

# A fresh, creative approach to **Public Consultation**

**‘Nobody doubts the importance of engaging with residents, but public consultations are challenging, time-consuming and cost money’ (LGA)**

Doing them right not only saves time, money and the risk of challenge, but provides communities with a genuine opportunity to shape the services they use and the places they live.

**With a focus on co-production techniques, Paraffin ensures organisations not only meet their statutory obligations but arrive at better solutions.**

Since 2019, Paraffin has brought its 20+ years’ experience working with commercial clients using the best practice from [The Workshop Book](#) and [Supercharged Teams](#) and our own Project Bridge (public sector) methodology to facilitate public consultation events.

## How we do public consultation **differently**

1

Design a bespoke approach for every engagement, with active participation in mind.

2

Curate exercises and experience for constructive contribution.

3

Create time and space for people to feel heard.

4

Keep it simple, uncomplicated and jargon free, from verbal and written instructions to templates.

5

Engage existing community groups to help promote or cohost the event to maximise participation.

**Thank you very much to all involved for a great performance today ... it worked very well and took the sting out of any potential agitators, by giving them something [constructive] to do ... I am impressed and grateful.’**

Fire & Rescue Service Senior Leader



Click [here](#) to find out more about our recent work with the Fire & Rescue Service

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# CASE STUDY: Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service

## Public consultation on proposed changes to service delivery



Like many other public sector organisations in the UK, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service (HIWFRS) is facing financial challenges and must take steps to ensure its financial sustainability. By completing an Analysis of Risk, HIWFRS identified a number of resources that are not currently being used enough to justify the cost of running them and proposed three changes to the way the FRS is delivered on the Isle of Wight (IOW) to address the mismatch.

In May 2025, HIWFRS published a consultation document and launched an online survey. Additionally, HIWFRS commissioned Paraffin to design and facilitate two in-person events in the IOW communities most directly affected by the proposed changes.

The sessions were designed to ensure all attendees could contribute by completing a written exercise, participating in an open discussion, or both.

Participants came to the sessions with different expectations – some thought it was a protest, others came expecting to sign a petition against the proposals – but almost all were willing to stay and participate in the exercise and discussion. One participant went to the trouble of admitting afterwards that he thought the exercise was going to be a waste of time but could see the benefit of it having participated.

Overall, the impact was positive – the sessions were designed to provide residents with a voice and it very much achieved that objective!



## Outcomes & Impact

61

Participants  
attended the  
two sessions

90

Suggestions  
for improving  
the proposals

22

People  
participated  
in the  
discussions

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# CASE STUDY: Imagine Portsmouth 2040

Facilitated by Portsmouth City Council, Imagine Portsmouth is a collaborative project to create a new city vision: Imagine Portsmouth 2040. The project commenced in 2019 with a series of workshops, and in 2020 Paraffin was commissioned to design and deliver a Citizens' Conference that brought together a group of residents who were demographically representative of the people of Portsmouth.

The session was designed and facilitated by Paraffin to elicit participants' views on what makes Portsmouth unique, the things that inspire the city's pride and passion, and the things that the city needs to get right for the future.

Each group chose their three most important visions from the seven that emerged from the focus group learnings and built on their chosen visions to make them stronger

Conference participants' focus was on Environment, Transport, Health & Wellbeing and Education

Following the conference, Paraffin created a short film called [Imagine Portsmouth – Creating a vision for Portsmouth's future](#) – to tell the story of the day and summarise the outcomes.



Click the image to watch the film

## Outcomes & Impact

900

People applied to take part

100

People were selected as participants, with 90 attending on the day

10

Groups of nine residents shared their Top 5 Things to Get Right in Portsmouth



# CASE STUDY: Project Bridge

The Project Bridge methodology – itself co-created with Portsmouth's Voluntary & Community Sector – is an approach that brings together multiple stakeholders from public sector organisations, the voluntary and community sector, cross-party elected members and residents to build better solutions to their community's challenges and opportunities.

Based in Portsmouth, Paraffin has used its tried and tested approach to public consultation to co-produce an inspiring vision for the city ([Imagine Portsmouth 2040](#)), solve some of its most complex issues and provide better services to residents.

It has used the same approach in the wider region to facilitate constructive feedback on proposed changes to the Fire & Rescue Service, and in London with the Grenfell community.

- Rough Sleeping
- Young People at Risk of Exploitation
- Childhood Obesity
- Bringing People Home from Hospital
- Sitting Services
- Supporting Disabilities
- Reunification
- Building Safer Communities
- Volunteering
- Portsmouth City Council Customer Helpdesk
- Social Enterprises



# Working with Paraffin

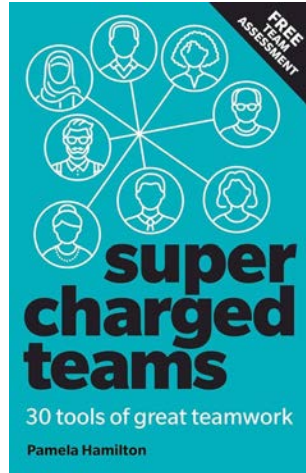
We create bespoke approaches, based on decades of best practice, to create engaging events and workshops that deliver positive outcomes.

Paraffin takes a completely transparent approach to costing, with each element of the project itemised and costed out to provide at-a-glance clarity on how your investment of public funds is being spent. Additionally, Paraffin only charges for time and expenses actually incurred.

We're always happy to share detailed session plans (appropriately anonymised) from previous projects, as an example – although we will always tailor our approach to suit your particular needs.

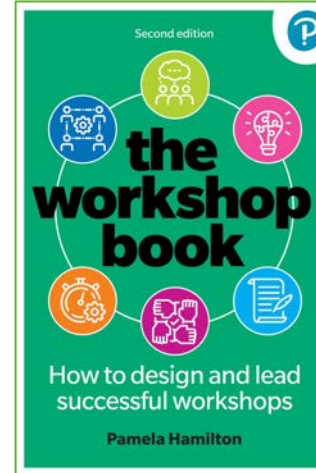
**Interested in finding out more about working with Paraffin on your public consultations?**

To set up a conversation about how Paraffin can support you with your public consultations, contact Nicola Waterman: [nicolaw@paraffin.ltd](mailto:nicolaw@paraffin.ltd)



**Chapter 8:**  
Dealing with conflict

**Chapter 10:**  
Engage your stakeholders



**Chapter 26:**  
Bring Communities together

**Chapter 23:**  
Co-create with consumers, customers and experts