

Let's listen

The Consultation Strategy for
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

2010 - 2013





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The Consultation Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Who is the Consultation Strategy for?

This strategy is for all officers and Members who wish to consult or engage with their stakeholders. 'Putting Consultation into Practice' is the supporting document that gives operational support and guidance as well as detailing processes, roles and responsibilities.



What do we mean by consultation?

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council defines consultation as:

" Dialogue between individuals or groups, based upon a genuine exchange of views and with the objective of informing decisions, policies or programmes of action".

The national policy context

Nationally there is a continued drive for citizens and communities to have a say in the services they receive, the management of their communities and the facilities within them. Our long standing commitment to community involvement and engagement means we are well placed to deliver this exciting agenda alongside our vibrant voluntary and community sector and other public and private sector providers.

The local context

At Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, effective consultation is at the heart of our commitment to the community. We want to ensure that residents of Stockton-on-Tees, our service users, partners and all other interested parties have the opportunity to be involved in the planning, prioritising and monitoring of our services and are involved in the Council's decision-making processes and activities.



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Aims of the Consultation Strategy

The Consultation Strategy, first developed in 1999, sets out our approach to consulting with local people, as well as establishing the processes by which it will be managed and evaluated. It also details our commitment to consultation and the principles that will underpin our consultation and engagement activity. Guidance to support the delivery of the strategy has been produced and contains advice on key consultation methods, as well as guidelines and tips for conducting effective consultation.

Our commitment to consultation

As a Council we will:

- ✓ Continue to develop different mechanisms for community consultation and involvement as part of our role as a community leader
- ✓ Continue to support our partners from the voluntary, community and other public sectors to deliver high quality effective consultation activities
- ✓ Ensure that expectations and limitations of consultation are clearly defined at the outset and conveyed in an effective manner to those being consulted
- ✓ Undertake reliable, purposeful and effective public consultation in order to clearly inform policy decisions, strategic planning and service improvements
- ✓ Take a revised approach to consultation, resulting in reduced quantity and increased quality by ensuring that activity is coordinated and meets consistent quality standards
- ✓ Ensure that all results of consultations are robust and reliable
- ✓ Ensure we adhere to the principles set out in the Stockton Renaissance (Local Strategic Partnership) Compact with the Third Sector
- ✓ Ensure that staff have the necessary support, mechanisms, equipment and training to undertake effective consultation
- ✓ Ensure the results and outcomes of consultation are communicated effectively
- ✓ Ensure staff are aware of and comply with protocols, ethics and processes relating to all aspects of consultation



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Our principles:

Let's Listen is one of a suite of documents that outlines and supports our approach to consultation and engagement. The other documents are:

- Communications Strategy - Getting the message
- Community Engagement Strategy - Let's Get Engaged
- Community Assets Transfer Policy
- Draft Third Sector Investment Fund

All of these documents can be accessed via www.stockton.gov.uk

Each document shares a commitment to the following principles:

Co-ordination and Partnership:

- We will avoid duplication of effort
- We will share best practice with our partners
- We will ensure that the direction and nature of our engagement and consultation activities influences our services and plans

Inclusivity

- We will use all our skills and experience to ensure that there is equal access to consultation opportunities
- We will reach out to all communities
- We will include work to support residents and hard to reach groups

Clarity of Purpose

- We will ensure that our consultation activities stand firmly on all of these principles
- We will only implement specific community engagement and consultation processes when there is real opportunity for people to inform, influence, or change what we do and how we do it
- We will be open and honest
- We will not prejudge our intended actions
- We will be clear about why specific options have been chosen



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Integrity and confidentiality

- Community participation in our consultation activities will be valued and nurtured by the Council
- We will honestly interpret any information we receive
- We will respect the rights of our residents and others participating in consultation to decide how much information they want to reveal about themselves
- We will ensure that in respecting confidentiality we are taking into account relevant legislation

Communication

- We will make effective use of our Communications Strategy
- We will ensure that measures are taken to not only encourage residents to respond to council proposals with their views but to ensure that doing so is easy and clear
- We will reduce the number of occasions when residents feel under pressure to respond with undue haste to surveys and other consultation activities
- We will ensure that our written communication is checked so it is easy to read and understand
- We will have clear and strong feedback processes in place
- We will explain what has been done as a result of consultation and engagement activity.



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Why do we consult?

All Local Authorities have a statutory duty to consult on a variety of services. In the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees we go far beyond any statutory duty and aim to consult local people on many aspects of our service planning and delivery. Consultation is crucial in helping the Council and its partners make decisions which will affect the Borough. The Council considers consultation to have a key role in informing and influencing its decision making and activities. When consultation is effective, it can help the Council to:

- Make better decisions and improve the quality of our services
- Deliver services people want in the way they want them
- Respond to the needs of our service users
- Identify any problems caused by changes, or potential changes, to services
- Demonstrate our commitment to openness and accountability by helping people understand how we work and how we reach decisions that affect them
- Involve local people more thoroughly in the democratic process
- Help ensure we are achieving value for money

Effective consultation increases our ability and capacity to:

- Understand the social, environmental and economic needs of local communities
- Understand the problems and needs of local communities
- Improve awareness of different ways of doing things, as a basis for innovation, change of policy or service delivery
- Understand the views of local citizens and other stakeholders about the services and activities of the Council
- Promote involvement and participation of citizens and partnership working with other stakeholders
- Develop stronger local democracy through local accountability and responsiveness and by showing that they really can make a difference
- Understand the impact of strategies, policies, programmes and services on the well-being of communities and the locality
- Gain greater acceptance by local people of Council decisions because people understand what is being done and why
- Provide better services that are more responsive to local needs
- Increase satisfaction with services, service providers and the local area
- Improve the quality of decision-making because the people affected by the decisions are directly involved.



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Who do we consult?

The Council and its partners consult a wide range and number of individuals and organisations including:

- Citizens e.g. all people living in the Borough
- People working and studying in the Borough
- Specific population groups e.g. children and young people, people with disabilities, people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups, people who are elderly
- Interest groups, e.g. local businesses, voluntary sector agencies, sports and recreational groups
- Geographical groups, e.g. Parish Councils, Area Boards, Residents and Community Associations, Neighbourhood Groups e.g. Neighbourhood Watch
- Users and non users of services
- Elected Members
- Employees, contractors, service providers
- Trade Unions

We want to ensure that everyone within our community has an opportunity to be involved where appropriate and we recognise that at times, we may have to work harder and more creatively to achieve this. We need to be confident that consultation has been carried out effectively so that we can use this information to understand and balance the needs and aspirations of local people with the resources available and the statutory obligations of The Council.

Role of Elected Members

The representative and scrutiny role of Members is crucial to the consultation process in terms of their formal involvement in:

- **Local community initiatives**
- **Community planning**
- **Service reviews**

Their role as community leaders gives Members a major input into the consultation process and Members will play a key role in the implementation of this strategy through:

- **Feedback from their involvement in local groups, partnerships and Forums**
- **Their unique relationship with residents**
- **Feedback from the Councillors Complaints and Enquiries system.**

Officers will ensure that the requirement to adhere to the Concordat for Consultation with Members is met.



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Monitoring and Review

The success of this strategy will be reviewed on a regular basis through a variety of methods. Ongoing resident satisfaction is measured through residents' surveys. In addition we carry out regular bespoke consultation exercises with our communities to seek their views on our activities. We have for example already used Viewpoint to assess satisfaction with Viewpoint itself.

A core element of the Customer Service Excellence Programme is concerned with Consultation, Communication and Engagement and we will ensure that these remain core competencies for future service assessments.

The ongoing monitoring and review of this strategy will ensure its continued effectiveness and that following its principles allows the Council to continue its excellent progress in ensuring community involvement.

Next steps

The vision

This strategy details our commitment to consultation. To ensure that residents of Stockton-on-Tees get the highest quality and most effective service delivery this needs to encompass the work of all our partner public sector agencies.

What we will do

- Commit to working with our partner public sector agencies to identify potential overlap and duplication with our consultation activities
- Work to identify ways in which this overlap can be reduced
- Identify ways in which consultation activities can be coordinated across Stockton Renaissance (our Local Strategic Partnership) and can be shared across Stockton Renaissance to allow for sharing of expertise, improving the use of information and providing better value for money
- Work to identify ways in which resources and expertise can be shared across the Local Strategic Partnership to ensure the best quality consultation services are delivered

How we will do it

To support the Consultation Strategy an Implementation Plan has been developed. This plan will be monitored and updated regularly and reported to appropriate forums.

Contact details

Policy, Performance and Partnerships

Research and Consultation Team
526091

Diversity Team
528334



The Consultation Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

If you would like this information in any other language or format for example **large print** or audio please contact 'Diversity Team' on 01642 528334.

إذا كنت ترغب الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغات أو بأشكال أخرى على سبيل المثال بالطبعة الكبيرة أو بالشريط المسجل فالرجاء الإتصال 'بدايفرستي تيم' [Diversity Team] على هاتف رقم 01642 528334

ARABIC

欲要這份資訊的其它語言版或其它版式例如大字體印刷/錄音帶，請致電 01642 528334 接洽 '多元化隊' (Diversity Team)

MANDARIN

اگر شما این اطلاعات را به زبان یا شکل دیگری مثلا چاپ بزرگ یا بصورت صدا میخواهید لطفا با تیم دایورسیتی (گوناگونی) [Diversity Team] با شماره 01642 528334 به تماس شوید

FARSI

Si vous souhaitez obtenir ces informations dans d'autres langues ou sous un autre format, par exemple, en gros caractères / version audio, veuillez contacter l'équipe "Diversity" au n° 01642 528334

FRENCH

ئەگەر حەزرت لێ یە ئەم زانیاریە بە دەستت بکەویت بە زمانەکانی تریان بە شێوەیەکی تر بۆ نمونە چاپی گەورە/یان بە تێپیکی تۆمارکراو تکایە پەیوەندی بکە بە 'تیمی دایفیرستی' [Diversity Team] لە سەر ژمارە 01642 528334 تەلەفۆن

KURDISH

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਬਣਤਰ ਜਾਂ ਬੋਲੀ ਵਿੱਚ, ਵੱਡੀ ਛਪਾਈ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਂ ਟੇਪ/ਸੀ ਡੀ 'ਤੇ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 'Diversity Team' ਨੂੰ 01642 528334 ਨੰਬਰ ਉੱਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

PUNJABI

اگر آپ ان معلومات کو کسی بھی اور زبان یا انداز، مثلاً بڑے پرنٹ/آڈیو ٹیپ وغیرہ میں حاصل کرنا چاہیں، تو ڈائیورسٹی ٹیم 'Diversity Team' کو اس نمبر پر فون کیجئے 01642 528334

URDU

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