Huntingdonshire
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Consultation and Engagement Strategy
2014-2017

Introduction

The council is committed to involving local people in shaping their area and the services they receive; consultation and engagement is one of the key ways the council interacts with and involves local communities and residents. Public understanding, involvement and perception of consultation and engagement are particularly important as more challenging decisions need to be made in light of considerable pressure on finances.

Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a framework and a consistent approach to our consultation and engagement activities. It is supported by guidance and an action plan.

This strategy aims to adopt a more realistic and proportionate approach to consultation and engagement whilst also ensuring that, where appropriate, the views and needs of local residents and other stakeholders are used to inform and shape the delivery of services.

Corporate Context

The council's vision is:

To continue to improve the quality of life for the people of Huntingdonshire and work towards sustainable economic growth whilst providing value for money services.

It will do this by:
• Empowering local communities
• Ensuring that we engage with customers when deciding how services are delivered and improved.

Principles

These principles set out how the council will approach consultation and engagement in Huntingdonshire.

Representative

The council will make sure that there are opportunities for all local residents, partners and business to get involved in consultation and engagement.

Inclusive

The council understands that successful involvement cannot happen without a good understanding of the make-up, needs and interests of different people and their capacity to engage. An inclusive approach will enable different groups to have the opportunity to participate and help us to fulfill our duties under the Equality Act. To encourage people to take part, a variety of methods will be used for example, surveys, face to face meetings, Internet and social media.

Effective

Effective consultation and engagement means ensuring people's views are used to inform and shape the delivery of services and that council is clear about how views have been taken into account.

Roles and responsibilities

Elected Members

Elected Members as leaders and representatives of Huntingdonshire residents have an important role in bringing to the council, the needs, views and aspirations of the communities they represent.

Check list for Members
- ensuring the needs, views and aspirations of communities contribute towards the democratic decision making process
- comment on proposed consultation & engagement activities
- promote and encourage local residents to get involved

Services

To deliver the right services and ensure value for money, services will need to continue to consult and engage with local residents. To improve coordination and help the council to achieve our principles, all service level consultation and engagement activity will need to be approved by the Corporate Team

Check list for services
If you are thinking about consultation & engagement please:
- complete the pre consultation check list in appendix two
- ensure that this checklist has been signed off by the Corporate Team
- make sure that your Portfolio Holder, relevant Overview & Scrutiny panel, or where appropriate, Ward Member has been informed.

Partners

Joint working with other public sector organisations on a consultation and engagement activity can be a productive way of achieving a more effective and efficient use of resources and should be considered where appropriate.

The voluntary and community sector supports many residents; the views of these organisations are valuable and should also be considered as they can make a significant contribution to consultation and engagement activities.

Action Plan

The action plan details how we intend to deliver against the principles set out in this strategy over the next year.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are critical to ensuring that we achieve against our action plan. To ensure we are making progress we will:
- Report performance on consultation and engagement activities (annual report to senior officers and relevant scrutiny panel)

This Strategy, Action Plan and Guidance will be reviewed annually so that we can set specific targets for the future. A comprehensive review of the strategy will be undertaken every three years.

Appendix One - Action Plan 2014/15

Appendix Two - Consultation checklists

Appendix Three - Consultation & Engagement Strategy - advice on methods and techniques

Appendix Four - Consultation & Engagement Strategy - advice on making consultation more accessible

Appendix 1

Huntingdonshire District Council

Consultation & Engagement Strategy - Action Plan 2014/2015

Priorities	Action	Target	By whom
Improve internal processes to contribute towards achieving the corporate priorities of: • Empowering local communities • Ensuring that we engage with customers when deciding how services are delivered and improved	Update and promote the use of the Consultation & Engagement Strategy and appendices as good practice guidance	Sept 2014	Corporate Team
	Investigate alternative methods for using the website for consultation and engagement	Sept 2014	Corporate Team and IMD
	Investigate corporate approach to obtaining resident satisfaction/ perception	April 2015	Corporate Team and Customer Services
	Annual consultation evaluation report to senior officers and Members summarising outcomes from consultation & engagement activities	April 2015	Corporate Team and Customer Services
	Establish contact list or database of community/voluntary groups or forums who represent the needs of hard to reach groups or residents that we can develop to work with on consultation & engagement	April 2015	Corporate Team
	Consultation with residents to inform 2014/15 budget planning	June-Aug 2014	Corporate Team

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