

**DRAFT**

**Consultation and  
Engagement Strategy**

**2008–2011**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Objectives of the Strategy

This draft Consultation and Engagement Strategy seeks to build on the Council's commitment to increasing engagement and consultation with local residents, businesses, stakeholders and partners and will strengthen our strong record of ensuring all our services are customer led.

The Strategy also responds to the recent triannual survey results (2006/07) which sampled 1,000 local residents who were selected randomly.

### Key findings included:

- Overall 50.1% of those interviewed thought the Council kept residents 'very' or 'fairly well informed' about the services and benefits it provides;
- 59.2% felt that they were either 'not very well informed' or 'not very well informed at all' about how you can get involved in local decision making;
- 53.6% felt either 'to a great deal' or 'to some extent' that the Council acts on the concerns of local residents;
- 55.4% thought either 'to a great deal' or 'to some extent' that the Council is remote and impersonal.

We aim to build on the results of this survey; in terms of the success we have achieved whilst also ensuring we address the areas where residents feel we need to improve.

### **The Four Objectives are therefore set out below:**

#### Objective One

To deliver a strategic approach to engagement and customer access that enables effective planning of activity and the best use of resources, and avoids fatigue among participants.

Where possible we will seek to maximise opportunities for joint consultation with partners and this strategy will ensure delivery against this objective.

Under the Kent Commitment, the Council has signed up to enhance two-tier working and has been engaged in a number of high profile engagement activities including Councillor Call for Action, Ward Walks, the Gateway, the development of a Faith Forum and development of a joint Youth Strategy with Kent County Council Youth Services.

#### Objective Two

To ensure that all communities (geographic or interest) within the Borough of Tunbridge Wells are able to participate effectively, with particular emphasis on those who are currently not involved in our consultation activities.

We will ensure that we target 'hard to reach' groups through a range of mechanisms and where appropriate, seek external advice on supporting us to achieve this.

This objective will be primarily delivered through the Engaging Hard to Reach Groups Guide.

### Objective Three

To ensure that the outcomes of engagement activities are used to inform the Council's decision making process and to ensure that services are tailored and refined to meet the needs of users and residents.

This objective will be primarily delivered through the Customer Service and Access Plan and the Gateway.

### Objective Four

To provide clear guidance and promote consistent standards of consultation across the Council.

This objective will be primarily delivered through the Communication Plan.

## **Context**

### **What do we mean by community consultation and engagement?**

The term community engagement is used to embrace a whole spectrum of activities that support the two-way dialogue process between the Council and its citizens, businessess, visitors and other key stakeholders in the borough of Tunbridge Wells.

The purpose of the strategy is to enhance how the Council consults and involves citizens and other stakeholders in decision-making and to ensure that their views are systematically used to improve Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's services and inform the development of policies. The Strategy sets out clear objectives, standards and an action plan for engagement and consultation.

### The Strategy aims to:

- Ensure that consultation with residents, service users and staff is integrated into service planning and delivery
- Ensure that consultation is effective and meaningful for the people involved and for those using the information
- Ensure that outcomes of consultation and research are used to inform policy and decision making
- Improve the co-ordination of consultation across the Council and key partners
- Provide better value for money from the consultation that takes place.
- Ensure that when we consult and engage communities, your views and consideration will be taken into account alongside wider factors that determine final decisions (such as statutory guidance, resources, and political priorities) when making decisions

This Strategy provides a policy framework for engagement and the overlapping area of communication, customer access and hard to reach engagement as detailed in the following sections.

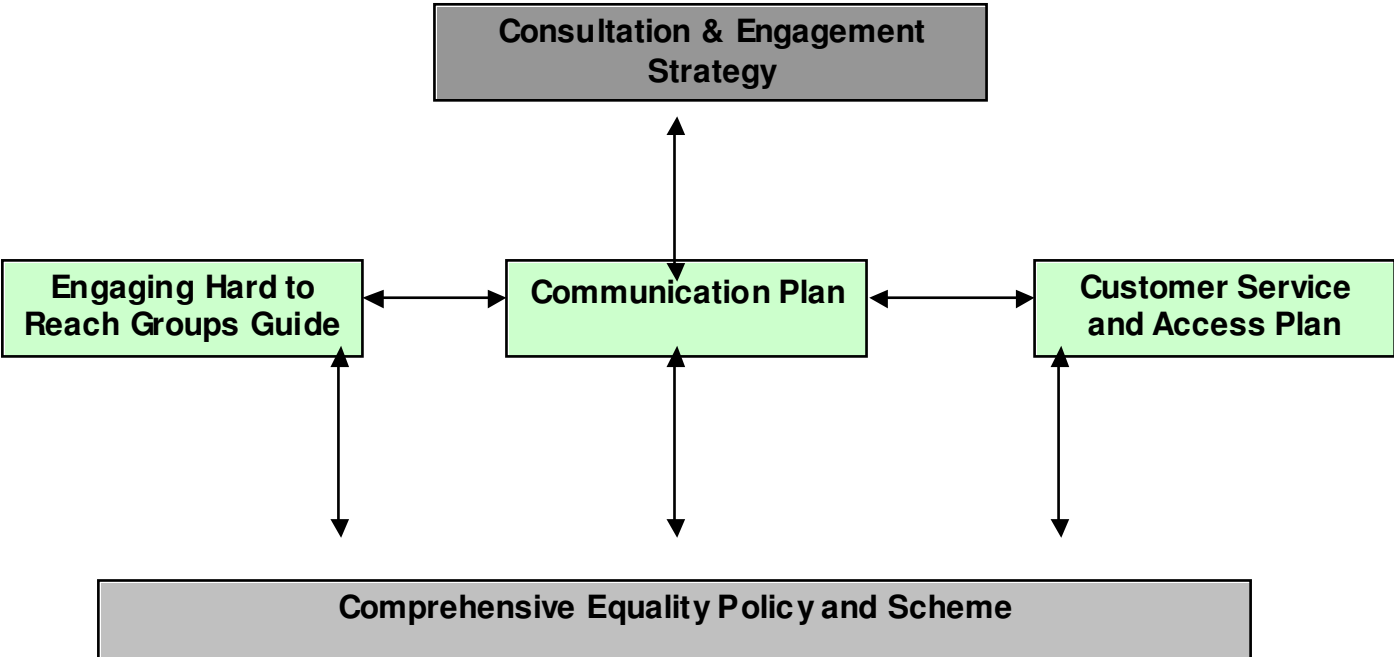
**Standards of Engagement**

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council will seek to bring about better coordination and consistency between consultation activities undertaken within the borough especially with key partners. We will also let people who participate in consultation know what to expect during and after each consultation event.

Examining best practice, the Council has committed to adopting the National Standards for Community Engagement, which helps to develop and support better working relationships between communities and agencies delivering public services. These are outlined in Section 7.

**Links to Corporate Policy Framework**

This Strategy provides an overarching framework, which supplements and supports a suite of plans, which have been developed to ensure we co-ordinate our approaches to communication, engagement and customer service, with specific reference to engaging hard to reach groups.



This Strategy also supports the delivery of the **Strategic Plan 2008-2011**, which sets out the Council's objectives and actions for the three-year period. Many elements of the Strategic Plan will be underpinned by consultation in terms of delivering services and improving outcomes for local communities.

Specifically, this Strategy provides a framework for engagement and supports the following corporate priority:

- **Safer and Stronger Communities** – by demonstrating community leadership and empowerment through co-ordinating engagement activities and ensuring results inform the decision making process.

It also underpins our cross-cutting customer commitments of:

- **Delivering high quality services to our customers**- by consulting communities to understand need and ensure quality standards are developed to reflect the level of service expected
- **Improving customer service and satisfaction** – by continuous engagement with customers, we will be able to improve our services to increase customer satisfaction
- **Ensuring that we are well managed, proactive and deliver value-for-money services** – by ensuring we consult in partnership where possible.

The Strategy also supports the Council's Core Values set out in our People Strategy and Strategic Plan 2008-2011. The Core Values are:

- **Customer Focus** - We will take responsibility and do our very best to deliver the services that the customer needs
- **Value staff** - We will empower each other to carry out our day-day roles as valued members of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council team
- **Respect** - We will always show respect for people and the environment
- **Communication** - We will consistently advise and inform and listen to what is being said to us
- **Responsibility** - We will care for our borough, the environment and the community that we serve
- **Transparency** - We will always seek to be open and honest

This strategy supports the following commitments from the **Council's Comprehensive Equality Policy and Schemes:**

- That we will be proactive in considering what barriers may exist to users of our services and seek to eliminate those barriers
- That we will actively promote the involvement of local communities in the further development of the 'equality scheme'
- That we will gather more evidence to gain a better understanding of the needs of our diverse communities
- That we will increase awareness and use of Council services within diverse communities

The Strategy underpins the Council in delivering its commitments in the **Sustainable Community Plan ‘ Enhancing the Quality of Life for All’** by ensuring we improve services and deal with the priorities identified by local communities.

This Strategy provides a framework through which each consultation activity can be coordinated across the Council and with partners. This builds on the good practice already in place such the recent Youth Strategy, which has been developed in partnership with Kent County Council and involved 570 young people being consulted and will be monitored by the Youth Forums.

The action plan in Section 6 has been developed to support and reflect the activities that are already being undertaken across the Council.

## **2. SETTING THE CONTEXT FOR ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

### **Why does Tunbridge Wells engage with residents?**

We consult and engage in Tunbridge Wells so that residents can shape:

- **Services** ensuring that residents have an input into decisions so that services provided by the Council better meet their needs
- **Priorities** involving residents on decisions on the Council’s strategic management issues
- **Planning for the Future** allowing residents to participate fully as citizens in developing a better borough.

### **Engagement Spectrum**

Community engagement can mean different things to different people, different communities and different services and situations. The Council has designed this Strategy to ensure that we can provide the most appropriate means for communities and customers to be involved and give feedback.

The various means of community engagement are:

- **Information** supports all types of community engagement and keeps people informed about such things as decisions, services and local events (e.g. the Council’s website is more accessible and it includes local information on each ward in the borough).
- **Consultation** can be used when there is a decision to make about something or when there are a number of choices about the details (e.g. the town centre masterplanning exercise will include consultation on options for regeneration and renewal).

- **Deciding together.** This is when local people are involved in deciding which options to choose, but it is the council that will act on the decisions (in determining the layout of new play areas)
- **Acting together.** This is when decisions are made by partnerships between local people or agencies and the Council. The people involved in making the decisions also take part in carrying them out (e.g the Sherwood Community Centre (TN2) was designed and is now being managed in partnership with local residents)
- **Supporting independent community initiatives.** This is when independent groups get help to develop and carry out their own plans (e.g through annual grants programme).

Every type of involvement is important in the community engagement process and different methods will be used depending on the activity and circumstances. Sometimes it may be appropriate to inform or consult on some activities, while at other times we will seek to involve communities and individuals in much greater depth. When we consult and engage communities, their views and consideration will be taken into account alongside wider factors that determine final decisions (such as statutory guidance, resources, and political priorities)

Our aim is to work towards devolving decision-making and supporting independent community initiatives wherever possible and to demonstrate where this type of community engagement activity can make genuine improvements.

### Five levels of Community Engagement

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
To provide information to assist the public in understanding issues	To obtain public feedback to inform decision making	To work directly with the public to ensure issues and concerns are addressed	To partner with the public in decision making	To place final decision making in the hand of the public
<b>Impact on public</b> We will keep you informed	<b>Impact on public</b> We will keep you informed, listen to your concerns and provide feedback on how your input influenced decision	<b>Impact on public</b> We will work with you to ensure your concerns are directly reflected in options and provide feedback on	<b>Impact on public</b> We will look to you for advice and innovation in finding solutions and incorporate your advice to the maximum extent	<b>Impact on public</b> We will implement what you decide

	making	how your input influenced decision making		
<b>Examples:</b> iLocal newsletter	<b>Examples:</b> Annual resident survey	<b>Examples:</b> Waste contract	<b>Examples:</b> Cinema site consultation	<b>Examples:</b> TN2 Community Centre is managed by a resident led Trust.

## Consultation and Research

It is important to recognise the difference between consultation and research.

- **Consultation** is a process of seeking information from individuals or groups. They may not be representative of the population as a whole, but they will usually have a view about the issues under consideration. Many consultation processes combine elements of research (e.g. purposeful sampling) to overcome unrepresentative or dominance by certain participants/groups.
- **Research** is usually used to find out new facts and to measure the views of a particular group of people systematically at a particular point in time. Representative and statistically reliable research can be used to evaluate issues and performance over time.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council undertakes research for its own purposes- to assess trends in public views on particular issues or to establish information about particular communities to inform policy development for example. Where this is the case, the Council does not necessarily feed back or publicise results. The Council's Annual Residents Survey is an example of survey research.

## Consultation and Information

Our Consultation and Engagement strategy is an important part of our approach to communication. Through consultation, we are developing a sustained dialogue between the Council and its various audiences and stakeholders, which involves listening as well as talking.

### Consultation is a communication channel in a number of ways:

- Communication with individuals being consulted: we need to make sure that when consulting people we have the right branding and communicate in the right messages. People are more likely to be engaged if they feel informed.
- People who have been consulted communicate with other people in the borough about the Council. If they have had a good experience of consultation, they will encourage others to participate and engage in the future.

- Consultation can provide material for media coverage, for example: feature articles.

### **When to consult**

#### Consultation needs to take place:

- At the start of the process of planning services
- When options are being narrowed
- At the final stages of the process – when a preferred option is being proposed and considered
- As part of regular customer satisfaction surveys to improve service delivery
- When evaluating a particular service or undertaking an Equalities Impact Assessment
- If there is a statutory duty to do so

### **Who to consult**

Who the Council consults largely depends on the issues under consideration. Local planning consultations may target a narrow group of stakeholders, whereas a Council wide consultation on the Strategic Plan will have a much wider focus. Consultation may include some or all of the following stakeholders:

- Residents
- Customers or users
- Non user and potential users
- Elected Members, Parishes and Town Councils
- Members of staff/ staff forums/ trade unions
- Local businesses and people who work in the borough

- Voluntary, community and faith groups
  
- Interest or pressure groups – e.g. tenant associations, resident associations  
Communities (geographic)
  
- Groups of people defined by a common factor such as age, disability, gender or ethnicity.

### **Making consultation inclusive**

As well as the general groups outlined above, the Council also consults with specific groups who, for a variety of reasons, do not tend to take part in consultation activity, for them a more targeted approach is required. These groups are often described as 'hard to reach'

These groups are identified as hard to reach, because traditional or standards methods of research and consultation may not be appropriate or may not achieve a sample that will produce valid and reliable results. Research with hard to reach groups therefore tends to be qualitative.

Examples of hard to reach groups include:

1. Ethnic minority groups, particularly those who do not speak English
2. People aged over 50 especially those who are housebound in rural areas
3. Some people aged 11-19
4. The new European population

Hard to reach groups should not be defined purely in terms of demography, as behavioural and attitudinal definitions are also relevant. The Council's 'Guide to Engaging Hard to Reach Groups' provides a number of indicators of special factors which should be considered when consulting hard to reach groups and our Communication Plan also deals with our aims of communicating with these groups.

## **3. KEY DRIVERS THAT SHAPE THE STRATEGY**

This Strategy has been shaped by a number of internal and external factors including:

Changes in the local population and the need to plan engagement around the changing demographics of our communities

- Corporate commitment to improve the co-ordination of engagement mechanism across the council
  
- The outcome of the recent peer review

- The place shaping agenda and the duty to co-operate as set out in the White Paper ‘ Strong and Prosperous Communities’ and the recent Local Government and Involvement in Health Bill.

#### **4. KEY MECHANISM FOR CONSULTING AND ENGAGING CITIZENS**

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has made significant improvements over the past two years in terms of improving consultation and engagement with local communities. This document builds on and replaces the ‘Good Practice Guide to Community Involvement and Consultation’. The following section describes how the Council is working to promote local democracy through its consultative mechanism and sets out the main elements of our current approach to consultation and engagement.

##### **Ward Councillors**

The representation and scrutiny role of local councillors is crucial to the consultation process, as they are involved in community initiatives and they are the voice of local communities and they act as advocates for individuals and as the champions of users for local services.

Ward Councillors have a major role in the consultation process, and they play a key role through their unique relationship with local communities and from their involvement in local groups and partnerships. Officers consult with councillors as representatives of their local communities on a frequent basis.

In addition to their regular contact with local communities, ward councillors are supported through a package of tools to assist them in consulting and feeding back on local issues and services including:

- **Councillor Call for Action** by providing local residents with a systematic approach to dealing with concerns in their neighbourhoods via councillors
- **Councillor Kitbag** allowing councillors to disseminate and provide up to date information on a range of services to local citizens in the community
- **Ward Walks** by allowing Councillors to systematically engage local residents in their homes about services, neighbourhoods issues and access to services
- **Interactively** via our website through ‘Ask the Leader’ forum

##### **Ward Walks**

The Council successfully piloted a new engagement mechanism (Ward Walks) that comprises of officers and councillors jointly engaging local residents through a systematic approach based on neighbourhood samples. Working in partnership with Town and Parish Councils, areas are identified which reflect the demographic make up of the neighbourhood and a sample is selected accordingly. Teams conduct interviews (a high proportion within the residents’ homes) and are acted upon within a predefined time. Community Feedback sessions are then held to disseminate the

results of the Ward Walks to look at what has happened as a result. Partner agencies including police, Primary Care Trust and Kent County Council services are also encouraged to attend.

Cabinet have agreed that the Ward Walks initiative will be rolled out across the borough over the next six years and will include a cross agency approach as this is taken forward.

### **i-Local**

i-Local is the official magazine of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council which informs local residents and businesses what the Council and its partners are doing and why. The magazine i-Local is produced 3 times a year, and delivered door-to door throughout the borough. Copies are also available on the website and at the Town Hall.

Officers can use i-Local to inform, consult and engage residents including questionnaire and articles.

### **Employee Consultation**

The Council has a well-established Joint Consultative Committee and a council wide staff convention that takes place twice a year. In addition, we have a Management Forum that has recently supported the development of our Core Values. In addition, there is a staff magazine, '*on the Write Lines*' and a monthly corporate briefing. These are all available for officers wanting to include staff in their consultation plans. In addition all staff get an opportunity to meet the Chief Executive through the birthday club initiative.

### **Young People**

The Council recognises the need to engage young people through appropriate and meaningful mediums. Working in partnership with Kent County Council Youth Service, the Council has recently developed a Youth Strategy, which sets out what young people see as the key issues affecting them and what services they would wish to see in the borough. The Strategy has been developed and will be monitored by young people.

### **Youth Forums**

Following engagement with young people, it was recognised that the existing Youth Council was not meeting the needs of young people, and therefore new urban and rural youth forums have been established. Member champions have also been identified to ensure direct links between young people and Councillors to ensure their views are taken forward in the decision making process.

### **Youth Website**

Young people have a dedicated webpage on the Council's website, which sets out information and services available to young people and helps ensure that young people views influenced decision makers.

### **Consulting with Partners**

Partnership working is crucial to achieving engaged and active communities and where possible and appropriate the Council will seek to engage with relevant partners.

### **Tunbridge Wells Together**

The Tunbridge Wells Together (Local Strategic Partnership) is currently being established and will bring together partners from the private, public, voluntary and community sectors into an overarching partnership for the whole borough. The LSP will provide the strategic umbrella for policy development, to ensure all partners and partnerships are working together to enhance services and opportunities for local communities.

In order to inform the design and delivery of services across partners, and avoid duplication, it is essential that partners are aware of and share each other's consultation and engagement processes and outcomes. Any additional exercises, carried out by the LSP, will be developed together with partners to fill particular gaps in consultation and engagement.

### **Tunbridge Wells Community Safety Partnership (CSP)**

Under the recently published National Standards, CSP's are expected to develop engagement and consultation mechanisms, which support the increased emphasis on citizen, focused policing. In partnership with West Kent Police and other members of the CSP the Council work closely to engage local residents in policing and community safety related issues. Neighbourhood Policing driven PACT (Partners and Communities Together) Panels, meetings and surgeries will engage local residents as appropriate.

### **Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector**

The voluntary, community and faith based organisations work closely with and represent many of our local communities. These groups have access to a wide range of information related to the needs and concerns of local residents that the Council needs to access in order to ensure that it is addressing local people's needs. The Corporate and Community Planning service (part of Planning and Development Directorate) is the Council's corporate link and work closely with Voluntary Action West Kent – an umbrella organisation that support voluntary and community groups operating in the borough. The Council is also seeking to establish a Faith Forum to ensure strong links with the LSP, the Council and support cross faith dialogue.

### **Parish and Town Councils**

The Council is committed to working with Parish/Town Councils who are in many cases present at the heart of their communities and therefore more likely to be aware of local concerns and issues. Through active engagement with the Parish/ Town Council, we will ensure that we involve and partner where possible when undertaken consultation in neighbourhoods. The Ward Walks Programme has had Parish/ Town Council involvement from the development phase and was welcomed as an example of good practice.

The Parish Charter also sets out how the Council engages with and involves the Parishes/Town Councils in policy and service development. In addition, the Council

has a nominated officer who supports involvement of the organisations and the Leader of the Council chairs regular meetings with chairmen of all fifteen Parish/Town Councils across the Borough.

A regular briefing is also distributed which sets out key development and clerks are invited to take part in the Council's corporate training programmes.

### **Businesses**

The Council currently engages with businesses through existing business organisations and structures such as the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and the Chamber of Commerce. In addition, the Council is seeking to develop local business fora within specific areas as appropriate to encourage and develop dialogue with the business community. A new business forum for the Tunbridge Wells town centre has recently been established

### **Resident Groups**

Resident groups also exist across the borough and where appropriate engagement and consultation is undertaken through these groups on issues related to and/or impacting on local areas. These include the Town Forum and other organisations based in unparished areas.

### **Kent Partners Compact (KPC)**

The Kent Partners Compact is a partnership agreement between the Voluntary and Community Sector (CVS) and the Public Sector in Kent – a jointly agreed framework of principles to guide their working relationship, for mutual, purposeful and positive benefit for the Kent community.

The Council is committed to the KPC and has recently informed the consultation process.

### **Survey Research / New Place Survey**

#### User satisfaction and perception of services.

Until recently, the Council was expected to collect user satisfaction information under the best value performance indicator regime. The survey took place every three years, most recently in 2006/07. Representative samples of local residents were asked about their overall satisfaction with council services. The results were provided to the Government and compared to other local authorities.

However this has now been replaced by a new performance framework, which includes 25 citizen perspective indicators, 20 of these are proposed to be collected through a single Place Survey. The Place Survey will seek to capture local people's views, experiences and importantly track people's changing perceptions, as a way of determining whether interventions made in an area result in the right outcome for local people. At present the Place Survey is out to consultation and is likely to be undertaken on a biennial basis with the first survey expected in Autumn 2008.

### **Residents Surveys**

The Council also undertakes resident survey, where approximately 1,000 local residents, selected randomly, are surveyed to track perceptions about Council services. The sample is asked to rate satisfaction with the Council's core services

and how they perceive issues related to community safety and access to wider services available within the borough. The data is used allows us to identify trends in perceptions of services and focus attention on area of concern. To ensure we are able to target hard to reach groups, the Council supplements the sample by commissioning a series of appropriate 'booster' surveys, which collate views from ethnic minority communities, disabled people to analyse any variance from the larger sample of residents.

### **Our Approach – a summary**

The Council recognises that we must ensure our consultation and engagement with our communities is accessible, relevant and timely. With an increased focus on consultation across all statutory partners, we will ensure that our arrangement compliment and work alongside other agencies to ensure we build on and minimise duplication in our activities.

We will continue to be innovative, and look at new ways to consult and engage and will encourage staff and Councillors to examine new approaches and suggestions based on their experience and local knowledge of the borough.

Through mechanism such as Ward Walk, we will work to map the needs and requirements of our communities and ensure we feedback outcomes to communities. In addition, we will use the results of consultation and engagement to ensure we are able to support the personalisation of services to all our communities and where possible work to achieve improvement in partnership.

## **5. CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

The Council will through this Strategy introduce a comprehensive process for consultation that will bring about greater consistency, encourage the sharing of good practice and raise the standard of consultation in Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

The Corporate and Community Planning service is responsible for developing a corporate policy on consultation.

The service will work across the Council to:

- Ensure that consultation activity is co-ordinated
- Promote the use of best practice
  
- Support the establishment of mechanisms for effectively disseminating information about consultation and the results of consultations
  
- Ensure that information gathered from consultation exercises is gathered, interpreted and made available in an accessible format (including the use of Geographical Information Systems).

### **Internal Mechanisms**

The Strategy Matrix Group (SMG) has been established to co-ordinate all policy development across the Council, consultation and engagement is integral to this process and SMG will be involved in:

- Supporting the Council to achieve the delivery of this Strategy
- Achieving greater consistency in the planning and managing of consultation exercises across the authority
- Encourage sharing of good practice
- Facilitate the sharing of results through recording all consultation outcomes into a consultation database.

In addition, the equalities impact assessment process also identifies where consultation is necessary to improve customer service.

### **Co-ordinating consultation**

The Council recognises that the amount of consultation and engagement activity has increased over the past few years, it is therefore important that approaches we make are coherent and strategic in terms of future consultation.

Where appropriate we will ensure:

- Approaches to the public and other stakeholder groups are streamlined and better focused to avoid consultation fatigue among participants
- That we are more strategic in our approach to ensure all activities are effective and ensure that best use is made of resources
- That we share results of consultation across the Council and key partners to ensure we avoid duplication and build on existing consultation data

Not all consultation is known in advance. However, developing a strategic approach means working towards a position where future consultation is mapped out and publicised among Council staff, communities and partners.

### **Developing our skills to share and learn**

The Ward Walks programme as well a general increase in the number of staff taking part in consultation exercises makes it critical that we ensure staff are equipped to undertake and understand approaches to engagement. Ipsos MORI were commissioned to train staff and councillors in 2007 and further training will be arranged as part of the corporate training schedule for 2008.

### **Communicating Feedback**

It is important that we communicate the results of consultations and actions that are being taken as a result, to generate confidence among members of the public that their views are being taken forward. For example everyone who took part in the 2007 triennial survey was contacted afterwards and informed of the outcomes of the survey. Communicating results internally within the Council is equally important to increase shared understanding and perception of local communities across a range of issues.

Our Communication Plan sets out a number of aims about improving communication and feedback to those who are consulted.

We will communicate through the following mechanisms:

- Key consultations activities and results will be reported to the Cabinet Member and disseminated among Councillors
  
- Articles in iLocal and press releases about consultation activities
  
- Consultation results will be fed back directly to consultees, (e.g Ward Walk community feedback sessions)

Regular feature on consultation activities within the borough will appear in the i-Local magazine from March 2008 onwards. The purpose of this column is to give feedback on consultation events and how outcomes have been used.

### **Evaluating our Approach**

It is important that we evaluate our consultation processes and that this is built in at the start of the process. Through understanding whether we have been effective in our approach we will be able to amend and improve the Council's approaches.

Ways in which we can measure the effectiveness of consultation include:

- Through clear criteria such as the extent to which we reached the target audience, what feedback we received from participants, the costs and the impact of implementing the outcomes.
  
- Examining our approaches by looking at good practice elsewhere and gaining external advice.
  
- By including our outcomes of key consultations in the i-Local.

## 6. 2008-2011 ACTION PLAN

Four key objectives have been identified in Section One. Set out below are action plans which sets out how we will achieve these objectives and how they relate to the Council's Corporate Objectives

To deliver a more strategic approach to engagement and customer service that enables effective planning of activity and the best use of resources, and avoids fatigue among participants

Target	Lead	Outcome	Timescales
Promote the Consultation and Engagement Strategy within the Council and wider stakeholders	Corporate and Community Planning Portfolio Holders Directors	Staff, councillors are informed about the corporate approach.  Wider stakeholders are aware of our Strategy and commit to co-ordinate consultation where appropriate	On going
Support the development of the Strategy Matrix Group and ensure consultation is embedded within the SMG work programme	Corporate and Community Planning Director of Change and Business Support	SMG considers all consultation activity and received feedback on results at each meeting and develops best practice across the Council.	On going
Ensure that information /data obtained from surveys and consultation events are shared corporately and reported to decision makers	All Heads of Service	Management Board / Leaders meetings to receive quarterly reports on outcomes of research and consultation activities	Quarterly reporting

**To ensure that all communities (geographic or interest) within the borough of Tunbridge Wells are able to participate effectively, with particular emphasis on those who are currently not involved in our consultation activities**

Target	Lead	Outcome	Timescales
To roll out Ward Walks Programme across the borough	Corporate and Community Planning	To target residents, who may not otherwise participate in consultation through a systematic approach.  To respond and deliver Community Feedback sessions in each area to report on findings and what actions have been taken as a result	2008- 2014
Explore the use of new technology to engage residents (e.g. text messaging, webcasting and DigiTV)	Corporate and Community Planning and other services as relevant	To engage specific groups such as young people who may not take part through traditional mechanisms.	On going
Maximise the use of the Voluntary Action West Kent database of local community and voluntary organisations	Corporate and Community Planning and other services as relevant	To ensure we engage communities who may be service users or volunteers in the CVS sector.	2008 onwards
Utilise the Joint Consultative Committee to engage staff as well through the Management Forum and Staff Convention.	All Heads of service	To ensure staff are able to feed in their views into the formulation of policy and on service changes.	On going

<p>To work with local stakeholders to map our new communities and where possible ensure they are engaged.</p>	<p>Corporate and Community Planning</p>	<p>Examine the potential of introducing a multi agency welcome pack.</p> <p>Ensure the Gateway in Royal Tunbridge Wells is accessible to all our communities</p>	<p>2008</p>
<p>To capture all consultation via Geographical Information System (GIS)</p>	<p>GIS Manager</p>	<p>To be able to identify differences in perceptions of services and other inequalities (e.g. deprivation data) among residents and ensure we are able to address these through a partnership approach</p>	<p>On going</p>
<p>To ensure all services and policies are subject to equality impact assessment and where gaps are identified actions is taken to address these</p>	<p>All Heads of Service Performance and Improvement Manager Equality Policy Officer</p>	<p>To ensure we are able to demonstrate how our services and policy affect certain groups and where appropriate ensure we mitigate adverse impact.</p>	<p>On going</p>
<p>To examine the use of qualitative research methods to assist in consulting with hard to reach communities who may not take part in more structured approaches</p>	<p>Head of Corporate and Community Planning Strategy Matrix Group Corporate Equalities Monitoring Group</p>	<p>To ensure a range of approaches are adopted to ensure we reduce barriers to engagement</p>	<p>On -going</p>

**To ensure that the outcomes of engagement activities are used to inform the Council's decision making process.**

Target	Lead	Outcome	Timescales
Key outcomes from consultation and engagement are to be recorded and reported to decision makers	All Heads of Service	Data from consultation is available to Management Board and Leader and can inform decision making process	On going
Outcomes from Ward Walks Programme are available to all staff, stakeholder and the public	Corporate and Community Planning Research and Information Officer	Develop a website page dedicated to feedback.  Publish reports on findings as required	2008-2014
To ensure iLocal articles set out both forthcoming consultations and feedback on the outcomes of strategic consultations undertaken	All Heads of Service	Articles published and featured in each publication	On going.



**To provide clear guidance and promote consistent standards of consultation across the Council**

<b>Target</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
Raise awareness of the Council's Standard across the Council	All Heads of Service	Distribute Standards across all Council services and include in the Corporate Briefing  Include in the Corporate Induction programme	On going
Include training on research and consultation as part of the Corporate Training Schedule	Human Resources	Training events to be held annually	On going
Integrate the new consultation process into the Council	Corporate and Community Planning	Consultation feedback forms to be developed and disseminated  Heads of Service made aware of the new approach.	Summer 2008

## 7. TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL'S ENGAGEMENT STANDARDS

- **Involvement:** We will identify and involve people and organisations who have an interest in the focus of the engagement
- **Support:** We will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement
- **Planning:** We will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this evidence to agree the purpose, scope and timescales of the engagement and the actions to be taken
- **Methods:** We will agree and use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose
- **Working Together:** We will agree and use clear procedures that enable partners to engage collectively resulting in effective and efficient approaches being used
- **Sharing Information:** We will ensure that all necessary information is communicated in advance of the consultation and engagement activity.
- **Feedback:** We will feed back the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected
- **Monitoring & Evaluation:** We will monitor and evaluate whether engagement achieves its purposes and meets our standards

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