

CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL

Report to:- Council

Date of Meeting:- 9 September 2008

**Agenda Item
No:-**

| | | |
|---------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Public | Policy | Delegated: No |
|---------------|---------------|----------------------|

Accompanying Comments and Statements

Required

Included

Environmental Impact Statement:

No

Corporate Management Team Comments:

Yes

Financial Comments:

Yes

Legal Comments:

Yes

Personnel Comments:

Yes

Impact on Customers:

Yes

Title:- **TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT POLICY**

Report of:- **Head of Policy and Performance**

Report reference:- **PPP 81/08**

Summary

The report presents the Corporate Communications Policy (appendix 1) and Corporate Consultation Policy (appendix 2) that will form the basis of a more comprehensive community engagement policy.

Recommendation

Council is recommended to approve the policies.

The policies were considered by the Executive, 28 July 2008. The report is attached for information. The Executive recommended approval by Full Council.

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REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

PORTFOLIO AREA: PROMOTING CARLISLE

Date of Meeting: 28 July 2008

Public Yes

Key

Decision: Yes

Recorded in Forward Plan: Yes

Inside Policy Framework Yes

Title: TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Report of: Head of Policy and Performance

Report reference: PPP 73/08

Summary:

The report presents two draft documents first considered by the Executive, 30 June 2008:

1. Corporate Communications Policy which incorporates the Internal Communications Policy (appendix 1)
2. Corporate Consultation Policy (appendix 2)

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007 outlined a new duty for councils and other best value authorities to inform, consult, involve and devolve. The two draft policies contribute towards a comprehensive Community Engagement Policy that will support this new duty and the work the Council is progressing to empower its local communities.

The policies have been subject to consultation with a number of stakeholders, including local community groups. Comments from Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be presented at the meeting.

Recommendations:

The Executive is requested to:

1. Consider the comments made during the consultation process and how they may inform the Communications and Consultation policies
2. Refer to Full Council for adoption

Reasons for recommendations:

1. To set out in the policies, Carlisle City Council's commitment to high quality, timely, relevant communications and consultation that encourages feedback from all sections of our local communities.
2. To ensure that information is captured in a way that allows us to develop a better understanding of the needs of our local communities so services may be developed accordingly.

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1. BACKGROUND

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007 and the Action Plan for Community Empowerment, 2007, all emphasise the central role community engagement could and should play in effective local government. Specifically:

- The new Duty in the Act for local authorities to involve citizens in the design and delivery of services
- The expectation that councils will devolve significant powers, budgets and responsibilities to neighbourhoods and parishes
- The strengthened role for frontline councillors, including delegation of powers and functions, Councillor call for action, and an enhanced role for overview and scrutiny

A further White Paper on Community Empowerment, Communities in Control: Real People, Real Powers, was published 9 July which also aims to give local communities more say over things that effect them. It proposes a duty to promote democracy that could include better information for residents, engaging with young people, etc.

The two policies are elements of an overarching Community Engagement Policy that will incorporate the Government's commitments to community empowerment and that will enable us to design and deliver more responsive local services.

2. CONSULTATION

To date: Senior Management Team
Employees
Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Cumbria Disability Network
AWAZ¹
Cumbria County Council and Cumbria District Councils
Carlisle Parish Councils Association (response awaited)

Detailed scrutiny of the draft policies has been undertaken under the terms of our Service

¹ A group of representatives of black and ethnic minorities in our local communities

Level Agreements with Cumbria Disability Network and AWAZ. The potential impact of the policies on equality issues is not currently known but should be monitored as they are implemented. Little equalities information is currently gathered and monitored, e.g. which groups are / are not using our services. This is being addressed as part of the Council's commitment to improving its performance within the Equality Standard for Local Government.

An additional section has been added to the policies to make our commitment to equality more explicit and to identify some of the actions we will take as part of implementation. Some of these issues are covered in much more detail in the Council's Communications and Accessibility Policy (2007).

Comments from Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be presented at the meeting.

The policies will be tried and tested with our local communities and with our partners as the community empowerment pilots progress.

7. IMPLICATIONS

- **Staffing/Resources** – The policies are the responsibility of all employees and elected Members and will be implemented within existing financial and people resources. The corporate consultation budget covers the cost of Community Voice, the Citizen's Panel. The corporate equality and diversity budget meets the cost of the Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with Cumbria Disability Network and AWAZ.
- **Equality and disability** – These policies underpin the Council's developing Community Engagement and Empowerment agenda that will ensure local peoples' involvement in the design and delivery of more responsive, local services. The Council works closely with local groups representing those that are in a minority in our local communities, including those with a disability and ethnic minorities, to ensure their communications and consultation needs are met. The Communications and Consultation policies have been subject to equality impact assessment and detailed scrutiny through Cumbria Disability Network and AWAZ as part of the consultation process.
- **Financial** – The draft policies have been produced and will be implemented and reviewed within existing resources. Additional resources and / or re-allocation of existing resources may be required in the future as the Council develops the Community Empowerment agenda.
- **Legal** – The Consultation Policy goes some way to meeting the new duty to involve in The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007. More detail about how the Council will meet this duty will be contained in the Community Engagement Policy, informed by the Community Empowerment pilots. With regard to communications, the Council must comply with the Local Government Publicity Code pursuant to the Local Government Act 1986.
- **Corporate** – The policies set out the Council's corporate approach to Communications and Consultation.

- Risk Management – The policies will help us to manage any potential financial and reputational risk to the Council by defining a corporate approach to communications and consultation.
- Environmental – None directly although the Consultation Policy sets out how local people and other stakeholders will be consulted on Council priorities and developing more responsive, local services.
- Crime and Disorder – As environment
- Impact on Customers – Effectiveness of the policies will be evaluated annually to include analysis of how results of consultation have increased our understanding of our customers' needs and, in turn, have informed decision making. Overall satisfaction with the Council and with Council services will be monitored by the Place Survey.



Carlisle City Council

Corporate Communications Policy 2008

Incorporating the Internal Communications Strategy, 2007

Final version September 2008

1. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT:

Carlisle City Council will communicate clearly, openly and regularly with our residents and partners so that we can work together to make Carlisle an attractive place where people choose to live, work and visit.

2. INTRODUCTION:

The Communications Policy is a corporate working document which is at the heart of how we communicate, not only with each other as employees and elected Members, but also with our residents, stakeholders and partners.

Communication is a two way process that involves the City Council informing stakeholders about its services, priorities and decisions. It is also about listening to what our residents and partners are telling us so that we can reflect their aspirations and priorities to help shape the future vision and ambitions of the City Council.

The Council through its communications role must also influence government, partner organisations and other decision makers so that we can provide the best possible services and initiatives for our district and deliver our Vision and ensure that the area can stimulate economic and social growth.

3. AIMS – WHAT WE INTEND TO DO:

- Increase understanding of the goals of the Leadership of the authority and support Carlisle Renaissance, Cleaner, Greener and Safer, and Learning City
- Protect and enhance the reputation of the City Council
- Retain and recruit good staff
- Create a positive, informed and recognisable profile for the City Council.
- Inform and increase equality of access to services
- Support service delivery
- Support Members in their work as community leaders
- Share best practice to promote the highest standards of service
- Work in partnerships that benefit the local community, supporting neighbourhood working which will involve local people in developing services that meet their needs
- Build on the strengths outlined in the peer review 2006
- Ensure that communications meet the needs of community groups particularly those that are potentially vulnerable
- Ensure efficient and proactive media relations
- Promote and manage a strong and consistent corporate identity
- Promote Carlisle as a sub-regional capital to support economic and social regeneration
- Through the Communications and Accessibility Strategy, set out how we will ensure clear communications for all

- Internal communications - use established communication channels and develop new ones so employees and Members are able to carry out their roles effectively
- Provide opportunity for feedback
- Create opportunities for greater engagement between employees across the authority to promote knowledge of areas other than their own and to share good practice
- Provide training to improve communication skills of Managers, other employees and Members as part of the Corporate and Member Training and Development programmes

4. STAKEHOLDERS:

To be effective, communications need to be relevant and targeted. Carlisle City Council has a number of stakeholders who will receive information in different ways through different channels. All stakeholders should have opportunity to provide feedback to the Council which can be use to develop and improve services.

Stakeholders include:

- Residents)
- Employees)= Key Stakeholders
- Elected members)
- Business community
- Local, regional and central government
- Carlisle Partnership and associated sectors including Police, Health, Education, Housing
- Cumbria County Council
- Cumbria's district councils Lake District National Park Authority
- Parish Councils
- Voluntary Groups and organisations
- Interest groups
- Students
- Visitors and tourists
- Local, national and specialist media

Carlisle City Council is committed to providing excellent public services to everyone living, working, studying and visiting the area.

The Council recognises the increasing diversity of the area and is committed to ensuring that all groups within its local communities are able to access Council services without discrimination and have opportunities to influence their design and delivery. All communications will consider equality issues such as accessibility of publications (plain English, different formats, etc) and venues¹.

¹ More information on equality issues is found in the City Council's Communication and Accessibility Policy, 2007

5. THE POLICY CONTEXT:

5.1 Extract from IDEA² – Effective Communications and why it is important³

Communications is a two-way process. All stakeholders should have the opportunity to provide ideas, views and feedback on services and changes in their area and be kept informed of the latest news and development.

Local government communications also means regular contact with a much wider range of people than service users and residents. It is about:

- Keeping staff and elected Members up-to-date and involved with changes and developments
- Creating strong relationships with the media and using them effectively
- Developing an identity and promoting 'the place'
- Communicating and joining up with partners

Good communication, where people can have their say, leads to more effective services, a better reputation and stronger relationships.

Communication with residents on a two-way basis is an increasingly important way of achieving higher levels of resident satisfaction and a greater understanding of the needs and views of local communities. Research by MORI (2006) and the Audit Commission has consistently shown that people are often distrustful of local government. The 2006 Communities and Local Government report 'Perceptions of Local Government in England'⁴, claimed that one of the reasons for this was that many people felt that their council made little effort to communicate with them.

5.2 Best Value Performance Indicator Survey

The Local Government Association made an in-depth survey (2007)⁵ of Best Value Performance Indicators for every council in England to find out why some authorities were more popular than others. It found the following:

- The biggest driver of resident satisfaction is 'perceived value for money'. Residents who feel they get good value for money score their council high
- Council tax levels have no correlation with overall satisfaction
- There is no relationship between resident satisfaction with council services and resident satisfaction with the council
- Councils whose residents feel well-informed about services i.e. letting residents know what they do for them, have come out as the most popular councils with residents but not necessarily ranked high in the Best Value

² Improvement and Development Agency

³ www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageid=5594601 – December 2006

⁴ Local Government report 'Perceptions of Local Government in England'⁴, <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/perceptionslocal>

⁵ <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelid=175110>

User Satisfaction Survey. E.g. the most popular district council was also the one whose residents feel best informed but when it was rated based on service satisfaction levels, it was ranked 93 out of 238 district councils in England

- Overall, an average of 42% of people feel well informed by their council in the 2006-07 BVPI scores, a fall of 9% from the 200304 survey.

5.3 Quality of Life Survey⁶

In the Cumbria Quality of Life Survey, 2006, residents' levels of satisfaction with the Carlisle area were relatively high; 84% of residents said they were satisfied, slightly less than the Cumbria average of 88%.

In a Carlisle City Council Citizen Panel Survey⁷, October 2006, the following were felt to be important or highly important:

- Reducing waste and increasing recycling
- Ensuring good public transport in and around Carlisle
- Improving the quality and availability of housing in Carlisle
- Improving cultural, leisure and sporting facilities
- Improving the quality of our local environments
- Enforcing environmental laws such as fines for dog fouling and litter
- Improving the quality of life for disadvantaged neighbourhoods

The Policy will set in place a framework to support the City Council's priorities and ambitions.

6. CURRENT CHALLENGES:

6.1 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007

The Act puts emphasis on engaging with local people so they are able to get involved in improving public services and quality of life within local communities. Local people are to be given more control over their lives, to be consulted and involved in designing and running services, be informed about the quality of services in their area, and enabled to call the local authority and others to account if they fail to meet their needs.

Local authorities will have to involve and consult service users more fully and provide better information about service standards in their local area.

The Act demands stronger, local leadership, greater resident participation in decisions and an enhanced role for community groups, all of which can promote cohesion.

⁶ Quality of Life Survey, 2006, Cumbria County Council

⁷ Citizen's panel, number 20

<http://intranet.carlisle.gov.uk/yourcouncil/dirser/ppp/polper/Documents/Consultation/Citizens%20Panel%2021%20Report%202006.doc>

It recognises that local authorities will want to adopt a range of different approaches, depending on their local circumstances.

These would include steps to:

- **Inform citizens** – providing good, accessible information on how to access services and on how local services are performing; through, for example, newsletters, information on websites, text messages, local media, or staff working in neighbourhoods
- **Consult citizens and communities** – about the shape of local services and policies using, for example, surveys, focus groups or neighbourhood and parish plans
- **Involve citizens directly in designing, delivering or assessing a service** – for example by co-opting a group of young people to help manage a youth centre
- **Devolve responsibility for the delivery of a service** – for example through community management and ownership of a local community hall

6.2 New Place Survey

The proposed Place Survey, Autumn 2008⁸, will require councils to ask local residents their views on a wide variety of issues. These will range from use of local services to general health and well-being, from support of older people to tackling crime, as well as levels of participation in the local community. Respondents will also be able to say how concerned they are about the problems affecting their communities, from littering, graffiti or noisy neighbours, to whether they feel the police and local authorities are tackling anti-social behaviour effectively.

Local Government Minister, John Healey, said: "... Local people should be actively encouraged to have their say on the key concerns in their communities, both at the ballot box and between elections. The new Place Survey will be a significant tool for councils and local agencies not only to measure their performance in important policy areas, but also gauge people's views on things that should be given top priority."

6.3 Comprehensive Spending Review

The Council will have to review its budget forecasts for 2008/09 – 2010/11 to ensure that the efficiency agenda of 3% cash savings in each year is achieved to enable the Council to meet its service priorities. Communications will be a key part in explaining the outcomes of this review and its effects on stakeholders who have increasing expectations of council services.

6.4 Reputation Campaign⁹

⁸ May be delayed until 2009

⁹ Local Government Association – www.campaigns.lga.gov.uk/reputation/home

The City Council has signed up to the nationally recognised Reputation Campaign which was launched by the Local Government Association and the IDEA (the Improvement and Development Agency), after MORI research showed that people respect councils far less than the services they provide.

To support this, MORI identified 12 core actions, which have the potential to have a marked and positive impact on a council's reputation.

The core actions fit into two broad categories:

- Cleaner, greener, safer
- Communications

Work within the Council is underway to benchmark what we are already achieving and to see which actions we need to develop further. The actions are graded: bronze (planning stage), silver (implementation stage) and gold (evaluation stage).

- We have achieved Gold standard in the category A-Z guide to services and Council Magazine/Newspaper
- We are working towards silver for internal communications
- We are at the bronze stage for managing the media
- Our target is to achieve Gold Status for all Communications Core actions by 2010

6.5 Code of Recommended Practice for Local Government Publicity¹⁰:

All local authorities have to carry out their communications function within the context of the Department of Communities and Local Government's Code of Recommended Practice for Local Government Publicity, issued under Section 4 of the Local Government Act 1986, as amended by section 27 of the Local Government Act 1988.

The code of recommended practice covers the content, style, distribution and cost of local authority publicity and asks that any decisions on publicity are taken with reference to the code.

7. IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY:

Our employees and elected Members are our greatest ambassadors who can inform and shape external and internal communications. Communications is a priority for the Senior Management Team, Heads of Service and key communicators throughout the organisation. Implementing and monitoring the policy is the responsibility of our elected Members in their community leadership role and of all council employees.

¹⁰ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/rft/153169.rtf>

The day to day management of the Policy will be the responsibility of the Communications team, part of People, Policy and Performance.

All Heads of Service will take particular responsibility for the successful implementation of the Communications Policy by ensuring that:

- All staff are aware of the Communications Policy
- Communications is a priority within their Service Plan
- They provide advice and inform future planning for Communications issues

A detailed action plan and Communications Toolkit support the policy and will be available on the Council's intranet and website. A brief guide to the Toolkit is found at appendix 1a.

Progress will be reviewed annually to evaluate success in delivering the policy. Satisfaction of local residents will be measured by the Place Survey¹¹ and other means of engagement, particularly neighbourhood working and the community empowerment pilots.

¹¹ Place Survey consultation 2007;
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/newplacesurvey>

The Toolkit provides practical information to staff and Members on how we will communicate effectively, in accordance with the principles of the policy. The Toolkit forms the basis of a more detailed action plan that will be used to monitor implementation.

The Toolkit includes information about:

1. Carlisle Focus

Carlisle Focus is the City Council's quarterly resident's magazine published every Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter and includes information about City Council services, local events and partnership initiatives. Every edition also includes a local events listing, council meeting dates, city councillor contact details and Customer Contact Centre opening times and contact details.

2. Media

The media has a key role in promoting our services, events, meetings, decisions and policies. With this in mind, we issue approximately 300 press releases a year. In addition to these, we issue statements in response to press enquiries and arrange interviews following up a press release or as a comment from the City Council.

In our 2007 readers' survey, we found that 74% of residents got their information about Carlisle City Council from Carlisle Focus, 48% from the Cumberland News, 24% from News and Star, 26% from local TV and 14% from local radio.

3. Corporate Marketing Campaigns

Marketing campaigns are used to enhance the reputation of individual services. They can also help to change behaviours and perceptions using a variety of visual and information tools to do this, such as: press advertising, posters, lamp post banners, bus advertising, postcards, lamp post signs, litter bin stickers, packaging stickers, car park tickets, information leaflets and vehicle signage and the website.

4. Branding

Our brand is one of the most visible ways in which the organisation is seen and judged and if applied effectively and consistently, it will establish a positive coherent perception of the City Council in the eyes of our customers, partners and suppliers, and also our own employees.

5. Internal Communications

Communication is a powerful tool that can be used to develop the culture and values of an organisation. The Internal Communications Strategy, April 2007, has been incorporated into the wider policy.

6. Carlisle City Council website and intranet

Our website provides information that may be accessed all year round at any time of the day or night. In 2007, it generated 1,127,718 page views from local, national and international visitors to the site, an increase of 50% on 2006. The intranet is in its early stages of development.

7. Corporate publications

Corporate publications such as A-Z of Services, Community Plan for Carlisle, Corporate Improvement Plan and Summary, and Carlisle Performance and Council Tax Summary are produced through the Communications Team. The design is clear and the layout simple, they are checked for Plain English with the aim of being jargon free.



Carlisle City Council

Corporate Consultation Policy 2008

Final version September 2008

1. Introduction:

The City Council knows that it can only achieve its aspirations and ambitions for the people of Carlisle with their support. The Council has put consulting and involving local communities at the heart of its business. The Corporate Improvement Plan, 2007-2010 promises that, **The City Council will work hard at getting the public more involved in planning the future of Carlisle and in helping the city improve.**

The Policy sets out the Council's continuing commitment to consultation, details what residents can expect from our consultation, and outlines the methods we will use to ensure that we consult consistently and effectively.

Effective, meaningful consultation presents many challenges, not only in terms of how we conduct consultation but in how we feedback to participants, how we evidence the ways in which the results of consultation has informed decisions, and how we learn from our own practice. When done effectively, consultation is a key driver for improving service design and delivery.

2. Why the Council consults:

The primary aim of Carlisle City Council's consultation activities is to help the Council to ensure its priorities, services and decisions reflect the needs and aspirations of our local communities as closely as possible.

The Council realises that consultation can help to:

- Improve service quality and standards over time
- Identify new ways of working
- Prioritise services and delivery
- Help us set standards and ensure we are meeting those standards
- Evaluate performance
- Develop more effective and efficient services by involving users in their design
- Ensure the city council is accountable for the services we offer and the decisions we make
- Highlight problems that may not be apparent to us but are obvious to residents and service users

In addition effective consultation has other benefits:

- Services can be targeted more closely on providing what people want, and avoiding what people do not want
- Take-up of services can be improved
- Local people can be involved more in decision-making, rejuvenating the local democratic process and directly empowering communities

In some cases, local authorities have a statutory requirement to consult on specific issues. All applications for planning consent and related approvals are subject to consultation and publicity and, in the latter case, this can

include national legislative requirements such as development in conservation areas, or affecting listed buildings. Otherwise the Council undertakes to publicise planning application proposals using either site and press notices, or direct written notification to adjacent occupiers, or a combination of the two.

3. Carlisle City Council's Commitment to Consultation:

The Council is committed to conducting good quality, coordinated consultation with its key stakeholders. It recognises the importance of such activity, and applies the following principles to the consultation that it undertakes.

- Consultation will be needed to inform a decision. It will be genuine and transparent and findings will be used alongside other relevant information to inform decisions, Council policy and priorities, and to improve services
- It will be timely, well planned and coordinated
- It will be inclusive and targeted to ensure that all groups within our local communities may contribute where this is feasible and relevant
- The quality of consultation will be high using appropriate, cost effective methods
- Results of consultation and how they informed decisions will be fed back to those involved in the consultation process
- Results will be made available across the Council and to partner organisations

4. What the Council will do:

To ensure that the principles outlined in this policy are maintained the Council will:

- Publish details of planned public consultation on its website
- Co-ordinate with partners to reduce 'consultation fatigue' and ensure that activity is neither unnecessary nor duplicated
- Maintain and encourage the use of corporate consultation mechanisms such as Community Voice, the Cumbria Resident's Panel
- Review all consultation activity on completion to assess its effectiveness in reaching the appropriate audience and its influence on decision making
- Develop a database of completed consultation to help us share and publicise results
- Evaluate the effectiveness of our consultation policy and procedures on an annual basis
- Make use of the most cost effective techniques including exploring more innovative approaches and emerging technologies such as, Social Networking Sites, Facebook, etc
- Develop in-house skills and keep up to date with new techniques to ensure that our consultation is innovative and of high quality

5. What can consultees expect from the Carlisle City Council?

Anyone being consulted by the Council can expect the Council to:

- Respect their opinion and listen to their views
- Give a clear explanation of the purpose of the consultation and how results will be used
- Be clear about the scope of the consultation and honest about what can and cannot be changed as a result
- Offer an explanation of what to expect from the process including details of how consultees would be expected to contribute
- Provide feedback of consultation findings, highlighting how messages are being acted upon and what changes will be made as a result
- Make it as easy as possible for all sections of the population to take part in consultation activities and to make special provisions and provide incentives where appropriate

6. Who will we consult?

Carlisle City Council will identify the relevant target audience for any consultation exercise. To monitor performance and inform future service developments, service users and non-users, including groups which are sometimes harder to reach, will be consulted. On wider issues of Council policy the range of consultees will include all appropriate stakeholders, which are many and varied but will often include:

- Elected Members
- Local residents and community groups
- People working in the district
- Users of Council services
- People who don't currently use Council services
- The local business community
- Employees
- Trades Unions
- Parish Councils
- Community and Voluntary sector
- Other public agencies and partnerships that we work with

7. How will we consult?

There are many different consultation methods available. Carlisle City Council will always seek to use the most appropriate consultation method for the task at hand. The method will be tailored to both the purpose of the consultation and the people/organisations being consulted.

Research may be continuous, as in the process of producing performance indicator information, or it may be a one-off research exercise to help shape policy or highlight improvements or changes to services.

Consultation methods are quantitative or qualitative.

Typically, our quantitative methods will include (but are not limited to):

- Citizens Panel Questionnaires (self-completion and telephone)
- User satisfaction surveys
- Employee surveys
- Statutory surveys such as Place Survey

Typically, our qualitative research methods will include (but are not limited to):

- Focus Group discussions
- Workshops
- Forums
- In-depth interviewing
- Mystery shopping
- Service Level Agreement with Cumbria Disability Network and AWAZ¹

Any consultation may use just one or a number of these different methods.

Carlisle City Council is committed to providing excellent public services to everyone living, working, studying and visiting the area.

The Council recognises the increasing diversity of the area and is committed to ensuring that all groups within its local communities are able to access Council services without discrimination and have opportunities to influence their design and delivery. All consultation will consider equality issues such as accessibility of publications (plain English, different formats, etc) and venues².

To ensure that our employees and Members are equipped to conduct the high quality approach to consultation outlined above; a Toolkit for public consultation has been produced to compliment this policy. A brief guide to the toolkit is found at appendix 2a. During 2008-09, we will be working with other local authorities in Cumbria and the police to develop a shared consultation kit to help ensure maximum efficiency and consistent standards across the county, and to embed best practice.

Carlisle City Council also commits to exploring and developing new means of consultation as appropriate.

8. What will we consult about?

The council provides a large range of services and functions. For many of these services consultation is a regular aspect of their work. Where possible, Carlisle City Council will consult:

- To help determine service and spending priorities
- To monitor and improve service performance
- To develop or test new ideas and proposals

¹ A group of representatives of black and ethnic minorities in our local communities

² More information on equality issues is found in the City Council's Communication and Accessibility Policy, 2007

9. Summary

1) Identify service or policy area where consultation is needed to inform a decision

2) Contact Policy and Performance Team for guidance / support

3) Determine Target Audience

4) Identify appropriate mechanisms; where necessary procure external support

5) Agree consultation timetable (inc. active fieldwork periods and deadline for publishing results)

6) Publish details of planned consultation exercise

7) Conduct consultation exercise (in line with published timeline)

8) Publish results (in line with published timeline)

9) Assess / implement findings and feedback impact of consultation on service / policy etc to participants

10) Complete evaluation of consultation exercise

11) Annually, evaluate cost and effectiveness of consultation

10. Getting involved:

We will publicise opportunities to take part in consultation activities widely. Any member of the public who would like to know more information about the Council's consultation activities should visit www.carlisle.gov.uk or contact:

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September 2008

The toolkit contains very detailed, practical guidance for staff and Members on implementing the Consultation Policy. It should act as a resource that provides us with the knowledge needed to conduct effective community consultation. It offers information about the tools available and the various advantages and disadvantages of these tools.

It covers:

1. Planning a consultation

- What you need to consider and the justification for it. Consultations that are unnecessary waste time and money and make it harder for genuine consultations to generate interest and responses.
- Working out what you want to know. Consultations without clear objectives can confuse and disillusion participants and produce results that don't meet our needs.
- Scoping the consultation - what decision, or aspects of it may be influenced? Being sure there is scope for the consultation to influence a decision - if there is not then DO NOT consult
- Deciding who you're talking to and setting specific targets for the level of response you want from different groups, and particularly harder to reach groups or communities
- The resources you have, including how much time
- How feedback will be provided. Consultees should be told what the results were and, crucially, how they influenced the decision, service or policy, - or why they did not.
- The importance of evaluating the consultation so we may continuously improve and how to consider evaluation criteria prior to carrying out the consultation.

2. Approaches to consultation

Including:

- Community Voice



Our Cumbria wide citizens' panel is a corporate resource and is shared by the Cumbria County Council, the six district councils, and Cumbria Constabulary.

The panel consists of a representative sample of 3000 Cumbria adult residents, 600 of which are from the Carlisle District.

- The scope, likely costs, practicalities of organising, and the advantages and disadvantages of the various methods available to us:
 - Postal surveys
 - Telephone
 - Face to face
 - Focus groups
 - Representative groups
 - Using ICT, and
 - Mystery shopping