

Briefing Note – Consultation in Transportation Team

Quietway 2 - (Route 3 of the Cycle Grid)

Background:

As part of a cost saving exercise some 5 years ago within Public Realm, the Traffic & Engineering Service looked to save money by reducing the costs of consultation. This corresponded with a move to web based consultation, which resulted in drastically reduced costs for a similar response rate, of between 9% to 12%. This range is considered quite typical nationwide.

Prior to this time detailed A4 gatefold documents identifying the consultation details would be posted to all those properties within a consultation area. These would have appropriate return slips which could be detached and posted back with the response. These were expensive to produce and could cost approx. 50p each.

A greater response rate was preferred by Members to give assurance of the public opinion before making a decision. To assist in getting response rates of over 25% Council Officers would undertake a “door-knocking” exercise of those properties that had not responded to the consultation to gather opinion. This was time intensive and further added to the cost as was generally passed to external consultants.

Current Consultation Process:

As mentioned, the Traffic & Parking Service moved to a web-based consultation as a cost saving exercise. This still involves the postage of a leaflet to properties in the consultation area to inform residents/businesses there is a consultation in progress. However this takes the form of a simple A5 card with text on one side directing the consultee to the web page. It will identify the web link and may also include a QRL code.

The Traffic & Parking Service uses Survey Monkey for its web-based consultation. We are able to construct appropriate text to identify the scheme with tick box question and answers, plus space for general comment. Survey Monkey then offers the facility to download the responses in Excel format for review.

Again as mentioned, our experience it is normal to get around 9% to 12% response to a consultation that is posted out. This is considered to be the norm.

Survey Monkey has a facility to upload drawings however they have to be small drawing files (i.e. low resolution). This is fine for simple schemes, for instance maybe a zebra crossing. However for a scheme such as the Quietway consultation this was problematic. With 25 detailed drawings associated with the scheme we could not put them on survey Monkey. Therefore we opted to use the Council Website with a link to Survey Monkey.

The recent Quietway consultation followed our standard procedure in that we posted A5 notifications to local premises within the consultation area (over 14000) and collected responses via Survey Monkey. These cost £900 to print and £675 to deliver. However because of the number of detailed drawings associated with the scheme, these could not be

loaded on to Survey Monkey, so were placed on the appropriate Cycle Grid/ Quietway web page with a link to Survey Monkey through which comment could be made. The consultee basically needed to click between the web based drawing and survey monkey to review and place comment. Through this procedure we received 200 responses (just over 1%).

Officers considered this to be too low to offer as a response rate so took the decision to print more elaborate documents which were also delivered to all properties in the consultation area. This boosted the response rate to almost 600 about 4%. At a further cost of £1800 to print and deliver.

The consultation responses are still being reviewed but it is likely that despite the low response rate will be looking to recommend the scheme be implemented.

Waltham Forrest:

The Waltham Forrest Mini- Holland scheme is a £30M scheme looking to transform areas of Waltham Forrest to provide more cycle friendly streets. The quantity of funding has allowed Waltham Forrest to offer wholesale change to streets including streetscape design. In this instance the early interaction with residents and stakeholders, to understand their vision for their streets was an ideal use of the Commonplace web based system, to gather and share that information. Considering the available funding the cost of this stakeholder engagement was less significant.

Financial Implications:

The Council has, to reduce scheme admin costs, reduced its spend on consultation exercises. Currently the consultation process for schemes such as the Quietway is providing reasonable response rates for minimum cost. There are insufficient Council resources within the Transportation Team to provide any increased administration for consultations so it should be noted that any such changes would be outsourced to appropriate consultants.

Conclusion:

To provide a more interactive consultation experience for future Quietway schemes (similar to that provided for the Waltham Forrest Mini-Holland) Council Officers have already been in touch with Commonplace to establish what they could provide for the scheme and at what cost. The attached estimate has been provided and officers are investigating what benefits the increased cost would provide. Furthermore appropriate funding would need to be sought from the scheme sponsor, TfL.

Note - Accompanying document – Commonplace estimate for web based consultation.

Report author: Paul Taylor – Transport Engineering Manager

Tel: 020 7527 8038

E-mail: paul.taylor@islington.gov.uk