

May 2023

A monthly summary of consultation matters by Consultation Guru – Rhion Jones.

# Consultation Catch-up



In many ways, this year’s local elections amount to the biggest public consultation exercise for years, but voting is a very different process. Consultation is not just a vote, Even though candidates espouse policies, we vote for an individual, knowing that political aspirations often collide with the practical realities of public administration.

In the coming months, I want to focus on helping elected members and senior officials become more sure-footed on public engagement and consultation. When to use the one ... and when to rely on the other. Recent blogs and [videos](#) have explored these themes and I now look forward to working with real, live audiences to disseminate *best practice*, motivate, and, hopefully, inspire.

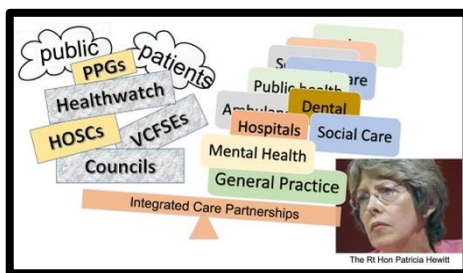
## Best of the Blogs

### Why May elections victors need to be the most consultative Councillors EVER



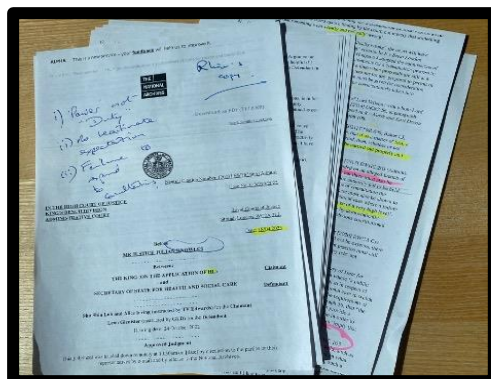
Busy times ahead for thousands of local election candidates in England. So, here's a reflection on what lies ahead for those who win their seats. They face hugely challenging decisions and, unless they're careful, may witness 'civic pride' being overtaken by 'civic panic'. To avoid this, I recommend an investment in better public engagement and consultation, and provide three compelling reasons why ....

### The Hewitt Review re NHS in England: Little or nothing on Public and Patient involvement!



I fear that we've just missed an opportunity to beef up patient and public involvement for Health & Social Care in England. I've been reading the Hewitt Review, and although there are many good things in it, the largely technical recommendations may not be enough. It suggests an enhanced role for HOSCs and a National Health, Wellbeing & Care Assembly ... For true local accountability, this is very disappointing

### Government dither and poor consultation practice exposed in Care Act (2014)



#### High Court judgment

Occasionally you see a High Court judgment which initially seems unimportant. Then you spot something - a hidden truth - with significant implications. This story of legislative confusion should help policy-makers and policy-influencers understand the pitfalls - in this case notably that once you commit to a consultation, it's wrong to hide behind closed doors for years and exclude the stakeholder community from further input.

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## Instant insights

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- The most newsworthy consultation story of last week was the publication of the Gambling reform proposals, and the accompanying public consultation – called [High Stakes: Gambling Reform for the digital age](#). [Fraser Henderson](#) has already commented upon it, pointing out that it may struggle to attract *consultees* that are most impacted. I'm interested in the politics of this issue, as the principal criticism of the whole exercise has been the long delays, during which the Gambling industry has done little to reduce the risks and the harms it causes. In the House of Lords on 4<sup>th</sup> May, there was concern that this consultation may make legislation impossible before a General Election, with worries that an incoming 2024 administration might struggle to find legislative time for the issue. Another [Politics of Consultation](#) case study.
- My latest article for **Tractivity** has been published. In "[Understanding the dynamics of community stakeholders](#)", I draw upon many years of studying the subject, and material used in the Consultation Institute's Training course on '*Managing and Measuring Public engagement*' – a subject which I believe is in need of a revival to cope with net-zero policies at local levels. **Tractivity** has also published this [short video](#) in which I explain the complexities ...
- I am following the legal challenge by the Trades Unions to the Government's 2022 regulations making it easier for employers to circumvent industrial action by using temporary staff – something outlawed by a Labour Government in 2003. One of the arguments is that there should have been a consultation. Instead, the Government is relying upon a 2015 consultation, and arguing that the outputs of a more recent exercise would be no different. The Unions disagree. The judgment will be interesting!
- An emerging issue is the encouragement of what's called a **15-minute city** - urban professor Carlos Moreno's idea of a human-centric neighbourhood in which all one needs is within easy reach. This is starting to be implemented in European cities like Paris and Barcelona. It has been stretched to 20-minutes in **Scotland** where they launched a [consultation](#) last week, and I predict many UK local authorities will explore the concept; [Norfolk Councillors](#) showed an interest long before recent elections. This is a classic case where precision and detail matters because critics are already lining up with misinformation and scaremongering, warning of a dystopian future where lockdown-like, car journeys will be banned and even the disabled urged to walk to local services! There should be sufficient and high-quality consultations on any proposals of this kind.

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## Straws in the wind

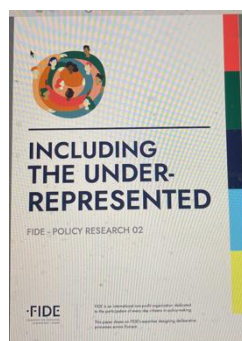
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## The Reading List

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FIDE, the [Federation for Innovation in Democracy in Europe](#), which has just held its Spring School on Climate Citizens' Assemblies in Milan, is becoming a really influential body. It has just produced an excellent paper called [Including the Under-represented](#). This considers different methods and strategies to increase the inclusion of underrepresented groups in two particular aspects of deliberative democracy - recruitment and the deliberation itself. It's another contribution towards the much-needed development of effective standards in public engagement.

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