

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY

24th NOVEMBER 2015

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

REVIEW OF CONSULTATION

SUMMARY

This report presents Members with baseline information in respect of the reporting in review of Consultation.

RECOMMENDATION

Members note the detail of the report and agree to receive:

1. a further report analysing detail, findings and recommendations around the review
2. a demonstration of the Stakeholder Consultation portal.

BACKGROUND

1. The scoping document (Appendix A) of the Consultation Review presented the overall aims of the review as:
 - a. An agreed policy and approach that takes account of the risks to the Council (reputationally, financially and politically)
 - b. Improved co-ordination and management of Consultation across the Council
 - c. An approach that better links the content of consultation with key communications
 - d. Ensuring compliance with any statutory duties with regard to consultation and where there is no statutory duty compliance with other agreements such as the Compact with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE).
2. The key lines of enquiry were defined as:
 - a. How Consultation can be improved across all areas of the Council
 - b. Take up and adoption of a Stakeholder Consultation solution
 - c. Links between Stakeholder Consultation and the Customer Portal (My Stockton)
 - d. Links between the Consultation, Community Engagement and Communication strategies.

DETAIL

3. Consultation is currently undertaken in the Authority on a number of levels:
 - a. Strategic
 - b. Thematic / Service Specific
 - c. Internal.

Key examples can be found in Appendix B.

4. The Strategic consultation is the larger consultations that cover all areas of the council such as the Residents Survey and the Viewpoint panel. This is managed within Policy, Improvement and Engagement (PIE).

5. PIE commission and manage delivery of the Borough wide Residents Survey, the 2015 is currently underway in Borough, they undertake further data analysis and interpretation and report findings.
6. Advice, guidance and support to colleagues undertaking high impact service reviews and other consultations e.g. School and Adult Transport is also provided at a strategic level by PIE.
7. The Viewpoint panel, is the residents' consultation panel, it was refreshed in 2013 with the help of a local research company. The Viewpoint panel has four surveys per annum with a number of online rapid response short questionnaires as required across the year.
8. Currently there is an established corporate consultation database to ensure all consultations by service groups across the Council are documented all planned, current and completed consultations that are being undertaken for and / or by the Council. This is to encourage sharing of results, provide an added value to consultations (ask once and used numerous times) and avoid, where possible, consultation overload. This is very well used by some service areas and not as well used as it could be in others, although this has improved with the ownership of the database being taken up by Policy Officer Group (POG).
9. Thematic / service specific consultations are carried out within service groups, sometimes undertaken by SBC staff and occasionally undertaken by external consultants. Strategic support from PIE staff is available when requested with advice and guidance to undertake consultations and to commission and manage external research service providers e.g. Town Centre.
10. Internally there are key pieces of consultation around service reviews which are undertaken by HR. There is also a biennial internal Employee Survey which is conducted jointly by HR/PIE. The associated data analysis, interpretation and action plans are reported to Cabinet.
11. PIE works alongside and with as many colleagues as possible to help ensure they deliver consultation as effectively and efficiently as possible. This work often relies on colleagues approaching and sharing information and requests with them.
12. Between 2011/12 and 2015/16 inclusive, as a result of two Service Reviews, both the human resource and budget available specifically for the consultation function in Policy, Improvement and Engagement Service has been reduced by 50%. Corporately within PIE there is now only one Consultation Officer to undertake this strategic role.

LEGISLATION

13. There are certain statutory requirements placed on some consultations, most notably those involving changes to staffing terms and conditions, services to specific groups and planning. Some parameters around length of consultations are imposed, usually 12 weeks.
14. In addition to those consultations where there are legal requirements to consult there are also occasions where there is no statutory duty but it ensures compliance with the Compact (the agreement between the public sector and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE)).

CURRENT CONSULTATION, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES

15. The Consultation and Engagement Strategies were due to be refreshed in 2013 but work was put on hold until the PIE service review 2015 was completed. In view of organisational change approved by Cabinet most recently, plans are now in place to produce a combined Consultation, Community Engagement and Communications Strategy once the consultation and community engagement functions have been realigned to sit within the Authority's new "HR, Legal and Communications" Directorate.

WORK UNDERTAKEN TO DATE

16. The use of the consultation database across the Council has improved with ownership and monitoring from POG, however not all service areas were using it or requesting advice, support or guidance until they had finished their consultation and were unable to analyse and present the data.
17. In order to improve Consultation skills work has been undertaken corporately with an external provider to develop a consultation package which teaches participants how to plan, deliver, analyse and report on consultation projects. This is completed and ready to be offered to staff as part of the authorities training offer.
18. At the same time work was undertaken with Xentrall to procure a more comprehensive, multifunctional consultation software solution available for use by the Whole Authority providing a web-based 'Stakeholder Consultation Portal' for the Authority. Working with Communications has ensured that the Consultation Portal looks like the corporate website and working with Customer Services has established the potential to link this with 'My Stockton' in future.
19. Working closely with colleagues in Communications to ensure appropriate PR and marketing for consultation projects has improved over the last two years but there are still examples where this could have been improved. The use of the Consultation Portal will ensure that Communications are a key stakeholder in any consultations going forward.
20. With a corporate lead work is underway across the Authority to explore how and if consultation with children and young people can be improved to ensure that it is representative of all children and young people and cost effective going forward. This work has been prompted by evidence that suggests approaches taken in the past were resource (staff and budget) intensive, not always representative of all children and young people in the Borough and somewhat outmoded in view of the increased use of social media and the internet by children and young people for social interaction. This work will be complete in 2016.

Next Steps/Key Areas to Explore

21. The review will examine in detail:

- How Consultation can be improved across all areas of the Council
- Take up and adoption of a Stakeholder Consultation solution.
- Links between Stakeholder Consultation and the Customer Portal
- Consultation, Community Engagement and Communication Strategies.

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Executive Scrutiny Committee
“Reporting In” Review – Consultation

Outline Scope

<p>Scrutiny Chair (Project Director): Councillor David Harrington</p>
<p>Scrutiny Officer (Project Manager): Judy Trainer</p>
<p>Departmental Link Officer: Lesley King/ Laurayne Featherstone</p>
<p>Finance Link Officer: N/A</p>
<p>Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?</p> <p>Council Plan Objective – Deliver effective community consultation and engagement</p>
<p>What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?</p> <p>A review of resident and stakeholder consultation with the potential outcome being an agreed policy and approach that takes into account the risks to the Council (reputationally, financially and politically). Key areas relate to the way consultation is currently co-ordinated/managed across the Council and in particular linking of the approach and content of consultation documentation with the key communications.</p> <p>Local residents and key stakeholders have a clear interest in the determination of Council policy and service delivery both in relation to areas where there is a statutory duty to consult as well as where there is no statutory duty but it ensures compliance with the Compact (the agreement between the public sector stakeholders and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE)).</p> <p>Resident engagement is a key objective within the overall framework of the Council Plan and has an important role to play in terms of people’s perceptions of the Council.</p> <p>There aren’t any direct measures of performance linked to consultation.</p>
<p>What are the key lines of enquiry:</p> <p>Examination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How Consultation can be improved across all areas of the Council; • Take up and adoption of a Stakeholder Consultation solution; • Links between Stakeholder Consultation and the Customer Portal • Consultation, Community Engagement and Communication Strategies.

<p>Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?</p> <p>Cabinet, Council Services</p>
<p>Expected duration of review and key milestones:</p> <p>Scope – 15th September 2015 Baseline – 27th October 2015 Options and Recommendations – 12th November 2015 Cabinet – 3rd December 2015</p>
<p>What information do we need?</p> <p>(Background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):</p> <p>The review could include understanding of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current consultation practice • Current Consultation and Engagement strategies • Good practice internally • Good practice externally • Legislation with regard to particular consultations • Links to the Compact and other agreements
<p>How will this information be gathered? (eg. Financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)</p> <p>Desk Top analysis; Benchmarking;</p>
<p>Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:</p> <p>As local government budgets continue to reduce alongside increased demand and expectation with associated changes in policy and service delivery a robust and proportionate approach to consultation will be required.</p>

Appendix B

	KEY EXAMPLES
STRATEGIC	
Borough wide Residents Survey in 2012 and also 2015 (currently underway, due to report in early 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents Survey 2012, please see: http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab12.pl?cmte=CAB&meet=102&arc=71
Viewpoint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduced statistical weighting of Survey data to ensure that all results are representative of the Borough's population. Developed the online only, Rapid Response Survey model which can be distributed once per month to provide intelligence about how different residents feel about a range of our services/ initiatives, e.g. Smoke Free Play Areas, SIRF, Stockton Cycling, Free Healthy Heart Checks, Rediscover Stockton, Stockton News, Fireworks and Tees Achieve. Refreshed the look and feel of the Viewpoint Newsletter, changing the tone and feel of it and expanding its availability via the internet. Introduced a strategic approach to working with CMT for Viewpoint Survey planning and reporting to help ensure it can be used to help meet highest priority needs for information and intelligence about residents perceptions of what we do and how we do it.
THEMATIC/ SERVICE SPECIFIC	
Thematic/ Service Specific Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EIG Review 2011 Asset Review Library Services Review – Phases 1 and 2 LD Review – Phases 1 and 2 Adult Mental Health Review – Phases 1 and 2 Weight Management Service Review Halcyon Centre 'Dementia Live Well Hub' Local Council Tax Support Scheme School Nursing Review Combined Authority

Supported colleagues to commission and manage external research service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yarm Car Parking Review • CESP Impact Evaluation
Designed and introduced a new corporate Consultation Database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members have received reports on the Consultation Database via the Quarterly Performance Report since 2011/12. • The Consultation Database relies on Service Groups inputting information about their planned, current and completed consultation work, now monitored by POG
INTERNAL	
Employee Surveys in 2012 and 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Survey 2012, please see: http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab12.pl?cmte=CAB&meet=104&arc=71 • Employee Survey 2014, please see: http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab12.pl?cmte=CAB&meet=128&arc=71
CONSULTATION LINKS TO KEY COMMUNICATIONS	
Worked in close partnership with colleagues in Communications to ensure appropriate PR and marketing for consultation projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIG Review 2011 • Library Services Review – Phases 1 and 2 • LD Review – Phases 1 and 2 • Adult Mental Health Review – Phases 1 and 2 • Weight Management Service Review • Local Council Tax Support Scheme • School Nursing Review • Combined Authority