

# Consultation Principles

Produced by the Corporate Research Team, Borough of Poole.



## Our Approach to Consultation

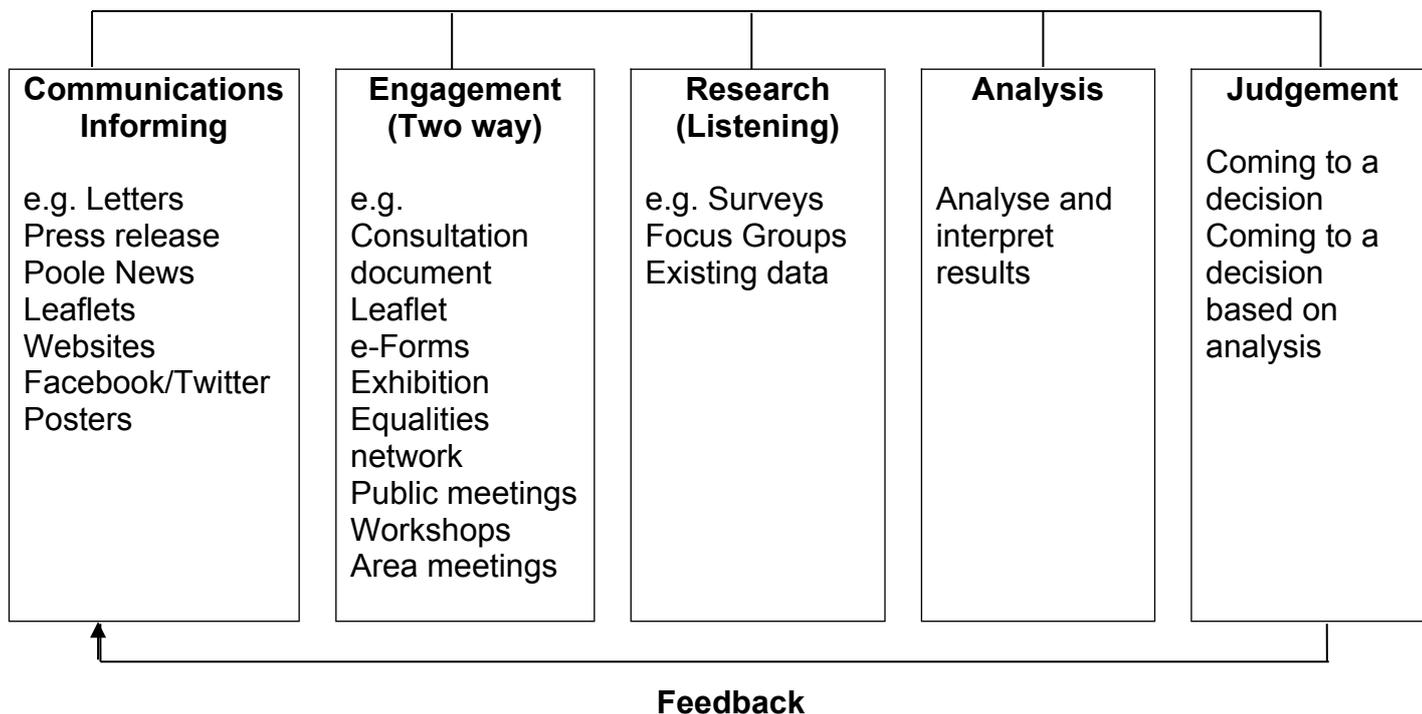
Consultation means asking for opinions about actions or proposals the Council intends to take. It ensures the Council is accountable by seeking and listening to the opinions, concerns and advice of its stakeholders on what it plans to do and using it to inform service and policy development.

## 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.