



South London Theatre Members' Consultation Report 2026

Consultation period:
4 January – 1 February 2026

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South London Theatre

Members' Consultation Report 2026

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Total responses: **87**

Estimated membership at time of survey: **~400 members**

Response rate: **≈22%**

1. Introduction

In January 2026, members of South London Theatre were invited to participate in a consultation survey designed to gather insights about members' experiences of the theatre and their priorities for its future development.

The consultation formed part of a broader effort to ensure that SLT's future strategic planning reflects the experiences, ideas and priorities of our membership.

The survey explored a number of key areas of theatre life, including:

- Members' overall experience of SLT
- Volunteering and participation
- Productions and artistic activity
- Financials, revenue and fundraising
- The Fire Station building and facilities
- Local community engagement and outreach
- Governance and organisational oversight
- Communications and strategic planning

The survey was delivered online through Google Forms, and included both quantitative questions and open-text responses. This combination allows us to identify patterns in members' views while also capturing the richness of members' experiences and suggestions.

A total of **87 responses** were received. For a voluntary member consultation, this represents a strong level of engagement and provides a valuable snapshot of members' perspectives across a range of areas.

All responses have been anonymised in this report.

2. Overview of Key Themes

Across the consultation, several clear patterns emerge.

Core strengths

Members consistently highlighted:

- the **sense of community and belonging**
- the **quality and range of productions**
- the **opportunity to participate creatively**
- the **unique character of the Fire Station building**

Development areas

Recurring themes where members would welcome improvement include:

- communication and organisational **transparency**
- clarity of **volunteering pathways**
- maintaining **community culture**
- access to **opportunities in productions**
- improvements to **facilities and building comfort**

Opportunities for future growth

Members also identified opportunities around:

- deeper connection with the local community
- expanding artistic forms and experimentation
- sharing more information about SLT's long-term direction

Importantly, many responses combined strong appreciation for SLT with constructive suggestions for improvement. This reflects a membership that is **deeply invested in the theatre's success and future development**.

3. Respondent Profile

Membership length

Respondents represent a mixture of newer and long-standing members.

Membership length	Responses
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20+ years	20
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1–3 years	17
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3–6 years	15
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11–15 years	10
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Less than 6 months	8
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7–10 years	6
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16–20 years	6
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6–12 months	5
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This distribution suggests that the consultation captured perspectives from both:

- members with **long institutional memory**, and
 - newer members who may bring **fresh perspectives and expectations**.
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Section 1

About You, Your Involvement, and Overall Impression of SLT

This section explored:

- members' motivations for joining SLT
 - areas of involvement
 - what members love about the theatre
 - what SLT does particularly well
 - areas where improvement may be possible
-

Overall member experience

Members were asked to reflect on their overall experience of being part of SLT.

Results show very strong satisfaction:

- **53% described their experience as very positive**
- **37% described it as mostly positive**

This means **90% of respondents report a positive experience overall.**

While a small number of responses described mixed experiences, the overall tone of responses indicates strong goodwill toward the theatre.

What members love about SLT

A text analysis of responses shows that several words appear very frequently when members describe what they love about the theatre.

Summary

Key words appearing most frequently include:

- **"community"**
- **"theatre"**
- **"people"**
- **"plays"**
- **"shows"**

- **“being involved”**

This pattern reflects a very consistent theme throughout the responses.

Interpretation

Members do not primarily describe SLT in terms of infrastructure or programming alone.

Instead, they frequently emphasise the human experience of the theatre.

The most prominent theme across responses is **community**.

Illustrative quotes

Members expressed this sentiment in many ways:

“The people and the sense of belonging. It feels like a real community.”

“Being part of a creative community where everyone supports each other.”

“The friendships and connections you build through making theatre together.”

“The chance to be part of something creative with like-minded people.”

Several responses also highlighted the creative opportunities available through participation:

“The opportunity to perform and be involved in theatre in a supportive environment.”

“There are always opportunities to get involved and try something new.”

What SLT does well

Members were also asked what they believe SLT does particularly well.

Summary

The most frequently occurring words include:

- **“shows”**
- **“plays”**
- **“variety”**
- **“quality”**
- **“productions”**

Interpretation

These responses indicate strong confidence in the artistic output of the theatre.

Members frequently praised:

- the variety of productions
- the ambition of the programme
- the quality achieved in an amateur setting

Representative responses include:

"The range and quality of productions is impressive."

"The theatre consistently produces interesting and ambitious shows."

"There's a great variety of work being staged."

Several members also highlighted the dedication of volunteers:

"It's amazing what the volunteers achieve year after year."

"The passion and commitment of members is what makes it work."

Areas members believe could improve

Members were also asked openly what SLT could improve.

Summary

Commonly appearing words include:

- **"members"**
- **"community"**
- **"involved"**
- **"building"**
- **"directors"**

Interpretation

These responses indicate that members' concerns tend to focus on:

- community dynamics
- opportunities to get involved
- communication and transparency
- facilities and building improvements

Several responses expressed concern about maintaining the theatre's community culture.

"The sense of community has changed slightly over time and I'd love to see it strengthened again."

"More opportunities for members to connect socially."

Others raised concerns about pathways into certain roles.

"It can be unclear how to get involved in directing or technical roles."

"More guidance for new volunteers would be helpful."

These themes appear repeatedly throughout later sections of the survey.

What members value most

Members were also asked a simple but powerful question:

What is the one thing you value most about SLT right now?

Summary

The most prominent words are:

- **"people"**
- **"community"**
- **"theatre"**
- **"shows"**
- **"opportunity"**

This reinforces the earlier finding that **community identity is central to members' experience of SLT.**

Illustrative quotes

"The community — it's the reason I stay."

"The people. That's what makes SLT special."

"The opportunity to make theatre with friends."

"The sense of belonging and shared creativity."

Key insight from Section 1

The opening section of the survey establishes one of the most important findings of the entire consultation.

SLT is valued not simply as a theatre venue or arts organisation, but as **a creative community built around shared participation and relationships**.

This theme recurs throughout the survey and should remain central to any future strategic planning.

Section 2

Volunteering & Getting Involved

This section explored members' experiences of volunteering within SLT and their perceptions of how easy it is to become involved in different areas of the theatre.

As a volunteer-led organisation, SLT depends heavily on the time, skills and enthusiasm of its members. Understanding how members experience volunteering — including both opportunities and barriers — is therefore particularly important.

Questions in this section asked about:

- how easy it is to understand volunteering opportunities
- barriers that may prevent members from getting involved
- roles members would like access to
- how supported members feel when volunteering
- how the theatre could better support volunteers

Ease of understanding volunteering opportunities

Members were asked how easy they felt it was to understand how to get involved in volunteering roles at SLT.

The average response score was approximately **3.8 out of 5**.

Summary

Responses were distributed as follows:

Score	Responses
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5	25
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4	33
---	----

3	17
---	----

2	10
---	----

1	2
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This suggests that most members feel **reasonably confident navigating volunteering opportunities**, but there is still a meaningful minority who find the process unclear or challenging.

Approximately **one third of respondents rated this question 3 or below**, indicating room for improvement.

Interpretation

This pattern suggests that while volunteering opportunities exist and are widely recognised, **the pathways into those roles may not always be obvious**, particularly for newer members or those exploring unfamiliar areas of theatre production.

Barriers to volunteering

Members were asked what might make it easier for them to volunteer.

A number of recurring themes appeared in responses.

Common barriers mentioned

Members frequently highlighted:

- uncertainty about **who to speak to about particular roles**
- lack of clarity about **training or experience required**
- uncertainty about **time commitments**
- lack of visibility of **available opportunities**

Several members noted that opportunities sometimes feel easier to access through informal networks rather than through clearly structured pathways.

Illustrative quotes

"Sometimes it's not clear who to approach if you want to get involved in a different department."

"I'd love to try new roles but I'm not always sure how to get started."

"It would be helpful to know what the commitment for different roles actually involves."

"More visibility of opportunities would encourage people to step forward."

These comments suggest that members are generally willing to volunteer, but may benefit from **greater clarity and structure around participation**.

Interest in new volunteering roles

Members were also asked whether there were roles they were interested in but had not known how to access.

A number of responses indicated interest in:

- directing
- backstage technical roles
- stage management
- production roles

Several respondents noted that while opportunities appear to exist, **the pathways into them can feel unclear or difficult to navigate.**

Illustrative quotes

"Directing feels quite difficult to break into."

"It would be great to have clearer routes for people wanting to move into new areas."

"Shadowing or mentoring would help people develop new skills."

Support when volunteering

Members were asked how supported they feel when taking on roles at SLT.

Overall responses were positive, with most members reporting feeling **supported or quite supported.**

However, responses suggested that the level of support can vary depending on:

- the department
- the complexity of the role
- the experience of the volunteer

Illustrative quotes

"Generally people are very supportive and helpful."

"Most departments are great at helping new people learn."

"Support can vary depending on the role and who is leading the production."

Suggestions for improving volunteer support

Members provided a range of suggestions for how volunteering experiences could be improved.

Common suggestions included:

Clearer role descriptions

Members expressed interest in clearer explanations of:

- responsibilities
- expected time commitments
- required skills

Training and development opportunities

Several responses suggested:

- workshops
- mentoring schemes
- shadowing opportunities

These could help members develop confidence in new roles.

Better onboarding for new members

Some respondents suggested that new members might benefit from:

- clearer introductory information
- guidance about how the theatre operates
- introductions to key contacts within different areas

Emerging themes

Across responses, volunteering appears to be both a **strength and an opportunity area**.

Members clearly value the opportunity to contribute to the theatre, but some respondents feel that the pathways into volunteering roles could be clearer and more accessible.

This suggests that relatively small structural improvements — such as clearer role descriptions or mentorship opportunities — could significantly improve the volunteering experience.

Strategic signal from this section

The consultation suggests that **strengthening volunteering pathways and support structures could be one of the most impactful improvements available to SLT.**

Given the theatre's reliance on volunteer contributions, improving clarity, accessibility and support around volunteering could help:

- increase participation
- broaden involvement across departments
- support skill development among members

These improvements could also strengthen the theatre's community culture by making it easier for members to become actively involved.

Key insight from Section 2

Members clearly want to contribute to the life of the theatre, and many already do so enthusiastically.

However, some respondents suggest that **clearer pathways into volunteering roles and better visibility of opportunities could encourage wider participation.**

This indicates an opportunity for SLT to build on its existing volunteer culture by introducing **more transparent and supportive structures for participation.**

Section 3

Productions & Performing

This section explored members' perspectives on SLT's artistic programme and opportunities to participate in productions.

Questions in this section asked members:

- what SLT does well in its productions
- whether there are enough opportunities to get involved
- how members feel about the current range of artistic styles
- what could be improved in this area

Productions sit at the heart of SLT's identity. For many members, the opportunity to participate in theatre — whether performing, directing, producing, or supporting productions — is one of the main motivations for joining the organisation.

What SLT does well in its productions

Members were asked to reflect on what the theatre does particularly well when it comes to productions.

Summary

Analysis of open responses shows several words appearing frequently in responses:

- **“shows”**
- **“plays”**
- **“variety”**
- **“quality”**
- **“productions”**

This indicates strong appreciation for both the range and standard of work produced at SLT.

Interpretation

Across responses, members consistently praised the theatre's:

- ambitious programming
- diversity of productions
- creative energy
- strong directing and production teams

Several respondents noted that the theatre produces work that is **remarkably ambitious for a volunteer-run organisation**.

Illustrative quotes

"The variety of shows is fantastic — there's always something interesting happening."

"The standard of productions is incredibly high for an amateur theatre."

"SLT consistently produces ambitious and exciting work."

"I love that the theatre is willing to take creative risks."

Some respondents also emphasised the importance of the theatre producing both well-known plays and more unusual material.

"The balance between classic plays and more experimental work is really good."

"It's great that SLT isn't afraid to stage unusual or challenging material."

Opportunities to get involved in productions

Members were asked whether they feel there are enough opportunities to participate in productions.

Most respondents felt that **opportunities generally exist**, but responses also revealed some mixed experiences.

Interpretation

Many members highlighted the large number of productions staged each year as a positive factor.

However, some respondents suggested that **access to opportunities can feel uneven**, particularly in certain roles.

Areas where members expressed interest in more opportunities include:

- directing
- technical production
- stage management
- backstage roles

Illustrative quotes

"There are lots of opportunities if you're willing to get involved."

"SLT does a good job of creating opportunities for members to participate."

However, some respondents expressed concerns about how accessible certain opportunities feel.

"Directing can feel difficult to break into."

"Sometimes it feels like the same people are involved in many productions."

"It would be good to see more pathways for new directors."

These responses represent a minority of comments but appeared frequently enough to suggest an area worth examining further.

Artistic range & experimentation

Members were also asked whether they would like to see a wider range of artistic or theatrical styles at SLT.

Examples given in the survey included:

- new writing
- devised theatre
- immersive theatre
- improvisation
- forum theatre

Interpretation

Responses suggest that most members are broadly happy with the current programming mix, but many would welcome **some expansion of artistic forms**.

Members appear to value both:

- maintaining a strong core programme of plays
- exploring new theatrical approaches

Illustrative quotes

"It would be exciting to see more new writing and experimental work."

"SLT could explore more unusual forms of theatre."

"The current mix is good, but there's always room for experimentation."

However, several members emphasised that experimentation should **complement rather than replace the existing programme**.

"New forms of theatre would be great, but I wouldn't want to lose the strong play programme."

What could be improved in productions

Members were also asked what SLT could improve when it comes to productions.

A number of themes appeared across responses.

Access to opportunities

Some members raised concerns about how accessible certain roles feel.

These comments focused particularly on:

- directing opportunities
- casting processes
- pathways into production teams

Community and collaboration

Some responses highlighted the importance of maintaining a collaborative and inclusive culture around productions.

Illustrative quotes

"More transparency around directing opportunities would be helpful."

"It would be good to make sure opportunities feel open to everyone."

"Productions should continue to feel collaborative rather than competitive."

These comments do not appear to represent the majority experience, but they do highlight areas where perception and communication may be important.

Emerging themes

This section reinforces one of the clearest messages from the consultation:

SLT's productions are widely seen as **one of the organisation's greatest strengths**.

Members consistently praised:

- the number of productions
- the range of material staged
- the ambition of the programme
- the dedication of production teams

However, responses also highlight areas where members would welcome improvement.

These include:

- clearer pathways into directing and production roles
 - maintaining openness and fairness in opportunities
 - exploring additional theatrical styles alongside the existing programme
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Strategic signal from this section

The consultation suggests that **the production programme is one of SLT's strongest assets**, and should remain central to the theatre's future strategy.

At the same time, there may be opportunities to:

- improve transparency around production roles
- support new directors and production teams
- experiment with additional artistic forms while maintaining the core programme

These improvements could strengthen both participation and creative diversity within the theatre.

Key insight from Section 3

Members clearly take pride in the artistic work produced at SLT.

The production programme appears to be widely valued as:

- ambitious
- diverse
- creatively rewarding

Maintaining and strengthening this artistic culture will likely remain one of the most important priorities for the organisation moving forward.

Section 4

Funding & Revenue

This section explored members' perceptions of SLT's financial sustainability and their ideas about how the theatre might generate income in the future.

Questions in this section asked members about:

- their confidence in SLT's financial health
- what they believe SLT currently does well in generating income
- potential income-generating activities the theatre could explore
- what improvements could be made in fundraising
- whether there are changes that could help balance affordability with long-term financial stability

As a volunteer-led organisation operating from a historic building, SLT must balance artistic ambition, accessibility, and financial sustainability. Understanding how members perceive these issues can help inform future strategic decisions.

Confidence in SLT's financial health

Members were asked how confident they feel about SLT's ability to remain financially healthy.

Summary

Responses showed three broad groups:

- **Quite confident** – the largest group
- **Very confident** – a smaller but significant group
- **Not knowledgeable enough to judge**

A small number of respondents expressed uncertainty or concern.

Interpretation

The responses suggest that most members feel **generally confident** about the theatre's financial position.

However, a substantial proportion of respondents indicated that they **do not feel sufficiently informed to assess the situation**.

This suggests that the key issue may not be financial concern itself, but rather **limited visibility of financial information among members**.

Illustrative quotes

"I trust the theatre is being run responsibly, but I don't really know the financial picture."

"I'm confident overall but would be interested in understanding more about how finances work."

"The theatre seems stable, but more transparency would be helpful."

A small number of responses raised concerns about the long-term financial challenges faced by theatres more generally.

"Running a theatre is never easy financially — it would be good to understand the long-term strategy."

What SLT does well in generating income

Members were asked what they believe SLT currently does well when it comes to fundraising and income generation.

Responses frequently mentioned:

- ticket sales from productions
- the bar and social events
- community support and membership
- the volume of productions staged each year

Several respondents noted that the theatre's **active programme of productions** is itself an important driver of revenue.

Illustrative quotes

"The number of shows each year helps keep the theatre active and brings people in."

"The bar and social events are a great part of the theatre and help generate income."

"The theatre feels busy and active, which must help financially."

Ideas for new income-generating activities

Members were also invited to suggest additional ways SLT might generate income.

A wide range of ideas were proposed.

Common suggestions included:

Expanded room hire

Several members suggested increasing the use of the building for:

- rehearsals
- workshops
- private events

Partnerships and collaborations

Members suggested exploring partnerships with:

- local arts organisations
- schools and community groups
- local businesses

Events and festivals

Some respondents proposed hosting:

- theatre festivals
- community events
- themed evenings

Bar and hospitality opportunities

A number of responses highlighted the potential for the bar to play a larger role in generating income.

Illustrative quotes

"The building could potentially be used more for external events."

"Workshops and theatre courses could be a great income stream."

"Partnerships with other arts organisations could bring new audiences."

What could be improved in fundraising

Members were also asked what SLT could do better when it comes to fundraising.

Responses often focused on:

- clearer communication about fundraising goals
- exploring additional revenue streams
- making better use of the building as a venue

Several members suggested that members themselves may be willing to contribute more if they understood the financial priorities of the theatre.

Illustrative quotes

"If members understood the financial priorities more clearly, they might be more willing to support fundraising."

"More visibility about where money is needed could help."

"There might be more opportunities to generate income from the building."

Balancing affordability and sustainability

Members were also invited to reflect on how SLT might balance affordability with long-term financial sustainability.

Several responses emphasised the importance of keeping the theatre accessible.

At the same time, some members acknowledged that sustaining the theatre may require exploring additional revenue sources.

Illustrative quotes

"It's important that SLT remains affordable, but financial stability has to come first."

"Accessibility is one of SLT's strengths, and it would be important not to lose that."

"Finding ways to generate income that don't affect ticket prices would be ideal."

Emerging themes

Across responses, members appear broadly supportive of efforts to strengthen the theatre's financial sustainability.

However, the consultation also suggests that many members would welcome **greater visibility into the financial picture of the organisation**.

This suggests that improving communication about finances — including how income supports productions and the building — could strengthen members' understanding and engagement.

Strategic signal from this section

The consultation suggests that **members generally trust the financial stewardship of the theatre**, but many feel they lack detailed knowledge about how finances work.

Increasing transparency around finances — for example through simple summaries or updates — could help strengthen shared understanding.

Members also appear open to exploring **new income-generating opportunities**, particularly where these align with the theatre's creative and community mission.

Key insight from Section 4

Members recognise that financial sustainability is essential to the long-term future of SLT.

While confidence levels appear generally positive, the consultation suggests that members would welcome **greater visibility and shared understanding of the theatre's financial position and priorities**.

This may present an opportunity to strengthen engagement between members and the organisation's long-term financial strategy.

Section 5

Building Management & Preservation

This section explored members' experiences of the **SLT Fire Station building**, including how well it is maintained, how comfortable and accessible it feels for members, and how the theatre might better celebrate the building's history and heritage.

Questions in this section asked members about:

- how well the building is currently looked after
- improvements to facilities that would make the biggest difference
- accessibility and comfort issues that should be prioritised
- ideas for showcasing the building's history and heritage

The Fire Station building is one of the defining features of SLT. For many members it represents not only a theatre venue but also a shared home for the organisation's creative and social life.

Perception of how well the building is looked after

Members were asked how well they feel SLT currently looks after the building.

Responses were strongly positive.

Most respondents selected either "**very well**" or "**quite well**", with only a very small number expressing uncertainty or dissatisfaction.

Interpretation

This suggests that members generally believe the building is being responsibly managed and maintained.

Given the age and complexity of the Fire Station building, this is a significant positive signal for the organisation.

However, while the overall perception of stewardship is positive, members still offered a wide range of suggestions for improvements.

Improvements to facilities

Members were asked what improvements to the building or its facilities would make the biggest difference to their experience.

Several themes appeared consistently across responses.

Comfort and temperature

A number of members mentioned issues relating to heating, ventilation, or temperature within certain areas of the building.

"Temperature control in some rooms could definitely be improved."

"The building can sometimes feel very cold in winter."

Dressing rooms and backstage spaces

Some respondents suggested improvements to backstage areas, particularly dressing rooms and preparation spaces.

"Backstage facilities could be improved, especially dressing room space."

"More comfortable spaces for performers before shows would be great."

Soundproofing and acoustics

A smaller number of members highlighted sound issues between rehearsal or performance spaces.

"Soundproofing between rooms would help when rehearsals are happening at the same time."

General maintenance

Some comments related to general building upkeep and improvements that could enhance the overall experience of the space.

Accessibility and comfort

Members were also asked about accessibility issues or comfort-related improvements that should be prioritised.

Several responses highlighted the importance of making the theatre welcoming and accessible to a wider range of people.

Suggestions included:

- improved access routes

- clearer signage
- seating comfort in performance spaces
- improvements to circulation areas

Illustrative quotes

"Accessibility improvements should be an ongoing priority."

"Clearer signage would make the building easier to navigate."

"Comfort for both audiences and performers could always be improved."

Celebrating the building's heritage

Members were also invited to share ideas about how SLT might better showcase the history and heritage of the Fire Station building.

This question produced a number of thoughtful responses.

Many members expressed pride in the building's history and suggested that this aspect of SLT could be more visible.

Suggestions included:

- displays about the building's history
- photographs or historical materials in public areas
- storytelling about the theatre's past
- guided tours or heritage information

Illustrative quotes

"The history of the building is fascinating and could be showcased more."

"It would be nice to see displays about the theatre's history."

"There is a lot of heritage here that could be celebrated."

Emerging themes

Across responses, the building appears to be widely valued by members as a central part of SLT's identity.

Members expressed pride in the Fire Station and appreciation for the work that goes into maintaining it.

At the same time, responses suggest that there may be opportunities to make **incremental improvements** that enhance comfort, accessibility, and usability.

Strategic signal from this section

The consultation suggests that **the building is perceived as one of SLT's most important assets**, both practically and symbolically.

Members appear supportive of ongoing investment in maintaining and improving the space.

Strategic priorities in this area may include:

- improving comfort and usability of key spaces
- addressing accessibility considerations
- celebrating and communicating the building's heritage

These improvements could help strengthen both the practical experience of the theatre and its identity within the community.

Key insight from Section 5

Members clearly view the Fire Station building as more than simply a venue.

It represents a shared home for the theatre's activities and history.

Maintaining and improving the building — while also celebrating its heritage — appears likely to remain an important priority for the organisation.

Section 6

Local Community & Outreach

This section explored members' perceptions of how well SLT connects with its surrounding community in **West Norwood, Lambeth, and the wider South London area**.

As a community theatre, SLT sits within a rich cultural and social environment. Understanding how members perceive the theatre's relationship with its local community can help identify opportunities to strengthen engagement and broaden the theatre's impact.

Questions in this section asked members about:

- how well SLT connects with the local community
- what the theatre already does well in this area
- what could be improved
- ideas for helping SLT feel more rooted in its local area

Perceived connection with the local community

Members were asked how well they feel SLT connects with its local community.

Responses were given on a scale from **1 to 5**.

The average response was approximately **3.1 out of 5**, suggesting a moderate level of perceived connection.

Summary

Responses were distributed as follows:

Score	Responses
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3	44
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4	22
---	----

2	13
---	----

5	4
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1	4
---	---

Interpretation

These results suggest that members generally feel SLT has **some connection with the local community**, but that this is not yet perceived as one of the theatre's strongest areas.

Many respondents selected the middle rating of **3**, indicating that they feel there is **potential for deeper engagement**.

What SLT does well in connecting with the local community

Members were asked to reflect on what SLT already does well when it comes to engaging with the local community.

Several themes appeared across responses.

Visibility of productions

Members noted that SLT's programme of productions helps bring people into the theatre and contributes to the local cultural life of the area.

"The number of shows brings local people into the theatre."

"Productions are probably the biggest way SLT connects with the community."

Local audiences

Some respondents noted that the theatre attracts a loyal local audience and is recognised within the area as a place where theatre happens regularly.

Community atmosphere

Several responses highlighted the welcoming atmosphere of the theatre, which helps create a sense of connection for those who attend.

"The theatre feels welcoming and open to people who visit."

Opportunities to strengthen community engagement

Members were also asked what SLT could do better when it comes to connecting with the local community.

Responses suggested a range of possibilities for strengthening engagement.

Partnerships with local organisations

Several respondents suggested exploring partnerships with:

- local schools
- arts organisations
- community groups
- local businesses

"It would be great to see more partnerships with local schools."

"Working with other arts groups in the area could strengthen SLT's presence locally."

Outreach and participation

Some members suggested that SLT could expand opportunities for people in the local community to participate in theatre activities.

Suggestions included:

- workshops
- community theatre projects
- educational programmes

Visibility within the neighbourhood

A number of responses suggested that the theatre could increase its visibility within West Norwood and the surrounding area.

Ideas included:

- stronger local promotion
 - outdoor or community events
 - collaboration with local festivals
-

Helping SLT feel more rooted locally

Members were also asked how SLT might feel more rooted in the local area.

Responses often focused on strengthening relationships with the surrounding community and ensuring that the theatre reflects the diversity and character of the neighbourhood.

Illustrative quotes

"More engagement with local schools and youth groups could help."

"SLT could play a bigger role in the local arts scene."

"It would be great to see more events that bring the local community into the theatre."

Some respondents also highlighted the importance of ensuring that the theatre remains accessible and welcoming to local residents.

Emerging themes

Across responses, members appear to recognise that SLT already contributes to the cultural life of the local area through its productions and activities.

However, the consultation suggests that there may be **untapped potential for deeper engagement with the surrounding community**.

This is reflected in the number of responses suggesting partnerships, outreach programmes, and increased local visibility.

Strategic signal from this section

The consultation suggests that **local community engagement may represent an area of opportunity for SLT's future development**.

While the theatre already contributes to the cultural life of the area, members appear interested in exploring ways to strengthen these connections.

Possible areas of focus could include:

- partnerships with local organisations
- outreach programmes and workshops
- stronger presence in local cultural events
- initiatives that reflect the diversity of the surrounding community

These efforts could help reinforce SLT's identity as a **community theatre rooted in its local area**.

Key insight from Section 6

Members recognise the theatre as an important cultural presence within its local area, but many believe there is potential to deepen these connections further.

Strengthening relationships with the surrounding community could represent an opportunity to expand SLT's impact while also broadening participation and audiences.

Section 7

Governance & Theatre Oversight

This section explored members' perceptions of how SLT is governed and run, as well as their understanding of the theatre's governance structure.

As a member-led organisation, governance plays an important role in shaping the theatre's strategic direction, operational oversight, and long-term sustainability. Understanding how members perceive this structure — and how well they feel informed about it — can provide valuable insight into how governance might evolve or be communicated more clearly.

Questions in this section asked members about:

- their understanding of the current governance structure
- what they believe works well about how SLT is governed and run
- areas where governance could be improved
- any concerns about the current structure or its long-term sustainability

Understanding of the governance structure

Members were asked whether they feel they understand the current governance structure at SLT.

Summary

Responses were distributed as follows:

Response	Count
Understand some parts but not all	33
Limited understanding but would like to know more	21
Confident understanding of the structure	20
No understanding but not interested	8
No understanding but would like to understand	5

Interpretation

Only around **one quarter of respondents feel they fully understand the governance structure.**

However, the majority of responses fall into two categories:

- partial understanding
- limited understanding but interest in learning more

This suggests that members are **interested in governance and organisational structure**, but may not feel they currently have enough visibility or clarity about how it works.

What members feel works well in governance

Members were asked to identify aspects of SLT's governance that they believe work well.

Several responses expressed appreciation for the dedication of those involved in running the theatre.

Illustrative quotes

"A lot of hard work clearly goes into running the theatre."

"The volunteers who run SLT do an enormous amount behind the scenes."

"The theatre seems to be run responsibly."

Some responses also highlighted the importance of having a structured governance system in place to support the organisation's long-term stability.

Areas where governance could improve

Members were also invited to suggest improvements to how the theatre is governed and run.

Several themes appeared in responses.

Transparency and communication

Many responses suggested that members would benefit from **greater visibility of governance structures and decision-making processes.**

Illustrative quotes

"It would be helpful to understand more about how decisions are made."

"More visibility of trustees and their roles would be useful."

"Clearer communication about governance would help members feel more informed."

Accessibility of governance information

Some respondents suggested that governance information could be made easier to access.

Suggestions included:

- clearer explanations of roles and responsibilities
 - information about trustees and committees
 - summaries of key decisions or discussions
-

Concerns about governance or long-term sustainability

Members were also asked whether they have concerns about the current governance structure or its sustainability.

Most responses did not express major concerns.

However, a small number of responses raised questions about:

- succession planning
- ensuring governance structures remain sustainable as the organisation evolves
- maintaining transparency and accountability

Illustrative quotes

"It would be good to know more about how leadership transitions are managed."

"Ensuring sustainability of governance structures is important."

"Transparency helps build trust within the organisation."

Emerging themes

Across responses, governance does not appear to be a major source of dissatisfaction among members.

Instead, the consultation suggests that many members would simply welcome **greater visibility and understanding of how governance works**.

This distinction is important.

The responses suggest that the issue is not dissatisfaction with governance itself, but rather **limited awareness of governance structures and processes**.

Strategic signal from this section

The consultation suggests that improving **transparency and communication around governance** could strengthen members' sense of connection to the organisation.

Possible improvements could include:

- clearer explanations of governance structures
- increased visibility of trustees and committees
- periodic updates about strategic decisions

These measures could help ensure that members feel informed about how the theatre is run while maintaining the existing governance framework.

Key insight from Section 7

Members appear broadly supportive of how the theatre is currently governed.

However, many respondents indicated that they would welcome **greater understanding of governance structures and decision-making processes**.

Improving communication and transparency around governance could therefore represent an opportunity to strengthen engagement and trust across the membership.

Section 8

Communications & Keeping Informed

This section explored how members currently receive information about SLT and how they would prefer to stay informed about the theatre's activities, strategic direction, and organisational developments.

Communication plays a central role in any member-led organisation. Clear, timely and accessible communication helps members feel connected to the theatre and supports transparency around decision-making and future planning.

Questions in this section asked members about:

- their interest in hearing about SLT's long-term plans and direction
- how often they would like to receive updates about strategy and developments
- their preferred channels for receiving information
- whether they would like more opportunities to engage with those involved in governing the theatre
- suggestions for improving communication across SLT

Interest in hearing about SLT's long-term plans

Members were asked how interested they are in hearing about SLT's long-term plans and direction.

Summary

Responses were very strongly positive:

Rating (1–5)	Responses
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5	45
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4	30
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3	11
---	----

1	1
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This means that **approximately 86% of respondents rated their interest at 4 or 5.**

Interpretation

This is one of the strongest signals in the entire consultation.

Members clearly have a strong interest in understanding:

- the theatre's long-term direction
- strategic priorities
- plans for development or improvement

This suggests that members do not simply view SLT as a place where activities happen; many are interested in the **broader future of the organisation**.

Illustrative quotes

"I'd definitely like to know more about where SLT is heading in the future."

"Understanding the long-term vision would be really interesting."

"Members should be kept informed about major plans and developments."

Preferred frequency of strategic updates

Members were asked how often they would like to hear about SLT's plans, strategy, or improvements.

The most popular responses were:

- **every 3–4 months**
- **twice per year**

A smaller number of respondents expressed interest in more frequent updates.

Interpretation

These responses suggest that members would welcome **regular but not overwhelming communication** about strategic developments.

Quarterly or periodic updates appear likely to strike a good balance between keeping members informed and avoiding information overload.

Preferred communication channels

Members were asked how they prefer to receive updates and information about SLT.

The most commonly selected channels were:

- **members' newsletter**

- **direct email updates**
- **website news or announcements**

Some respondents also expressed interest in:

- in-person conversations or events
- opportunities to speak with trustees or organisers

Interpretation

The responses suggest that traditional digital channels — particularly email — remain the most effective way to communicate with members.

However, some respondents also highlighted the value of **face-to-face engagement opportunities**.

Opportunities to engage with governing members

Members were also asked whether they would like more opportunities to meet or speak with those involved in governing the theatre.

Responses suggest that some members would welcome opportunities such as:

- informal meetings or drop-in sessions
- open discussions about the theatre's future
- opportunities to ask questions about decisions or developments

Illustrative quotes

"It would be interesting to hear more directly from those running the theatre."

"Occasional open meetings could be a good way to share updates."

"It would be helpful to have opportunities to ask questions about plans."

Suggestions for improving communication

Members provided a range of suggestions about how communication across SLT could be improved.

Several themes appeared repeatedly.

Clearer information

Some respondents suggested that communication could sometimes be clearer or more structured.

Transparency about decisions

Some responses highlighted interest in better understanding how decisions are made within the organisation.

Centralising information

Some members suggested that information could be easier to access if it were gathered in one place.

Illustrative quotes

"Sometimes information is spread across different channels and can be hard to track."

"Clear updates about what's happening behind the scenes would be helpful."

"It would be useful to have more structured updates about developments."

Emerging themes

Across responses, members appear strongly interested in **remaining informed about the theatre's development and future direction**.

This suggests that communication should not only focus on day-to-day activities such as productions or events, but also include **strategic updates and organisational developments**.

Members appear receptive to communication that helps them feel informed and engaged with the theatre's long-term progress.

Strategic signal from this section

The consultation suggests that strengthening communication around strategy, governance, and organisational development could help reinforce members' sense of connection to the theatre.

Members appear interested in understanding:

- where the theatre is heading
- how decisions are made
- how the organisation plans to evolve

Providing regular, accessible updates about these topics could help strengthen transparency and engagement across the membership.

Key insight from Section 8

Members clearly want to remain connected to the theatre's development and future plans.

Providing regular updates about strategy, improvements, and organisational priorities could therefore play an important role in strengthening engagement and transparency across the membership.

Section 9

Final Reflections from Members

The final section of the survey invited members to reflect more broadly on their experience of SLT after completing the consultation.

Members were asked several open-ended questions, including:

- what they value most about SLT
- the one change that would make SLT even better
- something entirely new they would introduce
- something they would never want to see change
- what matters most about SLT overall

These responses provide some of the most revealing insights in the survey, as they capture members' reflections after considering all of the themes discussed in the consultation.

What members value most

When asked what they value most about SLT, the most common theme by far was **community**.

Summary

Analysis of the responses shows the most frequently used words include:

- **"people"**
- **"community"**
- **"theatre"**
- **"shows"**
- **"opportunity"**

Interpretation

Members consistently emphasised the importance of the relationships and sense of belonging that SLT provides.

Illustrative quotes

"The people and the friendships I've made here."

"The sense of community and shared creativity."

"Being part of something creative with others."

"The welcoming atmosphere."

One change that would make SLT even better

Members suggested a range of possible improvements.

Recurring themes included:

- clearer communication
- easier pathways to get involved
- maintaining a welcoming community culture
- improvements to facilities

These responses echo themes that appeared throughout earlier sections of the survey.

Something new members would introduce

Members suggested a wide variety of ideas for new initiatives.

These included:

- workshops and training opportunities
- new forms of theatre or creative projects
- expanded community events
- new social activities for members

These ideas reflect members' enthusiasm for continued experimentation and growth within the theatre.

What members never want to see change

This question produced some of the most consistent responses in the survey.

The most frequent theme was again **community**.

Illustrative quotes

"The community spirit."

"The welcoming atmosphere."

"The opportunity for members to create theatre together."

"The supportive culture."

Members clearly see these qualities as central to the identity of SLT.

What matters most about SLT overall

In their final reflections, members again emphasised the importance of the theatre as a **creative community built around participation and collaboration**.

This reinforces the central finding of the consultation.

Key insight from Section 9

Across these final reflections, one theme emerges repeatedly:

Members value SLT not simply as a theatre venue, but as a **community built around creativity, participation and shared experience**.

Protecting and strengthening this culture appears to be one of the most important priorities for the theatre moving forward.

Section 10

Emerging Strategic Priorities

The members' consultation provides a detailed picture of how members experience life at SLT and what they believe should shape the theatre's future development.

Across the survey responses, several themes appear consistently. These themes cut across multiple sections of the consultation and therefore provide important insight into where members believe the theatre is performing strongly and where improvements could have the greatest impact.

While not every suggestion can be implemented immediately, the consultation provides valuable guidance about where members believe attention should be focused in the coming years.

For the purposes of strategic planning, the findings can broadly be grouped into three categories:

- **Core strengths to protect**
 - **Priority areas for improvement**
 - **Opportunities for future development**
-

Core strengths to protect

The consultation clearly demonstrates that several aspects of SLT are deeply valued by members and form the foundation of the theatre's identity.

These represent areas where the organisation should focus on **maintaining and reinforcing existing strengths**.

Community and sense of belonging

The most consistent theme throughout the consultation is the importance of community.

Members repeatedly emphasised:

- friendships formed through the theatre
- the welcoming atmosphere
- the collaborative nature of productions
- the opportunity to create theatre together

Illustrative responses included:

"The sense of community and belonging."

"The people and friendships that come from working together creatively."

"The supportive atmosphere."

This theme appears across nearly every section of the survey, suggesting that **community culture is central to how members experience SLT**.

Protecting and nurturing this culture is likely to remain one of the most important priorities for the theatre.

The production programme

Members consistently praised the theatre's productions.

Strengths highlighted include:

- the number of productions staged each year
- the range and variety of material
- the quality of performances and production work
- the ambition of the programme

Illustrative responses included:

"The range and quality of productions is impressive."

"There's always something interesting happening."

"The theatre consistently produces ambitious work."

Maintaining the strength of the production programme appears to be essential to preserving SLT's identity as an active and vibrant theatre.

The Fire Station building

The building itself is also highly valued by members.

Many responses expressed pride in the theatre's unique home and appreciation for the work involved in maintaining it.

Members often referred to the Fire Station as a **shared creative space and gathering point** for the community.

Priority areas for improvement

While overall sentiment toward SLT is very positive, the consultation also highlights several areas where members believe improvements could have a meaningful impact.

These themes appeared frequently across responses and therefore represent potential priorities for the organisation.

Communication and organisational transparency

One of the most consistent themes across the consultation is a desire for clearer communication.

Members expressed interest in better understanding:

- how decisions are made
- how governance structures operate
- the theatre's financial situation
- long-term plans and strategic priorities

The survey revealed a particularly strong interest in hearing more about SLT's future direction.

Illustrative responses included:

"Clearer communication about plans would help members feel more involved."

"It would be good to understand more about how decisions are made."

"More transparency about what's happening behind the scenes would be helpful."

Improving communication and transparency could help strengthen trust and engagement across the membership.

Volunteering pathways and access to opportunities

While volunteering is clearly one of SLT's strengths, several responses suggested that the pathways into certain roles could be clearer.

Members highlighted challenges such as:

- uncertainty about how to get involved in new roles
- lack of clarity around training opportunities
- difficulty accessing directing or technical roles

Illustrative responses included:

"It's not always clear who to talk to about getting involved."

"Shadowing or mentoring opportunities could help."

"Directing can feel difficult to break into."

Improving visibility and support around volunteering roles could help encourage wider participation.

Maintaining a welcoming community culture

Although community was widely praised, a number of responses also suggested that maintaining this culture should remain a priority.

Some respondents expressed concern about ensuring that the theatre remains welcoming and inclusive as it continues to evolve.

Illustrative responses included:

"The community spirit is what makes SLT special."

"It's important that the theatre stays welcoming and open."

These comments suggest that preserving the theatre's collaborative culture should remain an ongoing focus.

Building comfort and accessibility

Members also identified several practical improvements that could enhance their experience of the theatre building.

These included:

- improvements to dressing rooms or backstage spaces
- temperature and comfort issues
- accessibility improvements
- clearer signage

While these issues were generally raised as practical suggestions rather than major concerns, addressing them could improve the day-to-day experience of members and audiences.

Opportunities for future development

The consultation also highlights several areas where members see potential for growth or innovation. These themes appeared less frequently than the core improvement areas but still represent interesting possibilities for the future.

Local community engagement

Members expressed interest in strengthening SLT's connection with its surrounding community.

Suggestions included:

- partnerships with local schools and organisations
- community events or outreach programmes
- increased visibility within the neighbourhood

While SLT already contributes to the local cultural landscape, members appear interested in exploring ways to deepen these connections.

Expanding artistic forms

Some respondents expressed interest in exploring additional theatrical styles, such as:

- new writing
- devised theatre
- immersive work

However, most respondents emphasised that experimentation should complement rather than replace the existing programme of plays.

Interpreting the consultation as a whole

Taken together, the consultation presents a picture of a theatre that is **highly valued by its members and supported by a strong sense of community**.

At the same time, the responses show that members are thoughtful and engaged in considering how the organisation might continue to evolve.

Many of the suggestions provided by members focus on **strengthening clarity, communication and participation**, rather than making fundamental changes to the theatre's structure or activities.

This suggests that relatively modest improvements in these areas could have a significant positive impact on members' experience.

Looking ahead

The findings from this consultation will help inform SLT's strategic planning over the coming years.

Not every suggestion raised by members can be implemented immediately. However, the consultation provides valuable insight into where members believe attention should be focused.

Future planning will therefore aim to:

- protect the strengths that members value most
- address areas where improvements could enhance members' experience
- explore opportunities that support the theatre's long-term sustainability and creative development

In this way, the consultation provides a strong foundation for shaping the next phase of SLT's development as a community theatre.

End of report.