

REQUEST FROM COUNCIL: The Council’s Consultation arrangements

Committee name	Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Marion Finney – Community Engagement Manager
Papers with report	None
Ward	All

HEADLINES

At the Council meeting held on 28 September 2023, a motion from Councillor Kaur, amended, was agreed as follows:

“That this Council regrets a low response rate to its public consultations and asks the Corporate Services select committee to review the Council's consultation process to ensure the voices of our diverse communities are heard, working towards geographical parity.”

In order for the Committee to consider the request from full Council, this overview report has been prepared and Marion Finney, Community Engagement Manager, will attend to answer any questions from Members.

To report sets out an overview of the Council's consultation process ‘to ensure the voices of our diverse communities are heard, working towards geographical parity’.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 1. Note the contents of the report and provide any seek clarification from officers as appropriate.**
- 2. Decide whether to take this forward as the next review topic and prepare a scoping report for the review.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Customer Engagement Team (CET) is vastly responsible for coordinating consultations and engagement activities across the council. The team organises events for residents and partner organisations, including conferences, forums, and assemblies.

The council offers opportunities for residents to engage in a variety of ways, via the use of digital tools as well as ‘in-person’ contact, understanding that engagement should be non-exclusionary, and not be limited to only digital means but should instead provide a breadth of options to give a voice to all residents.

To this end, the council supports engagement using the following methods:

- Face to face meetings
- Virtual meetings / discussions
- Surveys (online and paper-based, telephone / postal methods)
- Hybrid sessions
- Information shared on noticeboards
- Social media comments / feedback
- Estate-based events
- Regular engagement with community and faith leaders
- Regular engagement with residents' associations, tenant groups etc.
- Assemblies (e.g. older people)
- Forums (e.g., carers, young people etc.)

All the above methods are supported with interpretation and translation services where these are required, addressing any potential language barriers to resident engagement.

A number of engagement options are used to promote resident feedback and involvement at a pace and level which suits residents, and that which supports service improvement and the resolution of matters which are important to residents. These options are offered and delivered using finite resources.

The council has a database of residents with relevant focus or special interests in various service areas. Some of these residents have also indicated their preferred method of engagement.

CET is always looking at opportunities to improve its service delivery and add value to its consultation process.

The following areas are considered when planning a public consultation.

Information gathering

- What exactly do we need to know?
- What questions do we need to ask?
- Is the information already available elsewhere?
- How will the feedback from responses be used?

Target audience

- Who do we need to engage with?
- How will they be reached?
- Will residents require assistance to participate? Accessibility, language barrier, specific days, and times etc.

Engagement methods

- Which method of engagement is the most suitable for the target audience?
- Are there any possible alternatives to the preferred method?

- If a survey or consultation – what is the appropriate timeframe?
- What are the financial resources available?

Analysis and reporting

- How will information be collated?
- What will be the best way to report the findings? Depending on the audience, e.g., Cabinet, residents, staff etc.

Feedback

- What will be done with the feedback/information received?
- How will we demonstrate to stakeholders that we have listened to feedback and where appropriate, acted on it?
- Where necessary, how will information received be kept in line with GDPR guidelines?

CET works alongside the Corporate Communication Team and Web Team to ensure that surveys and consultations are promoted through various channels.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.