



'leading for tomorrow'

Consultation Strategy

2008 - 2011

Introduction

1. The Council's vision is 'leading for tomorrow'. Effective consultation will assist the Council to work with the community and partners in achieving this vision. The Council is also a 'listening and learning organisation' (Council Value) which supports the Council's approach to consultation in undertaking the Place Survey (replacing the Best Value Residents' Satisfaction Survey), the Community Safety Survey and to inform the Local Development Framework etc.

Definitions of Consultation, Community Engagement and Community Empowerment

2. Definitions:
 - Consultation is a form of communication between persons or groups based upon a genuine exchange of views and normally with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action.
 - Community Engagement refers to the practical techniques of involving local people in local decisions and especially reaching out to those who feel distanced from public decisions.
 - Community Empowerment is the process of enabling people to shape and choose the services they use on a personal basis; so that they can influence the way those services are delivered.

Why do we need a Consultation Strategy?

3. The aim of a strategy is to achieve a more joined up approach to consultation across the Council and with partners. Consultation will inform and influence the future strategic and operational direction of the Council and its services. Consultation will also contribute to the Council's understanding of its residents, their needs and aspirations for the development of the borough.

The Local Government Act 2007, places a new duty on Best Value authorities to actively involve representatives of local people in the provision of local services, a Consultation Strategy will contribute to achieving this duty.

A Consultation Strategy will ensure that feedback from consultations and the resulting actions taken are communicated to the public, this will assist with improving the public's satisfaction with the Council.

The Strategy will also assist the Council in addressing legislation and forthcoming legislation that requires a level of community engagement such as: the Children's Act 2004, Equality legislation and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill (due October 2007).

Current Position

4. The Council has undertaken consultation and community engagement on a range of topics for many years. The Council works to a consultation programme and has had a Community Panel since 1999, giving people a say in matters affecting their local area.

Objectives:

5. Consultation should be in line with the objectives and priorities of the Corporate Plan. The objectives of the Consultation Strategy are:
 - to use the results of consultation as evidence to effectively inform decisions and improve services.
 - to inform and influence the future strategic and operational direction of the Council and its services.
 - to ensure consultation is planned and joined up across the Council.
 - to ensure that consultation involves partners where relevant.
 - to ensure that consultation on customer satisfaction of services encompasses the whole customer service experience, from the first point of contact – to the last point of contact with the Council.
 - to ensure consultation is managed effectively and demonstrates value for money.
 - to find out more about the Council's customers and their needs.
 - to keep the public more informed about services and changes to services and policies.
 - to give the community more influence over the services that affect them.
 - to increase community engagement.
 - to ensure that the results of consultation and the resulting actions are communicated effectively.
 - to ensure that consultation conducted is representative of the community and that consideration is given on how to consult hard to reach groups, in order to develop services and policies that are fair to all.

Participation, Community Engagement and Empowerment

6. The Council is working toward greater community engagement and there are different ways in which this may be achieved. When planning

consultation consideration should be given to whether a more participatory method would be beneficial:

- **Share information** with local people about local services and policies
- **Consult** local people about local services and provide feedback on how their advice was used – this gives people the opportunity to influence decisions
- **Participation** - working in partnership with local people, groups to design, deliver and assess local services
- **Empowerment** – assisting local communities to take on long term responsibility for decisions within their own areas thus ensuring that their voice is heard and acted upon.

Who is the Strategy Aimed at?

7. The Consultation Strategy is a corporate document that will apply to all consultation whether it is strategic, conducted by service areas, to inform organisational development or in conjunction with partners.
8. Consultation can be aimed at a varying range of people: the residents of the borough, stakeholders in a particular issue, hard to reach groups, a targeted group, users of a service, partners of the Council such as the Police, other local authorities, Members, Council staff and local businesses etc. The area of consultation may require that more than one group is surveyed and that different methods of consultation are used.

Types of Consultation

9. The Council carries out different types of consultation (please see Annex A). Consideration should be given to whether the consultation proposed fits into one of these categories and whether it supports the corporate objectives and key priorities. In Annex A examples are given of the consultations which fit into the different categories. If the consultation falls outside of these categories then guidance should be sought from Strategy and Policy as to whether the consultation is beneficial for the Council and the community.

Who Should be Involved?

10. Consultation supports service and organisational development and therefore the relevant officers and Members should be involved. The relevant Service Head should have overall responsibility for every consultation undertaken.

Before Consulting

11. Before deciding on the method of consultation the following should be considered using the What, Why, When, Who, How and Where, questions e.g.
 - Who is the consultation aimed at?

- Why are you consulting?
 - When should the consultation be conducted e.g. at the beginning of a project to gain ideas or to receive feedback after an initiative?
 - How should the consultation be conducted e.g. method?
 - Where should consultation take place e.g. is the consultation targeted at a particular group or area?
12. All consultation should be planned. At the beginning of the process consideration should be given to:
- The purpose of the consultation and outcomes sought
 - Relevance to the Council's Key priorities, the objectives of the Corporate Plan and Service Plan objectives
 - Whether consultation has already been undertaken for a similar project
 - Links with other internal projects and external partner projects
 - Identifying and making clear the responsibilities of the Council in contrast to those of other partners when undertaking joint consultation
 - Possible conflicts between the messages that may be obtained against those that other past and forthcoming consultation may bring
 - Whether consultation should give options and consequences, where relevant
 - Making the consultation meaningful – if it is not possible for the respondents to alter a decision then consultation should focus on areas where change can be affected
 - Giving sufficient time for stakeholders to respond
 - Being cost effective
 - Ensuring that the stakeholders being consulted are representative of the community e.g. include equality groups (disability, gender, age sexual orientation, race and religion) and hard to reach groups
 - Asking equality monitoring questions
 - The best method of consultation
 - Giving feedback following the consultation – who to feedback to and the method of feedback
13. Consideration will also need to be given to the best method of consultation for the particular project. It may also be that different types of consultation should be used to obtain more representative results. Consultation should be representative of the community. Strategy and Policy should be consulted initially on the Method/s of Consultation.

Methods of Consultation

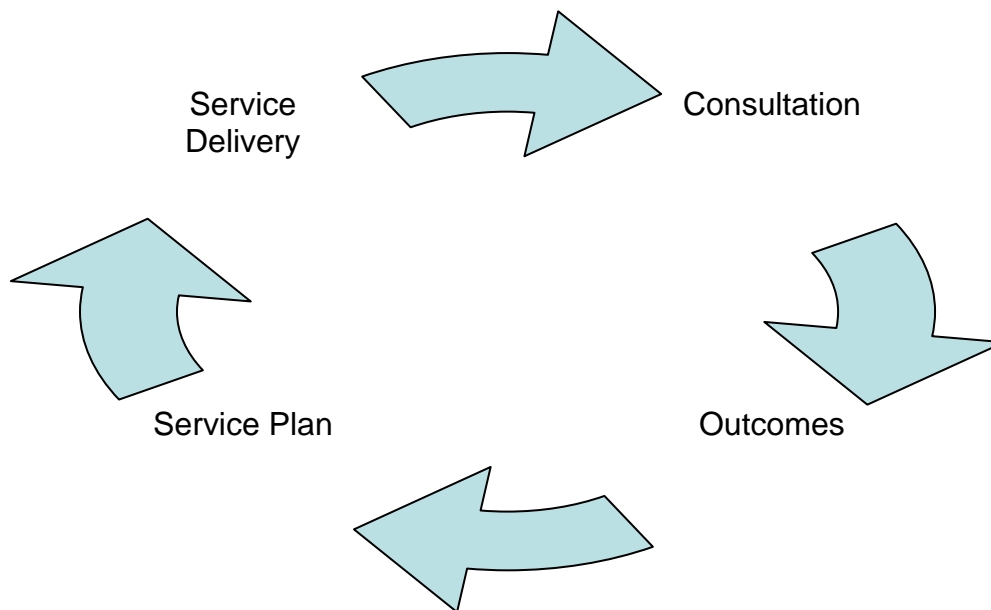
14. Consultation is conducted using either quantitative or qualitative methods. Quantitative data is research aimed at producing data that can be statistically analysed and whose results can be expressed numerically. Qualitative data is research that deals with information such as subjective opinions and is usually gathered through focus groups etc.

Different methods of consultation include (the method employed will be subject to available resources):

Quantitative	Qualitative	Targeted
<p>Questionnaire (In-house software - SNAP – electronic survey or Heathscene – Council magazine)</p> <p>Web surveys</p> <p>SMS – text messaging</p> <p>E – Polling on web site – ‘Have Your Say’</p>	Facilitation	<p>Targeted consultation – user group e.g. housing benefit customers, equality groups, hard to reach groups, staff.</p> <p>Demographic information can be used including the GIS system and the Council Tax database.</p>
Phone surveys	Working group	Local Strategic Partnership
Face to face surveys	Focus group	Write to Clubs, societies
Community Panel	Mystery shopper	Community Panel – target a particular group e.g. a ward
Competition, with a prize		Neighbourhood/community meetings – ‘Tune In’ event
<p>Market Research – list of approved contractors</p> <p>Using an authoritative source - MORI</p>		Schools
Benchmarking with other Councils etc		Resident’s Associations

Outcomes of Consultation

15. Consultation should be analysed and actions/recommendations should be developed to respond to the outcomes. Actions should be included in Service Plans and recommendations should be considered by the relevant decision making body – Management Board, Executive etc.



Monitoring and Review

16. The Consultation Strategy should be reviewed every 3 years. An annual Consultation Programme (please see Annex B) will be discussed and agreed with Management Board and Heads of Service Team prior to the start of each financial year and then monitored. Management Board will also review the programme at the half year stage. Consultation may be added to the programme during the year if it is line with the objectives and priorities of the Corporate Plan or will inform the future strategic and operational direction of the Council and its services.

Communication

17. The Consultation Strategy and Consultation Programme will be published on the Council's Intranet and web site.
18. Outcomes of consultation will be published both internally and where relevant externally through appropriate channels. Consideration should be given to appropriate and relevant feedback mechanisms following the consultation, please see examples below.

Examples of who to feedback to:	Examples of Methods of Feedback:
Those that were involved or who responded to the consultation	Summary report
Main stakeholders/partners e.g. Police, Local Strategic Partnership, Primary Care Trust, Surrey County Council, other Districts	Press release
A decision making body – Executive, Scrutiny Committee, Heads of Service Team, Management Board	Web site
Staff	Newsletter
Working group	A meeting/Action Planning meeting

19. **Annexes**

Annex A	Examples of Types of Consultation
Annex B	Consultation Programme 2008/09
Annex C	List of Approved Market Research Contractors for Consultation
Annex D	Examples of Stakeholders to Consult

Examples of Types of Consultation (section 9, page 4)

Regular Consultation
Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey
Contact Centre Customer Satisfaction Survey
Consultation as part of Equality Impact Assessments 2007 – 2010
Business Breakfast
'Tune In' - Neighbourhood/ Community event
Consultation Required by Legislation
Place Survey - Customer Satisfaction Survey
Fear of Crime Survey
Planning as set out in the Statement of Community Involvement
Organisational Development
Annual Staff Survey
Human Resources Partnership Working - Consultation with Staff
Consultation in Support of Corporate Objectives and Key Priorities
Waste Collection and Recycling Proposals and Options for Surrey Heath
One Off Consultation – which will inform the strategic and operational direction of the Council
Parking Strategy Consultation

Annex B

Consultation	Category/ Corporate Objective, Key Priority	Method	Start Date	Service Head Responsible	Feedback Mechanism
Waste Collection and Recycling Proposals and Options for Surrey Heath	Objective - 1 Priority - 3	E-mail and postal questionnaire to Community Panel. Questionnaire available on web.	June -08	Head of Environmental Services	
Community Plan and Corporate Plan (could include Cultural Strategy consultation)	Consultation in support of Corporate Objectives and Priorities	Work shops with Members, officers, partners and the community.	June – November 2008	Strategy and Policy Manager, Chief Executive	Feedback to MB, Executive and LSP. Report to Executive.
Housing Allocation Policy – joint consultation with Peerless Housing Association	Objective - 3	Questionnaire	Summer 2008	Head of Community Services, Housing Manager	Summary on the web site. Newsletter.
Staff Survey - Annual	Organisational Development	Paper questionnaire sent to all staff.	Sep-08	Strategy and Policy Manager, Chief Executive	HoST, Staff briefings
Place Survey – Customer Satisfaction Survey	Consultation required by Legislation.	Postal survey to residents	Late Summer/ Autumn 2008	Strategy and Policy Manager, Chief Executive	MB, HoST, Executive, press release

Annex B

Sub-Regional Strategic Housing Market Assessment undertaken with Rushmoor and Hart Councils	Objective - 1	Postal questionnaire	Nov-08	Head of Community Services	Summary on the web. Report to Community Scrutiny Committee.
Contact Centre Customer Satisfaction Survey (this could be part of the Council Satisfaction Survey starting in 2009)	Regular Consultation. Objective - 4	Short questionnaire in leaflet form available in the Contact Centre.	Quarterly (to be confirmed)	Contact Centre Manager, Head of Customer Relations Development	Web site
Tune In -Neighbourhood meetings (to be confirmed)	Regular Consultation. Objective - 3	Community meeting/ workshops for the public in Police cluster areas.		Strategy and Policy Manager	Newsletter on web site, regular updates to community stakeholders
Consultation as part of the Equality Impact Assessments 2007 - 2010	Required by Legislation.	Consulting the 6 equality groups on Council services	2008/09 – on-going	Strategy and Policy Manager	Impact Assessment document, Equality Action Group, Service Plans and publish on the web site.
Business Breakfast	Regular Consultation. Objective - 2	Meeting /Networking event	January, September 2008/09	Communications Manager, Head of Customer Relations Development	Newspaper

Consultation	Category	Method	Start date	Service Head Responsible	Feedback Mechanism
Core Strategy Submission Document (could be overlap with Community Plan consultation)	Required by Legislation	Forums/meetings Letters, questionnaires sent to identified consultees Press notices and adverts	Summer 2008	Head of Built Environment, Planning Policy Manager	LDF Working Group, Executive, web page
Local Development Framework - Core Strategy Final Sustainability Appraisal Report	Required by Legislation	Letters, questionnaires sent to consultees	Summer 2008	Head of Built Environment, Planning Policy Manager	LDF Working Group, Executive, web page
Camberley Town Centre Area Action Plan Submission Stage	Required by Legislation	Forums/meetings Letters, questionnaires sent to consultees Press notices and adverts	Mar-09	Head of Built Environment, Planning Policy officer	LDF Working Group, Executive, web page
Camberley Town Centre Area Action Plan Final Sustainability Appraisal Report	Required by Legislation	Letters and questionnaires sent to identified consultees	Mar-09	Head of Built Environment, Planning Policy officer	LDF Working Group, Executive, web page

Key- Corporate Objectives and Key Priorities

Objective 1 - Keeping Surrey heath a pleasant place to live, work and do business

Objective 2 - Promoting a buoyant and sustainable local economy

Objective 3 - Encouraging supporting and caring communities

Objective 4 - Delivering services efficiently, effectively and economically

List of Approved Market Research Contractors for Consultation

- MORI
- ORC International
- Kwest research
- QCL Market Research
- J K Consulting
- Marketing Sciences
- Synovate
- MVA

Examples of Stakeholders to Consult

Community Panel, (residents' panel) available from Strategy and Policy

Equality and Diversity Contacts in Surrey Heath available at
<http://intranet/Information/equalityactiongroup/>

Parish Councils – available on www.surreyheath.gov.uk

Resident's Associations available from Strategy and Policy

Local Strategic Partnership members including representatives from the Housing Association, Surrey County Council, and the Police etc - available from Committee Administration

Surrey Heath and Surrey County Council Councillors available at
<http://www.surreyheath.gov.uk/council/CouncillorsRepresentatives/>
<http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/members/membook.nsf/webSelectMember?openform>

Local Groups and Societies available from Planning Policy

National Organisations and Government Departments from Planning Policy

Please contact us if you would like the Consultation Strategy in another format such as large print.



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www.surreyheath.gov.uk - the Consultation Strategy is also available on the web site.