
REPORT TO:	FINANCE & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 10
DATE OF MEETING:	18th JUNE 2009	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	REF:
WARD (S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE:FM05

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 That Members:

- Approve the revised 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 during 2009/10.
- Note the key consultation achievements for the year ending 31st March 2009

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To present the Annual Consultation Strategy report and revised action plan for 2009/10 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 2008/09 and their contribution to Council priorities for that year.

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 not only locally but nationally. This is reflected in the revised national approach to assess the performance of public services based on areas (the Place) rather than individual services. Having robust systems and processes to consult, assess and use feedback will ensure that resources are directed to the priorities of our local community.
- 3.2 This report presents the 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. The Council has chosen to opt in to the Sustainable Communities Act 2006, which encourages local communities to suggest actions that central government could take to improve the economic, social or environmental well being of their area. How we are going to make the necessary arrangements to meet the requirements of the act is discussed in this report.

3.3 The report provides details on the key consultation outcomes delivered in 2008/09 including managing the new Place Survey process and delivering the consultation on priorities for the District. The report also includes a summary of the key consultation actions that need to take place in 2009/2010 such as undertaking a fundamental review of consultation and engagement activity within the Council, which will drive any future activity and support the delivery of the Councils Corporate Plan.

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 and 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 From 1st April 2009, a new statutory 'Duty to Involve' came into force for all local authorities (as part of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007). The duty forms an important part of the approach local authorities have to adhere to when undertaking consultation and engagement activity.

4.3 Following on from the 2006 White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities', the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 provides a much stronger focus on public involvement and requires communities to have much more say in their area.

4.4 All local authorities are expected to involve 'representatives of local persons' in all relevant areas of the decision-making process to better understand the specific needs of a local area. The aim is to make more residents feel that they can influence decisions in South Derbyshire.

4.5 A key measure of this is the new National Indicator 4 – *Percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality*. This is measured through the Place Survey and has previously been measured as part of the Best Value User Satisfaction Survey.

4.6 Currently, just over a quarter of respondents agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area. This has risen slightly, since 2006 but a high number of respondents still feel that they cannot influence decisions. 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.

4.7 This is the second annual report outlining the progress made in consultation activity over the past twelve months to 31 March 2009.

5.0 **Key achievements 2008/09**

- 5.1 There have been a number of key outcomes that include undertaking the new Place Survey and delivering the consultation on priorities for the District, along with providing continued support and advice to service areas to undertake effective consultation. Some of the key outcomes achieved during 2008/09 are outlined below:

The Place Survey

- 5.2 The Place Survey is a statutory, nationwide postal survey that will supply the data by which a number of National Indicators will be measured (replacing the Best Value Performance Indicators). Between September and December 2008, questionnaires were posted out to 4,000 randomly selected local households to find out what local residents think of living in the local area and the services we and other local organisations such as the County Council, the Police and Health provide. As key questions about satisfaction with the Council and with our services such as sport/leisure facilities were eventually covered in the Place Survey it wasn't necessary to run an additional survey with the old BVPI User Satisfaction survey questions.
- 5.3 In South Derbyshire the survey was commissioned to the research company Mori by a Derbyshire District Consortium (made up of five of the Derbyshire Councils). This meant that we could take advantage of the economies of scale in terms of the tendering process, which reduced our costs.
- 5.4 The minimum sample level for each District/Borough area nationally was 1,100 responses. We received 1,616 responses to the survey and our overall response rate was 40%, which was one of the highest response rates in Derbyshire.
- 5.5 In managing the Place Survey process, key tasks included making sure that the survey was suitable branded and that the survey was communicated to residents to raise awareness and ensure that we achieved a high response rate.
- 5.6 We have been informed by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that the official Place Survey results will be released in June. Following this, we will be arranging for Mori to attend a future meeting of the Council to deliver a presentation of the results and the key findings for South Derbyshire.

Consultation on local priorities

- 5.7 During September 2008 and January 2009 we consulted key stakeholders on priorities for the District. This consultation provided an opportunity for all stakeholders to input into the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the wider place-shaping agenda for the District. In addition, the results have informed the priorities in the Council's 2009-2014 Corporate Plan, which sets out the vision for South Derbyshire.

5.8 The purpose of the consultation exercise was to find out stakeholders' views on the area and what issues are important to them. This was done using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods, from a questionnaire sent out to Citizens' Panel members to workshops held with residents at Area Forum meetings and with Chatterbox (the South Derbyshire youth forum) on emerging priorities for the District. From the consultation the following top five priorities were identified:

- Reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime
- Activities for children and young people
- Clean streets
- Highways, roads and transport
- Decent and affordable housing

Employee consultation and engagement

5.9 In June 2008 all employees were surveyed using the Best Council methodology, as part of The Times 'Best Council to Work for'. This identifies workplace performance and best practice according to eight key factors, leadership, my Council, personal growth, my manager, my team, giving something back, fair deal and well-being.

5.10 The data gathered through the survey process provided a valuable insight into how staff feel about working for the Council. Positively, we scored the highest on the factor 'my team' which measured team spirit, feeling part of the Council, having fun, and belonging.

5.11 Following the survey, an employee focus group was held with representatives from each service area to discuss the results from the employee survey in more detail. An action plan has been developed and an employee forum has been established. One of the actions that has been achieved is an additional water cooler has now been installed at the Depot. Staff who start work at the Depot before the main Depot facilities are open did not have access to a water cooler. After concerns were raised at the last Employee Forum Group meeting, an additional water cooler has now been installed.

Citizens' Panel

5.12 Due to the Place Survey taking place between September and December, three surveys were sent out instead of the usual four. These were sent out to a thousand panel members and covered a range of topics including community safety, sport and physical activity, parks and open spaces, environmental awareness and local priorities. The results from the surveys have provided important feedback on what local residents think about our services and have been used by service areas to help improve our services so that they better meet residents' needs. The Community safety and sport and physical activity questions are repeated every year to measure and track satisfaction with these services.

- 5.13 The panel continued to be promoted internally as a vehicle for consultation and the use of the panel has since been extended to partners. The National Forest made use of the Citizens' Panel to inform its Forest Strategy 2004-14. 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.

Consultation database

- 5.14 Last year we explored the possibility of creating a database of consultation results and outcomes, as detailed in the Annual Report. Organisations with consultation databases were contacted to discuss examples of good practice. This action will be progressed during 2009/10 and we have continued to publish our consultation results and outcomes on the Council's website.

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' which is just as important as communicating the results of the consultation. An action plan is appended but a summary of some of the key actions that need to take place in 2009/2010 are covered below.

Fundamental review of consultation and engagement activity within the Council

- 6.2 With recent developments on the Place Survey and the increasing legislative requirements to involve local communities in all of our work, we need to undertake a fundamental review of consultation and engagement activity as a whole, rather than focusing on individual elements. Part of this will be exploring the area of customer insight and using our data about our customers to understand their needs and experiences and applying this to the design and delivery of our services. This review will drive the work of any future consultation and engagement activity across the Council.

Analysis of the results of the Place Survey

- 6.3 The new performance framework expects Councils and partners to use all the evidence at their disposal to build a robust understanding of the area they serve and the people who live there. Within this context, we will be drilling down and exploring the data from the Place Survey in order to understand how perceptions vary within local areas. This will enable us to identify hotspots of resident dissatisfaction overall or with particular aspects of services; understanding how priorities differ between neighbourhoods and looking at the relationship between perceptions and the nature of local areas (including, for example, deprivation levels). We will work with the Communications Team following the national publication of data to feedback the key messages to residents and to manage any media interest.

Citizens' Panel

- 6.4 We will continue to maintain and use South Derbyshire's Citizens' Panel as one of our main consultation tools. However, Derbyshire County Council has proposed that the current arrangement of shared panels comes to an end and the County and District Councils are now going to share the existing panels during 2009/10, each running two surveys a year and sharing results. Working jointly with the Derbyshire Consultation Group we will be using 2009/10 as an opportunity to jointly review the Citizens' Panels with the aim of coming up with a proposal in partnership for the future of the panel or a different model.
- 6.5 As the County Council is no longer in a position to 'refresh' a third of our panel, as was agreed in the original partnership agreement, we will monitor the non responses to Panel surveys and undertake a mini refreshment using any people from the Place Survey who expressed an interest in joining the panel. We will continue with ongoing recruitment to the Citizens' Panel or any other model that is to be used.

Updating the Consultation Strategy

- 6.6 The Consultation Strategy sets out the Council's commitment to consultation and is a framework that underpins all Council consultations, both statutory and voluntary. In light of the requirements of the legislation regarding public involvement the strategy will be reviewed and refreshed during 2009/10.

Sustainable Communities Act 2007

- 6.7 The Council has chosen to opt in to the Sustainable Communities Act, which encourages local communities to suggest actions that central government could take to improve the economic, social or environmental well being of their area. All proposals under the Act will need to be submitted via local Councils, who have discussed them with local panels. Consequently, we need to establish or identify a panel of local people and work with them to develop proposals. We will need to review whether our Citizens' Panel is 'fit for purpose' for this and then make the necessary arrangements to meet the requirements of this act.

Employee engagement and consultation

- 6.8 An employee survey will be undertaken to find out what they think about working for the Council. It is planned 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.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 There will be some costs associated with the rollout of the 2009/2010 Action Plan, namely the ongoing costs of maintaining and using the Citizens' Panel and the analysis of the Place Survey results if specialist mapping software is used.
- 7.2 Any costs will be found from existing budgets within the Organisational Development Unit.

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 very 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 'Creating Opportunities for all South Derbyshire's Community Strategy' and the priority action 'improving communication, consultation and involvement with local people to provide services'. 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 citizen's 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

- 11.1 Report to F & M 17th February 2009 – Sustainable Communities Act 2007