

Report of	Meeting	Date
Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) (Introduced by the Executive Member for Policy and Performance)	Executive Cabinet	4 th October

CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2007/08

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To present the Consultation and Participation Strategy 2007/08 to Members for consideration and approval.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That the proposed Consultation and Participation Strategy is adopted

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. A new Consultation and Participation Strategy has been developed to encourage effective engagement of our customers and communities in Chorley. The Consultation and Participation Strategy sets out the main principles that the Council will adhere to when consulting the public. It also includes an action plan for planned consultation in the next year, the feedback from which will be used to inform policy development and service improvements. The Strategy is attached for approval.

Underlying the strategy, a toolkit is being developed to give detailed guidance to staff undertaking consultation to ensure that consultation is carried out in the most effective way possible.

In addition, the report outlines the good work that is already undertaken in Chorley around consultation and highlights the developments that will take place to promote improvement.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

4. To ensure that consultation is carried out in a consistent and effective manner, in line with best practice. In addition, to provide Council Officers guidance when undertaking consultation.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

5. N/A

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

6. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the central Lancashire sub region		Improved access to public services	
Improving equality of opportunity and life chance		Develop the character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	
Involving People in their Communities	✓	Ensure Chorley is a performing Organisation	✓

CURRENT POSITION AND GENERAL INFORMATION

7. Chorley Borough Council is committed to including the public in decisions that affect them to ensure that services and priorities reflect local needs. At present, consultation is undertaken through a range of methods, often utilising best practice and innovative ways to engage hard to reach groups. Whilst the Council currently has a Consultation Strategy that dates back to 2001, the proposed Consultation and Participation Strategy should encourage a more consistent approach to consultation and spread best practice across the organisation.
8. The strategy outlines the principles that will guide consultation undertaken by the Council. These principles should ensure that consultation is effective and carried out in line with best practice. In addition, the strategy outlines the groups that should be specifically considered in consultation to ensure that the whole of society is able to participate in decision making. This is to ensure that consultation is as meaningful as possible and that the strategy contributes to Chorley's commitment to the equality standard for local government.
9. A great deal of good quality consultation and participation is already undertaken by Chorley. For example, over the last year, Chorley has:
- Undertaken consultation about the website redesign, based around a series of focus groups. Since its relaunch, the website has seen an increase in hits.
 - Undertaken budget consultation for 2007/08 with 100 residents, explaining the process of budget setting and asking their views on how it could be improved.
 - Following consultation, in response to residents' concerns, introduced weighted sacks for recycling to improve the kerbside recycling service.
 - A large scale consultation exercise was undertaken in relation to the Housing Stock Transfer to CCH.
 - Introduced public speaking at Council meetings.
10. The Consultation and Participation Strategy identifies ways of developing the good practice already seen in Chorley Council, as outlined above. Developments will include; a Consultation Database, refreshing the Citizens' Panel and a Consultation Toolkit. The consultation database will develop a mechanism to coordinate and

publicise consultation events to ensure that effort is not duplicated and resources are used in the most efficient way possible. The database will also capture consultation feedback and how this information has been used to inform service developments or shape policy decisions. The refreshed Citizens' Panel should give increased opportunity for good quality consultation on a wide range of topics on a regular basis and provide the Council with the facility to track trends over time.

11. The consultation toolkit is being developed to complement the strategy. It gives more detailed guidance on when and how consultation should be carried out to ensure that it is effective and worthwhile. This toolkit is designed to be used by officers when undertaking consultation to guide them through the process and give advice on specific aspects.

12. Appended to the strategy is an action plan that outlines the minimum consultation that the Council plans to undertake in the next year. It is likely that more consultation will actually be undertaken, as directorates often carry out consultation as projects are initiated and develop.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

13. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance		Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	✓
Legal			

COMMENTS OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (POLICY AND PERFORMANCE)

14. The more the Council can demonstrate through its policies and practices a commitment to consult and engage with our customers and all our communities including those often described as "hard to reach" will enable the council to achieve its goal of reaching level 3 of the Equality Standard by March 2009. This strategy and supporting toolkit is a positive step in this respect and should provide us with an effective approach to consultation.

LESLEY-ANN FENTON
ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (POLICY AND PERFORMANCE)

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Chris Sinnott	5337	13/09/2007	Consultation & Participation Report