Consultation on the draft Statement of Community Involvement
South Oxfordshire District Council

Compiled by:
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Draft document		
For comment by:	**Date comments to be made:**	**Comments received/action:**
Gary Palmer and Holly Jones	11 April 2017	Comments received 6 April 2017 Report updated
Adrian Duffield, Head of Planning	13 April 2017	13 April 2017 – no changes required
Corporate Management Team	25 April 2017	No changes required
Cabinet Briefing	9 May 2017	
Cabinet	1 June 2017	

South Oxfordshire District Council

Listening Learning Leading

1. Context

1.1 Purpose of the consultation

South Oxfordshire District Council is committed to working in a clear and transparent way, and is keen to assist anyone who may wish to be involved in the planning process. Our draft Statement of Community Involvement 2017 (SCI) sets out how we will engage with our communities and businesses so they can comment on new planning policy documents and planning applications.

The consultation on the draft SCI ran for six weeks from 11 January to 22 February 2017. It aimed to gather views from residents, businesses and stakeholders on its content.

The draft SCI described our consultation methods and our approach to communicating about planning matters and we asked for feedback on these methods. This is to help the planning service establish preferred consultation and communication methods, and identify any recommendations for changes to practice.

1.2 Methodology and target group

A questionnaire was designed by the Community Engagement Officer and the lead Planning Officer. The online survey tool Smart Survey was used. This was the first time the planning service used Smart Survey. This new system was used as the planning service had previously received feedback from consultees that the existing online consultation system (Objective) is difficult to use. The draft SCI consultation provided a useful opportunity to undertake another approach to online consultations.

A paper questionnaire relating to the draft SCI was also available and responses were welcomed by post and email.

Information on the consultation was distributed via:

- access groups by the council's Equalities Officer
- council's website and twitter account
- district councillors
- libraries and council offices
- parish and town councils
- planning consultee database (email and post)
- press notice in local papers
- press release to local papers.
- statutory bodies.

2. Respondents

2.1 Response rate

We received 168 responses to the SCI consultation. Of this:

- 142 (84.5%) completed the online questionnaire

- 25 (15%) responded by post or email; (3 responses were late, however their comments have still been considered)

- there was a facilitated session with Didcot Access Group[1] who were able to share views from access group members in South Oxfordshire.

37 responses were from organisations, all other responses were from individuals (See Appendix 1).

2.2 Demographics of respondents

Respondents were requested to provide demographics at the end of the questionnaire (See Appendix 2). This is to assist the council in analysing demographics of respondents and helps to identify any groups that may not be taking part in planning consultations. The results have been compared with data from the Local Insight profile for 'South Oxfordshire' area[2]. This has identified groups that did not take part in the consultation. This is addressed in recommendations (Section 5).

3. Consultation responses

In this section an overview is given of the responses to the online questionnaire, comments received from groups, and those by post, and email. As the latter did not follow the structure of the online questionnaire, their responses have been summarised in Section 3.4.

3.1 Format and layout of the draft Statement of Community Involvement

Respondents were asked to rate the format and layout of the SCI. The majority responded positively to this question with 92% of respondents rating it as a reasonable or good format and layout (See Figure 1, Appendix 3).

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[1] The input with Didcot Access Group was led by the council's Equalities Officer with support from the Community Engagement Officer.

[2] Local Insight profile for 'South Oxfordshire' area, Oxford City Council and District Data Service, Report created 17 January 2017. Downloaded on 24 March 2017 from http://local.communityinsight.org/

39 people added comments about the format and layout. Of this 15 people said the document was too long or difficult to understand and 11 made positive comments about the document.

Comments on format and layout

You should try to limit to no more than 10 pages to get across the messages. (Respondent Code: 51268285)

I found it very clear and direct with plenty of hyperlinks and diagrams which make the information much easier to understand and absorb. (Respondent Code: 51148002)

3.2 Consultation methods

Respondents were asked to rate consultation methods (See Figures 2-4, Appendix 3). The results showed:

- 79% rated online questionnaires as good or average

- public meetings and public exhibitions were rated as good or average with 78% and 74% respective scores

- social media received a lower rating with 36% rating it as poor.

The age demographics of respondents may explain the low rating of social media (See Appendix 2). National research should be taken into consideration when reviewing communication methods. An Ofcom report, for example, found that around two-thirds of the over 75 age group and a third of the 65-74 age group said they did not use the internet.[3]

53 people added comments about our consultation methods: of this number 28 people raised concerns and 15 people suggested how we could improve consultation.

Comments on consultation methods

Young people, non-local residents who work locally or would like to live in the area, and the working-age population generally are hard to reach because they are so busy working and raising families, but they are precisely the people your consultations need to hear from. (Respondent code: 51324799)

Work with Parish Councils so that they promote planning issues…offer parishes practical training in Social Media and get parishes to help you build a database of parish magazines so that you can really reach all the citizens. (Respondent code: 52481842)

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[3] Adults' media use and attitudes, Ofcom Research Document April 2016, pg. 7. Downloaded on 30 March 2017 from www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/80828/2016-adults-media-use-and-attitudes.pdf

3.3 Communication methods

The draft SCI detailed how we keep people informed about planning developments. Respondents were asked to rate communication methods (See Figures 5-7, Appendix 3). The survey findings showed:

- 80% rated email communication as good

- 68% rated contact with parish councils as good or average

38 comments were received, this included 16 suggestions on how communication could be improved.

Comments on communication

Good on Twitter... never any updates on Facebook? (Respondent Code: 50985115)

Postal notification still necessary for those who can't or choose not to have web access. (Respondent Code: 50994681)

On major plans, why can there not be further public meetings where people are informed on progress and given the opportunity to raise further questions / challenges. (Respondent Code: 52844770)

3.4 General comments on the draft Statement of Community Involvement

(i)   In this section an overview is given on comments received via Smart Survey and those by post, email and as a group response.

From 25 postal and email responses 5 made no comment on the content of the draft SCI.

As part of Smart Survey, respondents were invited to make general comments on the draft SCI. 71 comments were made. Of these 12 people gave positive feedback and 36 people made a negative comment. 22 people made suggestions for how the draft SCI could be improved. Some people made comments which were not relevant to the SCI. We have detailed below how we have responded to these comments.

(ii)   Feedback was received on:

- **the content of the SCI;** changes were suggested to the document structure, language used and length. And practical issues were noted such as a need to change the names of some organisations. These will be addressed in a revised version of the SCI.

- **neighbourhood planning** and its impact on development; these comments will be shared with our neighbourhood planning officers.

- **housing developments in local areas;** comments were made about specific sites including Chalgrove, Sonning Common and the development of Didcot Garden Town. These comments will be passed to the relevant planning officers and teams.

- **the planning service's approach to consultation** was commented on; this will be addressed by the development of a new community engagement strategy.

- **the democratic process** and its effectiveness. Some comments were made regarding individuals and will not be reproduced.

- **general planning issues** such as how housing is built and environmental concerns. These will be addressed as part of the Local Plan Second Preferred Options consultation (29 March to 17 May 2017).

(iii)   A group session was held with Didcot Access Group, who shared views of access group members in South Oxfordshire. Their feedback included comments about the length of the document and the need for a summary in plain English. They noted issues about the complexity of viewing planning applications and the need for documents to be more accessible as the council offices at Milton Park are not easily accessible. Recommendations on groups we should be involving and suggestions for how our work could be more inclusive were also made. Their views will help to inform the work by our Community Engagement Officers and the planning service.

(iv)   Statutory bodies used the consultation as an opportunity to advise us on their consultation processes and how they can support our work on planning applications and development.

General comments on the SCI

Please use more plain wording. (Respondent code: 50958629)

We would like to see greater communication around how community and parish council voices have been taken into consideration. (Respondent code: 51461458)

Helpful and well set out. (Respondent code: 50993714)

Felt that there was too much to read, most people won't want to read 28 pages. (Respondent code: SCIEP179)

Difficult for members of the general public to comment on planning applications as there is so much information to look at… might be an idea to have a folder with a summary of information such as the design and access statement. (Respondent code: SCIEP179)

4. Survey method

The planning service had received feedback from consultees that their online consultation system (Objective) was difficult to use. Smart Survey was used as the online consultation tool as this was viewed to be more user friendly.

Respondents were asked to rate the online questionnaire. Ratings showed that 48% were satisfied or very satisfied with the method. 14% said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (See Figure 8, Appendix 3). Seven comments were made which suggested improvements to the survey design. The findings from this survey will help the service to identify appropriate consultation methods, both online and paper based. These are addressed in recommendations (Section 5).

Comments on the online questionnaire

There is nowhere to put our views on how things should be planned. (Respondent Code: 52268003)

A step in the right direction (Respondent Code: 51461458)

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5. Recommendations

Recommendation	Action by planning service
Appendix 1 shows some groups were over-represented, while other groups were under-represented in the consultation. There is a need to ensure our consultations involve people from a range of backgrounds and are targeted at those most affected by the proposals.	The planning service's new community engagement strategy will address how we will engage with people from different age groups and backgrounds.
A few comments were made about the length of the draft SCI and terms used.	The council's Planning Policy Team will review the document to see whether terms can be changed. An executive summary will be considered.
Several comments were received regarding our consultation methods. Some people felt we could improve our consultation and give more feedback.	All respondents will be sent information on how to access this consultation report. Feedback from the consultation will be reviewed by the Community Engagement Officers. This will help to inform the planning service's community engagement strategy.

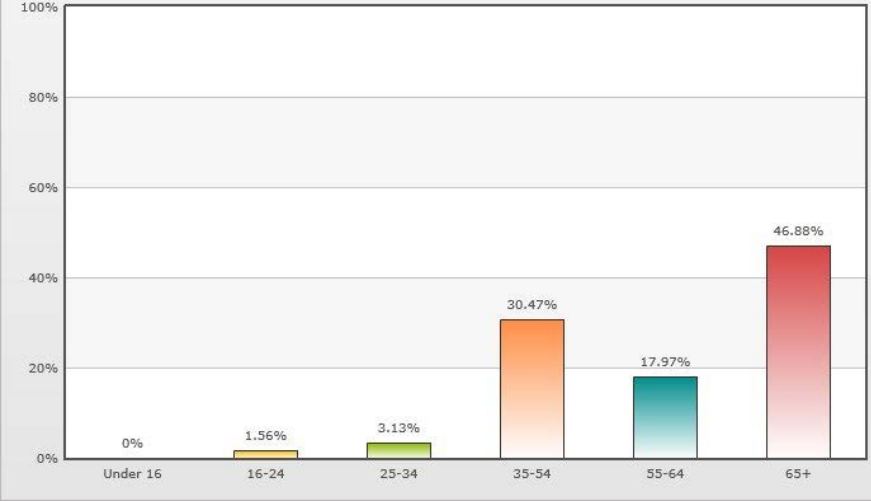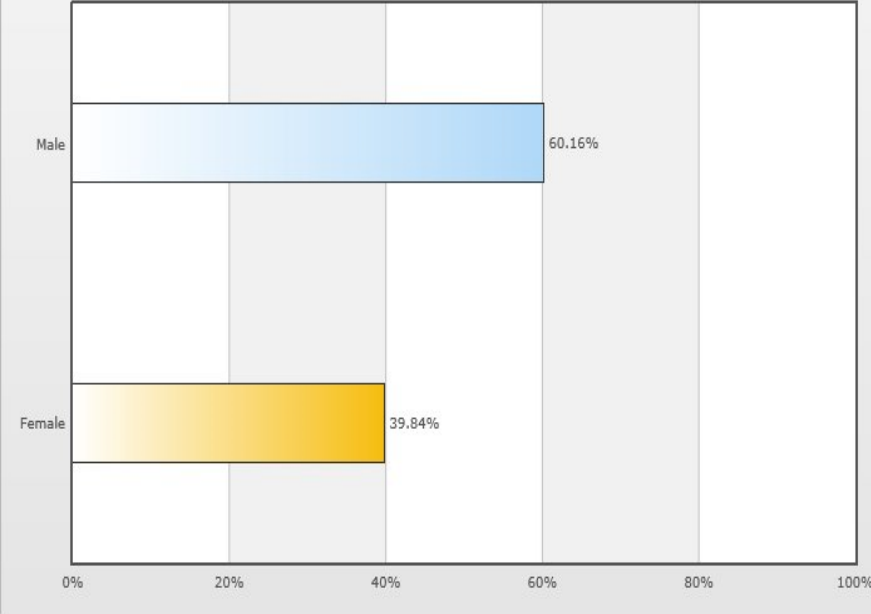| Recommendation	Action by planning service
A range of suggestions were offered regarding how we communicate about planning matters. Some people suggested we use social media and local parish newsletters.	Facebook advertising is now being used for the current Local Plan consultations (South and Vale). Articles have been sent to all parish newsletters to promote the current Local Plan consultations (South and Vale).
Positive feedback was received on the online survey with a few recommendations such as the facility to upload files.	Online questionnaires via Smart Survey are being used for neighbourhood planning and development planning consultations. The Community Engagement Officers are looking at other consultation approaches to meet all survey requirements.
Recommendation to increase use of social media to promote public meetings and consultation events.	Twitter and Facebook are being used to promote current Local Plan events (South and Vale).
Feedback was received on issues that were beyond the scope of this consultation, such as planning development and local housing.	These comments will be shared with relevant planning officers and teams; they will also help to inform the Local Plan consultation.
This report will be publically available on our website, with full results available to those who request access.	

Appendix 1 – List of organisations who responded

Barton Willmore on behalf of Gallagher Estates and Brasenose College
Beckley and Stowood Parish Council
Chiltern Society
Chilterns Conservation Board
Church of England
Community Safety Team, South and Vale District Councils
Didcot Access Group
Didcot Town Council
Environment Agency (Thames Area)
Forest Hill with Shotover Parish Council
Forestry Commission England
Health and Safety Executive
Henley-on-Thames Town Council
Her Majesty's Government – Marine Management Organisation
Highways England
Historic England
Housing, South and Vale District Councils
John Hampden Society
JPPC
Lance Adlam Architects
Leisure Development, South Oxfordshire District Council
Mobility Issues Group for Goring and Streatley
Natural England
Network Rail
Oxford Brookes University
Oxford Bus Company
Oxfordshire County Council
Oxfordshire Transport and Access Group (OXTRAG)
Pishill with Stonor Parish Council
Ramblers
Rokeby Homes Limited
Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust
Shiplake Parish Council
South Oxfordshire Sustainability Coalition representing:
- Chalgrove Environmental Network
- Goring and Streatley Sustainability Group
- Green Living Plan for Thame
- Greening Chinnor
- Henley in Transition
- Living Lightly in Dorchester
- Oxfordshire Chilterns Community Action (OCCA)
- Pangbourne and Whitchurch Sustainability Group
- Sustainable Didcot
- Sustainable Wallingford and Cholsey
Thame Town Council
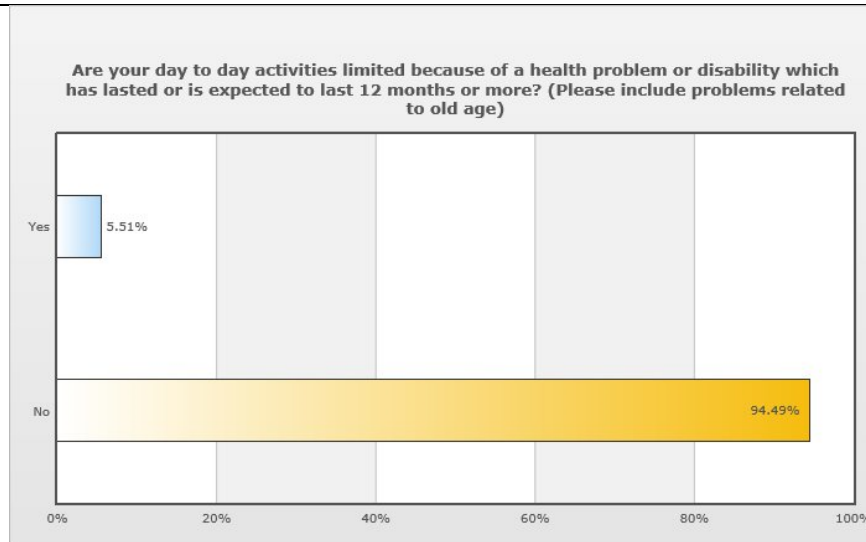Wallingford Town Council
Watlington Parish Council

Appendix 2 – Demographics of Respondents (Smart Survey)

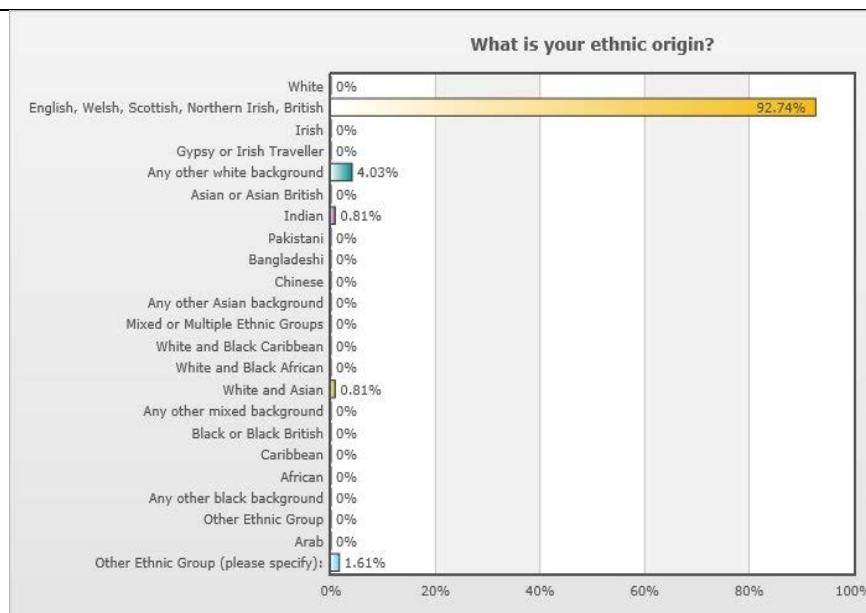| Smart Survey Result	Comparison with South Oxfordshire data[4]
What age are you? 100% / 80% / 60% / 40% / 20% / 0% Under 16: 0% 16-24: 1.56% 25-34: 3.13% 35-54: 30.47% 55-64: 17.97% 65+: 46.88%	Working age population is 60.6% in South Oxfordshire, and were under represented in the consultation. 65+ age group is 20.3% in South Oxfordshire, and were over represented in the consultation.
What is your gender? Male: 60.16% Female: 39.84% 0% / 20% / 40% / 60% / 80% / 100%	50.8% of total population is female; so females were unrepresented in the consultation.

4 Local Insight profile for 'South Oxfordshire' area, Oxford City Council and District Data Service, Report created 17 January 2017, downloaded on 24 March 2017 from http://local.communityinsight.org/

Smart Survey Result	Comparison with South Oxfordshire Data[5]
Are your day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more? (Please include problems related to old age) Yes — 5.51% No — 94.49%	Not comparable with data as figures are for disability living allowance of which there is prevalence of 2.4%
What is your ethnic origin? White — 0% English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British — 92.74% Irish — 0% Gypsy or Irish Traveller — 0% Any other white background — 4.03% Asian or Asian British — 0% Indian — 0.81% Pakistani — 0% Bangladeshi — 0% Chinese — 0% Any other Asian background — 0% Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups — 0% White and Black Caribbean — 0% White and Black African — 0% White and Asian — 0.81% Any other mixed background — 0% Black or Black British — 0% Caribbean — 0% African — 0% Any other black background — 0% Other Ethnic Group — 0% Arab — 0% Other Ethnic Group (please specify): — 1.61%	90% of South Oxfordshire is white British, so slight over representation. Under representation from ethnic groups which have presence in South Oxfordshire (see table below)

White British	BME	White-non-British	Mixed
122,085	12,175	6,910	1,800
90.9% (England average = 79.8%)	9.1% (England average = 20.2%)	5.1% (England average = 5.7%)	1.3% (England average = 2.3%)
Asian	Black	Other ethnic group	Households with multiple ethnicities
2,405	770	290	4,605
1.8% (England average = 7.8%)	0.6% (England average = 3.5%)	0.2% (England average = 1.0%)	8.5% (England average = 8.9%)

Source: Census 2011
Figure: Population by ethnic group
Source: Census 2011

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[5] Local Insight profile for 'South Oxfordshire' area, Oxford City Council and District Data Service, Report created 17 January 2017, downloaded on 24 March 2017 from http://local.communityinsight.org/

Appendix 3 – Responses to SCI Consultation (Smart Survey)

We would like your views on our Statement of Community Involvement. You can view a copy by clicking here How would you rate the general format and layout of the Statement of Community Involvement?

Good format and layout: 47.18%
Reasonable format and layout: 45.07%
Poor format and layout: 7.75%
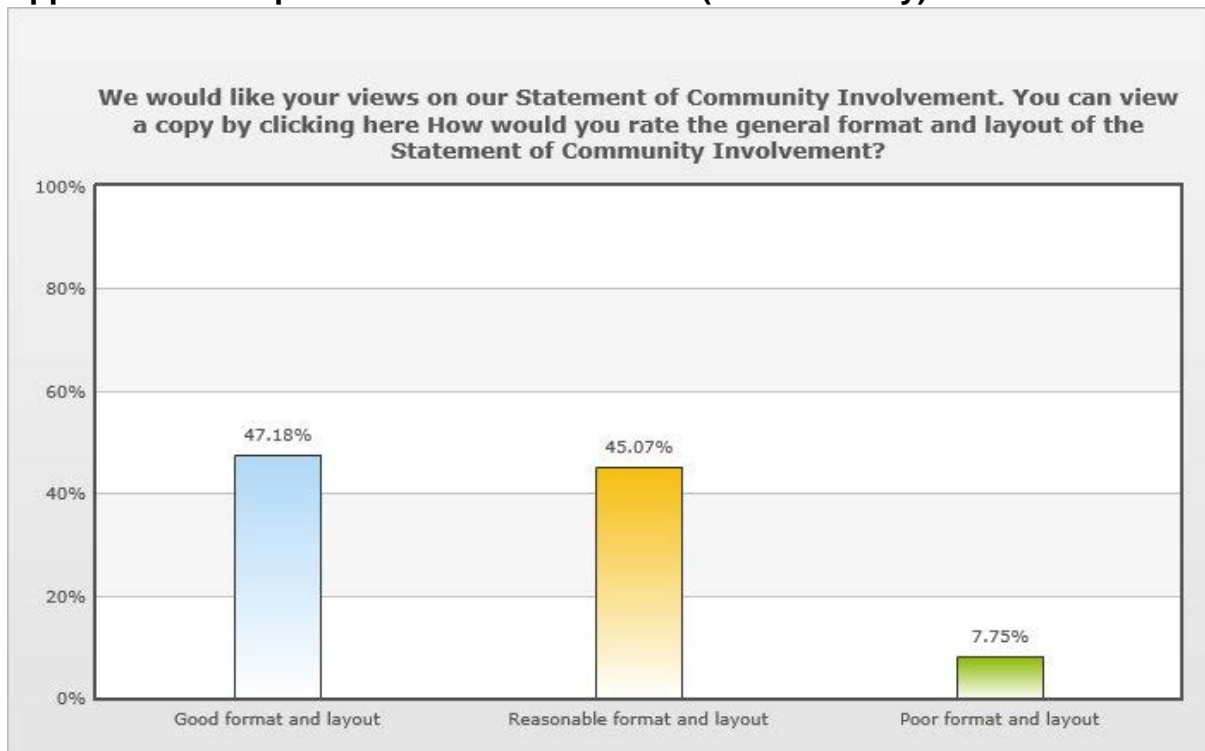
Figure 1: Format and layout of the draft SCI

In the Statement of Community Involvement we list our methods for consulting on our planning policy documents. We would like to hear your views on these methods and how suitable they are for you or the organisation you represent. Please rate the following methods:

Public exhibitions: 50.38%
Public meetings: 48.12%
Online questionnaires: 46.92%
Postal questionnaires: 25.95%
Social media: 17.83%
Events with special interest groups: 32.06%
Consultation portal: 33.59%
Focus groups: 20.77%

Legend: Good | Average | Poor | No comment

Figure 2: Consultation methods rated as good

In the Statement of Community Involvement we list our methods for consulting on our planning policy documents. We would like to hear your views on these methods and how suitable they are for you or the organisation you represent. Please rate the following methods:
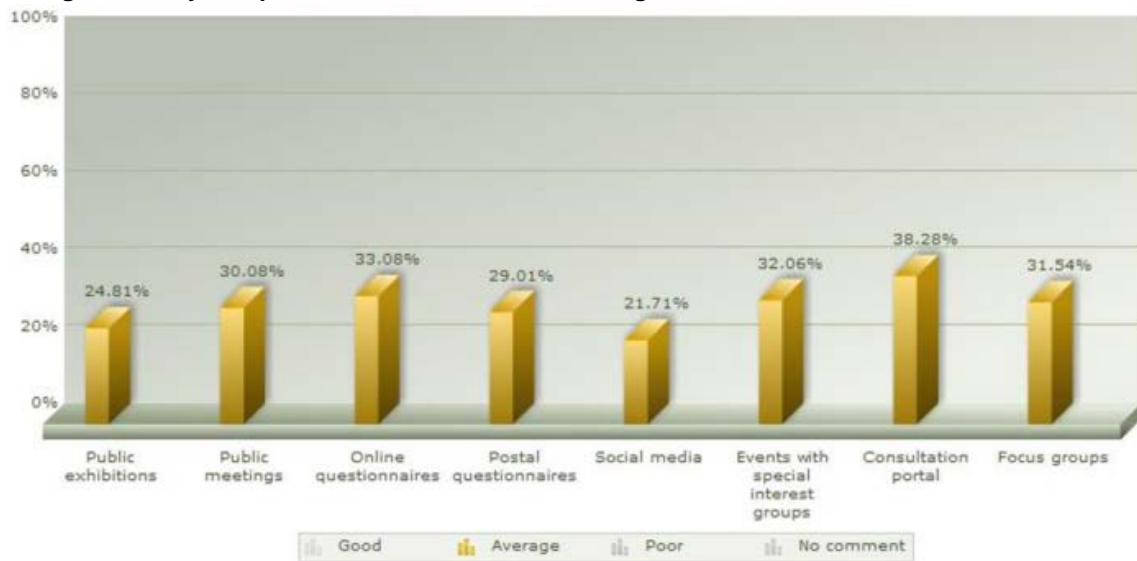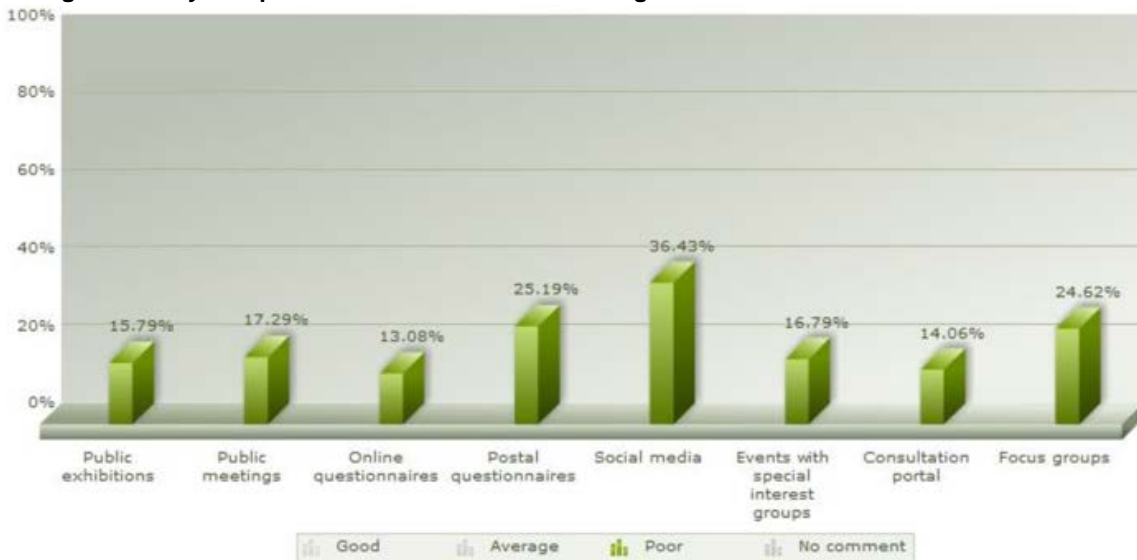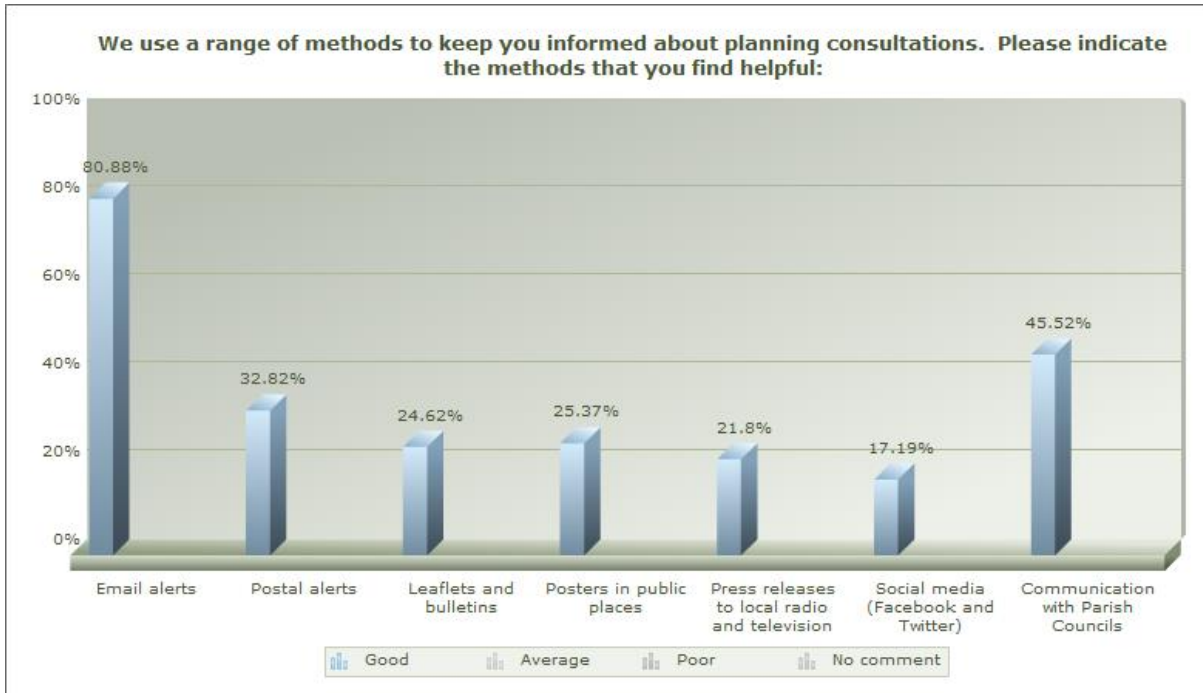

Figure 3: Consultation methods rated as average

In the Statement of Community Involvement we list our methods for consulting on our planning policy documents. We would like to hear your views on these methods and how suitable they are for you or the organisation you represent. Please rate the following methods:

Figure 4: Consultation methods rated as poor

Figure 5: Communication methods rated as good
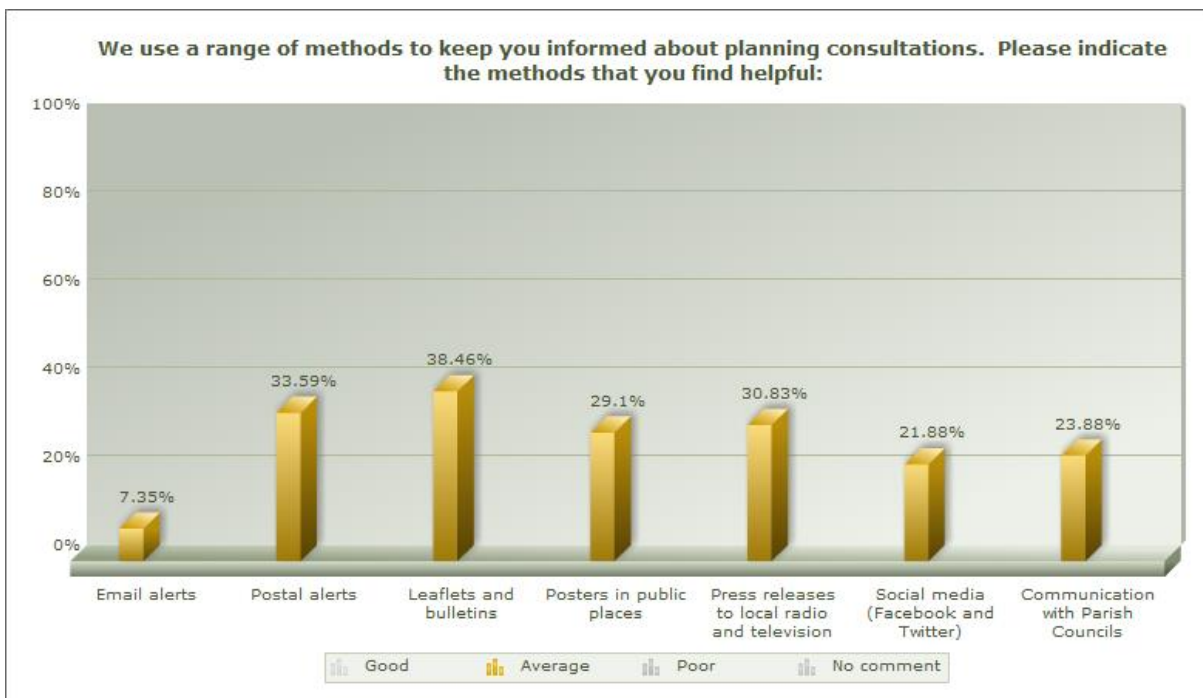

Figure 6: Communication methods rated as average
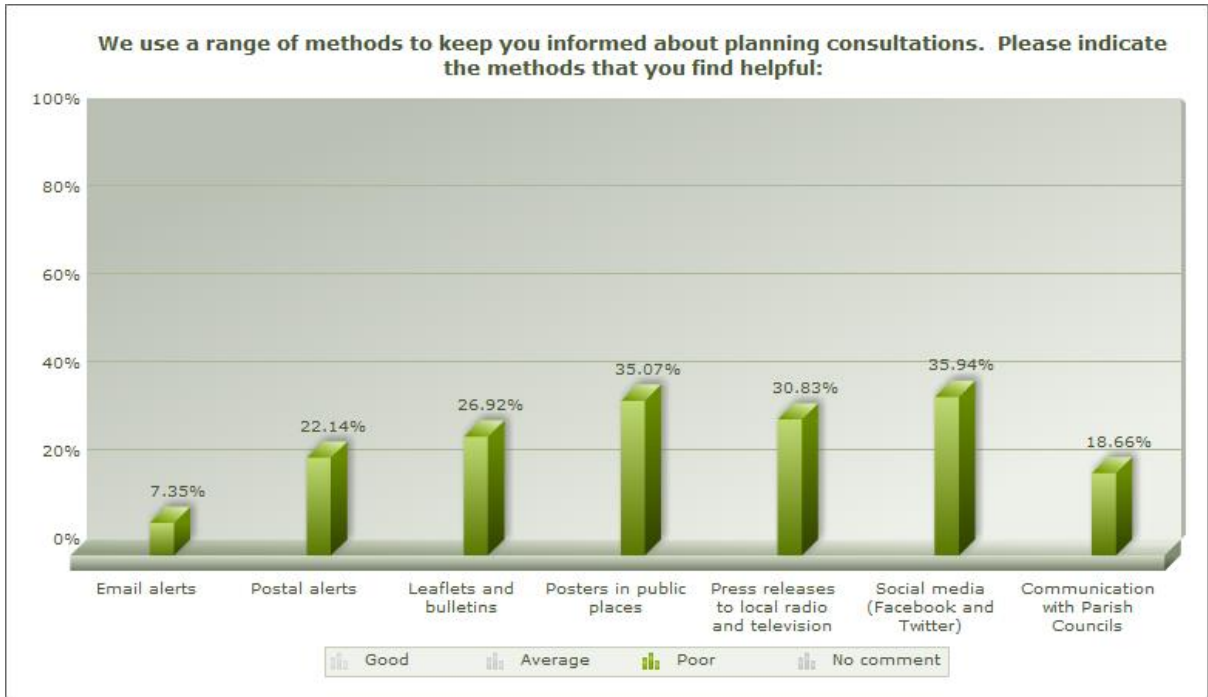
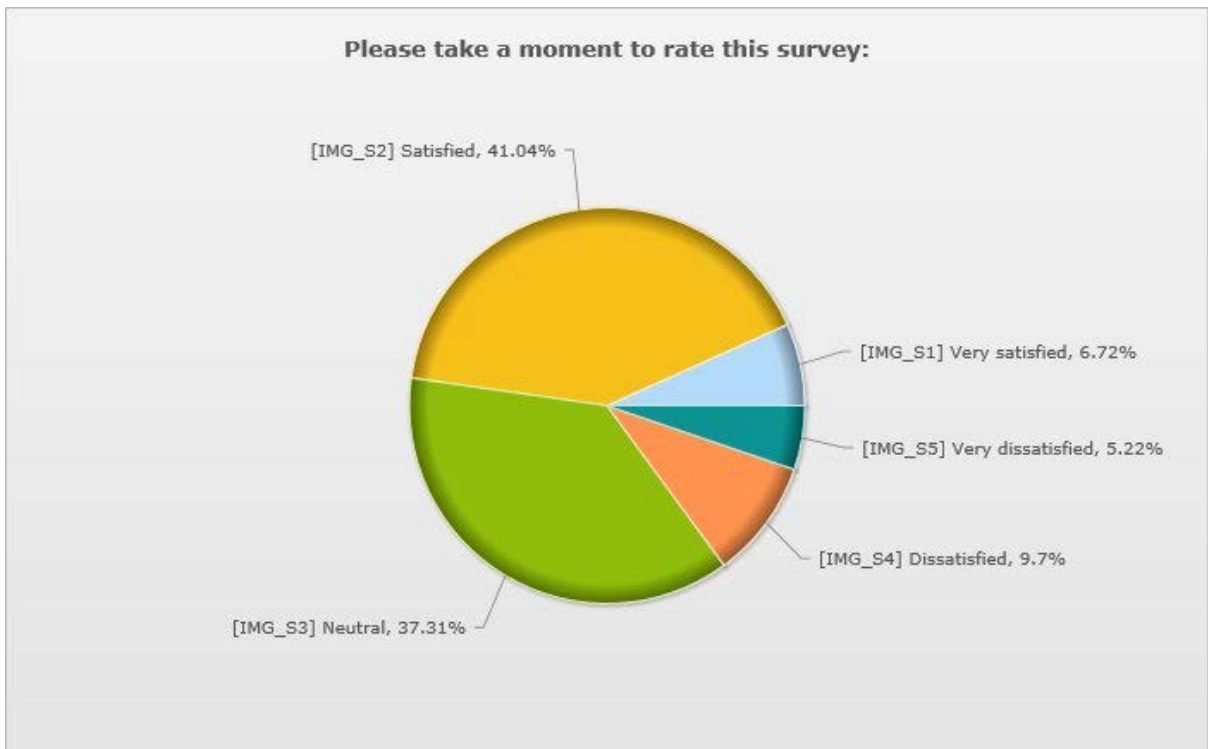**Figure 7:** Communication methods rated as poor

Figure 8: Survey rating

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