

Consultation and Engagement on Proposed East Kent Council

The proposal aims to:

- Ensure relevant stakeholders are aware of the key points of the proposal and have an opportunity to provide feedback in the manner of their choosing
- Obtain considered feedback from an informed and representative sample of the public in each district council area

Timetable

The suggestion is for the consultation period to run for eight weeks, from 24 March to 19 May 2017, in order to allow adequate time for responses to be analysed and findings to be reported.

Allowing the opportunity for KCC (to be treated as a separate stakeholder) to submit a late submission to allow for a debate following their period of purdah.

Outline Proposal

ORS have submitted the following proposal but recognise that we may not ultimately choose to commission all the items or prefer alternative approaches but it gives an indication of what is possible within the £60,000 budget already committed by the four councils.

ORS' recommended programme of activities, along with the cost of each element, is outlined below:

Design, setup, project management and advice
Workshop with Leaders and CXs
<p>This will be used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider options for a suitable consultation programme including the appropriate methodology for the representative survey • Explain the nature of consultation and how different findings may be interpreted • Begin to consider the content of the consultation questionnaire
Online/paper questionnaire open to all - design, setup and analysis of up to 2,000 responses
<p>An important requirement of the consultation exercise is to understand the detailed, considered views from informed residents, as well as understanding any wider strength of feeling, rather than only obtaining statistical results from residents across the districts.</p> <p>The main structured consultation questionnaire, available online and on paper for all who choose to participate - although not providing representative data - should be the primary mechanism to capture the views of a range of different stakeholder groups including residents, businesses, voluntary sector organisations etc. The effectiveness of the councils' awareness campaign will maximise the number of responses and provide an indication of the strength of feeling about the proposals.</p> <p>The questionnaire will need to be available for everyone with an interest in the possible future arrangements for configuring councils in East Kent (potentially residents and</p>

stakeholders from both inside and outside the districts) and will capture the type of stakeholder and in the case of individuals, their characteristics and postcode/district.

The questionnaire will outline the councils' proposed options, with supporting evidence and documentation, explain why the status quo is undesirable, and will then ask a series of open and closed questions about people's views in relation to the proposals, to try and gauge stakeholders support for the need to change and level of support for the proposals, as well as understanding concerns and how they might be mitigated.

Telephone survey - 1,000 interviews (250 per district of 12 minutes each

A robust representative survey of residents in each of the district council areas will be a reasonable way to understand how views differ by area, as well as by different sub groups of the overall population.

ORS suggest a quota controlled telephone survey targeting a sample size of 250 in each district council area and representative of the local population, with any discrepancies between the achieved sample and the local population characteristics (based on the most recent reliable secondary data for the relevant area, such as recent ONS mid-year population estimates and Annual Population Survey) corrected for by statistical weighting.

They would also make sure to take account of the sample design, to ensure that the achieved sample in each of the district areas has the appropriate amount of influence on overall results (based on proportions of the population). This will lead to overall results based on 1,000 interviews that would be accurate to within about $\pm 3\%$, whilst still providing a good indication of views within each sub area that will be accurate to around $\pm 6\%$ or better.

Stakeholder Forum

ORS anticipate that the councils already have a working relationship with town and parish councils across the areas, as well as a range of other local organisations with an interest in the proposals including residents' groups, community and voluntary sector organisations, the universities, partner organisations and businesses.

ORS have extensive experience of facilitating stakeholder workshops, including events with town and parish councils and reporting the findings, although it may well be appropriate for the councils to manage invitations to this event themselves, building on any existing links.

It has been assumed that the councils will organise and cover the cost of venues.

Four focus groups with residents

ORS suggest that consideration is given to engaging with small, randomly selected groups of residents in greater depth via deliberative events, offering the opportunity to understand the detailed and considered views from an informed selection of residents in each area. They propose that the deliberative workshops are carefully recruited across the four districts, and are broadly representative of the populations in each area. They would do this via random direct dial recruitment, and setting quotas, to ensure that residents from urban and rural areas, across a range of ages, social grades, employed and unemployed, ethnic minorities and disability etc. are present.

Each event would consist of around 10 participants and would be 1.5 to 2 hours long so that the councils' proposals can be presented and explained, in-depth exploration of feedback and concerns can be explored, and ways to mitigate these considered. They would be careful to ensure that everyone is given an opportunity to voice their opinions. They may include a before and after 'vote', which in the case of the recent Dorset councils workshops, generally showed an increase in the number of residents supporting a reduction in the number of councils, having listened to and understood the wider context and need to change.

It has been assumed that the councils will organise and cover the cost of venues.

Incentives for up to 40 participants at resident focus groups

Written report of the above activities (including interim summary)

For a complex project such as this ORS develop their reports part by part and would provide the councils with early and graduated feedback so that they have early information and can comment on and shape the report.

ORS would provide weekly updates on the progress of the research including levels of response to online and paper questionnaires.

They can produce a range of reports from simple graphical outputs through to extensive and in-depth interpretative reports. They do not make "one size fit all" but rather prefer to work with clients to produce bespoke outputs that enable the reports to meet individual requirements.

Executive summary of findings

Presentation by ORS Senior Executives to Leaders and CXs

ORS see the communication and presentation of results as a critical part of the overall research programme and ensure that results are accessible to a wide range of audiences. As such they are used to presenting information to Senior Management Teams and Elected Members.

They recognise the importance of this part of their service and normally only their Chairman, Managing Director, Head of Research Projects or Senior Research Executives will present the findings of studies.

As an alternative to the telephone and residents' focus groups, a quote was also requested for 1,000 face-to-face interviews (250 in each district). The advantage of a face-to-face survey is that it allows both a deliberative approach and provides a robust representative survey of residents..

ORS have also set out a number of additional costs that may also be required:

Standard template for capturing feedback at meetings in a consistent manner, to facilitate accelerated reporting

Using a standardised meeting record template would allow responses to be classified under key themes, leading to speedier and more structured reporting. ORS can provide a

suitable template and can provide resources to take notes if required. However, they are aware that budgetary constraints could mean it may be more appropriate for them to complete other activities.

Analysing and summarising up to 20 key responses which raise important issues (up to 5 of which are longer are more detailed and 15 of which are shorter single page)

Summarising further key responses (cost per response)

Additional project meetings - Chairman/CEO (including travel expenses)

Additional project meetings - Project Manager

Processing additional 1,000 paper questionnaire responses

Coding additional 1,000 questionnaire responses

Establishing and hosting a central repository of written responses, including processing and uploading 100 responses

ORS could collate all incoming letters and written responses in relation to the proposals. This would include any petitions or campaigns that relate to the proposals. It is often the case that fairly detailed and potentially lengthy responses are submitted from local organisations or other key stakeholders such as affected local authorities, and ORS is experienced at summarising these in order to make their arguments accessible to the readers of the overall consultation report and demonstrate to stakeholders that their arguments and views were taken into account.

The written responses can be stored and made available via ORS' client portal. This has been a valuable tool for some authorities, providing a single central repository and enabling collaboration, whilst also facilitating access for the key decision makers to all important responses, to demonstrate that they were taken into account in the decision making process.

As part of this process, it would be essential for ORS to maintain its status as an independent organisation and not promote the councils' proposals.

Processing 50 additional submissions for the central repository

Establishing and managing a freephone number and freepost address to deal with information requests and enquiries

ORS could provide and manage a freephone telephone line and freepost address for the consultation. In administering these services, ORS would record all contact and respond to requests appropriately. Of course, any queries requiring additional information would be forwarded to the councils; but based on experience elsewhere these are only a very small proportion of all contacts received.

Recommendations

1. *That, based on the proposal outlined above, ORS are appointed to undertake the consultation*

2. *That the consultation period runs from 24 March to 19 May to allow enough time for analysis*
3. *Inform Kent County Council of consultation process and explain extended deadline*

Next stage in the process

A scoping workshop is planned with Chief Executives and Leaders on 22 February to develop the preferred methodology and questionnaire design.