

# Community Planning Resource Sheet

## Community-led Plan: Questionnaire



Produced by CRCC in partnership with Cornwall Council

Resource Ref: CP001B

April 2011

This resource sheet is intended to help communities understand and work through the community-led planning (CLP) process, in conjunction with support and advice from CRCC and Cornwall Council officers. In addition to this resource sheet there are other individual sheets for different stages of the process including an overview; as well as plans to produce themed resource sheets (e.g. health, transport, planning) to help get the most out of this process. Where appropriate the themed sheets will be produced in consultation with relevant key organisations.

It is intended that these resources and the support available will strengthen the community-led planning process and provide communities with a better understanding of the priorities of the statutory authority, health, police and so on. Communities can then choose, where appropriate, to tailor their consultation to both suit their local needs whilst influencing strategic priorities - forging a mutually beneficial relationship, and creating a more robust and effective plan.

Ultimately the community chooses what goes into the plan, but being aware of the objectives of other organisations, and having an understanding of what information needs to be obtained in order to implement certain actions can help the communities achieve their aims.

### Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a good way to gather people's views, ideas and feedback on a wide range of topics, as you can obtain quite detailed information. An advantage is that people can fill them in when convenient and have 'thinking time', although you do need to get people interested enough to complete them!

Design of the questionnaire is vitally important to ensure that the right questions are asked and that the answer options give you the data you need. This can be a time-consuming process but is well worth the effort!

Questionnaires are often produced for a household, but you may choose to do individual questionnaires (although more costly), or an additional questionnaire for a particular section of the community, to enhance the data.

It is usual for the respondents to be able to retain anonymity so that they are not linked to answers.

It is possible to gather data on current issues but also data to help plan ahead.

## Questionnaire Design - Suggestions & Tips!

### Making Use of Other Questionnaire Examples:

Have a look at questionnaires that have previously been used - you may be able to make use of some of their questions or ideas. However, only use these as a starting point - adding in your own questions relevant to your needs and, just as importantly, discarding questions that don't have a specific purpose. Every question should have an objective, so think about what the answers will tell you and how you might use this information, as sometimes questions get copied across from previous questionnaires on the through an assumption that they must be important.

### Drafting the Questionnaire:

1. Once you have decided on the themes/topics that you want to include, you will need to start drafting it. If the questionnaire is being drafted in sections (by different people), make sure that the overall draft is cohesive and avoids duplication e.g. in a community plan there is a risk that transport questions could appear in a transport section but also under a specific service e.g. travel to health services. It is also important that the questions for all sections are discussed and agreed by the group as a whole.
2. Ensure that your questionnaire contains no biased or misleading questions - this is about finding out what residents think or want, not telling them what they should want.
3. At the start of the questionnaire make a clear and realistic statement of the its purpose. Include contact details if there are any queries, contents page (with page numbers), and ensure that the return date and arrangements are included, and noticeable!
4. Ensure the questionnaire is formatted so it is 'easy on the eye' and simple to complete.
5. Avoid jargon. Should it be necessary to use a technical term offer a short explanation if necessary.
6. Consider colour coding surveys for different locations within the parish or area - this may, for instance, help you establish priorities or identify specific difficulties within certain villages.

### Seeking input from others:

1. It is a good idea to get another resident to look over the draft questionnaire and test it out - a fresh pair of eyes from someone with local knowledge but unconnected to its production is helpful. This may, for example, highlight weaknesses e.g. lack of clarity in what's required or errors.
2. You may also find it helpful to get an external organisation to check through it and offer feedback on the format/structure; or the topic content (particularly if you want advice on terminology etc). You should also check out our 'topic' based resources sheets for ideas.

### Distribution/Collection of the Questionnaire.

1. Give a reasonable time period for return but not too long that it might be forgotten, and consider offering incentives to encourage people to complete and return.
2. In timing the distribution of the questionnaire, bear in mind that holiday periods are usually busy times with family activities, time away etc., and for those running their own businesses it could be a busier time than usual. Also avoid clashing with something that it likely to detract from what you are doing.
3. Bear in mind that hand delivery and collection by local people will maximise your response rate - people are more likely to complete their questionnaire if they know someone local has taken the trouble to deliver it and will be coming back for it! This also gives people the opportunity to talk.

### Publicity

Make sure you publicise in advance, and throughout the process, what you are doing. This will increase awareness and hopefully get people talking. As well as posters, newsletters, and other forms of publicity and marketing, try and get local facilities, clubs, businesses and schools involved. It may also help to link this to social events and activities. The aim is to get people interested and engaged with the process - this is a chance for them to have their say.