



## Polls, Referenda and Ballots

### **What are...Polls, Referenda and Ballots?**

These three methods are really one and the same, commonly seeking Yes/No responses on a single question. Variations of this methodology include the voting of the whole target population, the voting of a representative group and/or voting followed by information giving and a further round of voting. These are used as a way of establishing people's opinions on an option, or range of options.

These methods will provide you with a quick snap-shot of opinion; they will not provide you with the reasons behind decisions.

### **Why use this technique?**

Provide a clear choice of Yes/No and will provide statistics preferring one preference or another.

### **When should you use it?**

This type of consultation should be used when looking for decisions on options or choice of candidates and you are prepared to accept the outcome.

### **What type of information does it produce?**

Quantative data.

## **What are the advantages?**

- It is a good way to get a quick response on simple issues
- It uses common methodology
- It has a recognised status
- It gives you a clear cut decision
- It is an opportunity for many people to be involved with little effort.
- It is easy to participate in
- It is a confidential process e.g. uses secret ballots
- The view of a large number of people can be obtained efficiently and relatively quickly
- Returns can be given by post, by telephone or minicom and electronically
- On a small scale it can be low cost

## **What are the disadvantages?**

- It can be indecisive (i.e. tied result)
- It can be costly to organise/ administer
- There is no opportunity to probe reasons
- There are small numbers participating may undermine outcome
- It may oversimplify the issues by asking for a yes/no response
- Yes/no campaigns can be heated and divisive
- It can only be used for single issues that require little explanation

## **What are the costs?**

- They will depend of the size of the exercise. If it is on a County-wide scale would prove very costly
- You may need individuals to staff “polling station” or carry out street interviews.
- If done using the internet costs can be minimal.

## **What are the practicalities?**

- You need to be sure the issue lends itself to such a straight choice
- You must be easy for population to participate in
- You must be secret and confidential
- You must be of sufficient interest to generate response
- You need to take care must be taken that the campaigns are not hijacked.