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| REPORT TO: | FINANCE & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE | AGENDA ITEM: 11 |
| DATE OF MEETING: | 12th JUNE 2008 | CATEGORY: DELEGATED |
| REPORT FROM: | DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES | OPEN |
| MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT: | SASHA RYAN (5726) | DOC: |
| SUBJECT: | CONSULTATION STRATEGY - ANNUAL REPORT | REF: |
| WARD (S) AFFECTED: | ALL | TERMS OF REFERENCE: FM05 |

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the action plan which will guide the work of the Council in undertaking consultation with its service users, residents, partners and staff in 2008/11 is approved – Appendix.
- 1.2 That the key achievements at paragraph 4 for the year ending 31st March 2008 are noted.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To present an overview of the key outcomes from the Council's Consultation Strategy and a revised action plan for the period 2008/11.

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1 The 2006 White Paper '*Strong and Prosperous Communities*' set out new responsibilities for all local authorities to give local citizens and communities a greater say over their lives and the running of local services. Therefore, undertaking, effective consultation with residents and service users has become a key requirement for the Council over the range of its services. This has been further enhanced by the new performance framework for local government, which focuses on improving outcomes for local people and places.
- 3.2 The consultation process is a fundamental part of 'delivering value for money services', which is central to the Council's vision. If done effectively, consultation can produce significant financial savings in terms of service delivery as services can be closely tailored to meeting specific, identifiable needs. 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.
- 3.3 The Finance and Management Committee agreed the Consultation Strategy in July 2007 with the aim of improving the coordination of consultation between the services within the Council and with key partners to ensure that citizens' views were used effectively to inform council decision-making.

- 3.4 This is the first annual report outlining the progress made over the past twelve months to 31 March 2008.

4.0 Detail - Achievements 2007/08

- 4.1 A key priority was establishing the corporate 'infrastructure' that was needed to support and facilitate effective consultation, along with providing support and advice to service areas to undertake effective consultation. Some of the key outcomes achieved during 2007/08 are outlined below:

Consultation Strategy

- 4.2 The Strategy sets out the Council's commitment to consultation and is a framework that underpins all Council consultations, both statutory and voluntary. The Consultation Strategy was developed through a consultation process with service areas and key partners. This Committee formally adopted the strategy on 26 July 2007 with an annual review.

Annual Plan of Consultation

- 4.3 There was a need to coordinate consultation within and between service areas to avoid duplication, to ensure the best use of resources and to minimise 'consultation fatigue'. As part of the 2007 service planning process, each service area identified the key pieces of consultation planned to be carried out in 2007/08. This information was used to form the basis of our annual consultation plan and set out the key issues we were likely to be consulting residents, businesses and other communities about during the year. This enabled corporate prioritisation when consultation issues or programmes conflicted, whilst aiding in combining smaller pieces of consultation.

Consultation Toolkit

- 4.4 A consultation toolkit was developed and made available on the Council's Intranet as a resource for officers engaged in consultation activity or contemplating carrying out consultation work. This continues to be used in conjunction with advice and guidance from the Council's Policy Officer (Consultation). The toolkit contains best practice advice and guidance on all aspects of carrying out consultation and outlines the key issues an officer should be aware of. The toolkit is continually updated as new consultation methodologies are developed and has been distributed to our partners for use.

The Citizens' Panel

- 4.5 Surveys were sent out to panel members on a quarterly basis and covered a range of topics including Community Safety, Sport and Physical Activity, Cultural and Community Services and Quality of Life. The results of each survey were made available on the Council's website. The panel was promoted internally as a vehicle for consultation and the use of the panel has since been extended to the South Derbyshire Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The panel was also promoted externally to encourage residents to get involved. A citizens' panel 'frequently asked questions' section was added to the website including an online form for residents to register if they were interested in joining the panel.

Consultation Area on the Website

- 4.6 A dedicated consultation area was developed on the Council's website, as a central source of information on consultation. It contains a central register of the Council's consultation activity including current consultations and how to get involved and details of recent consultations including results and outcomes. This has enabled our consultations to become more accessible to our partners and the public.

5.0 Looking forward

- 5.1 An action plan has been developed to cover the period 2008/2011 that is attached at appendix. A summary of some of the key actions for 2008/2009 are;

Corporate Plan – Consultation Timetable

- 5.2 A large-scale district wide consultation exercise will be undertaken in 2009, which will feed into the Council's 2010 Corporate Plan. The key aspects of this consultation will need to be considered in 2008 and a timetable produced outlining the key elements of the consultation programme.

The New Place Survey

- 5.3 We have a statutory duty to undertake the bi-ennial New Place Survey with the first survey being carried out in 2008 (this date is still to be confirmed by the Department of Communities and Local Government, DCLG). The new survey will replace the Best Value User Satisfaction Survey (BVPI) triennial Survey and will focus less on customer satisfaction with local services and more on residents' quality of life, by asking local people for their perceptions about the area in which they live. Official guidance is still to be issued from the DCLG but completing this survey will be a key priority.

Customer Satisfaction Monitoring

- 5.4 An annual satisfaction survey with the Citizens' Panel will be undertaken to ask questions about a range of issues relating to how satisfied local residents are with the Council and the services we offer. This survey will be based on the old BVPI User Satisfaction Survey questions which will not be covered in the New Place Survey. It is important that we find out how satisfied our residents are with our services so that we can prioritise resources and improve our services in line with their views.
- 5.5 In addition, an approach to monitoring customer satisfaction with individual services will be developed. This will ensure that there is a consistent approach across the Council in monitoring service satisfaction. There is a requirement for service areas to regularly track their levels of customer satisfaction to monitor performance over time and measure the impact of service improvement activity. The approach developed will include equalities and the five key themes of satisfaction; delivery of the service, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude.

Consultation Calendar

- 5.6 The annual plan of consultation will be developed into an annual consultation calendar, which will detail for each month any planned consultation. The calendar will show a clearer picture of the type and scale of consultation that is currently taking place across the Council and the district and enable the better co-ordination of consultation activity.
- 5.7 This will also be rolled out eventually via the South Derbyshire LSP to include our partner's consultations.

Research Database of Results and Outcomes

- 5.8 There is an increased focus on improving outcomes for local people that is emerging from the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and this is forming part of the new national performance framework. Accordingly, a database of consultation results/findings and outcomes will be created, maintained and made available on the Intranet. This database will be used for research purposes and will link to a better understanding of our residents and their needs.

Citizens' Panel Refreshment

- 5.9 The Citizens' Panel that comprises a thousand residents from the District needs to be 'refreshed' in 2008. This is done in order to maintain the response rates of the citizens' panel, and to ensure the panel remains a representative sample of the community from the whole of South Derbyshire. This means that half of the panel will be 'retired' and be replaced by new local residents. Those residents, who still express an interest in being consulted, will be retained for other consultation purposes and be kept as reserves for the Citizens' Panel. There will also be an ongoing recruitment drive to encourage local residents to join the panel including promoting the panel at external events and producing a citizens' panel leaflet that will be distributed at venues around the district such as libraries and leisure centres.

Employee Consultation and Engagement

- 5.10 A key action will be managing 'The Times Best Council to Work for' process, which includes surveying all staff on how they feel about workplace factors such as leadership, personal growth opportunities etc. The survey will provide a valuable insight into employee engagement and motivation and will drive further work in this area including focus groups with staff, building on the issues arising from the survey.

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 There will be some costs associated with the rollout of the 2008/2009 Action Plan, namely delivering the New Place Survey and the 'refreshment' of the Citizens' Panel, which can be met from existing budgets.

7.0 Corporate Implications

- 7.1 Consultation is a key tool in not only developing the Council's Corporate Plan but also tracking our performance and the outcomes for the residents of South Derbyshire. The work undertaken therefore contributes to all the key themes within the Corporate Plan.

8.0 Community Implications

- 8.1 Involving local residents and other partners with the development, measurement and direction taken by the Council is an underpinning principal for the effective delivery of services. It is important to have a structured approach to this work and provide clear and consistent feedback on how the Council uses this information.
- 8.2 Through gaining a better understanding of concerns and aspirations of our community will support the Council in working with other partners to develop approaches to address these areas.

9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 The consultation programme ensures that the Council continues to involve its citizen's and stakeholders in decision-making, ensuring that their views are used to improve our services and inform the development of policies. The annual report is an essential tool for raising awareness of our progress.
- 9.2 The progress made during 2007/08 has ensured a significant improvement in improving the corporate 'infrastructure' that is needed to support and facilitate effective consultation.

10.0 Background Papers

- 10.1 Consultation Strategy 2007/10
<http://harvey/corporate/organisationaldevelopment/policy/Consultation>

Consultation Strategy Action Plan 2008/09

| <u>Aim</u> | <u>Action</u> | <u>Lead</u> | <u>Target</u> |
|--|--|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| To effectively coordinate and disseminate consultation. | Corporate Consultation database developed and updated after every major consultation exercise is carried out across the Council. | Policy Officer (Consultation) | September 2008 |
| | Develop to include district wide consultation by rolling out to the Local Strategic Partnership. | | September 2008 |
| | Support Heads of Service in developing the consultation aspects of service plans in line with Corporate guidance. | Policy Officer (Consultation) | May 2008 |
| The Citizens' Panel is 'fit for purpose' and representative of the district. | Manage the Citizens' Panel refreshment process. | Policy Officer (Consultation) | December 2008 |
| | Ongoing recruitment campaign of local people to join the citizens' panel. | Policy Officer (Consultation) | Ongoing |
| To undertake effective employee consultation and engagement. | Project manage the Times Best Council to Work For Process. | Policy Officer (Consultation) | October 2008 |
| | Complete a review of outcomes and develop a range of approaches to address any key issues | Policy Officer (Consultation) | March 2009 |

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| Consultation Strategy Action Plan 2008/09 |
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| <u>Aim</u> | <u>Action</u> | <u>Lead</u> | <u>Deadline</u> |
|--|---|---|------------------------------------|
| To gain an in-depth knowledge of resident's views of the area and of the Council and its services and use this information to influence decision-making. | Management of the Place Survey process. | Policy Officer (Consultation) | Between September to November 2008 |
| | Annual Council/ Service satisfaction survey undertaken with Citizens' Panel. | Policy Officer (Consultation) | November 2008 |
| | Develop an approach to service satisfaction monitoring by creating an online satisfaction survey that meets best practice guidelines. | Policy Officer (Consultation) | August 2008 |
| Use Consultation to inform/shape the 2010 Corporate Plan. | Produce a draft timetable for consultation on the 2010 Corporate Plan. | Corporate Policy and Performance Officer Policy Officer (Consultation) | December 2008 |