

# **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **CABINET**

**12 AUGUST 2009**

### **JOINT REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS AND THE HEAD OF FINANCE**

<b>Report Prepared by Roger Adley and Paul Riley</b>
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1. **Budget Consultation 2010-11**

1.1 **Issue for Decision**

1.1.1 To decide on the form of consultation on the 2010-11 Council Budget.

1.2 **Recommendation of the Head of Communications and the Head of Finance**

1.2.1 That the Cabinet considers the options for consultation methods and topics and the timetable and programme set out in the conclusion to this report.

1.3 **Reasons for Recommendation**

1.3.1 **Budget setting process**

The process for developing the budget is set out in the Council's constitution:

- (a) In each year before a plan/strategy/budget needs to be adopted, the Executive will publish initial proposals for the budget and policy framework, having first canvassed the views of local stakeholders as appropriate, in a manner suitable to the matter under consideration. Details of the Executive's consultation process shall be included in relation to each of these matters in the Forward Plan and published at the Council's main offices and on its website. Any representations made to the Executive shall be taken into account in formulating the initial proposals, and shall be reflected in any report dealing with them. If the matter is one where an Overview and Scrutiny Committee has carried out a review of policy, then the outcome of that review will be reported to the Executive and considered in the preparation of initial proposals.
- (b) The Executive's initial proposals shall be referred to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for further advice and consideration. The proposals will be referred by sending a copy to the proper officer who will forward them to the chairman of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall canvass the views of local stakeholders if it considers it appropriate, in accordance with the matter under consideration, and having particular regard not to duplicate any consultation carried out by the Executive. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall report to the Executive on the outcome of its deliberations. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall have one month to respond to the initial proposals of the Executive, unless the Executive considers that there are special factors that make this timescale inappropriate. If it does, it will inform the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the time for response when the proposals are referred to it. If the response period covers a significant holiday period or election then the period may be extended in order to give the Overview and Scrutiny Committee sufficient time to consider the proposals.

- (c) Having considered the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Executive if it considers it appropriate, may amend its proposals, before submitting them to the Council Meeting for consideration. It will also report to Council on how it has taken into account any recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### 1.3.2 **Previous budget consultations**

The Council has consulted on all its budgets since 2002-03. Various qualitative and quantitative methods have been used including a citizens' panel, focus groups, road shows, meetings, questionnaires, a Simultaneous Multiple Attribute Trade Off exercise and an online budget simulator.

### 1.3.3 We have consulted to:

- inform residents of the budget setting process, the council's spending levels and its services;
- find out or check priority areas for spending;
- find out how best to fund schemes or options for specific service elements;
- find out preferences for the funding of service improvements – council tax, increased fees, cuts in services or a combination of all three;
- test support for levels of council tax.

1.3.4 A table of different consultation methods and the advantages and disadvantages of each is attached at **appendix 1**. There are many choices and levels of involvement from information giving through to partnership and full engagement where decisions are delegated or shared with stakeholders.

1.3.5 The Cabinet must decide the topics, which could include – the level of council tax, service priorities or the level of fees and charges – and agree the level of involvement before deciding on the consultation programme.

### 1.3.6 **Recent Budget Consultations**

For the 2005-06 Budget the Council carried out a Simultaneous Multiple Attribute Trade Off exercise. The SIMALTO modelling method asked respondents to make their priorities from a choice of defined alternative levels of each service. In effect they were informing the Council where services should expand or contract to better meet their needs. Their choices were 'realistic' since the relative savings/extra costs of each different service level were shown to residents, and they only had fixed, constrained budgets to allocate across the competing service levels.

1.3.7 For the 2006-07 Budget the Council consulted via its website and at road shows at several venues across the Borough. Budget consultation was combined with a general information programme to help people understand the cost of Borough Council services. This consultation included the Council's priorities, other important issues, suggestions for savings and attitude to charges.

1.3.8 For the 2007-08 Budget the Cabinet decided to seek views on its decision to limit any increase in the borough's Council Tax to 3% and its work on healthy living and lifelong learning. Suggestions for savings were also sought. The Cabinet decided that it would lead a number of consultation meetings with stakeholders and hard to reach groups. A survey, with a sponsored incentive, was included in Borough Update and on our website.

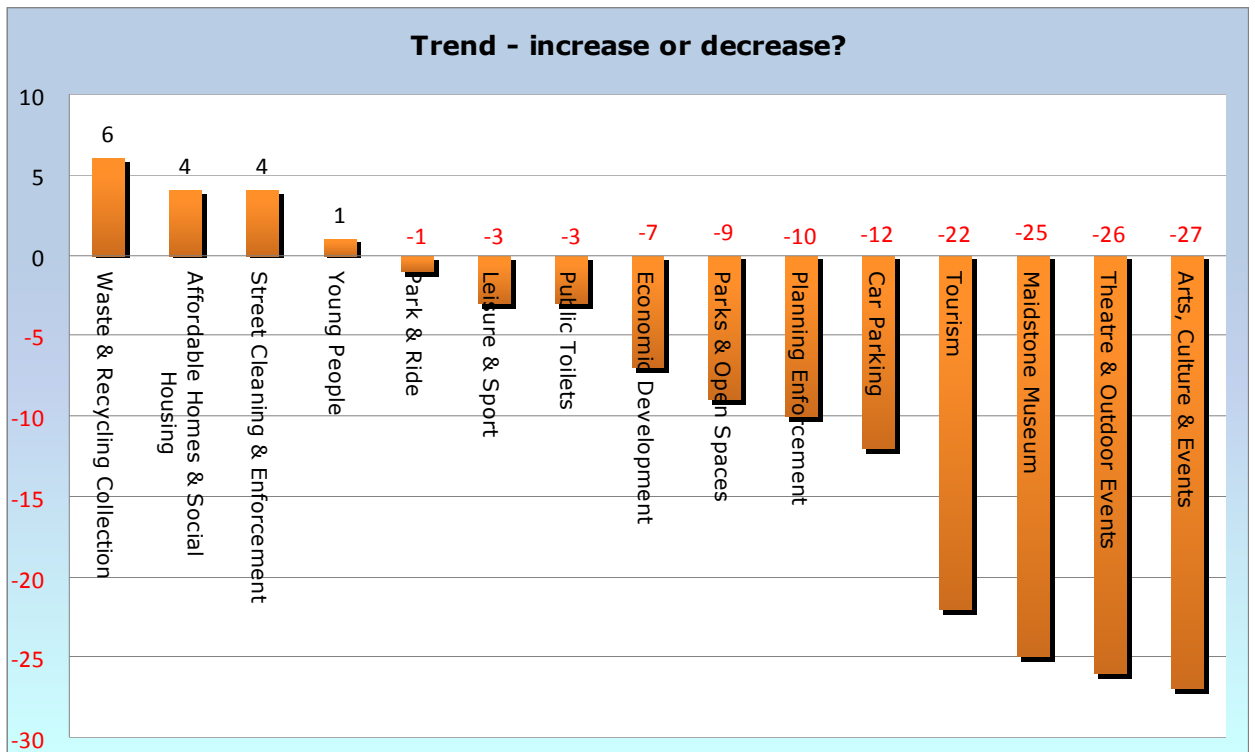
1.3.9 For the 2008-09 Budget the cabinet used a web based Budget Simulator backed up by a general information campaign and targeted focus groups. The simulator provided users with background information on specified budget headings. Users could see the consequences of adjusting budget items up or down on council tax and services. They compared their budget to the previous year's budget and their allocations were stored along with their comments.

1.3.10 In 2009-10 the cabinet used Budget Simulator to test residents' preferences for spending on services and overall spending. This was supported by a general information campaign and a programme of meetings to encourage participation and gain qualitative feedback.

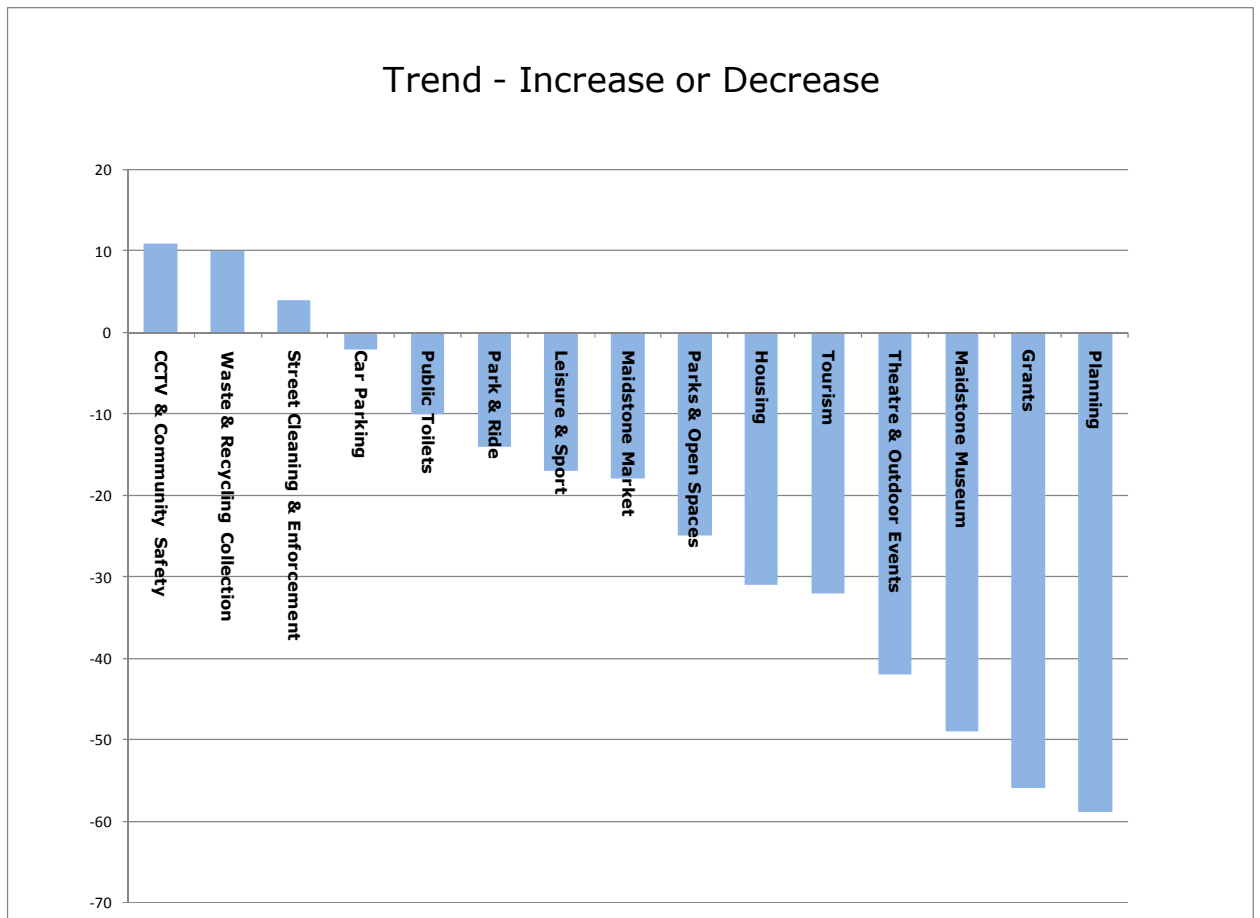
### 1.3.11 **What have we learned**

Previous consultations about the priority of services have yielded consistent results and the Council can be confident that it has a good understanding of residents' priorities for spending on services.

A summary of the 2008-09 consultation is shown overleaf:



A summary of the 2009-10 consultation is shown below:



In both of these exercises consultees found it very difficult to make savings in order to keep the Council's increase in its Council Tax to no more than 5% (about £10 a year for a Band D Taxpayer). For 2008-09 the average increase was 6.4%. For 2009-10 the average increase was 7.6%.

It is several years since we asked a specific question to test preferences for paying for services. For the 2002-03 budget we asked residents about options for service improvements and how they would like to pay for them. The results were:

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>	<b>Blank</b>
Increase council tax?	21%	27%	5%	47%
Cutting other services?	14%	25%	5%	55%
Increase charges?	16%	18%	8%	57%
Combination of these?	44%	15%	7%	35%

During consultation on the 2006-07 budget we asked if the Council should increase charges to keep Council tax down to a 5% increase, 23% of respondents said we should. 67% of respondents said we should make savings to keep Council tax down to below a 5% increase.

#### 1.3.12 **Other Consultation**

Budget consultation should be viewed in the context of the council's overall consultation, for example on priorities for the strategic plan etc, and as such the Council can be confident that it has a good understanding of the main issues that concern our residents.

#### 1.3.13 **The Place Survey**

The Place survey was completed by 2,300 residents in October 2008. When asked what would make somewhere a good place to live, respondents' top choices were:

1. The level of crime;
2. Health services;
3. Clean streets;
4. Public transport; and
5. Affordable decent housing.

When given the same options and asked which most needed improving the most commonly selected options were:

1. Road and pavement repairs;
2. The level of traffic congestion;
3. Activities for teenagers;
4. Public transport; and
5. The level of crime.

The Council added a question asking people what they thought the most important issues were facing Maidstone today. Initial findings show the following tend to be most commonly identified by respondents:

1. Congestion, highways and road safety;
2. Parking and public transport;
3. Anti-social behaviour and crime;
4. Litter and clean streets;
5. Housing and planning;
6. Health services;
7. Waste and recycling; and
8. The Town centre.

#### 1.3.14 **The Sustainable Community Strategy**

During consultation on the draft Sustainable Community Strategy 2009 -2020 people completed a short survey giving their views on the strategy's vision, their top three objectives and actions.

Overwhelmingly people agreed (81%) with the strategy's overall vision: 'We want Maidstone Borough to be a vibrant, prosperous 21st century urban and rural community at the heart of Kent, where its distinctive character is enhanced to create a safe, healthy, excellent environment with high quality education and employment where all people can realise their aspirations'. 16% weren't sure and 3% disagreed.

The top three objectives were:

- Build stronger and safer communities (50%)
- Make Maidstone Borough a place where people of all ages – children young people and families – can achieve their aspirations (47%)
- Develop a vibrant economy; create prosperity and opportunities for all (41%)

Closely followed by:

- Develop an efficient, sustainable, integrated transport system (40%)

Their top three actions were:

- Increase youth facilities and services as a means of tackling anti-social behaviour (43%)
- Regenerate the town centre and make more of the river (40%)
- Develop transport and parking strategies to reduce congestion (34%)

#### 1.3.15 **Consultation topics**

The Cabinet might wish to consider if any items from the Place Survey or Sustainable Community Strategy should be explored further in the consultation for next year's budget.

- 1.3.16 Residents could be asked to indicate their preference for paying for services – council tax increase, increased fees, cuts in services or a combination of all three.

- 1.3.17 However, as a result of our previous consultations, we can be confident that we have a good understanding of residents' preferences for service priority. We also know that when using Budget Simulator residents have found it difficult to make the necessary savings to achieve a balanced budget.
- 1.3.18 So as it is some years since we explored residents attitudes to fees and charges the Cabinet might want to explore this area in detail. For 2010-11 this subject has additional relevance for two reasons. The Cabinet has recently adopted a policy on the development of fees and charges and the current economic downturn has had a significant effect on income generation. Cabinet may wish to focus some of its consultation on the policy for fees and charges and/or specific fees in order to fully inform consideration on the development of specific charges.
- 1.3.19 The Council has discretion on the fees and charges for a number of Council services including:
- Parking
  - Park and Ride
  - Crematorium/Cemetery
  - Bulky Refuse and Green Waste
  - Theatre

The museum, parks, sports and play and licensing yield only limited income. We can compare building control and corporate property prices with their direct competitors.

- 1.3.20 Elsewhere on this agenda is a revised medium term financial strategy that is intended to enhance the focus of the budget strategy process to encompass the medium term. From this emphasis on the medium term it follows that there should be a similar strategic period for the focus of the budget consultation. This should be achieved in two ways:
- (a) A partial shift in focus away from questions that consider the immediate future to ones that consider the medium term. This shift should not be complete as pressing issues that affect the immediate timeframe are relevant for consultation but part of the work should measure opinion on medium term plans.
  - (b) A rolling programme of subject matter and consultation styles over the period of the strategy to ensure the best use is made of resources. During both 2008/09 and 2009/10 consultations the budget simulator has been used to good effect but provided the same conclusions.

#### 1.3.21 **Who to consult**

The Cabinet must consider who to consult. This should include stakeholders including staff and the LSP, the general public, businesses and hard to reach groups.

1.3.22 The general public can be reached through the website and through Borough Update. A prize Draw would increase responses.

#### 1.3.23 **How to Consult**

The consultation process has relied heavily on member and officer time to prepare for and support road shows and visits to forums. The major direct cost has related to the public consultation through the various surveys either through SIMALTO or the budget simulator. Officers have approached a market research organisation to provide indicative costs of direct mail, telephone and face to face market research to look at attitudes to fees and charges as a way to limit any increase in Council tax. It would be possible for Cabinet to consider either the continued use of the budget simulator, the use of a face to face or a telephone survey or a postal survey, and remain within current budget.

#### 1.3.24 **Conclusion**

The Cabinet should consider what to consult about including:

- the areas identified in the Place Survey and the Sustainable Communities Strategy;
- levels of council tax;
- preferences for funding services;
- residents attitudes to fees and charges.

1.3.25 The Cabinet should consider the audiences that it wishes to consult and methods for consultation perhaps as set out in the timetable at 1.3.26 below.

1.3.26 An eight week consultation is recommended. Cabinet might wish to consider starting with an event and multi media promotion including our website and social networking sites, followed by a Borough Update feature and focus groups to encourage general comments about the budget and the options for spending levels and savings to remain within budget. Market research could be employed to examine attitudes to fees and charges. The timetable would be:

- 28 September - Start of Consultation – event, website, news release.
- Market Research exercise to explore attitudes to fees and charges.
- October – Borough Update feature by the Leader of the Council with prize to encourage responses.
- October – November – Focus groups/meetings including with the Local Strategic partnership, Businesses, Youth Forum, Older Persons Forum, Transport Users Group and residents.
- 20 November – End of Consultation.
- 9 December 2009 - Cabinet considers results of consultation.



1.4 Alternative actions and why not recommended

1.4.1 There are alternative approaches but the options above should complement previous consultations and provide valuable feedback for the council to consider in setting next year's budget.

1.5 Impact on corporate objectives

1.5.1 The results of the consultation will be considered in framing the corporate priorities and Council's budget for 2010-11 onwards.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 A good consultation exercise addresses the strategic risk of a budget strategy which does not address the needs of taxpayers.

1.6.2 Failure to consult may produce a reputation risk for the council.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1.	Financial	X
2.	Staffing	
3.	Legal	
4.	Social Inclusion	
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	
8.	Procurement	

1.7.1 Financial –The cost of budget consultation is provided for in the Press and Public Relations budgets. For 2009-10 the budget simulator consultation cost £4000 plus staff time to develop and maintain the website. Outline prices obtained for a market research survey looking at fees and charges suggest that this could be achieved within the budget, if the simulator consultation did not occur for 2010-11.

1.8 Background Documents

1.8.1 None.

**NO REPORT WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THIS BOX BEING COMPLETED**

Is this a Key Decision?      Yes            No     

If yes, when did it appear in the Forward Plan? \_\_\_\_\_

Is this an Urgent Key Decision?      Yes            No     

Reason for Urgency

**Community Engagement, Involvement and Consultation  
Qualitative Methods**

<b>Method</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>	<b>Best for...</b>
Comment/ Complaints/ Compliments Cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to undertake</li> <li>• Low cost</li> <li>• Identify recurring problems</li> <li>• Demonstrates willingness to change and improve</li> <li>• Provides instant feedback</li> <li>• Customers often know best</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not representative</li> <li>• Includes only existing customers</li> <li>• Can be reactive</li> <li>• May produce low number of completed cards</li> </ul>	Service specific use.
Focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to organise</li> <li>• Complex issues can be addressed targeting specific groups</li> <li>• People feel confident to contribute ideas in a group setting</li> <li>• Discussion can stimulate thinking and spark new ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively high cost solution</li> <li>• Requires an experienced moderator</li> <li>• Not representative</li> <li>• Analysis is time consuming and complex</li> <li>• Some participants may feel inhibited to contribute to group discussion</li> <li>• Dominant participants may sway the outcomes of the group</li> </ul>	<p>Exploring issues around a specific proposal.</p> <p>Service development.</p> <p>Best to use with other methods.</p>
In-depth Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-to-one extended discussion</li> <li>• Detailed responses</li> <li>• Good for consulting excluded groups</li> <li>• Can identify new issues that may not have been thought of before</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expensive related to the reach of engagement</li> <li>• Time-consuming</li> <li>• Unrepresentative</li> </ul>	<p>Small focused consultations.</p> <p>Use in conjunction with other methods.</p> <p>Good for isolated communities.</p>
Mystery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Precise and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicable to</li> </ul>	Useful for

Shopping	<p>detailed feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple to implement</li> <li>• Flexible and immediate</li> <li>• Highlight problems quickly</li> <li>• Can be used to commend staff</li> </ul>	<p>front-line, person-to-person services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff are often suspicious</li> <li>• Records isolated instances and small samples</li> </ul>	<p>background information.</p> <p>Evaluation tool.</p>
Public Meetings / Roadshows/ stalls at fetes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for local people to comment on matters that affect them</li> <li>• A convenient and transparent way to demonstrate public consultation</li> <li>• Builds good relationships with local people</li> <li>• Can be used to inform and collect views</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can exclude hard to reach groups and concentrate on people who have the time or inclination to be involved</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge can hamper the collection of views</li> <li>• Can end up in personal concerns or those people with an axe to grind</li> </ul>	<p>Demonstrates that public has been consulted.</p> <p>Everyone has the opportunity to take part.</p>
Service User Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides a source of regular dialogue with users</li> <li>• Builds positive relationships between the service and users</li> <li>• Enables services to be targeted to what people want</li> <li>• Improve service take-up and delivery</li> <li>• Can test options for service change</li> <li>• Test public views on conflicting priorities and resource allocation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can become dominated by 'pet' issues</li> <li>• Views may not be typical of other users</li> <li>• Can become institutionalised to see the service from a providers point of view</li> </ul>	<p>Can inform future service planning.</p> <p>Tests the waters at the beginning of a service change or development.</p>
Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An interactive and fun way to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can attract the 'usual suspects'</li> </ul>	<p>Good for staff consultation.</p>

	<p>get people involved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stimulates in-depth discussion</li> <li>• Can hold a number at one time and have a plenary session at the end</li> </ul>	<p>and people that have a particular interest in the topic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs to be well organised</li> <li>• Must ensure that discussions are not dominated by 'strong' individuals</li> </ul>	<p>Useful as part of wider public consultation.</p>
Planning for real	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A fun and interactive consultation method.</li> <li>• Contributors place their ideas on a 3D model</li> <li>• Simple to organise</li> <li>• Can involve lots of people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time consuming</li> <li>• Need to generate 3D model</li> </ul>	<p>Good for planning and development in the community.</p>
Café Conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A drop-in experience for people with little time</li> <li>• Can attract new participants</li> <li>• Easy to organise</li> <li>• Transparent - public sees that consultation is taking place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need a team of staff to talk individually to participants.</li> <li>• Time consuming</li> <li>• Expensive option – requires extensive advertising</li> <li>• Little in-depth consideration of issues is undertaken</li> </ul>	<p>Can deal with multi-issues and 'big' topics.</p>
Imagine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good at extracting people's dreams and aspirations for areas/ issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not be representative</li> <li>• Lack of grounding in reality</li> </ul>	<p>Good for forward planning</p>
Customer Journey Mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives the service transparency</li> <li>• Identifies deficiencies in processes</li> <li>• Gets closer to customers</li> <li>• Describes customer experience</li> <li>• Can contribute to culture change</li> <li>• See things from a customer perspective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time consuming</li> <li>• Relatively cheap to conduct</li> <li>• Unrepresentative</li> </ul>	<p>Good for frontline services</p> <p>To achieve best experience</p>

Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants have the freedom to set their own topics, organise their own discussions and come up with solutions</li> <li>• Very fluid, dynamic and creative</li> <li>• Very flexible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labour intensive - requires facilitators and scribes at every group.</li> <li>• People can dislike this unstructured approach</li> <li>• Cheap to run</li> <li>• Must be able to give control to the participants</li> </ul>	Can be used with large, diverse groups when you want ownership of an issue and are happy with them deciding on the outcome.
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## Quantitative Methods

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages	Best for...
Electronic (online) or paper postal survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large number of people can be surveyed</li> <li>• Electronic- easy to prepare inhouse; cheap; wide geographic area; young people more inclined to answer; quick response</li> <li>• Can fill out in their own time</li> <li>• Repeating the same questions over time allows the tracking of opinions</li> <li>• A well designed questionnaire produces reliable statistical information</li> <li>• Most cost effective for a large sample size</li> <li>• Response rates can increase to 60% if you send out reminders</li> <li>• Quick response, give people 2 weeks to respond</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Filling out forms can be daunting</li> <li>• No control over who fills in the form – subject to bias through self selection. Very happy or angry people tend to reply</li> <li>• People with poor literacy skills or their first language is not English may be put off from responding</li> <li>• Paper surveys – expensive to produce, deliver and analyse</li> <li>• Usually need a prize draw to engage respondents to fill in form</li> <li>• Electronic – not all people have access to the internet</li> <li>• May exclude hard to reach groups</li> <li>• Poor questionnaire design can lead to poor data</li> <li>• Easy for potential participants to</li> </ul>	Good for general opinion polls.

		ignore the survey or individual questions	
Face-to Face Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questionnaire can be longer than in electronic or postal surveys</li> <li>• Response rates are high</li> <li>• Can track progress and responses during fieldwork process</li> <li>• More probing, complex questions</li> <li>• Quality of data is higher than postal, electronic or telephone surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expensive as it is labour intensive and requires trained interviewers</li> <li>• The presence of the interviewer can influence the respondent</li> <li>• Not everyone is willing to participate – especially if it is conducted in the street</li> <li>• Older and younger people are more likely to refuse to participate</li> </ul>	<p>Good for non users of services.</p> <p>Future direction of services.</p> <p>Target specific people for interview.</p>
Telephone Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtains relevant information</li> <li>• Can explore in details aspects of topic</li> <li>• More complex issues can be tackled than in postal or electronic surveys</li> <li>• Reaches people in wide geographic area</li> <li>• Cheap to carry out</li> <li>• Very quick to do</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviewing skill required</li> <li>• Questionnaire design is important</li> <li>• May not be representative</li> <li>• High refusal rates and can annoy prospective respondent</li> <li>• May not reach deaf people or those with hearing impairment</li> </ul>	Service specific consultations
Citizens Panel (see postal, electronic and telephone surveys)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Larger group of people who are refreshed over time</li> <li>• Builds up information over time</li> <li>• Reliable group who have signed-up to be consulted</li> <li>• Wide geographic area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be self-selecting and therefore unrepresentative</li> <li>• Expensive to keep going</li> <li>• Can be unrepresentative and not reach the hard to reach groups</li> <li>• Tends to be made up of more educated and</li> </ul>	

		informed people	
<p>Deliberative Polling</p> <p>(Similar to Citizens' Juries and Consensus Conferences)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A base poll is conducted after which the participants receive information and discuss the issues. A second final poll is then take to see if their views change.</li> <li>• Representative sample is sought of 200 to 600 people – so statistically reliable</li> <li>• Can increase public understanding of an issue</li> <li>• Demonstrates difference between people's uninformed and informed views</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expensive – as DVDs can be used to inform participants</li> <li>• Time consuming</li> </ul>	<p>To measure informed opinion on an issue that the public knows little about.</p> <p>Reflective approach on generally controversial issues.</p>
Text Based Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good for younger people</li> <li>• Quick response</li> <li>• Can act quickly on returns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheap to run</li> <li>• Limited questionability</li> <li>• Needs technical support</li> </ul>	Yes or no questions
Touch Screen Kiosks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to use</li> <li>• Limited number of questions</li> <li>• Can act quickly on returns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can breakdown</li> <li>• Lack of software/IT support</li> <li>• Moderately expensive – should become cheaper</li> </ul>	Good as a customer interface



## Participatory Methods

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages	Best for...
Participatory Appraisal – eg. Life in our area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People identify their own priorities and make their own decisions about their future</li> <li>• Very flexible and inclusive</li> <li>• Emphasises local knowledge</li> <li>• Local people do their own assessment, analysis and planning</li> <li>• Empowers communities</li> <li>• Outcomes are reliable for the community involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong members from the community can take over</li> <li>• Can lead to raised expectations if no action is taken</li> <li>• Experienced facilitators need to be on hand</li> <li>• Moderate cost method</li> <li>• Work is done over long time period</li> <li>• Not everyone may participate</li> <li>• Can be costly to start up, as experienced facilitators may be needed. Training and experience needed for people from the community who take the lead</li> <li>• Time consuming to report back on discussions, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Issues that directly affect people in a community.</p> <p>Capacity building and empowering a community – grass roots action.</p> <p>Used for ongoing cycle of research, learning and collective action</p> <p>When you want the community to take control.</p> <p>Can use arts and drama to reach particular groups – reminiscence work with older people on community changes.</p>
Participatory Budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People feel they can have a 'say' in how their money is spent</li> <li>• Can directly influence priorities</li> <li>• Can lead to money- saving initiatives and prioritise scarce resources</li> <li>• Informs local needs.</li> <li>• Creates public awareness of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be unrepresentative</li> <li>• Hard to motivate people to participate</li> <li>• If no action is taken, then becomes pointless and people become disenchanted</li> <li>• Financial issues are often complex and unintelligible</li> <li>• Can create unrealistic</li> </ul>	<p>Budget and service priorities.</p> <p>Can include peer grant funding.</p> <p>As part of the budget making cycle.</p> <p>Best if member led</p>

	<p>'trade-offs'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give participants a greater understanding of government</li> <li>• Can build public support</li> </ul>	<p>expectations amongst participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can undermine the role of elected members</li> </ul>	
Area Forums and Community Forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitated by the council or community development workers</li> <li>• Can be one-off or ongoing</li> <li>• Representatives from voluntary and statutory agencies participate</li> <li>• Issues revolve around those that matter to local people</li> <li>• Generally reflects the neighbourhood and its problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expensive</li> <li>• Time consuming</li> <li>• Can become 'talking shops' if no action is taken</li> <li>• Can become the 'usual suspects' where 'good' families participate and 'bad' ones don't</li> </ul>	<p>Used in deprived areas that require intensive input.</p> <p>Specific issues or pressure groups.</p>

### Scrutiny Methods

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages	Best for...
Citizens Jury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can involve lots of people</li> <li>• Deals with complex issues and options</li> <li>• Independent setting</li> <li>• Decision advising rather than making</li> <li>• Results can inform wider public debate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be interested parties and usual suspects</li> <li>• Hugely expensive</li> <li>• Time consuming</li> <li>• Only involves small number of people</li> <li>• Policy makers can find it difficult to ignore the outcomes</li> </ul>	<p>Issue specific.</p> <p>Controversial, public issues where opinion is often divided</p> <p>Good for where a set of recommendations or decisions are needed (a verdict)</p>
Consensus Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Panel of citizens who question expert witnesses at a public conference</li> <li>• Transparent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderately expensive</li> <li>• May not be representative</li> <li>• Require good recording mechanisms</li> </ul>	<p>Topic based discussion</p>

## Other Methods

<b>Method</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>	<b>Best for...</b>
Asset management and transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transfers buildings, halls or social housing over to community control</li> <li>• Community feel empowered and in control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires community to adopt management skills</li> <li>• Possible misuse of public money</li> </ul>	<p>Empowerment of the community</p> <p>Must provide training and support</p>
Petitions and e-petitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stimulates debate</li> <li>• Often attracts media interest</li> <li>• People get their voices heard</li> <li>• Can influence council decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not be representative</li> <li>• Very formal method of engagement</li> </ul>	<p>Usually for controversial issues</p> <p>Community Call for Action</p>
Local Charters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stimulates partnership working</li> <li>• Clarifies relationships</li> <li>• Written document</li> <li>• Easy to set up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally more about intent and arrangements rather than action</li> <li>• Cheap option</li> </ul>	<p>Setting out who does what, how decisions are made and what happens when they go wrong.</p>
Referenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives everyone the opportunity to have their say</li> <li>• Transparent</li> <li>• Usually attracts media attention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expensive</li> <li>• Gives total control to the voters</li> <li>• Question has to be formulated correctly – can be manipulated</li> </ul>	<p>Major issues that affect all or most residents.</p>