

Richmond Council's Approach to Consultation

Briefing for Policy and Performance Review Board May 2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This briefing note is designed to provide an introduction to consultation in Richmond and give an overview of the way in which the Council carries out public consultations, informal surveys and online engagement.

2. What is the difference between community engagement and consultation?

- 1.2. Community engagement is *'a broad and ongoing process of sharing information with the community and seeking their feedback to improve services and the local area'*. The Council engages with its communities using three distinct methods:
- **INFORMING** - Keeping the community informed about services, issues and initiatives in their local area
 - **PARTICIPATING** – Involving the community in discussions or activities to share ideas and concerns as part of the decision-making process
 - **COLLABORATING** - Working in partnership with the community, deciding and acting together and taking shared responsibility for the outcomes
- 1.3. Consultation is one element of community engagement. It sits under the umbrella of **PARTICIPATING** and is just one of the tools the Council uses to listen to residents, businesses and other stakeholders about their views on issues that may impact them. Making sure people have a voice and involving those who are most affected leads to better, more informed decisions.
- 1.4. The Council's **Consultation Team** sits within the Chief Executives Group in the Resident Engagement Service. It is responsible for advising and supporting teams across the Council to carry out robust consultation activity such as survey, ensuring that legal and best practice standards are met. The focus of the Consultation Team is on the **PARTICIPATING** aspects of engagement. The team helps colleagues avoid common pitfalls that could damage the Council's reputation and/or lead to legal challenge. The Consultation Team are qualified researchers and certified members of the Market Research Society, bound by the MRS Code of Conduct when conducting research. The team are also members of The Consultation Institute, a consultation best practice organisation, which promotes high-quality public and stakeholder consultation. The Consultation Team is responsible for the Council's two online corporate engagement platforms [Citizen Space](#) and CommonPlace ([Night Time Strategy](#)). The team also has a corporate programme of consultation including managing the Council's Annual Residents Attitude Survey and Employee Survey.
- 1.5. The Council's **Community Engagement Team** also sits within the Chief Executive's Group but in the Stronger and Safer Communities Service, its focus is more in terms of the **COLLABORATING** aspects of engagement. But the team do use all of the three methods above and provide a link between the Council and its local residents and stakeholders. The team works on the ground with local groups, and helps colleagues across the Council engage with the community - through face-to-face conversations, pop-up and drop-in sessions, public meetings, workshops and focus groups.

- 1.6. The **Communications Team** again is within the Chief Executive's Group but in the Climate Change, Policy and Communications Service. The Communications Team is responsible for most of the work **INFORMING** the community about the Council, its services and what is happening in the local area. They also promote all consultation and engagement activities to ensure maximum awareness and participation.
- 1.7. All three teams work very closely together to support Council activities that span across the Community Engagement spectrum of Informing, Participating and Collaborating. This ensures the Council has a robust approach. It is also essential to ensure that for each activity the Council is engaging with its residents and service users on that there is clarity in terms of the type of engagement (Informing, Participating or Collaborating), as each have different methods and very importantly **different level of involvement and influence**. This clarity is critical for setting and managing expectations from the outset.

3. When does the Council consult with residents and other stakeholders?

- 3.1. Councils sometimes have a statutory requirement to consult their residents and stakeholders, for example around planning and development. Statutory consultations are bound by legal requirements and can have strict rules surrounding how they should be conducted.
- 3.2. Non-statutory reasons that the Council might run a consultation exercise include:
 - To improve policy and decision making
 - To gather information, ideas and suggestions
 - To ensure concerns are listened to and considered
 - To encourage greater participation in the Council's activities
 - To shape Council activities around residents' needs and aspirations
 - To ensure residents and other stakeholders have a voice and are listened to
 - To measure residents' satisfaction with the Council, its services and the local area
- 3.3. Non-statutory consultations have no legal status but enable councils to hear from a wide spread of voices within their community. Some consultations, such as the regular Residents Survey, provide the Council with feedback from a representative cross-section of the population.

4. What forms of consultation does the Council undertake?

- 4.1. The corporate Consultation Team carries out the following types of activity on behalf of colleagues across the Council:
- 4.2. **Formal public consultation** - Formal consultation is a regulated process to gather people's views when the Council is considering a proposal to develop or change elements of services it provides. They can be statutory or non-statutory. Consultations are not a vote; however, the results are an important part of the information the Council considers when making decisions.
- 4.3. Formal public consultation must abide by general principles derived from case law as to how consultations should be conducted. Those principles, known as the 'Gunning Principles', are as follows:
 - Consultation should occur when proposals are at a formative stage
 - Consultations should give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit intelligent consideration
 - Consultations should allow adequate time for consideration and response

- There must be clear evidence that the decision maker has considered the consultation responses, or a summary of them, before taking its decision
- 4.4. The Council is committed to these best practice principles and endeavours where possible to consult residents and other stakeholders whenever a decision will directly affect them and when they might have a reasonable expectation that they should be involved.
- 4.5. **Informal public consultations and surveys** - In addition to formal consultations, the Council carries out various surveys and informal engagement on a range of issues, to ensure there is an ongoing conversation with those who live and work in our borough.
- 4.6. These activities include proposals and projects from teams across the Council – so far this year we have already consulted and engaged the public on the following:
- Proposed zebra crossings
 - Reduced chemical weeding trials
 - Controlled parking zones
 - Facilities and activities for a new group exercise studio
 - An all-abilities outdoor gym
 - Public realm improvement proposals
 - Bikehangar locations
 - Establishing a community food growing area

5. Core activity of the Consultation Team

- 5.1. The Consultation Team since 2010 has carried out over 1,400 consultation projects. Table 1 below sets out the number of projects and the level of responses received in more detail over the last four years. On average the Consultation Team supports over 80 projects a year that are run through our Citizen Space platform, averaging around 13,000 responses annually. The Consultation Team provides expert advice and guidance to colleagues across the organisation and ensures each project meets the highest quality standards in terms of robustness of approach and methodology, to safeguard the reputation of the Council and avoid any potential legal challenges.
- 5.2. Around 65% of the projects the Consultation Team supports each year are environment-related, ranging from Traffic and Transport, Controlled Parking Reviews or public realm consultations. These can be targeted on specific streets or may be reviews impacting a larger area such the Teddington/Strawberry Hill Parking Study that attracted over 3,400 responses or the East Sheen parking consultation that received over 2,000 responses. While more targeted projects such as the recent Youth Engagement in Parks and Open Spaces consultation received over 230 responses. As mentioned above the Consultation Team support projects across the Council, from the Childhood Vaccination Survey to the Richmond upon Thames Community Safety Survey, Public Space Protection Order consultations to the Castelnau Parade Survey.

Table 1: Richmond Consultation Activity over the last four years

Year	Number of consultations projects	Number of responses	Largest response
2023/24	92	12,283	- Castlenau Parade Survey – over 800 responses - East Sheen Parking Review - over 590 responses - Teddington Zone T6 Consultation - over 520 responses - Ham Parade – over 500 responses
2022/23	60	11,186	- East Sheen parking consultation – over 2,000 responses - Richmond upon Thames Leisure Centre Survey – around 1,300 responses - Access to sexual and reproductive health services survey around 550 responses
2021/22	98	13,648	- Consultation on extending the Rosslyn Road Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) – over 1,300 responses. - Ham and Petersham Walking and Cycling Survey over 800 responses - Food Waste Campaign Tracker – around 700 responses
2020/21	83	15,050	- Several Twickenham Riverside consultations – over 3,700 responses - Teddington/Strawberry Hill Parking Study – over 3,400 responses - Hampton Parking Study Consultation - over 1,900 responses

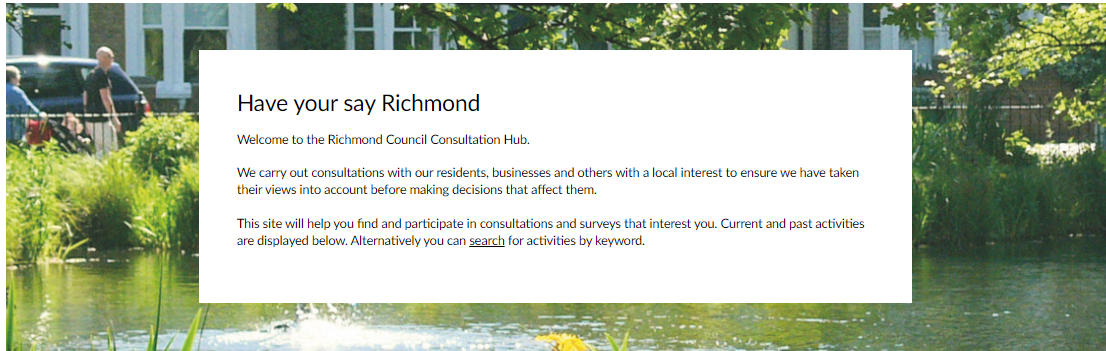
6. Online engagement activities

6.1. As technology continues to develop, the Council is keen to adopt innovative techniques to consult and engage with our communities. Our two corporate consultation and engagement portals allow us to:

- Enable more people to have their say, at their convenience
- Share plans and proposals with the public
- Build trust in the Council and increase the transparency of its activities
- Complement public meetings and events with online participation opportunities
- Reach a wide range of diverse groups, stakeholders and communities
- Improve the user experience for those sharing their views with the Council
- Use interactive maps so respondents can pin comments to particular geographical areas
- Adhere to strict data security standards to ensure everyone has safe access to make meaningful contributions
- Collect valuable feedback to help us understand views and concerns to feed into decision-making
- Ensure that participation activities are accessible to those unable to attend in person events

6.2. The first of our two corporate consultation portals is our [Citizen Space Portal](#). This provides the residents and staff with a central location where they can view current and past consultations and results and outcomes can be published. The tool is also essential for the Consultation Team to ensure consultation activity is co-ordinated and planned and that we minimise over-consultation or consultation fatigue. There is a growing expectation from residents for Councils to have such portals. It has an online survey functionality that ensure a consistent and high-quality experience for our residents taking part in such activities, and analytical features that enable the Consultation Team to undertake robust analysis of the results. Some screen shots of the portal are set out below:

Front page of the Citizen Space Portal



Closed activities

<p>Dean Road Open Space – Community Food Growing 2024</p> <p>The London Borough of Richmond's Parks team is consulting on a proposal to establish a Community Food Growing area at Dean Road Open Space, Hampton. This would be operated by local volunteers and community groups who have expressed interest in supporting this initiative. Food growing...</p>	<p>Closed 2 April 2024</p>
<p>Richmond Bikehangars Consultation 2024</p> <p>Richmond Council is seeking views on the introduction of up to 41 additional bikehangars throughout the borough. There are currently 53 bikehangars in Richmond. The introduction of additional bikehangars will help to alleviate some of the demand for the existing units while also improving...</p>	<p>Closed 29 March 2024</p>
<p>Hampton Wick Controlled Parking Zone Review</p> <p>This consultation has now been extended to Sunday 17th March 2024. In 1987, the Council implemented the Hampton Wick Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ), Zone X, operating 8.30am to 6.30pm, Monday to Saturday. Please click here to see a map of the zone. In the 36 years since the...</p>	<p>Closed 17 March 2024</p>
<p>Reduced chemical street weeding trials</p> <p>As part of our commitment to the environment, Richmond Council is committed to reducing our environmental...</p>	<p>Closed 15 March 2024</p>

Example of results published on the Citizen Space Portal



Richmond upon Thames Leisure Centres Survey

Results updated 12 Jul 2023

At the end of last year the Council ran an online survey to find out what you think about our leisure centres and exercising. This work was carried out as part of the Leisure, Sport and Physical Activity Strategy that is currently in development.

We'd like to say a big thank you for all those who took the time to give us their feedback. We had a great response rate of 1,295 and this information has been key to the development of the strategy.

In addition to receiving your feedback we also held focus groups with young people, inactive people and parent carers. All three of these groups are currently underrepresented in our leisure centres.

Please click the links below for the analysis reports of both the online survey and the focus groups.

Along with the consultation results we have been busy working on the next steps of the strategy work. We are aiming to present the work so far to the Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports Committee in the Autumn.

Thank you for taking time to be part of this engagement.

[Richmond Leisure Centre Survey Report](#)

[Richmond Leisure and Physical Activity Focus Group Report](#)

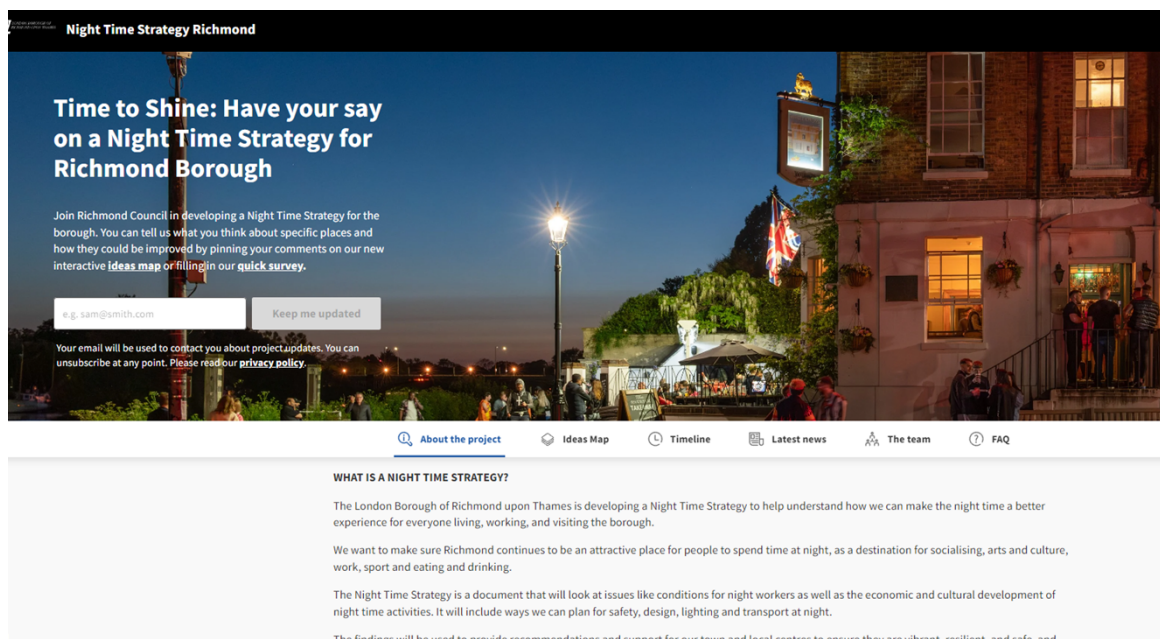
Closed 25 Nov 2022
Opened 26 Oct 2022

Contact

For any queries or to request a copy of the survey in an accessible format please email:
consultation@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk

- 6.3. The second of the Council's corporate engagement platforms is Commonplace. It is an innovative platform that is designed to reach communities, engage them in conversation and collaborate on future ideas. It is a more informal platform with very different functionality – it has a wider established CommonPlace community we connect to; its email campaign management and social media functionality help increase public participation in projects by driving community members to our site.
- 6.4. CommonPlace is particularly adept at reaching residents who would not normally engage in Council consultation or engagement activities, such as younger people, working age residents etc. It enables targeted campaigns that can be based on location, interests, demographics and channels to seek a balanced community view. The site is engaging and ideal for ongoing community discussions and place-based engagement that gives people the chance to interact and share their views and ideas. The platform's Ideas Map allows users to drop a pin and make comments which other respondents are able to see and add a like tag or build on the idea or comments already left.
- 6.5. The functionality of the site also allows complex material to be broken up and displayed in a visual and engaging way. It also seamlessly fuses online and face to face engagement and there are sections of the site dedicated to offline or face-to-face engagement. There are some screen shots below from our recent Night-Time Strategy engagement project, this was one of the first of its kind in London,

Front Project Page for the Richmond Night Time Strategy Consultation on CommonPlace



Night Time Strategy Richmond

Time to Shine: Have your say on a Night Time Strategy for Richmond Borough

Join Richmond Council in developing a Night Time Strategy for the borough. You can tell us what you think about specific places and how they could be improved by pinning your comments on our new interactive [Ideas map](#) or filling in our [quick survey](#).

Your email will be used to contact you about project updates. You can unsubscribe at any point. [Please read our privacy policy](#).

[About the project](#) [Ideas Map](#) [Timeline](#) [Latest news](#) [The team](#) [FAQ](#)

WHAT IS A NIGHT TIME STRATEGY?

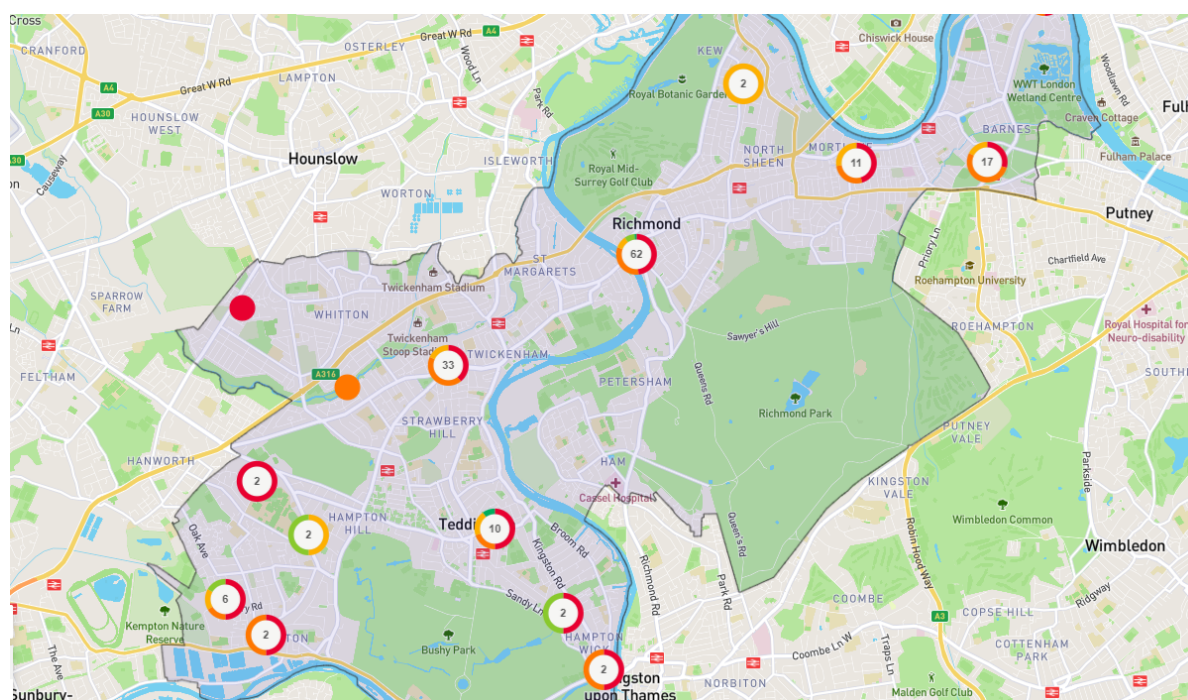
The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames is developing a Night Time Strategy to help understand how we can make the night time a better experience for everyone living, working, and visiting the borough.

We want to make sure Richmond continues to be an attractive place for people to spend time at night, as a destination for socialising, arts and culture, work, sport and eating and drinking.

The Night Time Strategy is a document that will look at issues like conditions for night workers as well as the economic and cultural development of night time activities. It will include ways we can plan for safety, design, lighting and transport at night.

The findings will be used to provide recommendations and support for our town and local centres to ensure they are vibrant, resilient, and safe, and

Ideas Map for the Richmond Night Time Strategy Consultation on CommonPlace



6.6. **Staff surveys** – In addition to the consultation activity with residents, the Consultation Team is also responsible for carrying out and commissioning staff surveys. The most recent formal Employee Survey was carried out in Autumn 2023 and was run for us by Ipsos Karian & Box. This survey asks staff to answer a range of questions on topics such as their role, team, health and wellbeing, equalities and leadership. The data provides the organisation with a full picture of staff engagement and satisfaction, which can be tracked through time. Surveys are also run directly by the Consultation Team with staff to help the organisation understand their views on topics such as hybrid and agile working, digital technology and the new values.

7. Accessibility and inclusion

7.1. As outlined in its Digital Strategy, the Council is clear that an increasingly digital approach will be one of the enablers to achieving its goals, and that becoming more digital is key to better, more efficient service delivery – for service users, the organisation and for the community as a whole.

7.2. However, it is recognised that some people are not able or do not want to engage digitally, and it is vital that we provide opportunities for people to participate in the way that they choose. All Council consultations include the option to request materials in hard copy and other accessible formats. Public events often complement online engagement to maximise participation. Where groups being consulted are likely to have English as an additional language there is the option to provide materials translated into the relevant languages. Our consultation software adheres to the required accessibility standards and can be accessed by those using screen readers.

7.3. Where groups of people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act may be particularly affected by Council proposals, consultations will identify who the groups are and how they will be involved. Equality Impact Needs Assessments are included in the consultation material where the Council has considered the impact of proposals on these groups, so that respondents are aware of these and can make an informed contribution.

7.4. The Consultation Team monitors equalities data from corporate consultations and regularly compares this with the borough-wide statistics to identify who we are hearing from and what gaps we can identify. This ensures that particular actions can be applied to increase participation from under-

represented groups, and the team works in tandem with Communications and Community Engagement Teams to address any issues.

- 7.5. Equalities questions asked as standard in Council Consultations are as far as possible aligned with Census questions and agreed with the Council's Policy Team.

8. Information security and data protection

- 8.1. The consultation software used by the Council meets all relevant information security standards to ensure respondent data is stored securely. The Consultation Team stores and shares all consultation feedback in line with data protection legislation requirements, and has robust records management, retention and disposal policies agreed with the Council's Information Governance Team.
- 8.2. The Council is serious about data protection and confidentiality in terms of the publishing of consultation results. All consultation responses are analysed and reported in line with Market Research Society guidance. Where consultations are anonymous, only aggregated, anonymised results are published on the Council consultation webpages. Small numbers are never disclosed where this could lead to respondents being identified. Where online engagement activities feature publicly posted responses, those visiting the site are clearly advised that their comments will not be confidential. These kinds of projects are designed so that people can see what other respondents have shared and help build a transparent community conversation. However personal data (such as respondents' postcodes and demographic data) is stored securely within the software and is accessible only to the Council.
- 8.3. The Consultation Team was audited in 2023 and 2024 as part of the ISO recertification audit and received extremely positive feedback on its processes and protocols from the external auditor. The Council was subsequently recommended for recertification.

9. Transparency and closing the feedback loop

- 9.1. Wherever possible, consultations will be published on the Council's consultation webpage so that residents and stakeholders can find information in one place about activities and how to participate. (Targeted consultations restricted to particular areas or groups will not always be visible on the public site)
- 9.2. Consultations are supported by communications activity to maximise awareness and participation. Depending on the project these may include press releases, e-newsletters, social media posts, letters, emails, posters and leaflets.
- 9.3. Consultations will include as much information as possible about what is being consulted on and why, any options that are being (or have been) considered, who is being consulted, how to participate, events being held, the timetable for the consultation and next steps / decision-making process. Although there is usually no statutory requirement in terms of length of consultation period, the Council will allow sufficient time for respondents to consider the material and submit an informed response. Every effort is made to avoid running consultations over holiday periods, however where this is unavoidable the Council will try to extend the consultation period accordingly.
- 9.4. Once consultations have closed, and depending on the nature of the project and the relevant decision-making process, a summary of results and next steps will be published on the Council website. This may be on the original consultation page, the service webpages, or the Council's decisions page. This closing of the feedback loop builds trust and ensures that respondents can see how their views were taken into account during the decision-making process. Set out below are a number of examples of the feedback and outcomes from consultation activities undertaken by the Council:

- [A305 Twickenham Road and Staines Road \(Apex Corner to Sixth Cross Road\): Proposed 20mph and complementary speed reduction measures](#) – the results are published on the Councils Consultation Hub. Following consideration of the feedback received, a decision was made not to proceed with the introduction of a 20mph speed limit at this time, however the proposed other changes are going ahead.
- [Proposed School Safety Measures in Kings Road, Richmond](#) – the results are published on the Councils Consultation Hub. The results of this consultation were not favourable, mainly due to the resultant loss of residents parking. In conjunction with ward councillors, it was agreed that officers would revisit the design with a view to undertaking a further consultation in the Spring.
- [Consultation on proposed greening in Powder Mill Lane / Hanworth Lane, Whitton](#) – the results are published on the Councils Consultation Hub. The designs are now subject to some minor changes following a Road Safety Audit – this is an example of other elements that need to be taken into account during the decision-making process.
- [Oak Avenue - Proposed Pedestrian Crossing](#) – the Councils Consultation Hub links to the decision report, which notes that the proposal was consulted on as a signalised pelican crossing, but as a result of comments received to the consultation this has now been changed to a zebra crossing.