

## Communication Discussion Group

8 July 2009 2pm

<p>How well informed do you think Stockton Borough Council keeps you about the services and benefits it provides?</p>	
<p>What do you expect the Council to be telling you about as a local resident?</p>	<p>What services provided</p> <p>Future plans</p> <p>Councillor expenses</p> <p>Council tax rises</p> <p>Events</p> <p>Tristar Decent Homes</p>
<p>Do panel members have examples of where Council communications have been good? Why was it good?</p>	<p>Attendee was able to view accounts before these were sent to the auditors</p> <p>CFYA usually very good</p> <p>Publicity for SIRF</p>
<p>Are there instances where communications have not been good? How could they have been improved?</p>	<p>Bus times have changed but public not been informed</p> <p>Need to communication more about ward councillors – who they are and what they do</p> <p>An attendee noted that Social Services not in the telephone directory</p> <p>Leaflets and information for council officers not always available</p> <p>With the exception of SIRF, events are not publicised enough. Suggested an officer group to be set up to look at the publicising of events</p>

	<p>Attendee noted that when they contacted CFYA with an problem at his property, he was given the contact number for an officer, however when he contacted the officer they did not come to his home to sort out his problem.</p>
<p>Do you feel that the Council is in touch with people in the Borough? Why? Why not?</p>	<p>Yes people are aware of what is happening in their ward</p> <p>Stockton News and A – Z directory has been useful</p> <p>Because of viewpoint people have been able to get feedback although sometimes feel decision has already been made</p>
<p>Do you feel that the Council gives good value for money?</p>	<p>Unsure what the term ‘value for money’ refers to, this needs explaining in SBC information</p> <p>SBC does a good job compared to experiences of people who live in other local authority areas</p> <p>When looking at accounts get a full break down of expenditure</p> <p>Been improvements over the last five years</p> <p>SBC listen to people and gather opinions</p> <p>SBC does very well in keeping the street clean</p>
<p>How do you feel the Council is viewed by local people; what does it stand for?</p>	<p>SBC provides services</p> <p>Done well in Britain in Bloom</p> <p>Reputation is starting to build up slowly</p> <p>SBC now looking to lead in areas e.g. improving on recycling</p> <p>Promoting Fair Trade</p>

	<p>Impressed that public can make their view known and are asked their views – this is an improvement as previously where not given opportunity to be involved</p> <p>Was a perception that once councillors were in power they were prepared to make their own decisions, however feel people are being listen to</p>
<p>Do you think that a strong identity and positive image is important for the Council</p>	<p>Yes</p>

<p>Do you feel you have enough information about decisions that are being made by the Council?</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Consult with people when the decision has been made</p> <p>Unaware of the role of Cabinet, whether these meetings are open to the public, and how to find out about meetings</p> <p>If public attend meetings councillors will be more perceptive to peoples views when making decisions</p>
<p>Do you feel that you can personally influence decisions affecting your local area? How?</p>	<p>No due to lack of knowledge that decisions are being made and not knowing how to influence</p> <p>Once a public consultation has been done, there does not appear to be an outcome – nothing is achieved</p> <p>There is a view that public are being pacified with being involved in small decisions, while being kept out of the big issue decision making.</p> <p>Believe that officers are making a lot of the decisions</p>

<p>To what extent do you want to be involved in decisions being made?</p>	<p>Should be involved in local wards and making sure the area is kept maintained</p> <p>Should be involved in major issues and changes.</p> <p>Public meetings, where people can make representations, should be held</p>
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<p>How do you want the Council to keep you informed?</p>	<p>Website – a lot on there</p> <p>Leaflets in libraries</p> <p>Schools</p> <p>Newsletters from ward councillors</p> <p>Information should be put on sandwich boards or electronic notice boards placed outside of public buildings such as libraries, health centres, community centres, leisure centres, so that public will look take notice when walking past</p> <p>Public forums should be held by departments when changes are proposed</p>
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<p>Have you ever used the Council website?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When?</li> <li>• How frequently?</li> <li>• What for?</li> <li>• Was it easy to use?</li> <li>• Could you find what you were looking for?</li> <li>• Was the information clear and readable?</li> <li>• How could it be improved?</li> </ul>	<p>Some attendees used the website more regularly than others.</p> <p>Attendees used website to find information e.g. school holidays diary, library, CFYA, whats on in education services</p> <p><b>Positives</b></p> <p>Website is easy to use however sometimes the subject you are looking for not obvious - may be named something different on website</p> <p>Information on website is clear</p> <p>CFYA – was able to find the correct officer to contact</p>
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	<p><b>Negatives/Other Improvements</b> Search engine not so good</p> <p>There should be a page with frequently asked questions on issues that do not come under SBC remit, giving an explanation of who is responsible and how to contact e.g. public transport</p>
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<p>How you ever seen Stockton News?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you read Stockton News?</li> <li>• How useful/informative is it?</li> <li>• How long do you keep it for?</li> <li>• Is it enjoyable to read?</li> <li>• Could the content be improved?</li> <li>• Could the format/layout be improved?</li> </ul>	<p>Attendees read Stockton News and most kept each edition until the next edition arrived.</p> <p>However feeling that people don't read Stockton News, and it is those people who complain that they were not informed about decisions, changes, event etc</p> <p><b>Positives</b> Well balanced politically</p> <p>Format, with pictures and photographs, good</p> <p>What's happening section good</p> <p>Front covers striking</p> <p>Good spread of issues across the borough</p> <p><b>Negatives/Improvements</b> Should be more articles on ward issues</p> <p>Needs to contact information about NHS services opening times</p> <p>Rarely see articles on the scout movement and other community groups, and contact details for such groups</p> <p>Should have the details for local libraries</p>
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<p>Do you have suggestions for improving any other Council publications that you have seen?</p>	<p>Yoyo very good</p> <p>Need to develop leaflets asking for views and complaints</p> <p>Communication surrounding the designs for the housing project on North Shore poor</p>
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<p>Additional Comments</p>
<p>Strong opinions regarding Stockton High Street including the pedestrianisation of the centre, the market, the former Globe building, and the number of vacant shops and ideas of how these can be improved. People do not feel they have a platform to discuss these.</p> <p>Some authorities/organisations use “Cleveland” on postal address, which is incorrect and should not be used</p>