and buildings, and the delivery of high quality services that meet local need
 - the potential improvement to the economic welfare of the borough
 - the potential improvement to local environmental sustainability
 - the potential to drive efficiency gains, capital receipts, and / or an income stream, particularly in the challenging financial conditions of 2009.



APPENDICES

Appendix A	Task group meetings and witnesses
Appendix B	List of evidence submitted to the task group
Appendix C	Analysis of customer satisfaction telephone surveys
Appendix D	Good practice in other boroughs
Appendix E	Participatory budgeting



A. TASK GROUP MEETINGS & WITNESSES

MEETINGS	ATTENDEES
Scoping meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task group members • Mandy Skinner, Assistant Director Commissioning Corporate Policy and Strategy; Jeanette Phillips, Acting Head, Community Engagement and Inclusion; Jon Freer, Assistant Director, Environment; Christian Scade, Senior Scrutiny Officer; Glenna McCulloch, Scrutiny Officer
Meeting 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task group members • Dr Philip Whiteman, INLOGOV, University of Birmingham • Bridget Clements, Consultation and Communications Officer, Urban Design, RuT • Jon Freer, Assistant Director, Environment, RuT • Glenna McCulloch, Scrutiny Officer • members of the public
Meeting 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task group members • Carl Byrne, Community Development Manager, Richmond Housing Partnership • Graham Russell, Assistant Director Finance, RuT • Glenna McCulloch, Scrutiny Officer • members of the public
Meeting 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task group members • CORLD • Richmond United Group • Glenna McCulloch, Scrutiny Officer • members of the public
Meeting 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task group members • Glenna McCulloch, Scrutiny Officer
Meeting 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task group members • Update with Mandy Skinner, Assistant Director Commissioning Corporate Policy and Strategy; Jeanette Phillips, Acting Head, Community Engagement and Inclusion • Glenna McCulloch, Scrutiny Officer



B. LIST OF EVIDENCE SUBMITTED TO THE TASK GROUP

Submitted by	Issues
Individual members of public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artificial turf on the St Mary's Junior School Playground • Pincho's awning in Church Street • Oldfield House closure • Richmond Terrace Gardens • Rugby matches on Twickenham Green • St Margaret's CPZ • Twickenham embankment • Twickenham riverside
Richmond United Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allotments • Gifford House • Meals on Wheels • Sherland Road / Shacklegate Lane garage sites • General observations around need for better representation in and analysis of consultation
Richmond upon Thames Forum for Older People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meals on Wheels • Public toilets
Transport Consultative Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • various



C. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION TELEPHONE SURVEYS

Consultation	Methodology / outcome
Mortlake CPZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Customer Services department surveyed 50 customers who had participated in the Controlled Parking Zone consultation for Mortlake in December 2007. An equal number of customers in favour and against the proposal were surveyed to ensure a fair representation
Twickenham riverside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Customer Services department used over 90 contact numbers of those who had participated in this consultation which took place between the summer of 2007 and February 2008. Of these, 61% were unavailable, and 28% did not remember taking part in the consultation. The result was that 11 customers were successfully surveyed. Given this small sample, analysis was not exhaustive and findings are included for interest only.
Planning hearings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 60 members of the public who had spoken at planning hearings since September 2008 were contacted. Of these, 13 completed interviews, and once again given the size of the sample, analysis has not been exhaustive and findings are included for interest only.

Customer satisfaction with recent consultations: summary

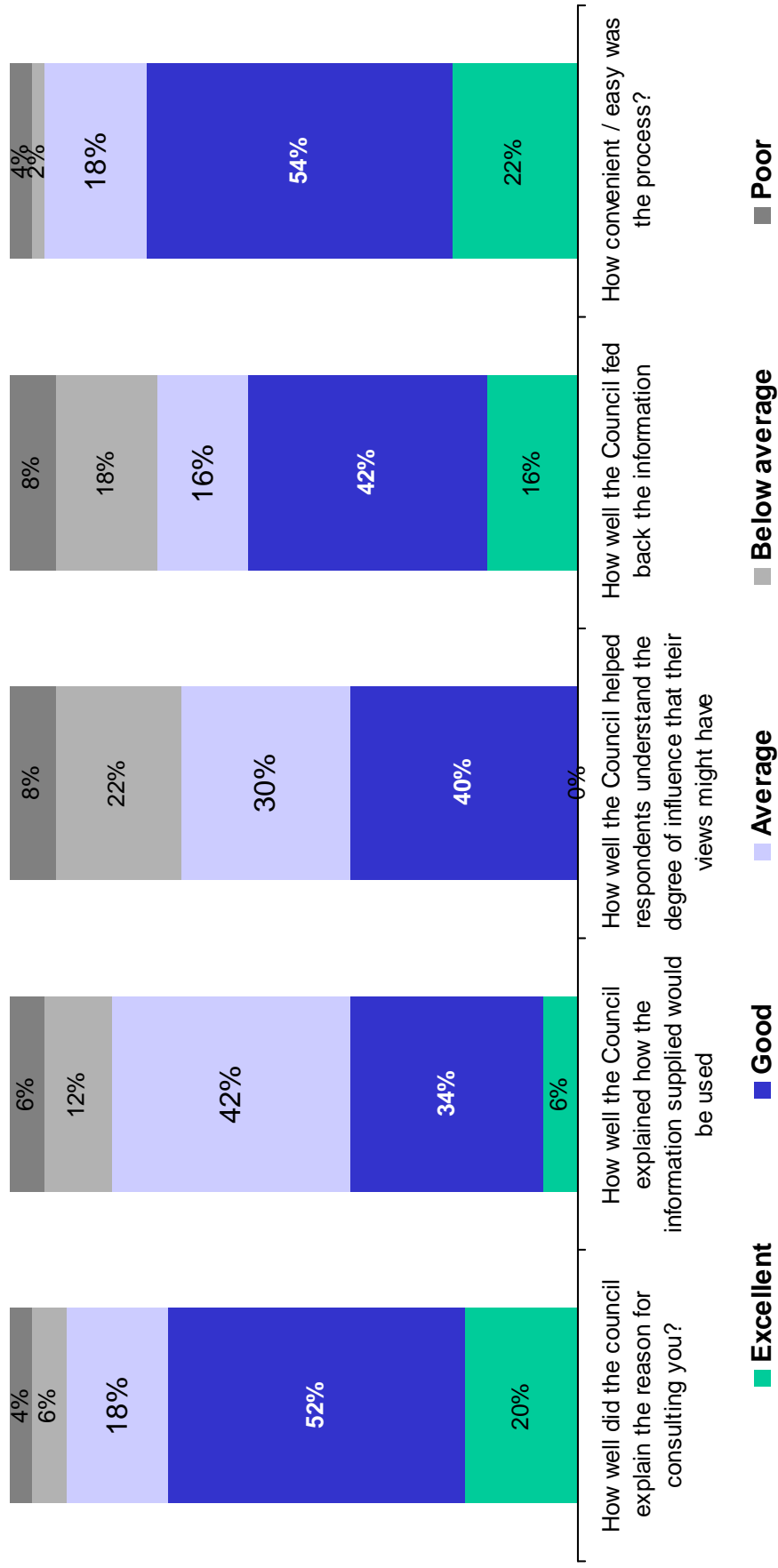
- There were areas of both strength and weakness in the Mortlake consultation process. Over half of respondents felt that the Council's explanations of how their views would be used, and how influential they were likely to be, were average or below average. However, there was a relatively high level of satisfaction (50%+ of the sample) with reasons given for the consultation, feedback, and the ease of the process.
- The Mortlake sample was analysed by those who were in favour of the CPZ proposal and those who opposed it. It is evident from the findings that perceptions of public consultation and its outcomes are clearly affected by the original stance of the consultee.
- The Twickenham riverside sample was very small and therefore reliance should not be placed on findings. Nevertheless, these few respondents were not as happy with their consultation experience, feeling that they were not properly briefed on just how influential their contribution would be; and also found the feedback particularly poor.



- Overall, planning hearings are considered by residents to be delivered to an acceptable level, with good ratings on support received from the Council on how to object to or support an application, and on the effectiveness of feedback. There were several suggestions on how the whole process might be improved, however, and made more equitable and accessible.
- **NOTE:**
 - **The findings of our telephone surveys cannot be considered as wholly reliable as, in the main, the consultation process is only recalled by those with a strong interest, particularly as both consultations occurred over six months ago; and planning hearings included in the survey date back to September 2008.**



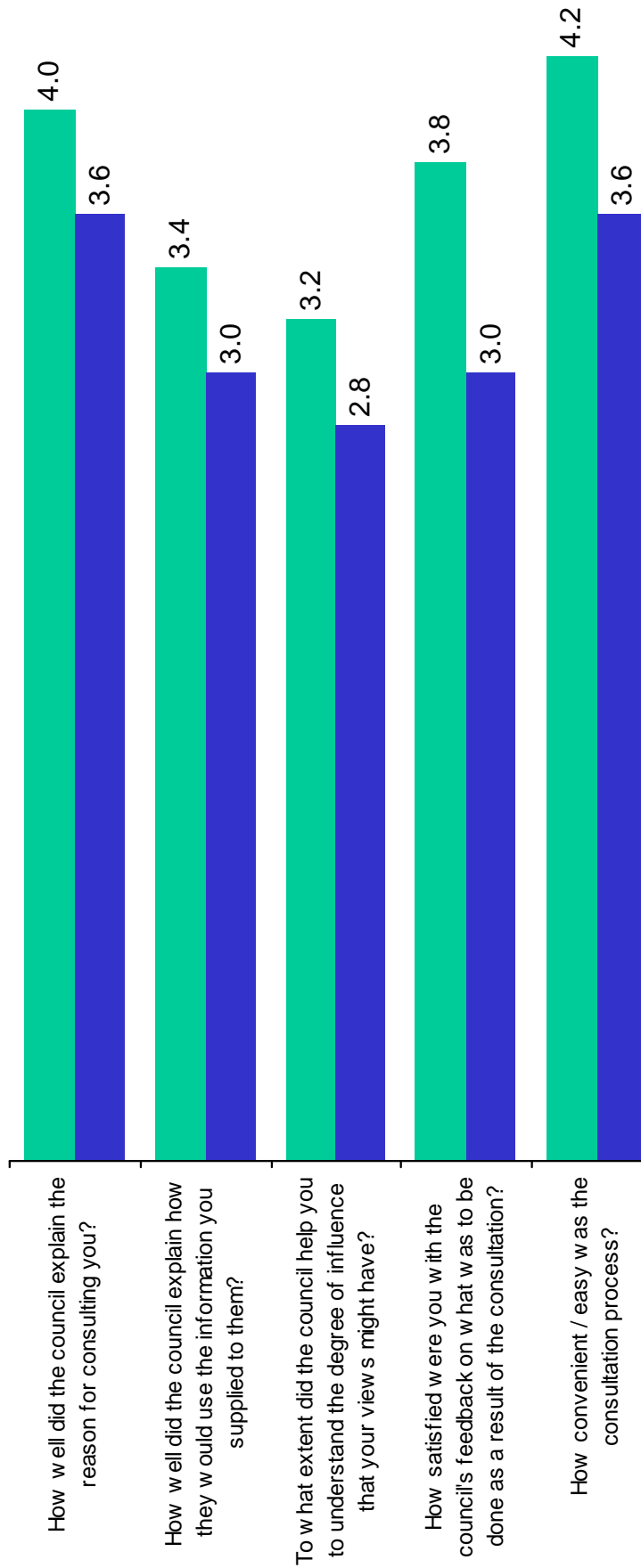
% Mortlake CPZ respondents (N=50)





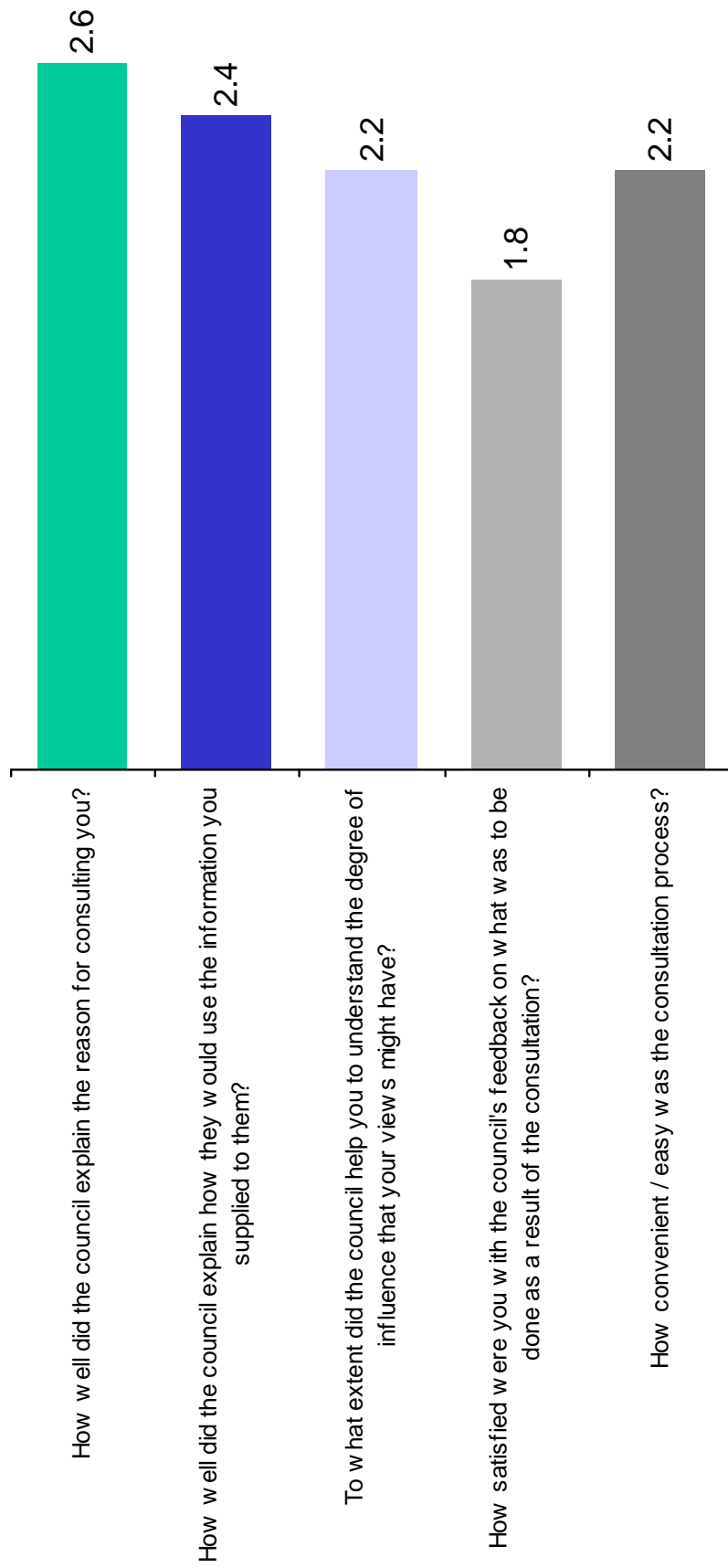
Average rating on pre-selected factors (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent)

Mortlake CPZ (N=50) by those in favour of scheme and those against



■ Residents in favour ■ Residents not in favour

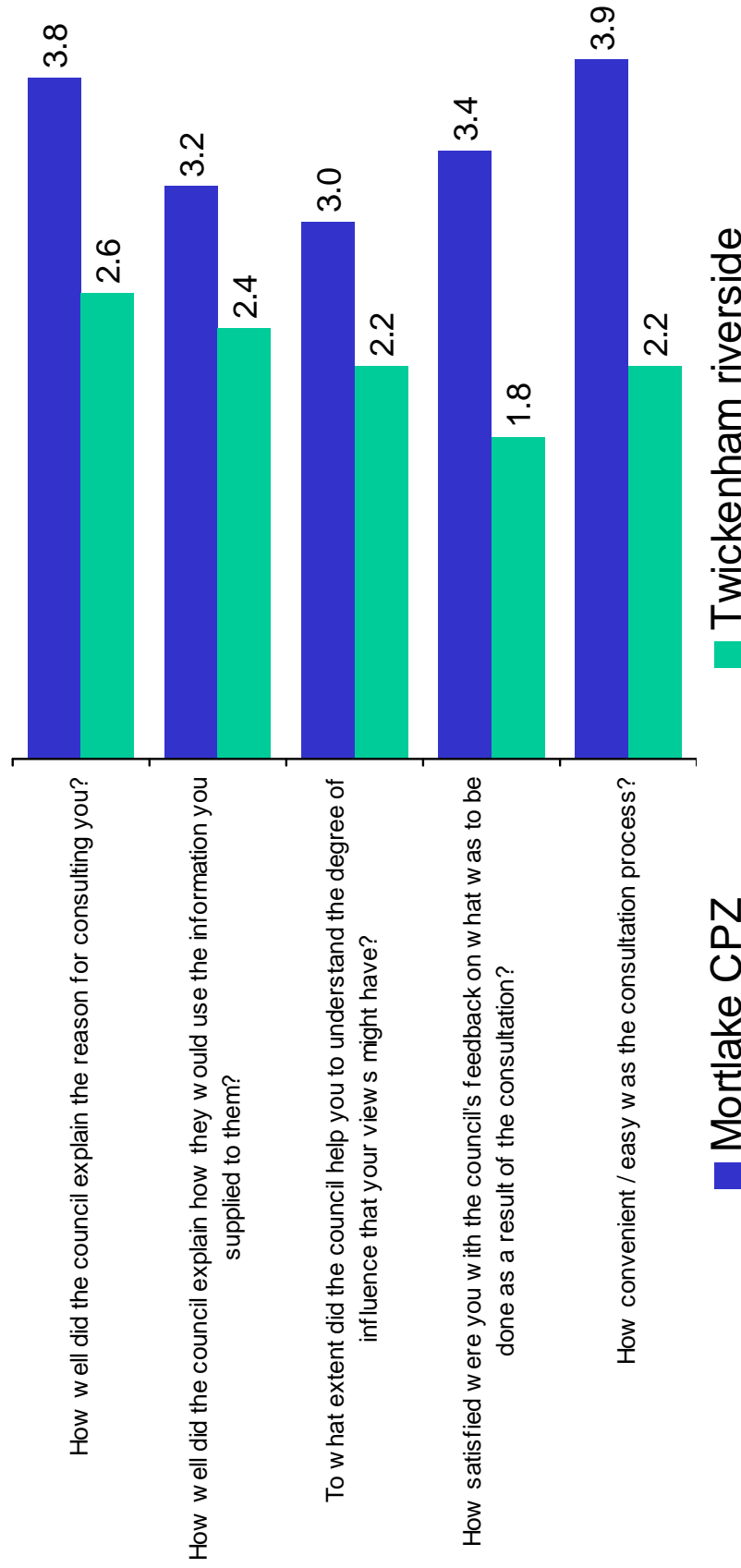
**Average rating on pre-selected factors (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent)
Twickenham riverside respondents (N=11)**



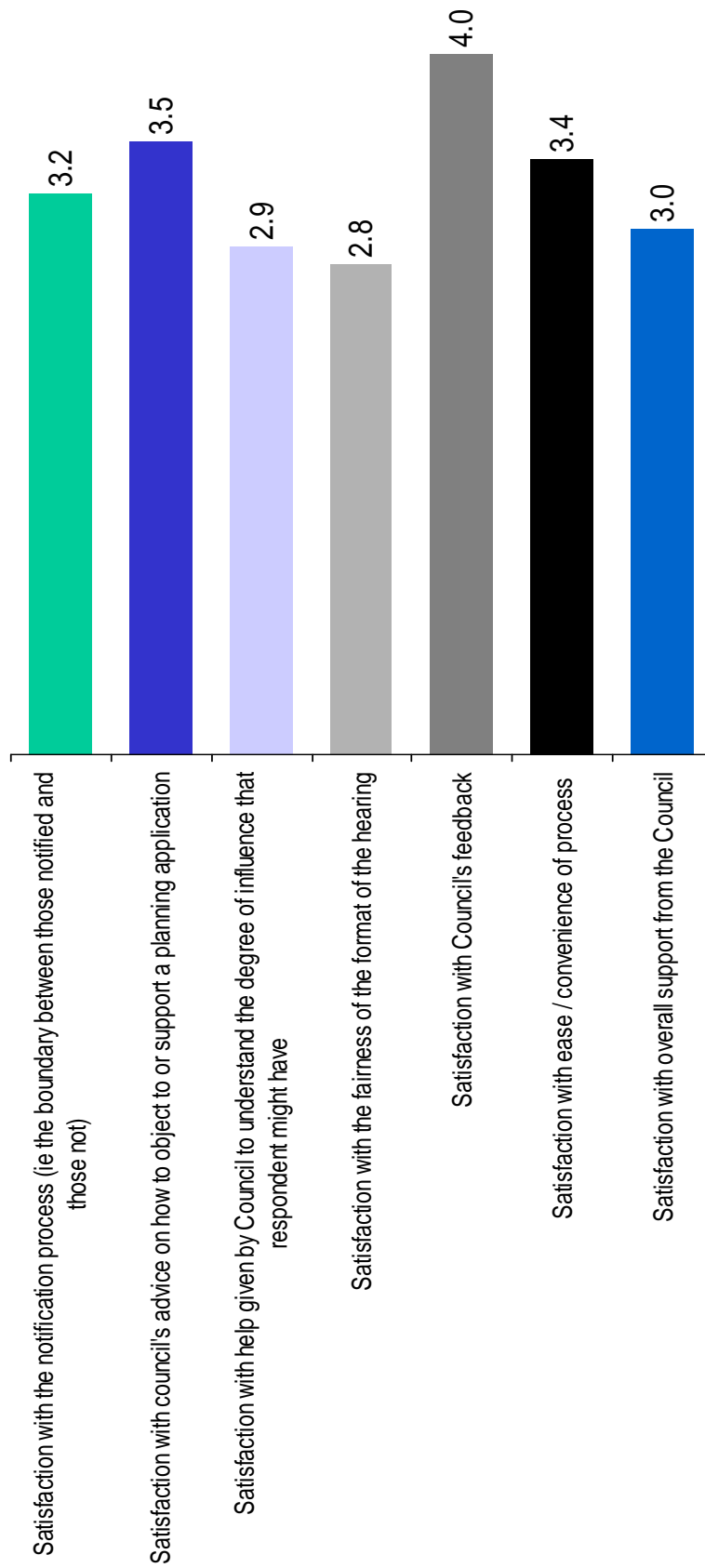


Average rating on pre-selected factors (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent)

Comparison of Mortlake CPZ (N= 50) and Twickenham riverside (N=11)



Planning hearings: average ratings on pre-selected factors (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very low and 5 is very high) (N=13)



IMPROVEMENTS REQUESTED

- Mortlake residents, although generally satisfied, would have preferred the CPZ consultation to be more convenient, accessible and open; whilst the Twickenham riverside exercise is characterised by the public as lacking in real communication with residents.

Mortlake CPZ	
Make it easier and more open	<p><i>“Make times more convenient for people who are working.”</i></p> <p><i>“Have an open meeting to discuss changes.”</i></p> <p><i>“I would like an open consultation where you can speak freely.”</i></p> <p><i>“More face to face consultations.”</i></p> <p><i>“Make it possible to complete consultation online.”</i></p>
Proper briefing and feedback	<p><i>“The results of the evaluation should be explained properly with an opportunity for discussion and feedback.”</i></p> <p><i>“More information about the public meetings, eg how you register, what the process is, etc.”</i></p> <p><i>“Council needs to communicate better and listen to what residents want.”</i></p> <p><i>“Better explanation of process.”</i></p>
Practical considerations / forethought	<p><i>“Diagrams showing the various stages would help to explain the process.”</i></p> <p><i>“Plans were not very easy to read, especially online.”</i></p> <p><i>“Large paper based plans would help for people to see in scale (colour too would help).”</i></p>
Twickenham riverside	
More (targeted) communication	<p><i>“More meetings so that people can put their views across.”</i></p> <p><i>“More individual correspondence with residents rather than notices on community boards.”</i></p> <p><i>“More information in the local paper.”</i></p> <p><i>“Not enough communication with residents.”</i></p> <p><i>“Residents would have liked to know more about it, what was going on, have more feedback.”</i></p>



Planning hearings

Better online access throughout process

“Online records need to be improved, access to the plans need to be easier to view.”
“More use of electronic communication.”
“To keep people informed residents should be able to check progress online.”

Format and fairness of hearings

“Objectors have to speak first so don’t get a chance to respond after those who are speaking for the application.”
“Increase time for speaking at committee.”
“Felt that minds had already been made up.”
“Officers didn’t listen to all points raised”



D. GOOD PRACTICE IN OTHER BOROUGHES

<p>Croydon (Source: Six of the best – community engagement studies, London Councils)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link meetings, neighbourhood partnerships and the Talk2Croydon website are ways in which the council finds out the views of residents and actively involves them in policy-making. • Link meetings provide residents and local voluntary groups with an opportunity to meet council staff and councillors to discuss arts, environmental, health or sports issues. • There is a network of 10 neighbourhood partnerships usually meeting three times a year at local venues. The partnerships encourage comment on the provision of local services and influence the work of the council and its partner agencies in their areas. • The Talk2Croydon website invites residents to air their views on all local public services, regardless of whether they are run by the council, the NHS, the police or even the voluntary sector. Representatives from local young people, black and ethnic minority communities, refugees, disabled people, people with learning difficulties and health service users helped to design the site for its launch in September 2007. • Key message: wider consultations with the community in Croydon are making local services more accountable to residents.
<p>Lewisham (Source: Beacons / IDEA website)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of Lewisham’s strategy to create a safe and accessible integrated transport system, public consultation was one of the key areas targeted. • Efforts were made to encourage maximum participation, especially by groups traditionally excluded. The strategy included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - having information available in different languages and alternative formats - ensuring venues are fully accessible, scheduling exhibitions for different times and days to encourage maximum attendance, and - advertising public exhibitions to all households - an accessibility and mobility forum was set up. • Lewisham took a 'blank canvas' approach to consultation. • The council involved residents, schools and local businesses in outlining



	<p>any areas of concern, then involved them in each stage of design process, increasing community ownership in the development of schemes, and acceptance, with few problems after implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key message: how working with the community through employing innovative methods of public consultation, results in a high degree of public ownership, improved user satisfaction and delivery of a better outcome.
<p>Hackney (Source: Hackney's Consultation and public information strategy)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hackney has evidently encountered similar problems to Richmond upon Thames, as the introduction to their consultation strategy indicates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"We are keen to engage the community in the wider strategic issues facing the borough</i> - <i>.....For our scrutiny function to be effective we need to engage and involve the public. We also need to ensure that we involve staff in improving our services to the public.....</i> - <i>.....Our commitment has not always meant that we are clear about what we are doing, why and indeed how.</i> - <i>In many cases, best practice is for users of services to be consulted on a continuous basis</i> On the other hand, there are specific circumstances in which the Council wishes to consult before making a decision or a change - <i>The results of the consultation will often form only part of the information that Councillors have to use to make a decision</i> and they are sometimes faced with unpalatable choices." • The measures that Hackney has specified as necessary to address the above weaknesses includes guidance to officers undertaking consultation, set out in the table overleaf. • Key message: There is a need for clarity and management of public consultations.



HACKNEY'S GUIDANCE TO OFFICERS UNDERTAKING CONSULTATION

Type of Consultation	When to use it	Explanation	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3	Appropriate Timescale
INFORMING	Where a decision has been taken and consultation is not required.	Telling local communities what the Council plans <i>is an information exercise</i>	Managerial decisions on how to progress. (Should ideally follow 2)	An election has been called and the public have to be informed of the dates and times of the election. We want to find out how the public would prefer to access Council services so we conduct a poll.	Outcome of Ombudsman complaints. Annual tenant survey - Postal survey sent to every tenants and leaseholder.	As soon as possible Timescale relevant to decision timescale
RESEARCHING	Where information is being sought to help to make a decision.	Gathering information on opinions, attitudes and priorities to inform decision-making.	Asking staff for ideas about the best way to achieve an outcome.			
CONSULTING	Where views will be taken into consideration when making a decision	Obtaining views on proposals or initiatives and taking them into account when decisions are made. This might be: a) Discretionary b) By agreement or Compulsory	Asking a Scrutiny Committee to look at a decision or policy before it is sent to Cabinet. Trade Union negotiations on redundancies.	Postal survey on rent sent to tenants. Best value performance consultation required by the Government.	Cross departmental agreement on a policy affecting the whole authority, such as implementation of IT On a statutory plan required by Government.	Eight weeks to three months Three months
INVOLVING	Where the outcome will be heavily influenced by the results of the consultation.	Working with consultees to find solutions, or where a range of possible options are on offer and the outcome is to choose one of the options.	Discussing with neighbourhood committees about specific changes that relate to their area.	Consultation with residents on the transfer of estates to a social landlord.	The outside of a community centre needs to be repainted. A choice of colours are available.	Where a statutory decision is required, up to three months
PARTNERSHIP	Where we are taking a decision with others	Initiating joint working and decision-making with the local community and other stakeholders.	Taking decisions about commencing services such as the drugs action partnership with the Health Authority.	Deciding with our partners whether to accept or reject applications that are made for funding through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.	New structure of joint management in Mental Health Services	Appropriate to decision to be made, normally at least eight weeks.







Worcestershire County Council

Although not directly comparable with Richmond upon Thames, Worcestershire has introduced some interesting initiatives.

It has a comprehensive website dedicated to the consultation process, including a corporate consultation toolkit and a template for stating objectives and what consultees should expect (see overleaf).

In addition, interested parties can sign up to e-mail alerts, or retrieve information on past, current or planned consultations, thereby affording additional opportunity to understand the process and its outcomes.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ask Me - Planner & Finder SearchAsk Me! - Consultation CalendarAsk Me - Login▼ Citizens' Panel<ul style="list-style-type: none">LinksTop TEN Consultation TipsWeb SurveysStrategy Document▼ The Toolkit<ul style="list-style-type: none">What's Hot	<h2>Welcome to Public Consultation in Worcestershire</h2> <p>As a County Council we are committed to listening to and learning from you – our communities. This site will give you all the information you need about public consultation in the County</p> <p>Worcestershire County Council – Asking, Listening, Improving</p> <hr/> <p> <u>Sign up for email alerts!</u> To receive email alerts about the consultations that Worcestershire County Council and its partners are undertaking, sign up here! Tell us which topics you are interested in, and in what area, and then every time a consultation is entered on to the Ask Me! Consultation Planner and Finder that matches your interests, we will send you an email alert.</p> <hr/> <p> <u>What's Hot?</u> Find out the latest on public consultation in Worcestershire</p> <hr/> <p> <u>Ask Me! Consultation Planner & Finder</u> Find out about public consultation in Worcestershire – what is happening now, what we found out from past consultations and what we have planned for the future.</p> <hr/> <p> <u>Consultation Calendar</u> A month by month view of public consultation in Worcestershire.</p>
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'Setting out your objectives to consultees' (extract from Warwickshire County Council website)

- *"Thank you for participating in (consultation). This consultation exercise will run between (dates). The final date for responses is xx.*
- *Your responses are important to us. We would like to know (description of objectives of consultation and what it hopes to achieve)*
- *The reason for asking your views is (what is on offer – what is the decision to be influenced). What you tell us can influence (state what can be changed / what the options are)*
- *Some of this (policy, service, document) has already been decided (state what - if appropriate). We are asking for your opinions only on the areas that can still be influenced. (state here if there are specific questions)*
- *We will let you know what we found out through this exercise by (state how feedback will be given).*
- *We will take account of your views when the decisions about this (policy, service, document – state) are being made. This will be (date). The final decision rests with (name).*
- *It is important that you know that (state any further constraints).*
- *If you need any further information about this (policy etc) please contact (name and details).*
- *(APPROPRIATE DATA PROTECTION STATEMENT).*
- *(APPROPRIATE STATEMENT REGARDING CONFIDENTIALITY)*
- *This is a genuine exercise to find out your (opinions, views, concerns). Thank you for taking part.*
- *You can find out more about the Council's "Good Practice Principles" for public consultation by*
- *If you feel that the Council has not followed its recommended process you can have recourse to the Council's representation procedure.*
- *Or contact Customer Services Officer, Consumer Relations Unit, etc"*



E. PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

- Centralised reform initiatives are working towards the ambition for participatory budgeting to be used in every local authority area by 2012.

A national strategy: LGIU overview

- Building on from the Governance of Britain agenda launched in July 2007 and focusing on how to hold power to account and uphold and enhance citizen rights and responsibilities, Communities and Local Government (CLG) has published a national strategy for participatory budgeting "which provides local people with an opportunity to get involved and influence how money is spent in their area".
- In the Empowerment White Paper, Communities in control: real people, real power the Government reiterated their commitment to participatory budgeting (PB), repeating their aim to have some form of participatory budgeting in every local authority area by 2012. To achieve this, the participatory budgeting strategy sets out four key elements:
 - promoting awareness
 - creating opportunities
 - providing guidance and support
 - learning from evaluation and research.
- CLG's delivery partner remains the Participatory Budgeting Unit (PB Unit) who will establish learning sets in each region to champion and promote PB.
- The strategy suggests that PB could help local authorities comply with the duty to involve, coming into force in April 2009. Communities could also use petitioning processes to call on local councils to use participatory budgeting.
- The strategy recognises that PB should be customised to meet local conditions while suggesting that some common principles and values, which are being developed by the PB Unit, are important.
- The strategy provides a series of case studies from participatory budgeting pilots as well as an annex which details the results from the early consultation on the draft strategy.

Source: *Local Government Information Unit* (www.lgiu.gov.uk/briefing-detail.jsp?id=1978&md=0§ion=briefing)

