

# Engaging with communities in Poole

## Community Engagement Working Party

### Final report and recommendations

March 2014



activities (2) area committee meetings (1) around (1) available (1) beach parking permits (1) better engagement (2)  
bin stickers (1) cllr surgeries (2) cllrs (1) communication (11)  
consultation (3) contact (4) councillors (9)  
customer service (8) dolphin (1) easy (2) email (4)  
engage with young (4) engagement opportunities (2) events (2) facilities (4)  
frequent (2) hear (1) improved (3) information (5) leaflets (2) learning disabilities (2)  
letters (2) libraries (14) link (2) listens (6) meetings (3) more engagement (1)  
newsletters (4) numbers (1) online (7) open (1) people (2) php (1) planning (4)  
poole news (37) refuse collection (2) repairs (1) residents (2)  
social media (11) staff (4) stall (1) surveys (5)  
variety of engagement (4) website (25)

## Introduction

Community engagement is one of the key providers of customer insight, which is used to help understand the needs, views and expectations of local residents, service users and other stakeholders. However, good engagement is not only about providing insight, but also about empowering individuals and communities to play their full role in society through participating in decision making and shaping service delivery.

The council has a very broad range of ways in which it engages with local residents and communities. These range from ensuring residents are informed of the Council's activities and services; through enabling residents to raise individual and community issues and concerns and influence decision making; through to the Council and partners working in very active partnership with local residents. Individual elected members use a variety of methods to engage with local people, with some elected members holding monthly surgeries open to their constituents. The Council also undertakes a wide range of specific consultation exercises with the public and people who use services. Community engagement is often undertaken at a neighbourhood level but is also undertaken with equality groups and interest groups and with children and young people.

## Purpose of Review

Cabinet established a Working Party to “**review the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council’s current system of public engagement in the light of the Localism Bill (now Act) and changing needs of the Council and the community**”. (Minute CA 41:11)

## Terms of Reference

The working party agreed the following Terms of Reference:

- Considering the council’s objectives in terms of engaging with the community and what needs to be done.
- Evaluate the current arrangements for community engagement including Area Committees and other forms and processes supported by the Council and looking at whether they are fit for purpose.
- Considering the aspirations of the community in terms of area based engagement and whether they are being met
- Considering the Council’s financial pressures and whether current arrangements represent good value for money in all the circumstances.

## Working Party Members

Cllr Judy Butt (Chair)  
Cllr Mrs Charmaine Parkinson (Vice Chair)  
Cllr Brian Clements  
Cllr Chris Matthews  
Cllr Ron Parker  
Cllr Mrs Karen Rampton

## Methodology

The approach included:

Formal meetings in public  
Evidence Day  
Community Discussion Event  
Involving People Survey

## Key Findings

A summary of the findings of the review are attached to this report at Annex 1 with the full report from the Involving People survey attached at Annex 2.

### *What is working well*

Through the review, positive feedback was received on the wide range of opportunities for engagement locally including Poole News, the Borough of Poole website and social media channels and through libraries.

Much of the consultation undertaken by the authority was of a good quality, but there is variation in practice. The openness of the authority to change and improve the way in which it engages with residents was also welcomed.

### *Most common likes with how the Council engages with its residents*



### *What needs improvement*

The level of engagement through public meetings, including Area Committees was low and there were comments on the limited and inflexible remit of these structures in particular.

A number of concerns were raised about the timeliness and purpose of consultation with a perception that decisions had already been taken before consultation was carried out.

### *Most common ideas to improve how the Council engages with its residents*



People recognised that social media in particular was a good way of engaging with people, but maintaining a range of opportunities to ensure engagement was inclusive was identified as important. The consistency of communication and engagement, particularly on Council decisions, was identified as an area for improvement.

Finally, it is not sufficient just to engage with people, it is vital to provide feedback. This was identified as an important area for improvement.

## **Learning from other practice**

The Working Group has also examined practice in other local authorities and partners. There are a wide variety of arrangements in other areas which have developed to meet specific local needs.

At the Evidence Day the Working Group learnt how in Eastleigh, the Council had operated a system of devolved decision making for many years. The Council's whole structure and decision making process is predicated on an assumption that as many decisions as possible would be made at local level. The Area Committees function appeared to be to discharge the Council's role as a Planning Authority on an area basis and the evidence was that much of the attendance by the public was driven by this activity. The Area Committees also deal with other area based decisions but the cost of this option is considerable with each Area Committee being managed by an Officer who is at Service Head level. Eastleigh is a District Council and so does not have the full range of services to manage that Poole does.

At Bournemouth the Council have a number of Area Forums which are community led with members of the community taking responsibility for their programme. This enables the agendas to roam more widely over a range of local issues and although there is a focus on what the Council is doing they have a wider remit of partnership engagement. These appear to work well and the community led format creates a positive forum for a dialogue between community members, including ward councillors. The Council maintains a small budget to support Area Forums with practical issues such as room hire and publicity but this does not amount to more than marginal cost. The Forums are self supporting and are responsible for their own calendar of meetings, agendas and minutes. It is also clear that the

development of the Forums is discretionary and to some extent depends on the interest or will in the area to promote them.

The Working Group also heard evidence regarding the operation of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) in Poole. Although the initiative has undoubtedly been successful in terms of increasing public confidence in the Police and Council, it appears that in most areas attendance at public meetings is limited and SNT practice has been to seek the views of local people in other ways, for example via street corner meetings or 'cops at the shops'. Experience is showing that this approach is significantly increasing the number of people who are able to participate.

Evidence from residents and others who attended the workshop sessions indicated that whilst some had attended Area Committees and found them useful, others felt that the model where the agenda was set and managed by the Council was unhelpful in terms of real engagement. However, amongst Residents Associations in particular, Area Committees were seen as a vital mechanism to influence local decision making.

## **Volunteering and Community Groups**

Volunteering is used in many areas of the council as a way not only to engage people but to enable them to contribute their time and talent to their community. It would be good to share best practice in the use of volunteers across the Council and to move to promote the opportunities available to volunteer to the public.

There are a wide range of organisations of Poole who have large memberships and who are contributing very generously and successfully to community outcomes, these include Neighbourhood Watch, Residents and Community Groups and those related to particular sectors and interests in the community.

## **Recommendations**

- 1 The council needs to ensure that the public are seen to be at the heart of efforts to engage and consult. The Council continues to pursue a range of strategies to achieve community engagement and not to adopt a 'one size fits all' approach.
- 2 The Council formally adopts a set of consultation principles to ensure that all consultation carried out by the Borough of Poole is well coordinated, effective and provides good value for money. Draft principles are attached at Annex 3
- 3 The Council's social media channels should be developed as one of the means of engaging with the community.
- 4 Training and support should be given by Members to work with new technology and social media in terms of engaging with constituents and the community at large.
- 5 An email based subscription service be developed, working with Residents Associations and other interested groups, to enable residents to select and steer the type of information they are most interested in.
- 6 Consideration be given to identifying sites within the Borough where events or issues of interest to the community can be promoted.
- 7 A strategic approach to volunteering, co-ordinating with existing volunteering arrangements by key service units in the Council and Poole CVS be developed to support more volunteering in the Council.

## **Area Committees**

Views on the effectiveness of Area Committees were polarised with many residents considering them to be unduly restrictive and inflexible with others seeing them as a crucial forum to challenge local decisions as well as maintain contact with their local elected representatives.

Support for Area Committees, while not widespread amongst residents, is nonetheless strong and therefore, at this stage, it is recommended that the current arrangements continue. It is noted that a motion to Council on 25<sup>th</sup> February requested that a review of the Council's committee structure be carried out prior to the elections in May 2015 and Area Committees would be included in this review.

## **Conclusion**

Engaging with residents and other stakeholders can help the Council and its partners make better decisions, focus key services where they will have most impact and build confidence and capacity in communities. The recommendations arising from this review will help the Council to ensure that its work to engage communities is effective, inclusive and good value for money.

## **Annex 1**

### **Summary of Evidence**

#### Current Engagement

The work undertaken by the Working Party has immediately revealed that the Council undertakes a huge variety of engagement and consultation activity. This includes well established frameworks of engagement (such as the Engagement Framework for Children and Young People) and consultation on particular policy changes. Much of the consultation and engagement which takes place is of very good quality, but there is variation in practice, and the survey results reveals some concerns in the community about whether the Council makes the best use of consultation responses. The Council also needs to be better at giving feedback over what decisions are made following consultation.

#### Public's initial thoughts

At the first meeting of the Working Party the public were asked to participate in a short scoping exercise highlighting what they thought was good, or less good in relation to the Council's current engagement processes. Good aspects included the wide range of different opportunities to engage and the view that the Council was increasingly open to change and improvement in the way that it engages. Some less good aspects were highlighted as the limited and inflexible remit of Area Committees and a feeling that on occasions, consultation was little more than window dressing. Ideas for improvement highlighted significantly extending the use of Ward Surgeries and the need for Members to be involved through attending residents' meetings as appropriate.

One of the points that came out strongly from various sources including the public's feedback was the need for the Council to have a coherent, searchable and up to date database of Residents Associations and Groups to help both Officers in knowing who was active in the area and enable residents groups to work together more fruitfully.

#### Survey Results

Views expressed by residents as a result of the survey were diverse and included satisfaction that the Council was considering how to improve its community engagement and a lot of positive feedback about the way in which the Council operates. Nevertheless, there was still a feeling that a fair amount of engagement took place because it was deemed necessary rather than because the Council was going to act on the results. There was a strand of opinion that concluded that decisions had often been taken before consultation was carried out and that the Council was poor in giving feedback about what decisions had been made and how the residents' opinions had informed that process.

The results of the survey indicate that many people were happy that methods of engagement are changing and many more people are now IT and internet literate. There was recognition that modern IT and social media provide new ways for people to interact with the Council. However, some felt it would not be appropriate for the Council to rely solely on electronic means for communication and engagement. Obviously to do so would exclude some sectors of the community who find it difficult to access such technology and there are also those who can access the internet but who would prefer to engage with the Council in other ways. The public would prefer the Council to

continue to provide an appropriate range of communication methods in order to ensure all groups of the population can be engaged. In particular, new communication tools can be used more extensively to target particular population groups and in relation to particular issues. A more detailed report on the findings of the survey may be found at Appendix 1.

The results of the survey with regard to meetings indicated that only a small percentage of respondents engaged with the Council via meetings (7%). There was also dissatisfaction expressed with regard to meetings and the fact that they attracted the same regular attendees where there is a risk that only those regular voices are heard.

#### Feedback from Community Engagement in Poole event

An event was held on 29<sup>th</sup> September to consider what is important to the community as a whole with regard to community engagement. The event generated a number of constructive ideas including improvements to communication methods to enable Council decisions to be better shared and understood, a potential open event, developing community led forums in place of area committees and the important role of elected Members. Community Groups and Residents Associations at the event readily acknowledged their role in widening engagement and offered to support each other in developing strong networks within the Borough.

#### Principles of Good Consultation

One of the issues raised by the public was a concern regarding public consultation in general (see elsewhere in the Report). It was highlighted that any consultation undertaken by the Council needs to be informed by the “Gunning” principles of good

consultation. These stress that consultation must be undertaken at a formative time in the development of any proposals and must give clear and sufficient reasons to allow those consulted to be able to give consideration to the issues and an intelligent response. Adequate time must be given for the consultation period and the product of the consultation must be taken into account when the ultimate decision is taken.

The Council undertakes consultation all the time in a variety of forms. The Working Party felt that there was too little co-ordination between departments undertaking consultation and sometimes best practice was not followed. Conversely there were some very good examples of consultation and these should be promoted more strongly to become a benchmark standard. The Council has adopted the Compact for Consultation and Engagement with Civil Society Organisations as a minimum requirement and more now needs to be done to spread the knowledge of this standard through Service Units and ensure that it is adhered to.

#### Volunteering

Volunteering is used in many areas of the Council as a way not only to engage people but to enable them to contribute their time and talent to their community. It would be good to share best practice in the use of volunteers across the Council and to move to promote the opportunities available to volunteer to the public.

There is evidence that agencies being visible in communities and taking practical and simple steps to talk to local people (e.g. “cops at the shops”; Councillor surgeries where provided; discussion groups at Children’s Centres; providing information on consultations etc in libraries) is an a very effective way of supporting local people to communicate concerns about and

indeed the strengths of their local area. Elected Members and Officers of the Council need to consider how to maximise these practical and simple ways for engaging local people.

There are a wide range of organisations in Poole who have large memberships and who are contributing very generously and successfully to community outcomes. These include Neighbourhood Watch; Residents and Community groups and those related to particular sectors and interests in the Community. The Council and partners have some very positive examples of working with these groups to achieve and fund community outcomes.

There are some areas of Poole where communities have needed dedicated budgeted support in order to develop residents' groups; Neighbourhood Watches and so on. Work with Residents in the Bourne Valley and the work of the Council's Community Team has shown this kind of dedicated support can produce very positive results in less resilient communities. The Council and its partners need to ensure that there is sufficient community development capacity to ensure that communities of greatest need in Poole also have the benefit of very active local residents' groups/Neighbourhood Watch, etc.

#### Other Models Elsewhere

The Working Group has also examined practice in other local authorities and partners. There are a wide variety of arrangements in other areas but the holding of Area Committees or meetings is not the norm. There are many reasons for this, but in many cases the driver for area based arrangements is geographical. If a local authority is particularly large in terms of its area there may be some impetus for area based arrangements. For instance, Birmingham City Council has a

network of Ward and District Committees to cover issues of concern to local residents but Birmingham covers a vast area and population, being the largest local authority in the country. On the other hand, Poole is a small unitary council within a relatively compact geographical area.

The Working Group also heard evidence regarding the operation of the SNTs in Poole. Although the initiative has undoubtedly been successful in terms of increasing public confidence in the Police and Council, it appears that in most areas attendance at public meetings is limited and SNT practice has been to seek the views of local people in other ways, for example via street corner meetings or 'cops at the shops'. Experience is showing that this approach is significantly increasing the number of people who are able to participate. At the beginning of the Working Group's consideration there were views expressed that it would be good to create greater synergy between Area Committees and SNTs. It now appears that in fact this is unlikely to be a sustainable way forward as SNT practice has moved away from using meetings to engage with the public.

Evidence from residents and others who attended the workshop sessions indicated that whilst some had attended Area Committees and found them useful, many felt that the model where the agenda was set and managed by the Council was unhelpful in terms of real engagement. The fact that the meetings are formal Committees causes tension with those who feel excluded from the process. There is also an opportunity for conflict if the public try to influence process and are rebuffed.

#### Area Based Decision-making – Eastleigh Borough Council

At t At the Evidence Day the Working Group heard how these issues were dealt with in two authorities. In Eastleigh, the Council had



operated a system of devolved decision making for many years. The Council's whole structure and decision making process is predicated on an assumption that as many decisions as possible would be made at local level. It appears that the Area Committees function is to discharge the Council's role as a Planning Authority on an area basis and the evidence was that much of the attendance by the public was driven by this activity. The Area Committees also deal with other area based decisions but the cost of this option is considerable with each Area Committee being managed by an Officer who is at Service Head level. Eastleigh is a District Council and so does not have the full range of services to manage that Poole does.

#### Area Forums – Bournemouth Borough Council

At Bournemouth the Council have a number of Area Forums which are community led and where Members of the community take responsibility for their programme. This enables the Agendas to roam more widely over a range of local issues and although there is a focus on what the Council is doing they have a wider remit of partnership engagement. These appear to work well and the community led format enables a positive dialogue between community members, including Ward Councillors. The Council maintains a small budget to support Area Forums with practical issues such as room hire and publicity but in reality this does not amount to more than marginal cost. The Forums are self supporting and are responsible for their own calendar of meetings, agendas and minutes. It is also clear that the development of the Forums is discretionary and to some extent depend on the interest or will in the area to promote them.

#### Costs

In terms of the costs of our current Area Committee arrangements these are supported in the main by Legal and Democratic Services. There is an extent to which it is hard to separate out the costs of supporting one set of specific meetings from the overall work of the team however it has been possible to isolate the following expenditure. The operational cost that can be ascribed to the current Area Committee system is approximately £40k per annum. This is divided almost equally between the administration cost of premises, transport, printing, security and advertising and the cost of staff time from Democratic Services Officers. These costs do not include the occasional input and attendance from the Head of Legal and Democratic services and more importantly, the time of Officers from other Units who attend, particularly from Transportation Services and these will be quantified before final report and conclusion stage.



## Purpose of the Report

This report presents the results of the Involving People Survey conducted in July 2012. A Community Engagement Working Party was formed to review engagement at the Borough of Poole. The Involving People Survey was commissioned to understand stakeholders views about the current community engagement arrangement at the Borough of Poole (positive and negative), and ideas to improve engagement.

## Aims of the Survey

- What are the good aspects of the Council's current engagement arrangements.
- What is less good about current engagement arrangements.
- Ideas to improve engagement.

## Key Findings

- 288 responses were received to the survey. The majority were responding as Poole residents (95%).
- The most successful method of promoting the survey was through libraries. 104 respondents had found out about the survey from a library.
- By far the most common method of engaging with the Council amongst respondents was through voting in local elections (82% had done this). 37% had taken part in paper surveys or consultations, and 34% had attended community fun days or other community events.
- Most common likes about the way the Council engages with its residents included Poole News, the Council's website and online facilities, use of social media and libraries.
- Dislikes about the way the Council engages with its residents included the way the Council communicates and promotes engagement, lack of use of the internet, reliance on the internet and meetings.
- Some respondents also felt that the Council does not always listen to residents, or decisions have already been made before engagement/consultation takes place. Respondents also mentioned a lack of feedback about what decisions have been made, or how their comments have been used.
- Most ideas to improve the way the Council engages focused around increasing and improving the promotion and publicity of engagement. Respondents also suggested that the Council should listen to their views, and provide feedback. Some respondents felt that the use of social media, such as Twitter and Facebook could be improved.

## Methodology

The Involving People Survey was available to fill in online through the Council’s website, and paper copies were available in Council buildings and libraries. Copies were also provided to be handed out at meetings. An engagement event was held at the Dolphin Centre, where copies of the survey were available.

The survey was promoted through several methods such as in Poole news, on the Council’s website home page and internally to staff, both on the Loop and by email.

## Survey Respondents

288 responses were received to the Involving People Survey. The majority of these responded as Poole residents (95%). 53 (19%) responded as Council employees (Table 1).

More responses were received from older age groups, than younger age groups. There were no responses from under 18s (Figure 1). 63% of respondents were female, and 37% male.

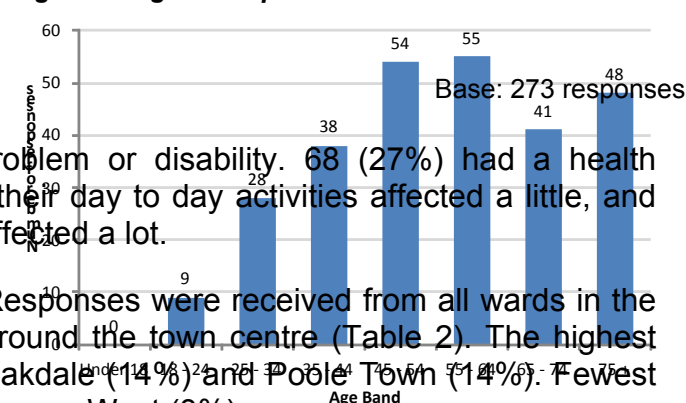
**Table 1: respondents to the survey**

Base: 274 responses

Are you responding:	Number	%
as a Poole resident	260	95%
as a Council employee	53	19%
Other	9	3%

288 respondents (73%) had no health problem or disability. 68 (27%) had a health problem or disability with 07 (14%) having their day to day activities affected a little, and 31 (22%) having their day to day activities affected a lot.

**Figure 1: Age of respondents**



240 respondents provided their postcode. Responses were received from all wards in the Borough, but most came from the wards around the town centre (Table 2). The highest number of responses were received from Oakdale (14%) and Poole Town (14%). Fewest came from Branksome East (2%) and Branksome West (3%).

The survey was promoted using a variety of methods, such as on the Council’s website, in Poole News. Copies of the survey were also available in Council buildings such as libraries, and an engagement event was held at the Dolphin Centre. Of the responses that were received, 104 had found out about the survey through a library. 40 had found out about the survey at the engagement event at the Dolphin Centre, and 39 through working at the Council (either on the Loop or through email) (Table 3).

Only 11 respondents said that they had filled in the survey after attending a meeting. Most of these were responding after a carer’s meeting.

**Table 2: Location of respondents**

Ward	Count	%
Oakdale	34	14%
Poole Town	33	14%
Parkstone	25	10%
Penn Hill	23	10%
Creekmoor	18	8%
Broadstone	17	7%
Canford Heath East	13	5%
Canford Cliffs	11	5%
Canford Heath West	11	5%
Newtown	11	5%
Hamworthy East	10	4%
Hamworthy West	10	4%
Branksome East	2	2%
Branksome West	3	3%

**Table 3: Method of finding out about the survey**

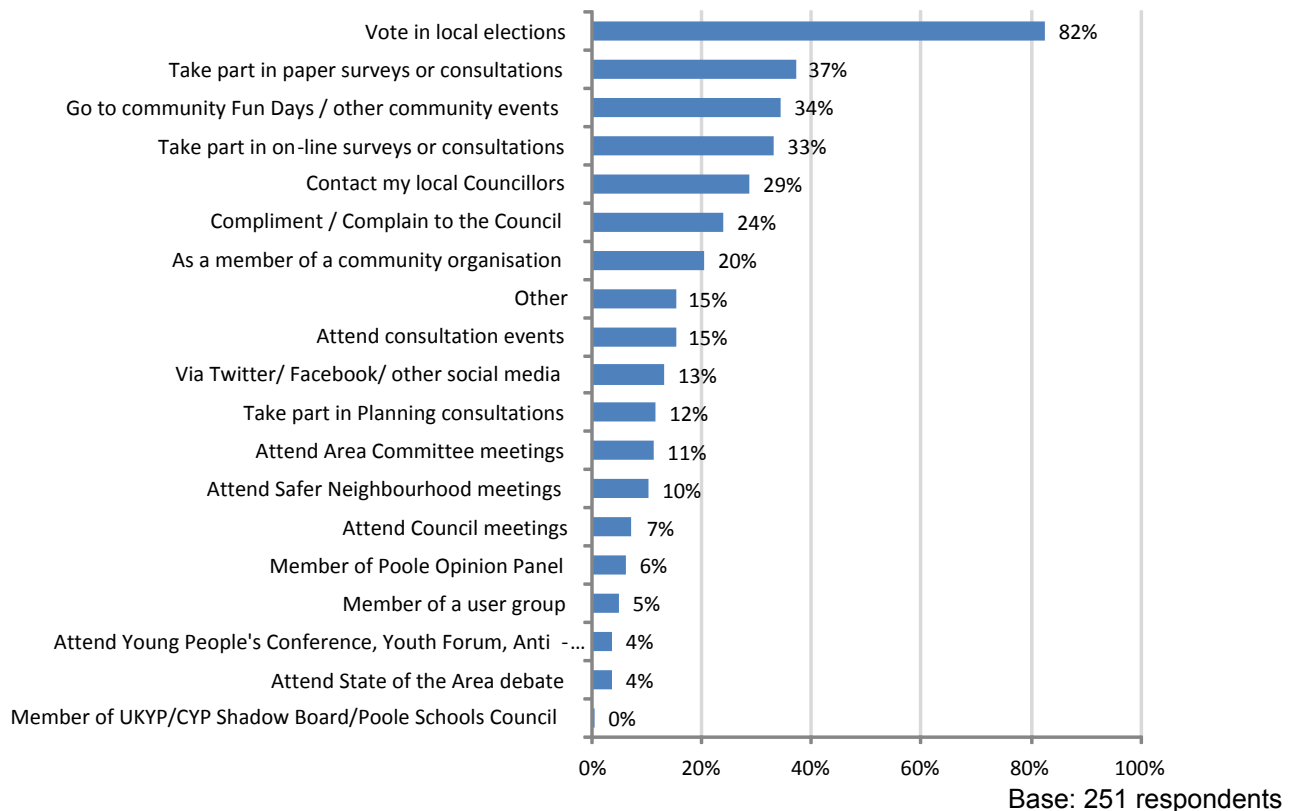
Method	Number
Library	104
Dolphin Centre	40
Through work (BOP)	39
Website	13
Email	10
Community Group	7
Online	6
Employer	5
Member of staff	5
Poole News	5
Letter	2
Meeting	11

### Q1: In what ways do you currently engage with the Council?

Of the 284 responses to this question, 33 people (12%) said that they did not currently engage with the Council.

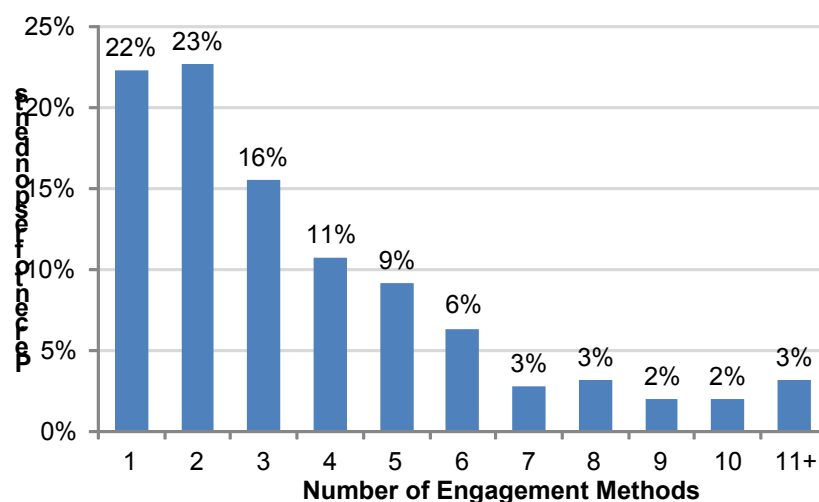
251 people had engaged with the Council in some way. Figure 2 below shows that most of these (82%) had engaged by voting in local elections. Other common engagement methods were taking part in surveys and consultations on paper (37%) or on-line (33%). Just over a third of respondents (34%) said that they go to community Fun Days or other community events. 29% contacted their local Councillors. 29% contacted their local Councillors. 29% contacted their local Councillors.

**Figure 2: How respondents currently engage with the Council**



When looking at the number of ways that respondents engaged with the Council, 45% have only engaged using 1 or 2 methods (Figure 3). Fewer respondents had engaged with the Council in multiple ways.

**Figure 3: Number of ways respondents engaged with the Council**



## Q2: What do you like about the way the Council engages with its residents?

There were 193 responses to this question. 16 people mentioned that there was not a lot they liked, or nothing that they liked about the way the Council engages. 8 people felt that they had no experience of or were not aware of any engagement.

Figure 4 below shows what respondents like about the way the Council engages with its residents.

**Figure 4: Most common likes with how the Council engages with its residents**



37 respondents said that they liked Poole News. These respondents felt that it was a good way of keeping up-to-date with Council News and events, and it is informative.

*“Poole News magazine is useful - especially events list.”*

*“Regular copies of Poole News ensures people without IT access can keep up-to-date.”*

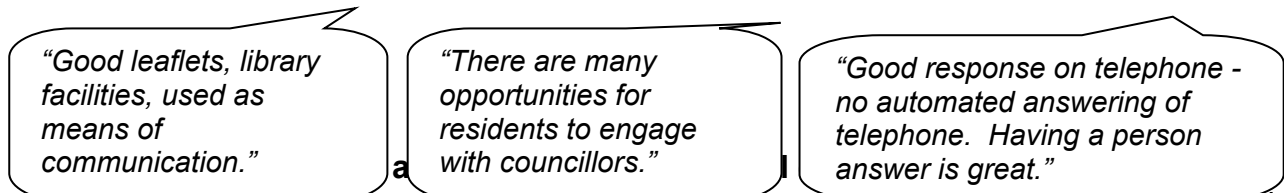
Respondents also liked the website (25), online facilities such as “report it” and surveys (7), and the use of social media such as Twitter and Facebook (11). Comments about the website included that it was easy to use, is informative and up-to-date.

*“BOP Website does contain useful information”*

*“Up-to-date website.”*

*“Website is easy to use - when information is available... Like being able to submit requests online.”*

14 respondents mentioned libraries as something they liked – they felt that libraries were a good source of information, had good facilities and liked that you can view documents such as papers and planning documents. 11 respondents said that they liked engagement with Councillors, saying that they were helpful, and there were many opportunities to engage with them such as through surgeries or by email. 8 respondents mentioned the good customer service they received.

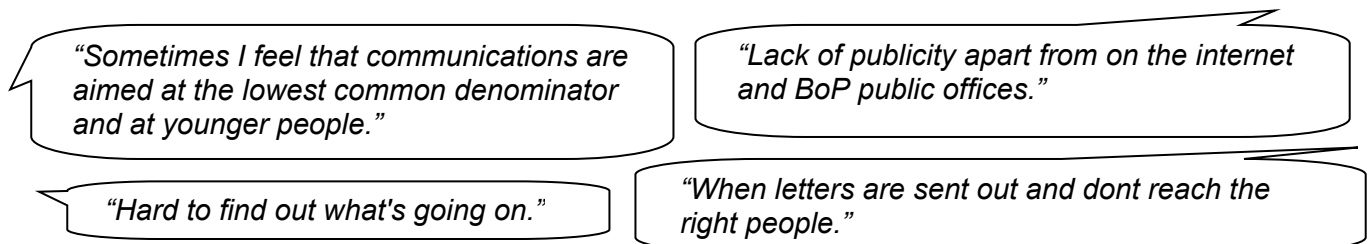


There were 105 responses to this question. 10 respondents said that there was nothing that they dislike about the way the Council engages. 3 respondents said that they could not comment because they had no experience of engagement or no opinion. 14 respondents stated general dislikes about the Council that were not related to the way it engages with residents. These are included in Appendix A.

Figure 5 below shows what respondents dislike about the way the Council engages with its residents.

8 respondents felt that there was limited or no engagement carried out by the Council.

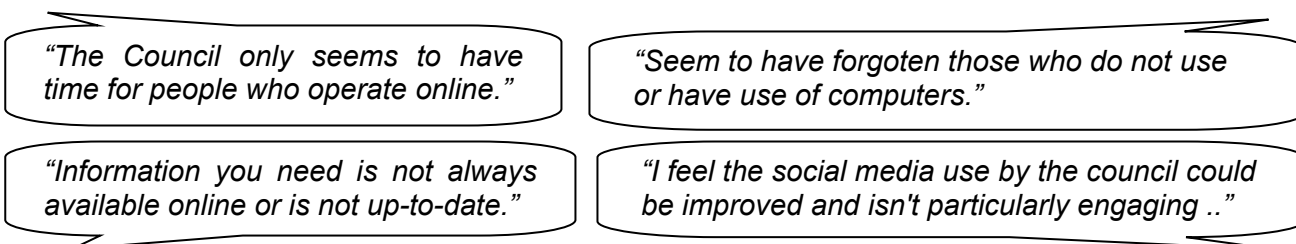
55 comments related to dislikes about the way in which the Council communicates with its residents, or promotes any engagement. 18 made comments about promotion, saying that it can be difficult to find out what is going on, and there needs to be more promotion and publicity around engagement opportunities.



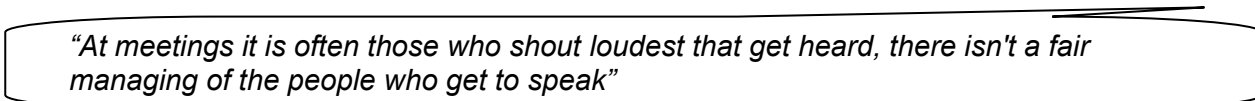
**Figure 5: Most common dislikes with how the Council engages with its residents**



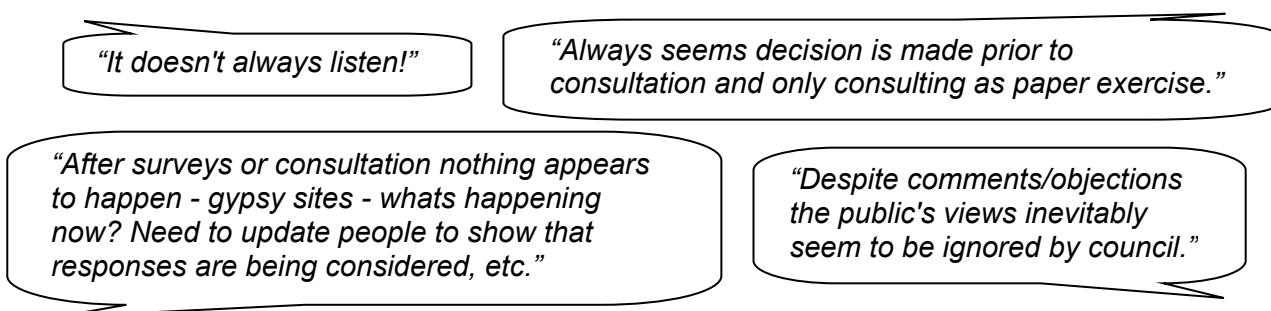
Looking at particular methods of communication and promotion, 10 made comments about Poole News, with respondents disliking its reduced frequency or being unhappy with the content. Comments were made about the content and information available on the website (6) and that Social Media use was insufficient (2). However, 9 respondents made comments about the use of the internet in promotion particularly that the Council assumes everyone has access to a computer or is 'internet savvy'.



Some respondents mentioned meetings (7) with some finding their timing inconvenient, or finding the meeting itself unappealing or negative.



33 comments focused around the process of engagement. 15 respondents felt that the Council does not listen to what people say, or goes against residents views. Some respondents also felt that decisions had already been made before engagement took place (5) or that engagement happened too late in the process to be able to influence decisions (3). Feedback was also mentioned by some (7) with respondents feeling that there is no information on what decisions have been made, or what has happened with their comments.



**Q4: What ideas do you have to improve how the Council engages with its residents and to encourage people to get more involved?**

There were 156 responses to this question. 11 respondents said that they did not have any ideas. 9 made comments not relevant to how the Council engages, and 4 made general compliments about the Council. These are included in Appendix A.

Figure 6 below shows the most common suggestions made to improve how the Council engages with its residents.

**Figure 6: Most common ideas to improve how the Council engages with its residents**

accessible (3)    better communication (4)    email alerts (5)    email newsletter (4)  
 encourage engagement (3)    engage with groups (3)    engage with young (5)    feedback (6)  
 improve customer service (3)    improve meetings (3)    listen (11)    local meetings (4)    newsletter (3)  
 online facilities (3)    promote how to engage (3)    promotion (15)    radio (3)    roadshows (3)  
 social media (9)    talk to people (4)    timeliness (3)    transparency (3)    use email (3)    use events (3)  
 use libraries (3)

The most common suggestion was to improve promotion and publicity (15). Suggestions included more information in newspapers, libraries and fliers, leaflets on how to engage and going out to where people are.

*"Promote / advertise better events and public consultation. Not everyone will be aware of the opportunity."*

*"More advertising of services. Maybe a brochure/Poole magazine posters. Section in Echo."*

*"Better publicity, more accessible sessions with a variety of techniques to hear peoples voices, e.g. participatory appraisal , being proactive, going out to where people are rather than expecting people to come to you."*

Some suggested that social media could be used more effectively by the Council (9). There were also suggestions of an email subscription system, where people could receive email alerts on engagement (5), or an email newsletter (4).

*"Engaging via social media? (Maybe you do already.) However, you would need, for example, to encourage/entice me to follow you on Twitter."*

*"Is there an online email/newsletter to subscribe to which would arrive regularly unprompted? Like alert on the Loop. If not, I think this would be a good idea to help people receive information without having to think about looking for it."*

Other suggestions made by respondents included to listen to resident's views, and to provide feedback on how these have been acted on and the decisions made.

*"Demonstrate that you do something with their input. Of course you will not please everyone but at least show that you are doing something."*

*"Listen to people - residents know what they're talking about."*



The Involving People Survey was conducted by the Corporate Research Team, Borough of Poole, on behalf of the Community Engagement Working Party. For further information please contact Corporate Research on (01202) 633086 or visit our website at [www.boroughofpoole.com/research](http://www.boroughofpoole.com/research)



## Our Approach to Consultation

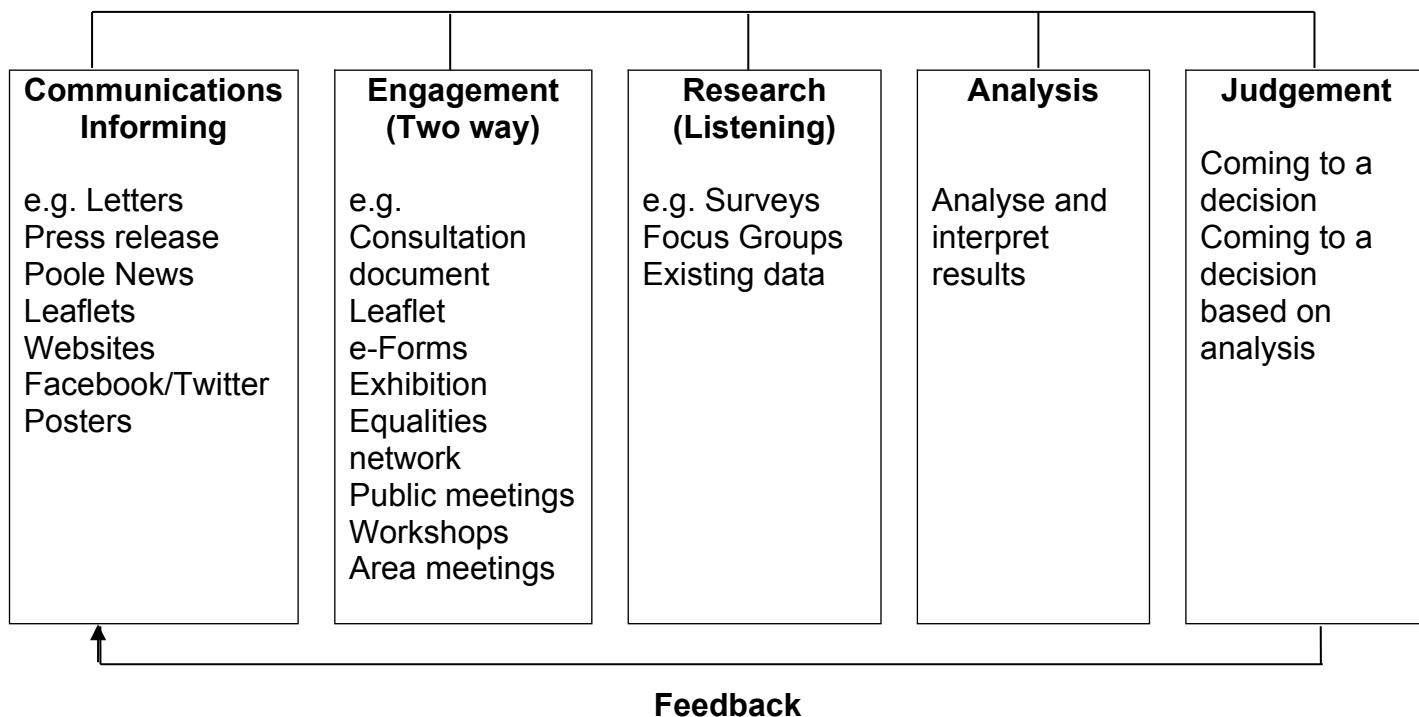
Consultation means asking for opinions about actions or proposals the Council intends to take. It ensures the Council is accountable by seeking and listening to the opinions, concerns and advice of its stakeholders on what it plans to do and using it to inform service and policy development.

## Consultation Framework

Consultation involves providing people with information to make informed decisions and includes the use of engagement and/or research methods to collect views/opinions that are analysed and considered with other evidence to make a judgement (see diagram 1).

Consultation may follow the stages sequentially, but often the stages informing and engagement or research may come together.

**Diagram 1: Consultation Framework**



## Types of Consultation

Consultation may include:

- Consulting on intended actions, options, proposals or strategies
- Giving choices

- Developing mitigations to actions
- Planning and Transportation

The Council has a statutory duty to consult in some areas of activity.

### Consultation Principles

The Council's consultations are:

1. **Transparent.** We will clearly explain the aim, consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence decisions and any limitations.
2. **Timely.** We will undertake consultation when there is scope to influence the outcome. We will give sufficient notice and time for consultees to respond.
3. **Co-ordinated** to minimise duplication and consultation fatigue.
4. **Accessible.** We will design and target consultations at all those with an interest to raise awareness and will seek to maximise response amongst all relevant groups.
5. **Inclusive.** We will use the methods most appropriate to the stakeholders and consultation objectives, and will take appropriate action to ensure the views of hard to reach groups have an opportunity to be included.
6. **Communicated clearly.** We will provide clear and unbiased information to enable consultees to make informed choices/decisions.
7. **Confidential.** We will protect individual's confidentiality when collecting, analysing and reporting consultations. We will adhere to the 1998 Data Protection Act and Information Management Principles.
8. **Responsive.** We will analyse consultation results carefully. Results will be accurate, clear and comprehensive. They will be taken into account by decision makers. We will tell respondents how and when they will receive feedback about the consultation findings and explain what has happened as result.

### **In practice this means that those undertaking consultations will:**

1. Clarify the aims and requirements of the consultation before starting, considering what the scope of the consultation and what can be influenced.
2. Clearly explain the consultation purpose, process, what is being proposed and any limitations to ensure that expectations are not raised that cannot be met.
3. Log consultations on the [Research and Consultation Database](#) on the Loop to avoid duplication and consultation fatigue; and join-up with other consultations where possible to maximise the use of resources. Results will also be shared on the Loop database to make best use of existing data and information. The database will be searched to check whether any information may already be available negating the need for further consultation.
4. Hold consultations at the most appropriate time when consultees can influence the outcome, and allow sufficient time to respond in order to maximise response.
5. Identify stakeholders for each consultation and select consultation methods to accommodate their different needs.
6. Ensure they have an understanding of the subject area, communications, engagement and research methods. They will use the corporate guidance, follow the Council's research

governance process and seek advice / support from the Corporate Research and Corporate Communications Teams.

7. Analyse consultation responses carefully and provide results to decision makers. Results will be accurate, open and honest and adhere to Information Management principles and the 1998 Data Protection Act. They will be taken into account when making decisions.
8. Evaluate the consultation and its effectiveness and share lessons learned.
9. Publish consultation findings to provide feedback to residents and what has / hasn't happened as result.

The Corporate Research Team will support Service Units by:

1. Providing unbiased and impartial advice to those undertaking consultation (working with Communications and engagement teams) including advising on the use of the techniques according to the consultation objectives and the target groups to be involved.
2. Providing and maintaining the Research and Consultation database corporately and with partners so that it can be searched for planned, current and completed research and consultation projects to minimise duplication and fatigue.
3. Providing a consultation toolkit, including the consultation planner on [www.boroughofpoole.com](http://www.boroughofpoole.com), e-Forms, the Poole Opinion Panel and the equalities network.
4. Working with the Communications Team to identify those consultations that require corporate research and communications support.
5. Providing assistance with interpreting results and using consultation evidence.