

COMMUNITY INVOLVMENT AND CONSULTATION – ACTION PLAN

Key

- A** Expected to be funded without allocating funding beyond that in 2005-06 budget or secured external funding
B Requires additional mainstream or external funding yet to be sought or confirmed through budget process
C Requires external funding that has been sought but not yet confirmed

	Community Regeneration Commission recommendations	Response	Proposed action	Timescale*	Resource implications – see key	Responsibility
1a	Internally the Strategy needs to be understood better in order for it to be used better	<p>Agreed</p> <p>The existing consultation strategy is being reviewed and will form an integral element of the new corporate Communications Strategy.</p> <p>We aim to introduce corporate consultation standards, which will underpin the strategy.</p> <p>We recognise the need to disseminate, communicate and promote the revised consultation strategy, the corporate standards and the support services provided by the consultation support team in order to raise awareness and improve understanding of the Strategy.</p>	<p>The review process includes consultation with service managers, Chief Officers, Members and DCP partners and will help raise awareness of the existence and purpose of the Consultation Strategy.</p> <p>We are developing a marketing plan for the consultation support team to promote the role of the strategy, the proposed consultation standards and the consultation team's support services.</p>	March 2006	A: Review and strategy development work being undertaken by Consultation Support Team	Andrew Auld
<p>Progress on this action: The Consultation Support Team is currently undertaking desk based research looking at best practice in consultation practice across other LAs as well as carrying out a series of reviews of the various consultation mechanisms, to help inform the revisions to the strategy. We have recently completed a limited market research exercise with the consultation network and service managers to establish the level of awareness and use of the consultation strategy and consultation support team's services and products.</p>						

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1b	The Consultation Forum should be bolstered as the forum for exchange of information between practitioners in Council departments and in the wider DCP	<p>The CST is managing a review of the effectiveness of the consultation network, seeking views on ways to improve its operation to better co-ordinate consultation activities and provide a forum to share best practice.</p> <p>We are aware of other models that involve more senior representatives who agree a consultation plan and also receive feedback on the outcome of consultations listed in the plan.</p>	The CST is carrying out desk based research comparing the network's operation with other LA consultation networks and undertaking a survey of network members and council officers to identify how it can be improved to support DCC's consultation needs. We will update the Commission on the findings and proposed actions.	December 2005	A: Review and strategy development work being undertaken by Consultation Support Team	Andrew Auld
Progress on this action: A review of the consultation network is under way						

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1ci	For the Council, a yearly programme of consultation should be agreed, brought together through the Consultation Network but agreed by chief officers and Council Cabinet – and buy in promoted from partner agencies	<p>This is one of the aims of the consultation network. Network members should provide information on future consultations, which is input into the Consultation Finder – an internet database resource which is publicly available through the Council's website,</p> <p>The value of the Finder in supporting a programme of consultation is however dependent on officers and partners providing information on planned consultation and updating at regular intervals and this has not happened effectively to date.</p> <p>The reviews highlighted in 1b and 1ci will inform proposals to respond to this recommendation.</p>	<p>As part of the consultation strategy review, the CST is looking at examples of best practice in consultation planning and use of databases such as the Finder, with a view to recommending a strategic objective around the need for a corporate consultation plan.</p> <p>The Finder will also be developed to enhance its functionality to support the consultation planning and co-ordination needs.</p>	March 2006	A. Funding from e-government available for Finder development.	Andrew Auld
Progress on this action: Research into best practice in consultation strategies is currently ongoing						
1cii	The Consultation Support Team needs to facilitate this work and have the support of DCP staff to have the intentions of the various partners fed into the process	<p>The CST are best placed to facilitate this process as they have a key role in managing and driving the consultation network and the Consultation Finder.</p> <p>The review of the strategy includes a review of the function of the CST in supporting the Council's and DCP's consultation needs</p>	The role of the CST and role of partners will be defined in the revised consultation strategy	March 2006	A: Review and strategy development work being undertaken by Consultation Support Team	Andrew Auld
Progress on this action:						

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2	The Consultation Support Team may not be adequately resourced currently and the enhanced co-ordination role envisaged in recommendation 1 means the team's capacity should be reviewed shortly after the new service manager commences.	<p>The team currently comprises 3 full-time and 2 part-time consultation officers, a full time events officer and a full-time job share manager - currently being filled by a part-time interim support manager.</p> <p>The structure, function and effectiveness of the CST and other consultation officers within the Council is being reviewed as part of the strategy review process.</p> <p>The capacity of the team is continually being developed through the A&D process to meet the Unit's business plan needs.</p>	<p>The role of the CST will be defined in the revised consultation strategy</p> <p>Capacity building will continue through the A&D process</p>	March 2006	A: Review and strategy development work being undertaken by Consultation Support Team	Andrew Auld
Progress on this action:						
3a	The welcome trend to greater innovation about the locations and timing of consultation should be hastened through institutional challenge about where target audiences are to be found – and when.	<p>Agreed</p> <p>The CST is constantly scanning horizons to update their knowledge on consultation methods.</p> <p>The CST provides advice and guidance on appropriate consultation methods covering issues such as location of any consultation events and timing.</p> <p>However, it is the service managing the consultation that ultimately decides on the approach to take. Limited resources may mean that the most innovative methods may not be employed.</p>	<p>Desk based research is ongoing to identify new and innovative methods of consultation.</p> <p>Innovative approaches to consultation are being considered as part of the strategy review process and CST will recommend new approaches where it is appropriate to do so.</p>	December 2005	A: Review and strategy development work being undertaken by Consultation Support Team	Andrew Auld

29 November 2005

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	Progress on this action:					

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3b	Possible obstacles identified over terms and conditions of employment should be flagged up through management channels rather than treated as a permanent impediment.	<p>This has never been raised as an issue by colleagues seeking advice from CST.</p> <p>Out of hours working by any consultation officer should be managed through the work life balance process and be regularly reviewed by the line manager.</p>	We will draw particular attention to the need for out of hours working for some consultation activities as part of the revised strategy and for managers to be aware of the health and safety and WLB implications.	March 2006	A: Review and strategy development work being undertaken by Consultation Support Team	Andrew Auld
Progress on this action:						
4	Council Cabinet instigate a review for the purpose of better responding to the communication and consultation needs of Derby's deaf community.	<p>The Head of Unit has recently held a meeting with representatives from the deaf community to discuss ways of improving communication and consultation</p> <p>As part of the consultation strategy review process, we will be exploring ways in which the Advisory Committees including the Disabled People's Advisory Committee can better facilitate consultation in Derby.</p> <p>CST is also currently developing an 'enabling participation guide' covering all hard to reach groups.</p>	<p>As part of the consultation process with the Advisory Committees, we will look at the effectiveness of the consultation and communication flows between the Committees and their constituencies.</p> <p>On the new enabling participation guide, we will seek input from key organisations/representatives from hard to reach groups.</p>	January 2006	<p>A: Review and strategy development work being undertaken by Consultation Support Team</p> <p>A: Development of guide part of CST's current operations</p>	Andrew Auld
Progress on this action: The new enabling participation guide is under development and should be published by March 2006						

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5a	The Council should not revert to the earlier practice of automatically producing a wide range of public documents in specified south Asian languages;	The help message on all Council publications is being revised. Guidance on accessibility is still being translated into the three main community languages. Where information on a service is targeted at a particular group of service users, the help message will reflect the needs of the target group, and this will include the medium of communication.	The communications strategy will be making recommendations about targeting messages and selecting appropriate channels There will be an ongoing review of the Council's provision of interpreting services	March 2006	A: the revisions are part of the communications' team workplan in 2005/06	Ann Webster
5b	Instead, the key needs are to be i) linguistically sensitive so as to promote equal access to services and information and ii) mindful that some groups are much harder to reach than others					
	Progress on this action:					
6a	Communicating straightforward information, and seeking feedback, through SMS texting should be considered for appropriate sections of the population	The use of SMS texting to support consultation processes is still in its infancy and there are significant cost implications.	As part of the strategy review process, we are looking for examples of best practice and innovative methods of consultation, covering information provision and feedback, including SMS texting. The outcome will be notified when an update report is brought to the Commission.	March 2006	B We would need to appoint an external provider to manage this service and we currently have no budget to fund new approaches	Andrew Auld
	Progress on this action:					

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6b	The Council web-site should be used to enable and encourage readers to be informed about issues and options – and then express their opinions.	<p>Agreed</p> <p>The Communication and Consultation Unit is currently looking at ways of making better use of the Council website to facilitate communication and consultation activities. However, we are constrained by the configuration of where the consultation section lies within the overall website.</p> <p>In addition, the new Youth Link Derby website provides a forum for information and idea exchange for Young People.</p>	The new Quick Poll function on the front page of the Council website will direct people to information on Council consultations. We will also be seeking to increase the use of online surveys.	December 2005	A: These actions should be accommodated under existing budgets	Andrew Auld
	Progress on this action:					

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7	Presenters in consultation exercises should challenge their selves about why the particular audience is being asked for its views and the delivery honed accordingly	<p>Agreed</p> <p>This issue is being considered as part of the strategy review process both in terms of the need for clearer guidelines to officers managing consultation and in particular when engaging with the Advisory Committees.</p> <p>The CST already provide an advice and guidance service, have a range of 'how to' guides and hold training courses on consultation techniques. In addition, some departments have their own consultation officers. However, there is probably a need for an enhanced level of support to be provided especially on major pieces of consultation. This has resource management implications - the adoption of a corporate consultation plan will facilitate this.</p>	The revised consultation strategy and standards will propose that the CST has a specific role in supporting key pieces of consultation identified in the annual plan. We will explore the potential of introducing a service level agreement or similar so that service managers are clear about the extent of support they can expect to receive.	March 2006	A: Some examples of best practice in providing a corporate consultation support service are based on a cross charge system. If additional expertise needs to be bought in, there would be costs[D1]. Likely to come from best value review budgets	Andrew Auld
Progress on this action:						

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8	That the new Head of Communications and Consultation consider whether the Derby Pointer contract should be re-tendered or, instead, allowed to lapse and the resources saved be moved into additional, more focussed qualitative methods	<p>The Derby Pointer has been re-let to another research company for 1 year. Improvements in response rates have already been recorded.</p> <p>As part of the consultation strategy review process, we are looking at other methods of surveying residents views and recommendations will be put forward on the future of the Derby Pointer</p>	<p>The new contract is being monitored over the next 12 months to see if improvements in response rates are sustained and increased further. The new supplier will also advise on how the survey process could be improved/altered.</p> <p>CST is surveying service managers who have used the Pointer and Chief Officers on their views for improvements and/or introduction of different approaches. We are also reviewing best practice in other LAs.</p>	<p>Aug 2006</p> <p>March 2006</p>	B If there is a decision to replace the Pointer there may be an overall increase in cost	Andrew Auld
Progress on this action:						
9	To avoid legal challenge, when undertaking consultations the Council i) needs to make clear if the outcome might be a permutation of one option or a hybrid of two or more options and ii) will need to re-consult if a new option is the outcome.	<p>Agreed</p> <p>There is a need for the Council to communicate clearly in all consultation the extent to which the issue under discussion will be changed as a result of feedback and views received. The outcome of the consultation then needs to be communicated to all consultees and stakeholders. These principles will be emphasised in the revised strategy and consultation standards.</p>	The revisions to the strategy will incorporate a specific section on communication and feedback .	March 2006	A: Review and strategy development work being undertaken by Consultation Support Team	Andrew Auld
Progress on this action:						

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10a	The cost of each proposed exercise should be identified and the political and management leadership should adopt the line that until it can be costed, it will not be authorised	Agreed in principle A standard template for costing a consultation exercise could be developed for use across the Council, and should be considered as part of the decision making process around the agreement of an annual consultation plan.	This proposal will be included in the revisions to the consultation strategy.	March 2006	A: Adoption of approach would be part of budget planning process	Chief Officers
Progress on this action:						
10b	The value-for-money of consultation must become auditable.	Agreed in principle A separate budget heading code could be introduced to help identify all consultation and research expenditure. A lot of the work involved in consultation is taken on in addition to service managers' and teams' normal duties. Thus these costs are often hidden. The use of a template describe in 10a would help identify these costs.	To be discussed by COG.	March 2006	B: Additional audit process	Finance
Progress on this action:						

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11	Feedback should routinely be given twice. Firstly when responses have been analysed and the <i>output</i> of the consultation is known and, secondly, at the later stage, when the decision has been made and the <i>outcome</i> is known.	<p>The revised consultation strategy will reemphasise the need for appropriate feedback.</p> <p>There needs to be a process of checking/assessing feedback to ensure it is being provided in line with agreed standards. This could be a role for a strategic/high level group overseeing the work of the Consultation Network.</p> <p>The Council website will provide an important vehicle for communicating the outputs and outcomes of consultation but this will need to be complemented with other forms of communication to ensure the messages reach all audiences.</p>	<p>We will stress the principle of feedback in the revised strategy</p> <p>We will propose the introduction of a quality standard around feedback and communication and monitor activities</p> <p>We will develop the consultation section on the Council website to include feedback information.</p>	March 2006	A: Review and strategy development work being undertaken by Consultation Support Team	Andrew Auld
Progress on this action:						
12a	When ever a consultee has provided a name and address the feed back should be provided to that individual in writing	<p>Partly agreed</p> <p>The potential to do this should be assessed at the start of the consultation – as it has resource implications – and communicated appropriately as part of the information/consultation process.</p>	Guidance on this will be developed as the 'how to' guides are updated and revised.	Ongoing	A: Part of CST's responsibilities	Andrew Auld
Progress on this action:						

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12b	Feedback through the media and direct to consultees should summarise the consultation process, including 'piggy backed' attendance at events	<p>We recognise the importance of feedback as part of successful consultation as set out in 11.</p> <p>However, different types of feedback will incur different costs and will have resource implications and the budget holder will need to take account of a range of factors in deciding how to feedback after consultation.</p>	Information on methods of feedback and cost implications will be incorporated into appropriate guides.	Ongoing	A: Part of CST's responsibilities	Andrew Auld
13	Where policy options, seen as controversial to a section of the Derby community, are later discounted this should be made clear through the media and, if there are individual consultees, in writing	<p>Agreed</p> <p>When political cover is given by Cabinet, steps will be taken to make clear when controversial options have been discounted or not further pursued.</p> <p>This issue may also be mitigated by improving communication on the extent to which feedback and views will influence decisions – see 9 above.</p>	Guidance on feedback will be incorporated into appropriate guides.	Ongoing	A: Part of CST's responsibilities	Andrew Auld