

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PROFORMA**

Cabinet Meeting .....4th January 2007

1. Title of Item/Report

Review of Corporate Consultation-Report of Corporate Policy Review  
Select Committee

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet was informed that the Corporate Policy Select Committee had been tasked with reviewing the Council's approach to corporate consultation.

Recent years had seen the growth of the consultation culture. In order to avoid a fragmented approach and a consequent rise in consultation fatigue, many public bodies had prepared Consultation or Public Engagement Strategies. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's Consultation Strategy was produced in 2000 and a review of the Council's approach to corporate consultation was therefore considered timely to examine whether the Strategy was fit for purpose and to identify any improvements.

The Committee agreed to adopt a phased approach to the review. The purpose of the first stage was to set the review in context by gathering evidence on best practice and understanding the Council's consultation arrangements. The purpose of the second stage was to examine specific consultation "case studies" taking evidence from departmental managers. The Committee chose to examine four consultation exercises in greater detail. In addition, the Committee sought the views of the Adult and Youth Viewpoint Panels through a series of focus groups and also conducted a Member survey. Input was also obtained from Policy Officers' Group on the Committee's initial conclusions and recommendations.

A copy of the Select Committee's report was provided for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

1. co-ordination of consultation arrangements be strengthened by extending the remit of the Policy Officers' Group to fulfil the following roles:

- to disseminate best practice
- to regularly review the Consultation Plan
- to audit a sample of consultations
- to conduct post consultation review

2. services be reminded of the importance of notifying the Consultation Unit of all consultations before consultation takes place and of keeping the Consultation Plan fully up to date.

3. the Consultation Plan be developed as a communication tool and made widely accessible through the Internet/Intranet including links to consultation results and Business Case/ Project Plans.

4. a Business Case/ Project Plan be prepared by the lead officer for significant consultations (determined by an assessment of risk and the scale of the consultation) and that the Business Case/ Project Plan identify opportunities for joint working, include an assessment of costs and set out how the consultation results and outcomes will be fed back to consultees.

5. training on consultation be compulsory for staff directly involved in organising and running consultations.

6. a robust post consultation review process be established to enable the Council to learn for future consultation activities (working, as appropriate, with local Councillors/partner agencies/other Local Authorities for greater challenge and independence).

7. all Members be asked for feedback on consultation activity annually.

8. a link to the Consultation Plan be emailed quarterly to all Members and summary information relating to the previous and next quarter consultations be reported to Executive Scrutiny Committee as part of its quarterly performance report

9. the Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members be revised to ensure that Councillors are notified of consultation proposed in their ward before the consultation commences and is in the public domain.

10. the Consultation Plan be shared with key partners on a quarterly basis and extended to include a section for consultations undertaken by Renaissance.

11. a revised Consultation Strategy be prepared taking into account the

outcomes of the scrutiny review and that the revised Strategy seeks to strengthen the Council's links with partner agencies and approach to consulting with children and young people.

3. Reasons for the Decision

This topic was identified as an area meriting a scrutiny review at a meeting of the Scrutiny Liaison Forum held on 8 March 2006. The issue was subsequently referred to the Corporate Policy Select Committee for approval, and passed to a meeting of the Executive Scrutiny Committee as part of the work programming procedure.

The objectives/aims developed by the Committee for the review were as follows: -

- To improve community engagement.
- To ensure corporate approach by all departments.
- To determine how views are used to shape service delivery.
- To review the Council's consultation strategy to determine whether it was fit for purpose and identify any improvements.

The review addressed the following strategic corporate objectives:

- Council Planning Framework – Putting people first / Working with others.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not Applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

By not later than midnight on Friday 12th January 2007

Proper Officer  
08 September 2007