Consultation Framework

2021

Introduction

Purpose of the framework

The Consultation Framework sets out how Chorley and South Ribble Councils undertake consultations. It provides step by step instructions and guidance on how to design, deliver, and evaluate consultation activities using best practice.

This framework will apply in general, however where there are statutory or external requirements for undertaking consultations in a prescribed manner, those requirements take precedence.

Key principles

This framework sets out the key principles, or our 'commitment to consultation', that are to be applied when undertaking consultation exercises. These are to ensure that:

- Consultation is planned effectively, undertaken in a timely manner at the appropriate stage in the decision-making process, and that results are used effectively to inform policy development and service delivery,

- We make it clear the purpose of an exercise and how it feeds into the decision-making process,

- Sufficient information is provided and accessible to participants to inform their response,

- Everyone has the opportunity to contribute and have their views heard,

- We consult using the most appropriate methods (both electronic and more traditional) to ensure that all groups can participate fully,

- Sufficient time is provided to respond, and for consideration of key findings,

- The results are used to inform the decision-making process,

- Key findings are fed back to participants,

- All consultations are registered and disseminated through our Consultation Portal (www.yoursay.citizenspace.com).

What we mean by consultation
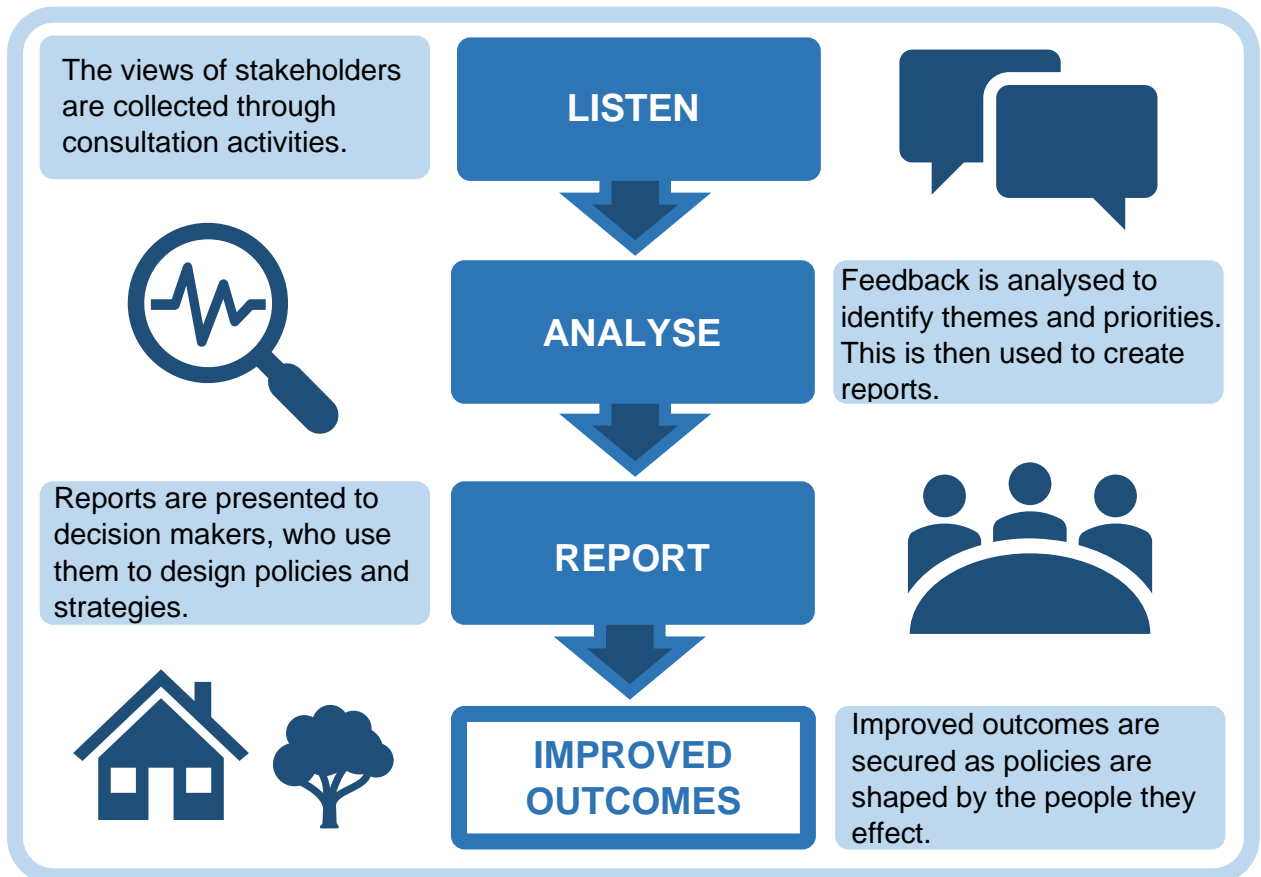
Defining a consultation

A consultation is a one-off process to enable resident or partner feedback to shape a policy, process, or decision. A formal consultation is carried out if the proposal or plan is likely to have a substantial impact on access to services, a change in provision of service or the wider community such as economic impact, or regeneration.

Consultations are one of a range of ways that we can seek feedback from our community. It is different to community engagement, which is an ongoing process of developing relationships and partnerships with local people. Engagement is about having continuous conversations and gathering intelligence on the changing needs of our communities through neighbourhood working and our community hubs.

Our process

To be clear, there are no general rules as to the kind or amount of consultation required. By the nature of each proposal or issue, the appropriate approach to eliciting feedback will vary depending upon the circumstances that call for it. Therefore, it is neither feasible, nor possible to lay out prescriptively a one size fits all approach. However, we believe that our consultations should reflect the process below:

The views of stakeholders are collected through consultation activities.

LISTEN

Feedback is analysed to identify themes and priorities. This is then used to create reports.

ANALYSE

Reports are presented to decision makers, who use them to design policies and strategies.

REPORT

IMPROVED OUTCOMES

Improved outcomes are secured as policies are shaped by the people they effect.

When we consult

Under the current statutory guidance, we are required to hold a consultation when:

- Creating or changing a service,
- Allocating funding,
- Planning decisions.

In addition to this, we seek to go beyond our statutory duties by creating extra opportunities to inform and listen to our communities, partners, and service users. This includes when:

- Designing policies,
- Identifying priorities,
- Developing strategies.

The role of councillors

As decision-makers, elected members will use consultation to inform the decisions they make. This may involve balancing competing priorities, or balancing consultation findings with other factors (i.e. resources available).

Portfolio holders will have a special interest in any consultations affecting their specific remit and should be involved in the scoping of the consultation exercise and kept informed of its progress.

Individual ward members should be consulted on proposals that will affect the area they represent.

Portfolio holders and ward members will also have an active role in disseminating and communicating the findings of the consultation and how this has been used to inform any subsequent decisions and policies.

Officers' roles and responsibilities

Managers are responsible for ensuring that all council employees understand and apply the consultation process outlined in this framework and that there is sufficient time and resource allocated to undertake the exercise effectively and meaningfully.

All consultation exercises should have a lead officer identified and responsible for planning, designing and undertaking the exercise and disseminating the findings. This will include ensuring the principles and commitments to consult in this framework are adhered to.

The Performance and Partnerships team in Transformation and Partnerships provides an oversight and advisory role. In doing so, the team can:

- Provide training and support for using our Consultation Portal,
- Publishing any consultations via the Consultation Portal,
- Managing the Consultation Portal,
- Promoting consultation best practice throughout the council,
- Updating the Consultation Policy and resources on consultation.

APPENDIX A - Consultation Toolkit

Starting your consultation

The six steps below provide staff with instructions on how to conduct consultation activities. To ensure the quality and consistency of our engagement activities, all consultations must be approved by Performance and Partnerships before publication.

STEP ONE: Scoping out your consultation

When scoping out your consultation there are some key things to consider and note:

- Make sure the consultation is necessary.
- Be clear about what you are trying to achieve and set clear objectives. What do you want to find out?
- Avoid duplication and over-lapping activities with other services by ensuring the information isn't being collected elsewhere.
- Every consultation needs to be approved by a Service Lead or Director.
- Allow adequate time for consultees to respond and for their views to be fully considered before any action or decision is made.
- Consider how much capacity is needed and the resources needed to implement any changes following the outcomes of the exercise.
- The Consultation Initiation Document can be found at **Appendix B** as an additional tool to help plan a consultation.

STEP TWO: Who are you consulting?

Being clear about who you are going to consult ensures that decisions and policies are being informed by the people they affect and allows us to consider those who may have barriers to participation. This ensures that consultations are inclusive and are representative of our communities.

Equality and Inclusion

An inclusive consultation is one that is accessible to everyone in our community by considering and addressing potential barriers to participation. This ensures all our residents are empowered to have their say irrespective of their background and that consultations are representative.

This includes barriers faced by protected groups, which are age, ethnicity, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, and rurality.

To understand more about equality and inclusion as well as protected groups, see our **Equality Framework.** There are also **Neighbourhood Intelligence Profiles** available that present key statistics on our communities.

Key questions to consider:

- Who are the key stakeholders?
- Is there any background data on the stakeholders?
- What obstacles to participation may there be including for protected groups?

STEP THREE: What methods are you using for consultation?

There are a range of tools and techniques available for undertaking consultations. The method used will depend on the sample size, audience, and purpose of the consultation. For instance, different groups respond more successfully to different engagement methods. When designing a consultation, accessibility must be considered. This ensures that all our residents are able to participate. For examples of methods, including their advantages and disadvantages, see **Appendix E**.

It is essential that all our participants are given sufficient resources and time in order to make an informed response. Consider how the consultation will be promoted and what materials will be presented to participants. Internally, consider the time and resources needed in order to conduct the consultation and analyse the results.

Citizen Space

A key resource available for conducting consultations is CitizenSpace. This is our digital consultation platform that allows us to design and publish consultations as well as store and analyse results from participants digitally. All consultations on the platform must be approved by Performance and Partnerships before they can be published.
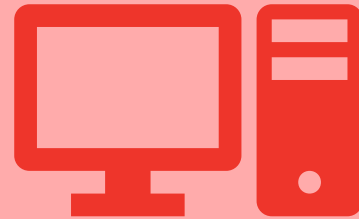
Any consultations not done on CitizenSpace must subsequently be recorded on the platform. This ensures that the data from the consultation can inform wider decision making and that duplication can be avoided. For information on how to access and use CitizenSpace, contact Performance and Partnerships.

Key questions to consider:
- What method would the target participants respond best to?
- How much time and resources will be needed?
- Has accessibility been considered?
- How will the consultation be promoted?
- Have the participants been given sufficient time and resources to make an informed decision?
- Has corporate branding been used?

STEP FOUR: What question are you going to ask?

It is important to consider the type of question you ask participants, which will depend on what you are looking to find out and the type of information you wish to collect. Questions should be well structured and easy to understand, with language suitable for non-specialist audiences. This is an important part of accessibility as it ensures that everyone in our community can easily understand and therefore participate in decisions that affect them.

Open questions are good for yielding lots of detailed qualitative information. These are questions that allow participants to leave their feedback. For example, 'What is your opinion on the proposed policy?'.

Closed questions can be used to get decisive answers on a particular issue or policy. These are questions that present serval options for participants to select in their response. These include multiple choice, which present serval options, as well as binary questions, which present two options. For example, 'Do you agree on the proposed policy changes? Yes/No'.

Equality Monitoring Questions

Every engagement activity is required to ask equality monitoring questions unless there is a clear predetermined reason otherwise that is agreed with Performance and Partnerships. The questions cover each of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and are optional for participants to complete.

These give a useful indication of whether council activities are representative of the local population and can inform measures

The equality monitoring question are available at **Appendix C** and **Appendix D** for each Council (different versions include a different link to privacy policy for each council). The equality monitoring questions are also available on CitizenSpace under saved questions.

Key questions to consider:

- Do the questions meet the objectives of the consultation?
- What type of data are you looking to collect? Qualitative (more descriptive) or quantitative (more numerical)?
- Have Equality Monitoring Questions been used?
- Are the questions easy to understand?

STEP FIVE: How are you storing the data?

Consultations often involve collecting personal information. Therefore, it is important to consider how information is stored and who can access it in order to be compliant with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). As Data Controllers, we have a duty to ensure that informed is stored and used correctly and that we are transparent in how we use data.

See our **Data Protection Policy** as well as **Special Data Processing Policy** for guidance.

General Data Protection Regulation

GDPR is designed to ensure personal information is handled correctly, stored securely, and used appropriately. There are key principles to the regulation that we must follow:

- Purpose limitation: data must be collected for a specified, explicit, and legitimate purpose.
- Data minimisation: data should not be held or further used unless essential for reasons in the original scope.
- Storage limitation: personal information must be deleted when no longer necessary. **How is the data being data stored and for how long?**
- Integrity and confidentiality: data must be processed and stored securely. **Who has access to the data?**
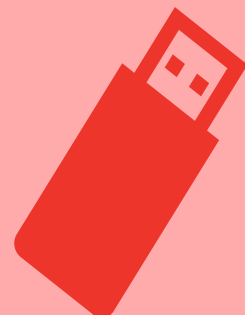
With all our consultation activities, a **Privacy Notice** must be presented to participants, which can found on each councils' website. This ensures that we are transparent with the information we collect and that people are aware of how we use data. **Have participants been presented with the Privacy Notice?**

STEP SIX: How will you evaluate and use the results?

To ensure that consultations have real outcomes that shape the final outcome, it is critical that results from engagement exercises are analysed so that they can inform decisions effectively. Consider how the information collected through the consultation will be evaluated and how that analysis will be presented to ensure it can easily be interpreted by decision makers. For consultations conducted on CitizenSpace, the digital platform provides analysis tools that can interpret respondent information.

When the survey is complete, it is important to record any lessons learned to improve future consultations including what worked well and what you might change next time to improve the process.

Once data from a consultation activity is analysed, consider how and when the information will be reviewed by decision makers, such as what committee the results will be presented to, to ensure participant feedback in considered effectively as part of decision making.

It is also critical that feedback is given to participants after the consultation is completed so that that they understand how their feedback influenced decisions and it can encourage future participation. This can include updating the consultation webpage on the Councils' websites with the results from the consultation and any relevant reports.

Key questions to consider:

- Have the results been reported to decision makers and participants?
- Has the consultation achieved its aims?
- Have the results been reported in an easily accessible way?
- Has the consultation been recorded on

Appendix B – Consultation Initiation Document (CID)

Service area:		Responsible officer:		Corporate Priority being addressed:	
Consultation type:				One off or ongoing activity (including frequency):	

The table below outlines the key elements that should be considered when planning a consultation activity. The evaluation column will enable you to review how well you did against the original brief and deliberate on potential improvements for future consultations.

Action	Brief	Evaluation
What are your aims and objectives? *(Please consider whether these have been achieved when evaluating)*		
Who is your consultation aimed at? *(Please consider 'hard to reach' groups and the number of participants)*		
What information/research has been done previously? *(Please consider any information that may support the consultation)*		
Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been completed? *(Please consider the impact on protected groups under Equality Act 2010)*		

What is the engagement timeline? *(Please account for preparation, conducting the engagement, and analysing results)*			
What resources are needed to conduct the engagement?	Money		
	Venue		
	Staff		
	Volunteers		
	Materials		
	Other		
What type of report will be produced at the end? *(Please consider how the results will be analysed and where they will be reported)*			
How will the results be fed back to participants?			

Appendix C – South Ribble Equality Monitoring Questions

These monitoring questions are optional and enable us to increase our knowledge and understanding of our diverse communities and gather information about who uses our services. The information you provide in our consultations will be used to make sure that our services are being accessed equally.

Although these optional questions <u>do not</u> ask for your name, we still handle any information provided with data protection in mind, and therefore it is only kept as long as necessary and then deleted securely. For more information please see our Privacy Policy here.

Q1 Can you please confirm your full postcode? (PLEASE WRITE FULL POSTCODE BELOW e.g. PR7 1DP)

Q2 Which of the following best describes your gender?

Male ☐   Female ☐   Prefer not to say ☐

If you describe your gender with another term, please provide here _____

Q3 Does your gender identity match your assigned sex at birth?

Yes ☐   No ☐   Prefer not to say ☐

Q4 What was your age at your last birthday? (PLEASE WRITE IN THE BOX)

[_____] Years   Prefer not to say ☐

Q5 Do you consider yourself disabled? (As defined by the Equality Act 2010 as having a long-standing illness, disability, or infirmity)

Yes ☐   No ☐   Prefer not to say ☐

Q6 To which of these groups do you consider you belong?

White   British ☐   Irish ☐   **Asian/Asian British** Indian ☐ Pakistani ☐ Chinese ☐

Any other White background_____   Any other Asian background_____

Black/Black British African ☐ Caribbean ☐   **Mixed** White & Black Caribbean ☐ White & Black African ☐

Any other Black/Black British background_____   White & Asian ☐ Any other mixed background_____

Prefer not to say ☐

Q7 Do you identify with any religion or belief?

Yes ☐   If yes, please specify here _____   No ☐   Prefer not to say ☐

Q8 Do you consider yourself to be…?

Bisexual ☐   Heterosexual/straight ☐   Gay man ☐   Gay woman or lesbian ☐   Other ☐   Prefer not to say ☐

Q9 Are you currently pregnant or have you given birth in the last 26 weeks?

Yes ☐   No ☐   Prefer not to say ☐

Q10 Are you currently…?

Married ☐   In a civil partnership ☐   Divorced or civil partnership dissolved ☐   Cohabiting ☐

Single ☐   Separated ☐   Prefer not to say ☐

Appendix D – Chorley Equality Monitoring Questions

These monitoring questions are optional and enable us to increase our knowledge and understanding of our diverse communities and gather information about who uses our services. The information you provide in our consultations will be used to make sure that our services are being accessed equally.

Although these optional questions <u>do not</u> ask for your name, we still handle any information provided with data protection in mind, and therefore it is only kept as long as necessary and then deleted securely. For more information please see our Privacy Policy here.

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Male ☐   Female ☐   Prefer not to say ☐

If you describe your gender with another term, please provide here _____

Q3 Does your gender identity match your assigned sex at birth?

Yes ☐   No ☐   Prefer not to say ☐

Q4 What was your age at your last birthday? (PLEASE WRITE IN THE BOX)

[_____] Years   Prefer not to say ☐

Q5 Do you consider yourself disabled? (As defined by the Equality Act 2010 as having a long-standing illness, disability, or infirmity)

Yes ☐   No ☐   Prefer not to say ☐

Q6 To which of these groups do you consider you belong?

White   British ☐   Irish ☐   **Asian/Asian British** Indian ☐ Pakistani ☐ Chinese ☐

Any other White background_____   Any other Asian background_____

Black/Black British African ☐ Caribbean ☐

Mixed White & Black Caribbean ☐ White & Black African ☐

Any other Black/Black British background_____   White & Asian ☐ Any other mixed background_____

Prefer not to say ☐

Q7 Do you identify with any religion or belief?

Yes ☐   If yes, please specify here _____   No ☐   Prefer not to say ☐

Q8 Do you consider yourself to be…?

Bisexual ☐   Heterosexual/straight ☐   Gay man ☐   Gay woman or lesbian ☐   Other ☐   Prefer not to say ☐

Q9 Are you currently pregnant or have you given birth in the last 26 weeks?

Yes ☐   No ☐   Prefer not to say ☐

Q10 Are you currently…?

Married ☐   In a civil partnership ☐   Divorced or civil partnership dissolved ☐   Cohabiting ☐

Single ☐   Separated ☐   Prefer not to say ☐

Appendix E – Method Examples

The table below presents some of the methods that can be used to conduct consultation activities:

Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Focus Group	An organised group discussion that explore issues in depth and seeks to gain views of particular interest groups.	• Facilitates interaction and brainstorming between participants. • Can be targeted at 'hard to reach' groups. • Can explore complex issues in depth. • Typically for an 8 to 10 group.	• Can be time consuming and costly. • Requires a trained facilitator to conduct session. • Lack of confidentiality. • May need several groups to gain different perspectives.
Survey	An investigation into people's views on issues by presenting a set of questions. Can be conducting virtually, manually, or over the telephone. This can be conducted digitally via our digital consultation platform CitizenSpace.	• Usually receives a good response rate due to convenience. • Can be conducted in confidence to explore sensitive issues. • Responses can be disaggregated by characteristics. • Can be cost effective if done virtually.	• Interviewer cannot respond to any of the respondent's questions. • Can be difficult to analyse when there is a small sample size. • Can be time consuming waiting for a response.
Consultation Document	Providing information and inviting public submissions and comments on specific proposals, which are published via reports and documents. This can be conducted digitally via our digital consultation platform CitizenSpace.	• Provides detailed information to stakeholders. • Elicits informed responses.	• Can have a poor response rate. • Difficult to target hard to reach groups. • Can be costly (i.e. publication resources). • Requires writing skills to formulate documentation.

	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Forum / Citizen Panel	A structured and regular meeting with an interest group. Used to provide information, seek views and, develop/endorse local plans and strategies. Composed of a dedicated set of participants. Can be conducted digitally.	• Facilitates committed engagement and participation. • Can form strong links between services, partners, and local people. • Can be aimed at hard to reach groups.	• Attendees are unlikely to represent all views. • Can be dominated by the most vocal. • The agenda can be taken over. • Can be poorly attended.
Workshop	A formally organised discussion group to exchange and gather information. Usually in the format of presentations that are followed by small group discussions, ending in a large group discussion of key issues. This can be conducted remotely.	• Large numbers of people can participate. • Encourages participants to network and share experiences, facilitating dialogue between stakeholders. • Participants can ask questions. • Opportunity to share large amounts of information.	• Requires a large amount of preparation. • Can be costly and time consuming. • Attendees are unlikely to represent all views
Public Meeting	A formal one off meeting with scheduled agendas. Used to provide information, seek views, and develop/ endorse local plans and strategies. This can be conducted remotely.	• Cheap to host. • Opportunity to provide information and receive feedback. • Builds relationships with local community	• Attendees are unlikely to represent all views • Large group may be a barrier. • Can be dominated by the most vocal. • Difficult to differentiate between individual and general views.
Social media	Uploading a post on social media in order to facilitate discussion via the platform through comments and sharing.	• Accessible to a large audience. • Cheap to conduct.	• No equality monitoring. • Comments can be resource intensive to analyse. • Not accessible to those who do not have social media.