

Planning a response to consultation

Plan how you are going to develop your response:

- Timescale – work backwards from deadline, be realistic, everything takes longer than you expect
- Who will pull the response together?
- Who will should approve or agree it?
- What format / structure should it have – is there a required / preferred format? If so, it will be easier to get your views across if you use it - an active way to help the recipient listen to you!
- What needs to be done? [the 'mini']
- What should be done? [the 'family saloon']
- What would be 'nice to do' but could be dropped if timescales slip? [the Rolls Royce]
- If your group organisation represents an area, try to find out what everyone thinks – not just the people who come forward with their views. What about young people, people who are housebound....?
- What practical resources do you need – PC, paper, internet access....??
- What are the costs involved? Will the right people 'volunteer' their time?
- Be pragmatic – do what you can

If you are working in a group on the response, set ground rules for the way you will work together – for example:

- Communication guidelines – speaking for oneself, not the group; the behaviour is not the person
- Value and respect everyone's contribution
- Don't get stuck, keep things moving forwards!

What if we do get stuck? Take a break Try another tack

Remember, think about trade-offs, compromises, concessions, accommodation, negotiation – there is never only one solution or one way of looking at things

For the Core Strategy, remember that this is setting the overall vision for the whole framework – not the fine detail; keep to general principles and areas

'Rome wasn't built in a day' – consultation and achieving consensus take time and a lot of good will.

Some simple tools to work towards consensus:

- prioritising 1 – assign numeric value to each element 1=low, 4=high [nb this forces everyone to choose lower or higher / more or less important]; everyone scores the list individually and anonymously; aggregate the scores so you have a prioritised list generated by the group (advantage = not linked in anyway to any of the individuals participating – shared ownership)
- prioritising 2 – every one chooses their top three (or however many the group feels is appropriate); then aggregate into a prioritised list as before

- check the two lists against each other to identify any significant variation
- reality check for any obvious glitches / maverick results, but don't re-open old discussions!

If you are looking to prioritise questions or proposed solutions, maybe within theme groupings or topics, you can grade them in the same way to achieve a prioritised, consensus ranking.