

## HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Client Interview with Lisa Anderson – Research Officer, Chief Executive’s Dept

The Consultation Team at Hartlepool Borough Council collects information in a range of ways, including interview surveys, postal surveys, telephone surveys, discussion groups and mystery shopping.

They also run Hartlepool Borough Council’s citizen’s panel, Viewpoint, which consults with over 1200 Hartlepool residents three times a year. The people they consult vary from the general population of Hartlepool to different age groups, residents of particular areas, service users, interest groups, Council staff and partner organisations.

“The information collected helps to inform the Council when it is thinking about things like changing services, checking on how well services are performing and deciding what should be the Council’s priorities in the future. As well as carrying out and commissioning research, the team help and advise other departments in carrying out consultation work”, says Research Officer Lisa Anderson.

### THE E-CONSULTATION CHALLENGE

Hartlepool Borough Council responded to the ODPM’s (now called Communities and Local Government) call for local authorities to enable citizen participation and response to forthcoming consultations and decisions on matters of public interest through on-line facilities, such as web based systems, email and text.

Through providing e-consultation, Hartlepool Borough Council is improving engagement between councillors, the Council, staff and citizens.

“We needed a web based consultation system to consult with members of the public and Hartlepool Borough Council staff. Based on this we developed our user requirement specification and began our tendering process,” says Lisa Anderson.



“Initially, we created two consultation sites – one for Council staff and one for the general public – as it was important to us to be able to separate these two consultation groups. We’ve since added a third system for consultation on the Local Development Framework in 2007”.

## WHY HARTLEPOOL CHOSE INOVEM

“Through this tendering process we selected INOVEM, because they best met the user requirement specification.

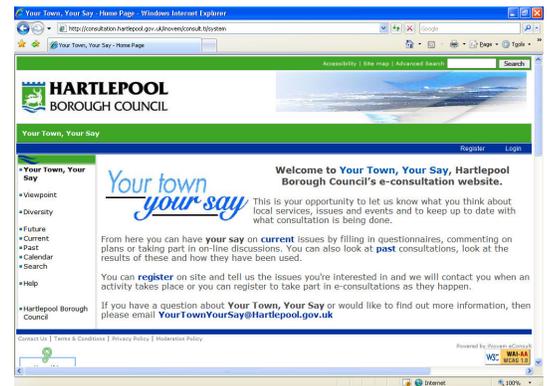
“Our key interests in INOVEM’s product were the facility to create on-line surveys, and to create a consultation database of all the authority’s consultation and involvement work. The potential to involve partner organisations in the future was also attractive.

## DEVELOPING THE SYSTEM

“Initially, we created two consultation sites – one for Council staff and one for the general public – as it was important to us to be able to separate these two consultation groups. We’ve since added a third system for consultation on the Local Development Framework in 2007.

Hartlepool piloted the system in the staff consultation site, through their annual employee survey of around three thousand Council employees. Traditionally this survey is carried out exclusively using paper based surveys. In 2005, they decided to try to use the e-consultation system and only issue paper surveys if requested.

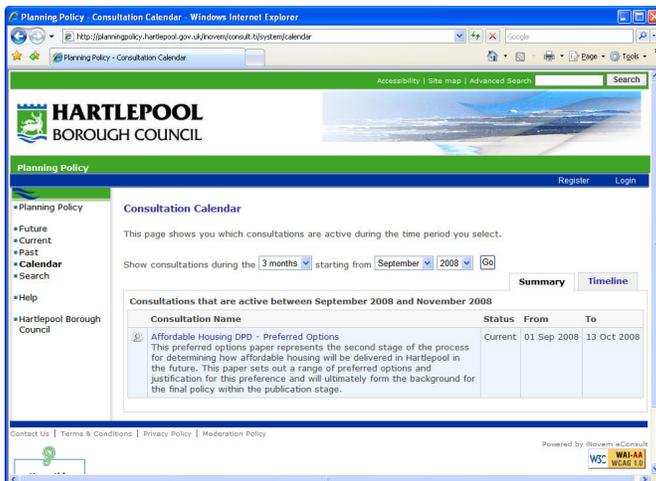
“Through this consultation we learned a great many lessons. We learned that although the eConsultation system is an excellent tool to aid consultation, it should mainly be used alongside other consultation methods as an alternative way for people to let us have their views.



“For example, it should not be used instead of paper-based surveys unless your consultation audience calls for it. Since then, we have successfully carried out consultations where the eConsultation system is used as an alternative method for people to let us have their views.

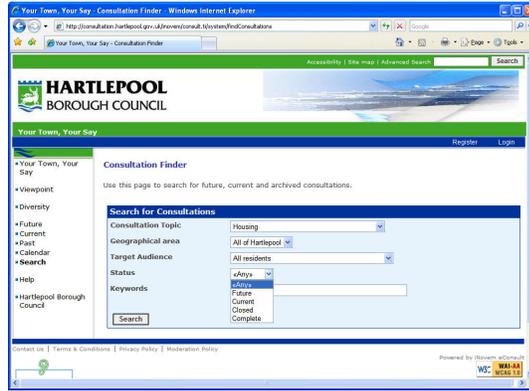
“An example of this is Viewpoint (the Council’s citizen panel), where an increasing number of Viewpoint members are filling out their Viewpoint surveys through the eConsultation database.

“We also began the Council’s consultation database by uploading past Viewpoint surveys, reports, results and newsletters. We now find it easy to direct people to past Viewpoints, to search and categorise them, and we find the download counts useful in knowing how many people are accessing Viewpoint or other consultation documents.”



## THE RESULTS WE'VE ACHIEVED TO DATE

“So far, on both our staff and public consultation databases, close to 1,500 people have registered to take part in on-line consultations”, says Lisa.



“Also, over 100 consultations have been set up on the staff and public consultation sites. These consultations range from on-line surveys that people can or have taken part in, to descriptions of public meetings such as ‘Talking with Communities’ or past consultations the Council have carried out.”

## WHERE NEXT?

“We will continue a recruitment drive to encourage residents and staff to register on the eConsultation system and we will continue to train the right individuals within the Council to set up their own on-line consultations.

“We’re still working towards the eConsultation system being an on-line directory of all Council-led consultation.”

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## LET'S GET TOGETHER

To find out more about INOVEM eConsultation Systems, Stakeholder & Community and Project & Partnership Portals, call INOVEM today on +44 (0)1488 648 468 or email [info@inovem.com](mailto:info@inovem.com)

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