
REPORT TO:	FINANCE & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 11
DATE OF MEETING:	9TH SEPTEMBER 2010	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	SASHA RYAN (595726)	DOC:
SUBJECT:	sasha.ryan@south-derbys.gov.uk CONSULTATION STRATEGY ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10 AND ACTION PLAN 2010/11	REF:
WARD (S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE:FM05

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 That Members:

- Note the key consultation achievements for the year ending 31st March 2010.
- Approve the refreshed 2010-2015 Consultation and Community Engagement Strategy at <http://harvey/corporate/organisationaldevelopment/policy/Consultation/Consultation> and the Action Plan, attached at Appendix 1, which will guide the work of the Council in undertaking consultation with its service users, residents, partners and staff.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To present the annual Consultation Strategy Report for 2010/11 that details how consultation activities will support the delivery of key priorities set down in the Corporate Plan 2009/14.
- 2.2 To detail the achievements made during 2009/10 and their contribution to Council priorities for that year.
- 2.3 In addition, to present the refreshed 2010-2015 Consultation and Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan.

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1 The importance of effective consultation with services users, community groups and members of the public remains a high priority both locally and nationally. This is reflected in our Corporate Plan where having robust systems and processes to consult, assess and use feedback will ensure that resources are directed to the priorities of our local community. This is also reflected in the national approach to assess the performance of public services based on areas (the Place) rather than individual services.

- 3.2 The agenda of the Government continues to assert new rights for citizens to have more information and influence over the local decisions and, where they choose, more opportunity to get directly involved in managing and shaping how local services are delivered.
- 3.3 The report covers the key outcomes delivered in 2009/10, which includes disseminating the results of the Place Survey and producing an action plan, consultation with residents via the Citizens' Panel surveys and undertaking an employee survey. The report also includes a summary of the key actions that need to take place in 2010/2011, such as continuing to work with our partners to manage the Citizens' Panel and exploring future options now Central Government has cancelled the 2010 Place Survey.
- 3.4 The report includes the updated Consultation and Community Engagement Strategy (2010-2015), which has been refreshed to incorporate the significant change in the approach for seeking the public's views, from 'consultation' towards 'engagement'.

4.0 Detail

- 4.1 We are required to deliver high quality and value for money services that the residents of South Derbyshire need and want. This is a fundamental part of the Council's vision, 'Making South Derbyshire a better place to live, work and visit'. Consultation is, therefore, a permanent and valued part of our approach to continuously improving the quality and cost effectiveness of the services that we provide.
- 4.2 The 2009 Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill outlined new rights for the citizen to have more information and influence over the local decisions; new powers to hold politicians to account and, where they choose, more opportunity to get directly involved in managing and shaping how local services are delivered. The Act requires all Councils to make, publicise and comply with a scheme for handling petitions (including electronically through their websites) by 19th December 2010. This builds on the 'Duty to Involve', which came into force for all local authorities (as part of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007) on 1st April 2009. The duty forms an important part of the approach local authorities have to adhere to when undertaking consultation and engagement activity.
- 4.3 A key measure of this is the National Indicator 4 – *Percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality*. This was measured through the Place Survey. Currently, just over a quarter of respondents agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area. A key priority for us, therefore, is ensuring that communities have more say in their area so that they feel they can influence decisions in South Derbyshire and are aware of the different ways that they can get involved in decision-making in their locality. We will now be exploring other options for collecting this measure.
- 4.4 In parallel with this review of our consultative activities over the past year, we have refreshed the Council's Consultation Strategy to ensure it has a strong link to the Council's strategic aims, is aligned to the latest Government legislation and takes account of current best practice

4.5 This is the third annual report outlining the progress made in consultation activity over the past twelve months to 31 March 2010.

5.0 Key achievements 2009/10

5.1 There have been a number of key outcomes that include producing the Place Survey Action Plan and delivering the employee survey, along with providing continued support and advice to service areas to undertake effective consultation. Some of the key outcomes achieved during 2009/10 are outlined below:

5.2 The Place Survey Results

5.2.1 The results from the 2008 Place Survey were officially released in June 2009. To place the findings in context we drew on national comparators, plus a consortium average (an average of the scores across the five Derbyshire districts/ boroughs surveyed by Ipsos MORI). The data from the Place Survey was also analysed by community forum area so that we could build up a robust understanding of each area and the views of the people who live there.

5.2.2 The results were shared with key partners at a South Derbyshire Partnership meeting in October 2009, were publicised on the Council's website and were also presented to residents at the Area Forum meetings, focusing on specific area priorities.

5.2.3 An action plan was produced which addressed areas of concern and where we need to improve on local priorities, taking account of the emerging issues. Actions included using the Citizens' Panel surveys to explore the decrease in satisfaction with our environmental and leisure services as reflected in the Place Survey results.

5.3 Employee consultation and engagement

5.3.1 **Best Council employee survey** - this was an internal survey sent out to all employees asking for their views on their workplace. The response rate to the survey was 42 percent that represents an increase of 10 percent since the 2008 survey. This indicates that our communications campaign to promote the survey including posters around the building and articles in 'better' magazine, was successful.

5.3.2 The results were used to evaluate our performance as an employer and to identify the specific areas in the workplace that employees felt the need to be improved. Overall, the survey results illustrate an improving picture for the Council with positive points emerging in most areas.

5.3.3 Our overall submission to Best Companies, combined with the results of the survey, enabled the Council to receive national as well as local recognition as we were published in the prestigious Sunday Times List as one of the top 75 public sector organisations to work for. The Council was placed 57th in the survey out of 207 entrants and was the 11th placed Council. We also achieved a 'One to watch' status in the Best Companies Accreditation 2010 for demonstrating high levels of employee engagement. Only a small number of organisations achieved the 'One to watch' status this year, which demonstrates the Council is considered a good employer.

5.4 Citizens' Panel

5.4.1 Citizens' Panel Surveys – two surveys were sent out to Panel Members between September and November last year. This was part of the new arrangements with Derbyshire County Council where panels are shared - each running two surveys a year. Surveys were sent out to a thousand Panel Members and covered a range of topics, which are explained in more detail below. Our response rates for each panel survey was 50% and 55% and positively, response rates had increased from the previous year. Following each survey, a newsletter was sent out to Panel Members in a 'you said-we did' format, showing that we have listened and responded to issues identified in the surveys.

5.4.2 We worked closely with service areas to develop their survey questions. A summary report of the findings for each section in the survey was produced and meetings held with managers to discuss the results and identify outcomes. This consisted of 'quick wins'. For example, 105 individual sites were identified as 'grot spots' by panel members and these were inspected/cleared by our Waste and Cleansing Team and actions identified that needed to be addressed over the longer term. For example, collecting plastics as part of the kerbside recycling scheme was a key issue for Panel Members and the most emotive topic out of all the surveys we did last year.

5.4.3 We used the Panel Survey's to measure our communication campaigns such as 'Beat the Crunch' which was a web resource produced to help local residents and businesses through the recession and the Cleaner South Derbyshire Campaign.

5.4.4 A series of questions were included in the September survey to find out residents' views on the Council's Corporate Services Partnering Project. We also asked several questions about Swadlincote Town Centre so that the future improvements could be designed more effectively. Furthermore, fourteen panel members participated in a focus group event where they were given the opportunity 'to have their say' on the proposals and for them to input and help shape the contract. We received positive feedback from panel members who attended the event

5.4.5 The November panel surveys explored the findings from the 2008/09 Place Survey in more detail. The survey covered the household waste collection, kerbside recycling and compostable collection and recycling centres in South Derbyshire. We also included questions about sports and leisure facilities in South Derbyshire, namely Greenbank Leisure Centre, Etwall Leisure Centre and Rosliston Forestry Centre

5.4.6 The panel continued to be promoted externally to encourage residents to get involved. Recruitment leaflets and displays were taken to local events including Liberation Day and the Housing Open Day and approximately 50 people were added to the panel.

5.5 The Consultation and Community Engagement Strategy

5.5.1 The previous Corporate Consultation Strategy was approved in 2007 and provided an effective framework to complete consultation activities that enabled the ongoing development and improvement of services for the Community. Since then, there has been significant change in the approach for seeking the public's views, and a move from 'consultation' towards 'engagement'. For example, the Government's Big Society drive to empower communities means we will need to continue to listen to the

views of residents and also be willing to devolve appropriate decision-making to residents. Furthermore, the Total Place initiative looks at a 'whole area' approach to public services and requires an expert understanding of the needs of residents, customers and citizens. This strategy has been refreshed to ensure that it recognises the changing environment.

6.0 Looking Ahead

6.1 To meet the challenges being set by Central Government Policy to focus on the Place, we will focus on embedding a culture of engagement across all of the Council's functions. Furthermore, we will work closely with the Communications Team to promote our decision-making processes and how people can 'have their say' that is just as important as communicating the results of the consultation. A summary of some of the key actions that need to take place in 2010/2011 are covered below.

6.2 Managing the 2010 Place Survey

6.2.1 We did have a statutory duty to undertake the second Place Survey in 2010 which measured satisfaction with the Council and the local area. However, this has now been cancelled by the Coalition Government and we are no longer expected to report against the National Indicators previously measured by the Survey. However, we will need to explore other options of collecting this information, as we still need to report on some of these measures through our corporate plans and strategies. We will review the most cost effective methods and recommend alternative options.

6.3 Citizens' Panel

6.3.1 During 2009/2010 we worked jointly with our partners through the Derbyshire Consultation and Engagement Group to review the future of Citizens' Panels. The recommendation from this review is to retain partnership arrangements for sharing the Citizens' Panels and to put in place a Service Level Agreement for managing the panels. Consequently, we will continue to maintain and use South Derbyshire's Citizens' Panel as one of our main consultation tools and undertake ongoing recruitment to the panel.

6.4 Employee engagement and consultation

6.4.1 Following on from the last year's employee survey, a survey will be undertaken with employees to find out what they think about working for the Council. It is envisaged that we will do this through the Best Council's process again, to enable comparison to be made with last year's results and for trends to be identified.

6.5 The Sustainable Communities Act

6.5.1 We are still awaiting for official guidance about when the second round of the process will take place during 2010. However, we will be prepared to identify a panel of local people and work with them to develop proposals to improve the economic, social or environmental well being of their area.

6.6 E-petitioning arrangements

6.6.1 We will work with Democratic Services and IT to establish a solution for the public to submit electronic petitions. We will ensure that petitions inform Council decision-making.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 There will be some costs associated with Consultation and Community Engagement Strategy, namely the ongoing costs of maintaining and using the Citizens' Panel. Any costs will be found from existing budgets within the Organisational Development Division.

8.0 Corporate Implications

8.1 This report is linked with the theme 'Value for Money' in the Council's Corporate Plan and the priority action 'meeting community needs in delivering effective consultation and communication with the community, businesses and other organisations'. A key outcome will be an increase in the number of residents who feel that they can influence decisions in South Derbyshire.

8.2 We will be working closely with the Communications Team to promote our consultation and engagement activities and to feedback the key messages to residents and to manage any media interest in our consultation and engagement activity.

9.0 Community Implications

9.1 This report is linked to the theme 'Vibrant Communities' in the South Derbyshire Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy. A key outcome will be public involvement in the Council's decision making processes, thus, rejuvenating the local democratic process.

10.0 Conclusions

10.1 The Council's consultation and engagement programme continues to involve its citizens and stakeholders in decision-making, ensuring that their views are used to improve our services and inform the development of our policies. The Annual Report is an essential tool for raising awareness of our progress.

11.0 Background Papers

E-petitions report
The Place Survey action plan
Citizens' Panel report
Sustainable Communities Act
The 2010-2015 Consultation and Engagement Strategy
<http://harvey/corporate/organisationaldevelopment/policy/Consultation/Consultation>

Appendix 1 - Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2010-2011 Action Plan

Aim	Action	Key measures of success	Lead	Deadline
To effectively coordinate and disseminate the results of consultation activity.	From the Service plans 2010/11 put together a timetable for consultation.	Update the Google Calendar on the Council's website.	Policy Officer (Consultation)	June 2010
	Continue to develop the consultation sections on the website publishing the results and outcomes of all of our consultations.	Up-to-date consultation section on the website.	Policy Officer (Consultation) Web Editor	Ongoing
	Review whether the Citizens' Panel is 'fit for purpose' to meet the Sustainable Communities Act and make the necessary arrangements to meet the requirements of the Act.	Adjustments have been made to the Citizens' Panel so that it meets the requirements of the Act.	Policy Officer (Consultation) Policy and Communications Manager	December 2010
	Work with Derbyshire County Council to establish the benefits and if necessary subsequent completion of a Residents survey in place of the postponed 2010 Place Survey.	Hotspots of resident dissatisfaction with particular aspects of services are identified. Trends on performance indicators	Policy Officer (Consultation)	Between September and December 2010

Aim	Action	Key measures of success	Lead	Deadline
To undertake effective employee consultation and engagement.	Project manage the Sunday Times Best Council to Work For Process. Analyse and present report back to Council along with recommendations for additional action as required and trends.	The survey is undertaken with all employees.	Policy Officer (Consultation)	Between October 2010 and March 2011
	Work jointly to develop an e-petitioning solution on our website.	E-petitioning solution in place. Petitions used to inform decision-making.	Policy Officer (Consultation) Head of IT Democratic Services Manager	Between August and December 2010
Ensure communications and consultation is joined up across the Council	Work with the Communications Team to promote our decision-making processes and how people can 'have their say', as well as communicating the results of the consultation.	There is an increase in the number of residents who feel that they can influence decisions in South Derbyshire (measured by the Residents' Survey replacing the Place Survey).	Policy Officer (Consultation) Communications Officer	Ongoing
	Support the delivery of internal and external campaigns through the design of effective means of consulting target audiences.	Link to performance measures for each campaigns	Communications Officer Policy Officer (Consultation)	Ongoing
	Review the Council's Engagement Strategy annually	The Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy is current and up-to-date.	Policy Officer (Consultation)	August 2011