

Tools for engaging citizens

There are numerous “ tools ”or methods that can be used to engage with communities. A list of these is given below, with a summary of why and how they should be used, associated advantages and disadvantages, and also any local examples. This list is intended as an initial guide and is by no means exhaustive or prescriptive.

Tool	Objective	Purpose	Advantage	Disadvantage	Example
Publicity – newsletters	Information -giving	To provide information specific to an organisation or neighbourhood initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for regular updates • Can reach a wide audience depending on coverage and readership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be costly and time consuming to produce and distribute • Often perceived as junk mail • Not always read/seen by target audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About Leeds
Consultation documents	Information-giving/Consultation	To provide information and can also be used to gather views by including a response slip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good starting point for consultation • Makes the view of the organisation clear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be costly to produce and circulate • May not be read by many • Needs to be produced in many different formats to be accessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development dept – Statement of community involvement • Headingley Primary School proposals
Exhibitions, road-shows, open- days	Information-giving/Consultation	Used to provide information and to obtain views on specific projects or services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective in publicising services/ organisations • Can give the public longer to comment on issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups who are reached are dependant on location and timing of road show, exhibition etc • Likely to obtain views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kirkstall Vision

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				of a small number of people who are not representative of the target population	
Planning for Real	Local involvement	Structured consultation method that uses map of the neighbourhood to ascertain what physical changes people want for their local area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to set up • Entertaining and involves those who wouldn't normally participate • Makes it easy to obtain honest and wide ranging opinions • Can deal with complex issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be costly • Difficult to ensure representativeness • Many maps may be required if consultation is to be far reaching 	
Self-completion questionnaires/surveys	Consultation	Market research exercise. Can be used to gather views, opinions and to measure attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively low cost in time and money • Effective way of gaining information from a lot of people very quickly • Analysis can be relatively straightforward for someone with the relevant skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-ended questions can be difficult to analyse • Can yield a low response so requires a large sample • Difficult to engage with hard to reach groups • Cannot always control how different people interpret questions 	
Area Committee meetings	Information giving/consultation	Formal public decision –making. Public may attend and be permitted to speak at discretion of the Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a formal structure for decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited public involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area Committee meetings

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<p>Forums</p>	<p>Consultation/Local involvement</p>	<p>Structured meetings with local residents/interest groups to consult/debate issues of local importance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular process of engagement • Useful link between partner agencies and local people • Can be used to seek committed involvement from local people • Relatively cheap • Can be held at times and locations appropriate to target communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendees are likely to be small numbers and therefore not represent the views of the whole community • Can be dominated by the most vocal • Minutes can be taken • Needs effective management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ward forums in Headingley, Hyde Park and Woodhouse and Kirkstall Burley
<p>Electronic consultation/e-government/Internet/email</p>	<p>Information giving/Consultation/Local Involvement</p>	<p>Provides information using web technology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very cheap and quick • Background information can be made readily available • Potentially wide-reaching and likely to be used extensively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only available to people who are IT literate and have access to appropriate equipment • Some groups less likely to use PCs and internet therefore unlikely to be able to obtain completely representative views(e.g. elderly, low income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Talking Point” – the Council’s communication engagement portal. • Area Management email address