

Communication Discussion Group

9 July 2009 6pm

<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>Explanation of what services are provided.</p> <p>It was also suggested that there should be better publicity about the different forums and how residents can get involved.</p>
<p>Do panel members have examples of where Council communications have been good? Why was it good?</p>	<p>Recycling information</p> <p>Good response from main switchboard number</p> <p>One panel member said that he phoned Care for Your Area if he any query with the Council.</p> <p>A – Z of Services</p> <p>Stockton News</p> <p>Good information about help with heating for vulnerable people</p>
<p>Are there instances where communications have not been good? How could they have been improved?</p>	<p>Website very difficult to navigate “a minefield”</p> <p>Lack of awareness by all group members about main Council number and CFYA number.</p> <p>Two members of the group felt that they had received subjective and biased responses from Councillors</p> <p>One member had sent an email to the Council website and not received a response at all.</p>

	<p>One member had experienced poor communication from the Council as a result of poor internal communications.</p> <p>One panel member felt that although a response was always received, the quality of the response was sometimes poor.</p>
<p>Do you feel that the Council is in touch with people in the Borough? Why? Why not?</p>	<p>Most felt that the Council was trying to be in touch.</p> <p>One member commented that most people had limited contact with the Council.</p> <p>Several members felt that the Council listened when there were bigger consultations but questioned whether individual issues were addressed properly.</p>
<p>Do you feel that the Council gives good value for money?</p>	<p>There was a mixed response.</p> <p>Most felt that the Council did offer good value for money, although examples of poor service were identified. Some felt that money was sometimes wasted such as floral displays whilst others liked them.</p> <p>One panel member commented that this was relative to residents needs. Another commented that the current financial climate altered people's view of the Council.</p>
<p>How do you feel the Council is viewed by local people; what does it stand for?</p>	<p>The group felt that this depended on where you lived in the Borough with perhaps the more deprived areas blaming the council for local problems.</p>
<p>Do you think that a strong identity and positive image is important for the Council</p>	<p>All felt that a strong image was important.</p>

<p>Do you feel you have enough information about decisions that are being made by the Council?</p>	<p>The group wanted more area/ward specific information.</p> <p>One member referred to Council minutes on the website but felt that they were not user friendly and that there should be a more proactive approach to informing the public about decisions being made.</p> <p>Perhaps use parish councils, local libraries more and include ward specific information in Stockton News.</p> <p>Positive examples: SIRF, topic alerts</p> <p>Negative comments: Need more info on how money is spent. Lack of info can lead to poor perceptions</p>
<p>Do you feel that you can personally influence decisions affecting your local area? How?</p>	<p>Having a parish council can distance residents from the Borough Council – minor matters can detract from the bigger issues</p>
<p>To what extent do you want to be involved in decisions being made?</p>	<p>That's why we are here. We would like the choice. You have to be proactive.</p>
<p>How do you want the Council to keep you informed?</p>	<p>Council should use email more – only being used regularly by viewpoint.</p> <p>Most members disapproved of leaflets to the door as a waste of paper and money and commented that the danger was that they get junked.</p> <p>Prefer:</p> <p>Libraries A-Z Guide Stockton News Local Parish Magazines</p>

	The CD version of Stockton News (for blind people) does not contain all of the information from the publication.
<p>Have you ever used the Council website?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When? • How frequently? • What for? • Was it easy to use? • Could you find what you were looking for? • Was the information clear and readable? • How could it be improved? 	<p>Some members had used the website.</p> <p>Some things had been easier to find than others.</p> <p>Need a better search facility like google. One panel member commented that he would do a google search to find something on the Council's website.</p> <p>Need simple style and good font size and careful use of colour for people with visual impairment.</p>
<p>Have you ever seen Stockton News?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you read Stockton News? • How useful/informative is it? • How long do you keep it for? • Is it enjoyable to read? • Could the content be improved? • Could the format/layout be improved? 	<p>All of the group had read Stockton News and most kept it until the next edition.</p> <p>The group felt that it was informative and enjoyable to read and looked professional. It was also felt to be a good way to find out about what was happening in all parts of the Borough.</p> <p>Panel members felt it would be useful to have more information about how finances are spent.</p>
<p>Do you have suggestions for improving any other Council publications that you have seen?</p>	<p>One panel member commented that the Golden Guide was very useful but information quickly became out of date.</p>