

POLICY, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

2 MARCH 2011

REPORT OF HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION STRATEGY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the Council's duty to consult its people on matters that affect them and use that information to improve services and performance.
- 1.2 To request approval of the Community Consultation Strategy which sets out a corporate process for consultation and formalises existing consultation arrangements.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the Community Consultation Strategy be approved.**
- 2.2 **That the Head of Communications be granted delegated authority to make amendments to the strategy in line with legislation and good practice.**

3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The key objective of the Consultation Strategy is to ensure that efficient and effective means to gather customer intelligence are in place, by which the Council can measure and determine what it needs to do, what is working well and what needs to change.
- 3.2 The strategy has been developed to increase opportunities to engage with more of the community through a variety of options, in order to develop and improve services in line with the Council's priorities.
- 3.3 The strategy needs to be delivered consistently by Members and Officers to support our commitment to enhance the quality of life for all those living in, working in and visiting the Borough.
- 3.4 The successful adoption and implementation of the strategy will benefit the community by enabling wider options for participation and provide a framework to advise residents of proposals and their outcomes, encouraging engagement at all stages.
- 3.5 By the successful capture and dissemination of data to relevant services the Council will be able to identify the improvements required by services and provide benefits to the community by reviewing and improving them in ways that meet customer requirements and deliver greater efficiency.
- 3.6 The strategy builds on ad hoc consultation that is already happening across the Council and aims to bring this work together to form a co-ordinated and corporate approach to customer engagement.

4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Implementing a Consultation Strategy is key to providing the 'intelligence' required to achieve the Council's ambition of being 'customer focused'. The introduction of the strategy forms an important action of getting better at listening to our customers, forward planning and being performance driven.

4.2 To improve and streamline services the Council needs to remain customer focused and monitor the changing needs of our communities to enable us to respond in ways that deliver real improvement and value for money.

5.0 **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Financial and resource implications will be met by in-house arrangements. However there may be a need for specialist data software in the future.

6.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

6.1 The Government's White Paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities, places a duty on Councils to consult and involve communities in decision-making.

6.2 The Government's new Localism Bill which is currently going through Parliament sets out the Government's aims for a radical shift of power from the centralised state to local communities. This bill could affect this strategy and the way consultation works in the future.

7.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

7.1 There are no direct community safety implications in this report.

8.0 **EQUALITIES**

8.1 Consultation provides opportunities to reach all section of the community and there is specific guidance in the Toolkit as to how this can be achieved. An Equalities Impact Assessment is being undertaken.

9.0 **RISKS**

9.1 Lack of recognition as to when to consult can result in lost opportunities for customer feedback and involvement in Council initiatives.

9.2 Officers find the consultation process and toolkit too bureaucratic and do not follow the procedure. To mitigate, internal communication arrangements will follow approval of the strategy.

10.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE**

10.1 The Council's 'New Ways of Working' includes working electronically, being 'paper-light' and meeting environmental government targets and this strategy states its preference for electronic methods of communication and consultation.

11.0 **CONSULTATION**

11.1 There has been no formal consultation on this strategy.

12.0 **WARDS AFFECTED**

12.1 All wards will be involved in consultation.

Contact Officer	Sarah Evans, Senior Democracy Officer
Date:	17 February 2011
Appendices :	Appendix – Community Consultation Strategy (includes 5 appendices A-E)
Background Papers:	White Paper – Strong and Prosperous Communities IDeA Consultation Toolkit Council websites including Bristol, East Northants, Lichfield, North Lincs, Torbay
Reference :	X : Cttee Council & Sub Cttees/PFA/2010-11/020311