



Talking Rubbish

A novel approach to deliberative research

What's it all about?

- Consulting with the public can be tricky; consulting with them on involved topics such as residual waste solutions can be even trickier
- For consultation to be meaningful people need to
 - understand a range of complex issues
 - use informed decision-making to apply order to the issues

Phoenix Market Research & Consultancy has developed a successful approach to help you make the most of your consultation budget

Our approach

- We asked members of the public to participate in discussions about residual waste solutions, the issues that Councils must consider and the relative importance of those issues

What's the point of consultation when people don't understand the issues?

- By using a **deliberative approach** people have the time to understand the issues they are being consulted on
- By using a **trade-off process** people can appreciate the real decision-making dilemmas faced by Councils

What did we find out?

- Current perceptions and opinions about residual waste and recycling
- The factors the public consider most important and less important when considering solutions for residual waste
- The change, if any, in perceptions and opinions after people have been informed as part of the deliberative process
- The effect of procurement stage, location, social engagement & demographics on knowledge and attitudes
- The impact of trade-off vs. traditional importance scoring

How can this research help you?

Techniques

- Apply new solutions by adapting established research techniques

Insight

- Elicit public preferences and key points of concern

Actions

- Discover successful messages and approaches to inform the public

Solutions

- Understand what drives public opinion



The finer detail

Why deliberative research?

Useful when a topic is highly technical
as well as emotive

- Need to devote as much time to sharing information as to eliciting opinions
- Can include many competing and conflicting factors for Councils – and members of the public – to weigh up
- Requires considerable moderator and expert input

Why use trade-off?

Although a harder task for participants...
... and requires higher levels of engagement

- Presents choices between pairs of issues
- Mimics the real decision-making process by making the choices explicit
- Quantifies the hierarchy of importance of factors

How did we do it?

18 Focus Groups, 2½ hours each

Locations selected to include councils at different stages in procurement
Participants recruited as hi/ lo social engagement in urban/ not urban areas

Step 1

- Initial briefing: verbal briefing, video, Q&A
- Spontaneous discussion of the issues

Step 2

- Information sharing: the options, issues & factors
- Further discussion

Step 3

- Trade-off questionnaire of 13 detailed selection criteria

Plus

- A very short pre/post questionnaire: trade-off between 3 high-level criteria; Cost, Suitability and Environment

Selection Criteria

These criteria are typical of those used by Councils

High-level	Detailed	Description
Environment	Local Environment & Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual impact, Odour and noise, Traffic and health, Local community benefits, Impact on local economy
	Wider Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable actions/measures; Continuous environmental improvement; Impact on wider environment (pollution, climate etc.)
	Collection Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on collection services; Other waste contracts; Partnership working
	Compliance & Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance with regulations and emissions; Monitoring service impacts; Data management
	Energy Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy efficiency; Electricity markets; Heat recovery
Suitability	The Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead time; Life span
	Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in waste; Improvements to the system
	Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changing waste legislation in UK and EU; Other legislation changes
	Materials Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guaranteed and proven markets for material products recovered or by-products
	Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land status; Planning risk; Centralised or dispersed solution
Cost	Track Record of the Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial and performance record of the technology
	Waste Management Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial track record; Capacity of the company
	Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial cost to build and operate (£)



What we discovered

Very limited awareness of waste strategies

- None aware of or involved in public consultation on waste
 - even those where new collection regimes had been implemented had little understanding of reasons for changes
- High awareness that landfill used for residual waste
 - but few aware that alternatives required

N.B. All knowledge very local... My street, My district (or nearby)

primarily from local media sources: TV, local paper, radio

Recycling widely accepted by the public

- 97% engaged in recycling
- Differences between districts undermine confidence in rationale for collection and recycling
 - lack of explanation & information
 - What can and can't be recycled?
 - Why/why not?
- More pressure needed on industry to reduce packaging

Why have all different areas got different rules and regulations for recycling? Why don't they all have the same?

(Essex, Stage 2, Hi, Non urban)

You can throw in a cabbage leaf if it's from your garden but if it's from your kitchen and you take the outer leaves off you can't

(Leics, Stage 2, Hi, Urban)

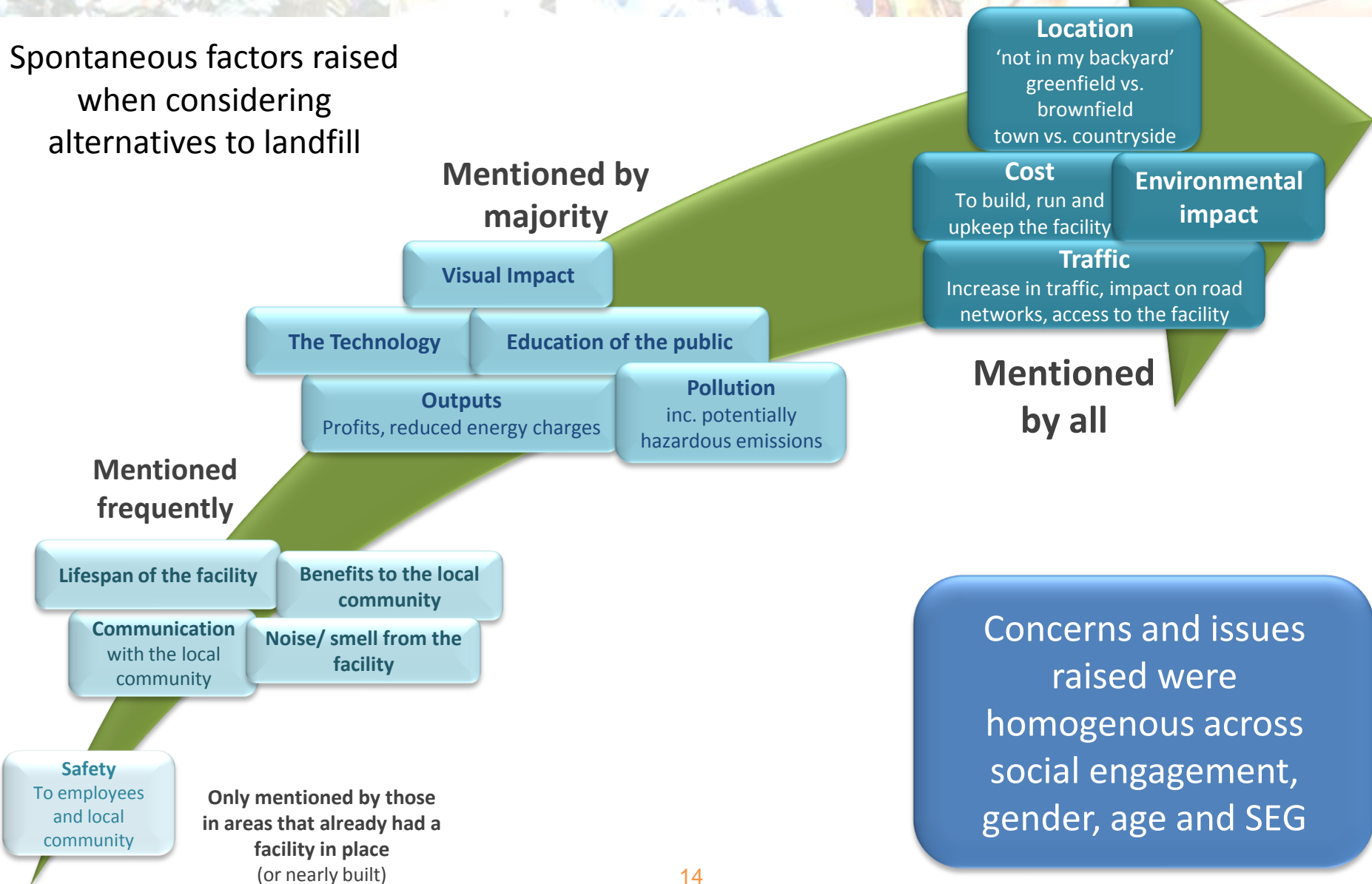
Cos if they're gonna legislate against councils for dumping the waste, surely they ought to legislate against the people who produce the packaging that we have to chuck away anyway!

(Leeds, Stage 2, Lo, Not Urban)

Strong feeling that residual waste facility should not divert from 3Rs

Environment, local issues & cost top priorities

Spontaneous factors raised
when considering
alternatives to landfill



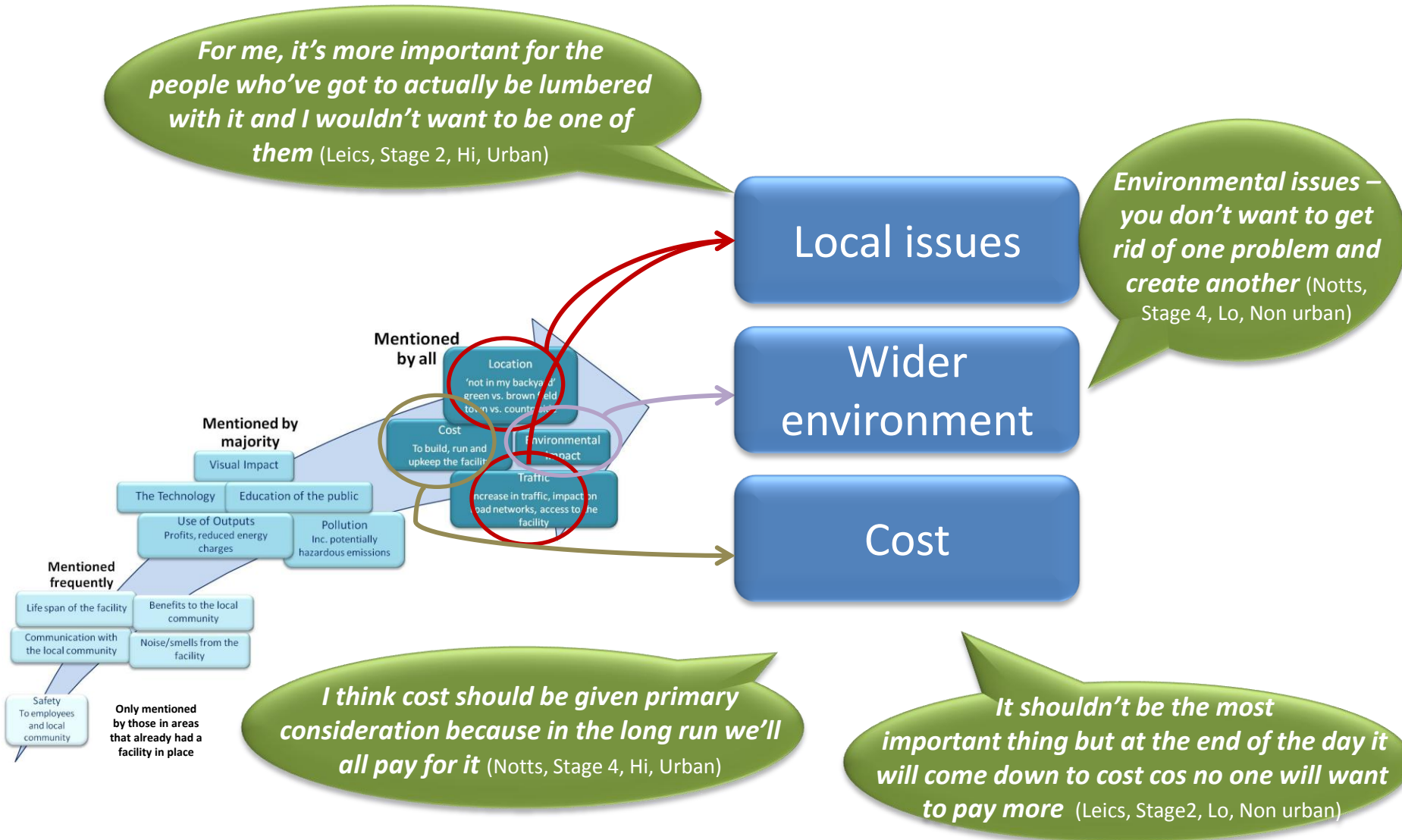
Trade-off quantifies relative importance...

Detailed Criteria	%
Local Environmental & Community	8.4
Cost	8.3
Wider Environment	8.3
Planning	8.0
Energy Recovery	7.9
Track Record of the Technology	7.8
Compliance	7.7
The Facility	7.6
Flexibility	7.4
Materials Recovery	7.4
Waste Management Company	7.3
Legislation	7.0
Collection Services	6.8
Total weight	100.0

No difference in traded importance by procurement stage, location, gender, social engagement...

Except *Materials Recovery*: significantly more important to urban (7.9%) vs. non-urban (7.0%)

...and reflects issues raised spontaneously



Some differences after deliberation...

Environment

- **most important** pre and post deliberation
 - significantly higher after deliberation among high engagement citizens

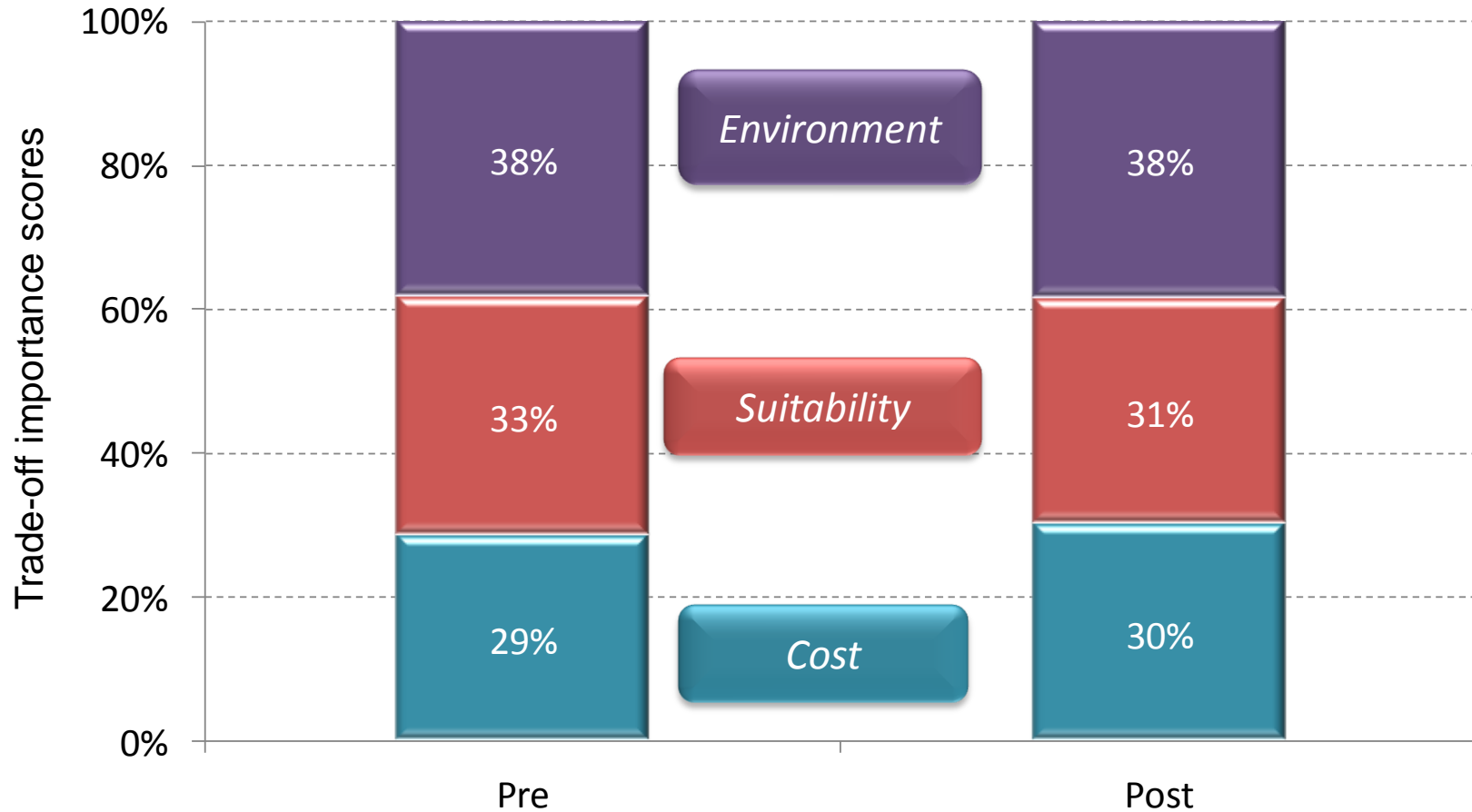
Suitability

- **decreases** in importance after deliberation
 - becomes increasingly important as procurement progresses

Cost

- **increases** in importance after deliberation
 - becomes less important as procurement progresses
 - increases in importance significantly among low social engagement

...though only small changes overall



The deliberation experience was positive

- Deliberation felt essential for seeing & understanding the 'big picture'

I think when you talk about it anyway you've got a better understanding of things and situations, and how it works, cos you know, if you don't read about it, you don't know, and often you're quite naive. So although [my opinions]'ve slightly changed, I think they've changed for the better (Leeds, Stage 2, Hi, Urban)

- Benefit from discussion, not just being provided information

I always think I'm right on these things but I've discovered tonight that everybody's got different opinions
(Leics, Stage 2, Hi, Urban)

It's probably the fact that you've had a little bit of debate about it as well isn't it...you might perceive a question to be one way, whereas after a bit of discussion you think 'ooh I can see that point of view' or you read it in a different manner (Devon, Stage 3, Hi, Non Urban)

Rating issues without complete information relies on individuals' knowledge & preconceptions

awareness of issues
often limited or none at all

The trade-off exercise was challenging

- Harder to decide between two options...
... especially as forced to choose one over the other

Some are very similar, you want to be right in the middle, they're both very important (Beds, Stage 1, Hi, Urban)

Cost and Wider Environmental Issues I found quite difficult, I wanted to put it right in the middle really (Devon, Stage 3, Hi, Non Urban)

... but trade-off exercise delivered realism to decision-making process and empathy for Councils

It's quite good that you can't sit on the fence, I can never understand why market research questions say 'I don't know' because what's the point? You've gotta go one way or the other (Essex, Stage 3, Hi, urban)

Although no difference in importance scores overall, patterns were observed within some subgroups when traded



Other learnings

Councils could improve

Consultation

- better interaction needed
 - want to be involved...
- ...but shouldn't have to go looking for it

Perception

- public cynical about Councils
 - don't listen to the public
 - seen as poor at communicating with the public
 - residual waste solutions a national issue
 - should be dealt with centrally

Information

- people want to know more
 - local issues
 - details of plans & the options available

Communication

- educate, inform & engage
- better use of communication channels

Consultation is great but...

- Attention shouldn't take emphasis away from related issues
 - e.g. Residual waste is part of the broader waste & resource issue; not to be viewed in isolation
- The public often can't relate to the problems Councils face
 - tell it how it is but impartially and with enough detail so citizens can make informed decisions
- Long lead times from plans to implementation
 - need to keep the public informed throughout

This research provides...

Techniques

- New solutions by adapting established research techniques

Insight

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Actions

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Solutions

- Understanding of what drives public opinion

Phoenix MRC provides...

Quality

- A consultation process that stands up to scrutiny

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- Research expertise

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- Making the most of your consultation budget

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