

Item No. 21	Classification: Open	Date: 7 January 2003	MEETING NAME Community Support and Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Report title:		Research and Consultation options available to the Sub-Committee	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Corporate Consultation Unit	

Introduction

- 1 At the 4 December meeting of the Community Support and Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee, Councillors were provided with a PowerPoint presentation outlining, in broad terms, some research and consultation options available to them. In addition to the presentation, Councillors were provided with a briefing pack outlining previous consultation relevant to the Committee's remit. This research/consultation was either conducted or commissioned by the Corporate Consultation Unit.
- 2 In the discussion following this presentation, Councillors directed the Consultation Manager to develop an overview of consultation options in the following five areas: emerging communities; domestic violence; CCTV; Gun Crime; and Disabilities.
- 3 Each of the five options is discussed in terms of: a brief background of existing consultation; the types of individuals/groups to be consulted; an overview of the potential benefits of conducting such research/consultation; who will carry out the consultation; and the time frames involved.
- 4 The Committee specifically directed that, at this time, no costings need be provided.
- 5 It should be noted that with all five possible areas of consultation a variety of methods could be used to bring the views of residents to the Committee. This includes video and still pictures taken by the participants as part of their process of telling the Committee their views, concerns and aspirations.

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1. Emerging Communities (Community Cohesion)

Background

- 1.1 Historically, Southwark has not carried out a great deal of robust research and consultation within emerging communities. In this instance, emerging communities refers to people from an ethnic or national background who have recently arrived in the UK. In many cases they arrive as refugees or economic migrants. The Albanian and the Somali communities, for example, could be categorised as new or establishing communities¹.
- 1.2 Co-incidentally there are two pieces of work being carried out by the Council which relate to emerging communities issues. First, the recent review of the Council's Translation and

¹ By way of contrast the Irish and Vietnamese communities could be seen as established communities within Southwark

Interpreting Services. This review, while answering some questions about language needs of these communities, has highlighted that further research/consultation is required to understand the views of these new and emerging communities. Within this area of further research/consultation are issues related to supporting these communities to interface more effectively with the existing population.

- 1.3 Second, the Corporate Consultation Unit and the Social Inclusion Unit are piloting a new training and mentoring programme for individuals from Black and Minority Ethnic communities to become effective interviewers. This programme has two primary goals. The first is to develop a pool of highly trained multi-lingual interviewers (locum basis) that the Council will employ to consult more effectively with people from BME and hard-to-reach communities. The second is to provide training and mentoring for Southwark residents from BME communities that will increase their skill base and thereby increase their employment possibilities.

Which individuals/groups to consult?

- 1.4 Specific communities, like the Albanian or Somali, could be consulted about their needs and aspirations as they try to interface with Southwark's population. Perhaps targeting specific groups, within these communities for example young persons who are attending Southwark schools may be more beneficial than a wider consultation programme. Linked to this would be consultation with the existing communities.
- 1.5 The Committee may also wish to consider consulting organisations within Southwark which represent new and emerging communities. While this would not replace consulting with individuals, it may help to provide a wider context for understanding the needs of these communities than simply consulting with individuals from the emerging communities.
- 1.6 This approach to the research design would assist the Committee to understand the needs and aspirations the entire community. The Committee therefore would have a fuller picture of issues related to community cohesion.

Potential Benefits

- 1.7 Examining issues of how effectively new and emerging communities integrate and/or interface with the existing population of Southwark is a new area of research for the Council. Indeed it is cutting edge research.
- 1.8 The consultation for the Translation and Interpreting Review highlighted the issue of "hidden or closed" communities. The Council knows very little about either the whole or certain parts of these "closed or hidden" communities. Without a fuller understanding of their needs and aspirations it is difficult to plan programmes and policies which will assist individuals to easily integrate, should they chose to do so, with the general population.

In-House or Commission

- 1.9 The training and mentoring programme for individuals from BME communities will start in January. During their period of training they will be closely mentored as their interview skills are developed through actual "hands-on" experience. It is hoped that in a short space of time, they will be in a sufficiently trained to carry out further research/consultation within hard-to-reach communities with the support of the Consultation Unit.
- 1.10 Alternatively, there are research agencies that specialise in research/consultation within BME and hard-to-reach communities; these could be commissioned to carry out this work.

Timeframe

- 1.11 It is difficult to be precise until the training programme has begun, however it is likely to take at least four months to carry out a proper and rigorous consultation with individuals from these types of communities.

2. Domestic Violence

Background

- 2.1 Domestic violence is a key issue that is largely an issue hidden within private homes. National data and studies exist that explore issues around domestic violence.
- 2.2 The Best Value Review of Community Safety is to commence in January 2003. One of the areas under review will be the Council's approach to violent crime. As this review is a strategic or policy review there are no plans, at present, to consult with the victims or perpetrators of violent crimes such as individuals experiencing violence at homes.

Which individuals/groups to consult

- 2.3 As the Community Safety Best Value Review is concentrating on strategic or policy issues, the Committee may like to consider undertaking consultation with the victims and the perpetrators of domestic violence.
- 2.4 In depth interviews would be the best method to use to consult with these individuals. Victims of domestic violence could be accessed through organisations such as women's shelters. For perpetrators it could involve interviews in a prison setting.
- 2.5 The Committee may also wish to consider consulting the organisations within Southwark that represent the victims of violence. While this would not replace consulting with the individuals themselves, it may help to provide a wider context for understanding the issues within a Southwark context.

Potential Benefits

- 2.6 By undertaking this research/consultation, the Committee could examine how effective the programmes of the Council and its partners are in addressing the issues of domestic violence. Specifically, the Committee could examine if our services and programmes meet the needs of victims and if they are accessible for individuals. In addition, how they can be improved to make the services easier and a safer to access programmes?
- 2.7 Similarly, with perpetrators, the consultation could examine the services and programmes used to rehabilitate offenders. In both cases, desk research exploring best practice used in other countries, especially New Zealand, would benefit the overall consultation.

In-House or Commission

- 2.8 Work with these individuals will need to be carried out by a specialist external agency. The Consultation Unit is able to manage the project for the Committee but we do not have the specialist skills in-house necessary to carry out this type of consultation
- 2.9 This type of work should be properly tendered to ensure that the Committee has the opportunity to retain the best consultancy to carry out this work.

Timeframe

- 2.10 With a proper tendering process, the timeframe is likely to take three to four weeks to commission and then four to five months to carry out the consultation. This timeframe is likely to lengthen rather than shorten due to the challenges associated with consulting this segment of the population that would be categorised as hard-to-reach.

3. CCTV

Background

- 3.1 The Council and its partners have been successful in implementing many measures to address street and neighbour crime including CCTV. In addition to CCTV, the Council is currently piloting a Street Wardens scheme that aims to make the streets safer for the general public. An evaluation scheme is in place to monitor the outcomes of this pilot.
- 3.2 Councillors will recall that at their 4 December meeting Des Waters, Head of Street Scene, informed the Committee that he was preparing to take a new Strategy to the Executive, dealing with CCTV, within the next three months.
- 3.3 At Southwark, there is already a significant amount of information on fear of crime including their desire for CCTV that has been collected through the biennial residents' survey. In addition, the Council is currently surveying 600, 10-16 year olds, for the Council's Youth Public Service Agreement (PSA) on issues, including their desire for CCTV, as a means to make them feel safer.

Which individuals/groups to consult

- 3.4 The Council has already conducted a significant amount of consultation with residents and now young people about their desire for CCTV and wider issues of personal safety.
- 3.5 Perhaps, therefore, an approach concentrating on particular neighbourhoods that examine issues related to personal and property issues rather than just CCTV would provide new information about the residents needs and ideas related to safety in their neighbourhood. A series of focus groups concentrating on 3 to 5 neighbourhoods spread across the borough would enable a detailed exploration of these issues. Alternatively, people from these 3 to 5 neighbourhoods could be brought together for a 1-day workshop to explore the issues.

Potential Benefits

- 3.6 The Council holds a great deal of information collected through surveys about residents' views on CCTV and the broad issue of safety. These survey results permit the Council to understand the headline issues of concern, but it holds less qualitative data which would enable a deeper understanding of the issues at a local neighbourhood level.
- 3.7 Through conducting a series of focus groups and/or a workshop in neighbourhoods, the Committee could explore with residents not only their concerns about safety. Equally importantly this approach to consultation would collect residents' views on what is needed at a neighbourhood level to deal with safety issues.
- 3.8 However, with the Head of Street Scene putting a paper on CCTV and Personal Safety to the Executive during the next quarter it may be more opportune to conduct consultation in this area once this paper has been tabled.

In-House or Commission

- 3.9 The focus groups and/or workshop could be recruited and conducted by the Corporate Consultation Unit.

Timeframe

- 3.10 The process of recruiting the groups, carrying out the consultation and writing the report/presentation will take 6-8 weeks.

4. Gun Crime

Background

- 4.1 The issue of gun related crime is a key one in London. Both in terms of actual gun crime and fear of crime in the general public, the impact of gun crime is significant.
- 4.2 The Council has already collected a significant amount of information through various consultation processes. The biennial residents' survey provided good trend data on fear of crime, from a resident's point of view, back to 1979. The consultation conducted with young people, for the Council's response to the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry, provides their views on issues related to their perceived quality of life. Currently, 600, 10-16 year olds, are being surveyed as part of the Council's Youth Public Service Agreement (PSA) for their views on issues that include fear of crime and experiences of actual crime.
- 4.3 The Best Value Review of Community Safety is to commence in January and one of the areas under review will be the Council's approach to violent crime. This is a strategic or policy review so consequently there are no plans, at present, to consult with the victims or perpetrators of gun crime.

Which individuals/groups to consult

- 4.4 With the Community Safety Best Value Review concentrating on strategic or policy issues, the Committee may like to consider undertaking a separate consultation with the victims and the perpetrators of gun crime.
- 4.5 In depth interviews would be the best method for consulting with these individuals. Victims and/or their families could be accessed through victims rights organisations or, possibly, the police. For perpetrators it could involve interviews in a prison setting.
- 4.6 The Committee may also wish to consider consulting organisations within Southwark that represent the victims of violence. Although this would not replace consulting the individuals themselves, it may help to provide a wider context for understanding the issue within a Southwark context.

Potential Benefits

- 4.7 Through undertaking this research/consultation, the Committee could examine how effective are the programmes of the Council and its partners in addressing the issue of gun crime. Specifically, the Committee could examine Council services and programmes to ascertain if they meet the needs of victims.
- 4.8 Similarly, with perpetrators, the consultation could examine the services and programmes used to rehabilitate offenders. In addition, it could examine with the offenders the underlying reasons for gun crime and the "gun crime culture" in Southwark.

In-House or Commission

- 4.9 Work with these individuals will need to be carried out by a specialist external agency. The Consultation Unit is able to manage the project for the Committee, however, we do not have the specialist skills in-house necessary to carry out this type of consultation.
- 4.10 This type of work should be properly tendered to ensure that the Committee has the opportunity to retain the best consultancy to carry out this work.

Timeframe

- 4.11 With a proper tendering process, the timeframe is likely to take three to four weeks to commission and then four to five months to carry out the consultation. This timeframe is likely to lengthen rather than shorten due to the challenges associated with consulting this segment of the population that would be categorised as hard-to-reach.

5. Disabilities

Background

- 5.1 Providing accessible services and programmes for persons with disabilities is of increasing importance for the Council, especially in light of the Disabilities Act. Over the last two years the Council undertook a Best Value Review of its services for persons who are disabled. This included consultation with individuals who are disabled. The Council is now in the process of implementing the outcomes of this review.

Which individuals/groups to consult

- 5.2 The consultation could include the following:
- consulting with Southwark residents with different disabilities;
 - undertaking mystery shopping at Council Offices and the offices of our partners (i.e. police, hospitals); and
 - canvassing the views of organisations such as the Southwark Disablement Association
- 5.3 In terms of consulting with residents and organisations, a combination of focus groups and in depth interviews would enable a deeper understanding of the issues. With respect to mystery shopping, persons with disabilities could undertake this consultation. In addition, the Committee may wish to participate in this consultation directly through mystery shopping as a person in a wheelchair, for example

Potential Benefits

- 5.4 The consultation would permit a deeper understanding of the real barriers to service for residents who are disabled. The Committee may wish to consider delaying consultation with residents and organisations, representing the disabled, as many will have just been consulted as part of the Best Value Review of Disabilities (i.e. consultation fatigue).
- 5.5 The mystery-shopping element could be undertaken by the Committee on a rolling basis as a means to scrutinise the work of the Council in this area. The issue of consultation fatigue would not apply to mystery shopping.

In-House or Commission

- 5.6 The Corporate Consultation Unit (CCU) would be able to conduct the interviews and focus groups with persons who are disabled and with organisations representing the disabled. The CCU could also co-ordinate and manage the mystery shopping exercise.

Timeframe

- 5.7 The process of recruiting the groups, carrying out the consultation and writing the report/presentation would take six to eight weeks.