

**PAPER NO. 2**

**REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE MEETING OF 23 MAY 2011**

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**Status:**            **Decision**  
**Title:**             **Consultation Strategy**  
**Originator:**      **Rachael Abbott**  
**Where from:**     **Scrutiny People 3 March 2011**  
**Where to**  
**next:**             **Approval**

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1     Purpose of the Report

- 1.1    Community engagement in Harborough district was driven by the Harborough District 2010 Vision, our core values and the priorities in the council's business plan. Our core values underpin the services we provided and how we consulted and communicated with the public and all our partners.
- 1.2    The existing Communication and Consultation Strategy 2006 demonstrated how our corporate values would be translated into clear principles and standards for effective communication and consultation to support our commitment to community engagement.
- 1.3    As a result of a review carried out on the existing Strategy, the Consultation element has been separated and re-written into a Consultation Strategy.

**2     Recommendations:**

- 2.1    To approve the new Consultation Strategy and consultation techniques to ensure it is fit for purpose
- 2.2    To approve the new Consultation Toolkit for staff and Members.

3     Summary of Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1    Consultation is all about listening, responding to and working with residents, local business and visitors to make sure they receive high quality services. With the far greater duty to involve local people in what we do, therefore a separate Consultation Strategy that is at the heart of the councils planning and decision making process has been produced. This new Consultation Strategy will help staff and members who carry out consultation by including a 'toolkit' to consultation which will ensure consultation is of a high quality and meets the needs of our residents.

- 3.2 Our role as a Council is not just to deliver services to the highest possible standard but also to ensure that our residents can:
- Find out the information they need
  - Find out about changes in existing services and influence new services
  - Provide comment(s) on the services they receive

The new Consultation Strategy will ensure our residents receive information in a clear and targeted way which would be accessible to all. In this new Strategy it will cover areas such as:

- Our aims
  - What is consultation?
  - What are the benefits of consultation?
  - The council's commitment to consultation.
  - Principles & Objectives
  - The role of members
  - Methods to co-ordinate consultation
- 3.3 The strategy also addresses the use of the Council's website and intranet by developing this service further and by offering on-line consultations which will ensure more cost efficient consultation by reducing paper, postage and the cost of capturing of data. It will also be more accessible to young people and those with a disability or access concerns.

#### 4 Impact on Communities

- 4.1 The revised consultation strategy will assist the council in targeting the needs of its residents through the business planning process and other forms of consultation. This will lead to improved services in the areas identified by the service users.

#### 5 Key Facts

- 5.1 Consultation is all about listening to and working with residents, local businesses and visitors to make sure they receive a high quality service.
- 5.2 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, places a far greater duty on us to involve local people in what we do and be involved in the decision-making process. Therefore we have developed this strategy to ensure we do this. To help achieve this we have also developed a toolkit which will work alongside this strategy to provide an easy and clear approach to consultation.
- 5.3 Over the past four years we have supported a Citizens' Panel, made up of local residents across the district, who have been involved in shaping service delivery, such as budget setting and development of the Local Development Framework, to make sure our services reflect the needs of those who use them – but we know there is more to be done.

5.4 Consultation and engagement with the community has never been more important if we are to raise standards further to we need to listen and learn from our local residents and users. We need to be mindful of resources and efficient methods of consultation and at the same time engage in dialogue with many different audiences and help them choose from a variety of methods.

5.5 Our strategy aims to involve and empower local people but also introduce a framework for consultation within the council and clear standards that of what you can expect when taking part in any council consultation activity.

## 6 Legal Issues

6.1 Local Government White Paper (Strong and Prosperous Communities). The aim of this White Paper is to give local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives. It is about creating strong, prosperous communities and delivering better public services through a rebalancing of the relationship between central government, local government and local people. Since the launch of the White Paper the Government has produced

6.2 Strong and prosperous communities - The Local Government White Paper: Final implementation plan 2009. This final implementation plan gives further information on how the Government is playing its part in implementing key proposals in Strong and Prosperous Communities - the Local Government White Paper. It focuses in particular on the performance and governance and empowerment work streams.

6.3 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 - seeks to introduce a range of devolutionary and deregulatory measures to ensure a local government system in England that:

- gives local people more influence over the services and decisions that affect their communities;
- provides effective and accountable strategic leadership;
- Operates in a performance framework – for local authorities working alone or in partnership – which supports citizen empowerment and secures better outcomes for all; and
- leads local partnerships to provide better services for citizens.

6.4 Strong and Prosperous Communities - The Local Government White Paper Implementation Plan: One Year On - Published: 1 November 2007

6.5 Strong and Prosperous Communities - The Local Government White Paper Making it Happen: The Implementation Plan Published: 22 January 2007

## 7 Resource Issues

7.1 The Consultation and Communications Manager will manage and monitor this strategy to ensure that unnecessary duplication of time and resources by allowing consultation exercises are co-ordinated and to be combined where

appropriate. This is will avoid consultation fatigue with the community and ensure value for money.

- 7.2 The production of an annual consultation calendar will set out our proposals for consultation and will ensure staff, members and partners are informed about fourth coming consultation and avoid unnecessary duplication.

## 8 Equality Impact Assessment Implications/Outcomes

- 8.1 An EIA has been completed and will be reviewed as part of the approval of this Strategy.

## 9 Impact on the Organisation

- 9.1 The strategy seeks to deliver:

- Effective consultation with all communities, including those hard to reach groups and businesses.
- The use of quality consultation across the authority which is innovative and creative.
- A more focused use of resources, skills and experience to provide a calendar format for consultant which will reduce consultation fatigue and overload.
- Clear guidance and standards for all those involved in consultation including staff, partners and stakeholders.
- Evidence which shows how consultation has influenced service delivery and future plans.
- Improved communication about our commitments to consultation within the council, in the community and across all our partners.

## 10 Community Safety Implications

- 10.1 There are no relevant community safety issues in writing these strategies. If/where they may arise they will be implemented in line with the councils Community safety policy.

## 11. Carbon Management Implications

- 11.1 Electronic consultation and better use of the website/intranet will reduce the excessive production of paper and postage.

## 12. Risk Management Implications

- 12.1 Failure to ensure a truly representative cross section of the community are engaged with.
- 12.2 The staff and members do not commit to the implementation of this strategy could result in an uncoordinated approach to consultation which could result in inefficiencies in the cost of undertaking consultation.

12.3 By not feeding back to those involved in the consultation process and also how people's views have impacted on decisions made by the council, could result in apathy towards consultation.

13 Consultation

13.1 This strategy will be sent to the Citizens' Panel for comment, to check for use of plain language and demonstrate an understanding / acknowledgement of the strategy. It will also be shared internally with Management Board and Third Tier Managers and staff.

14 Options Considered

14.1 *Not applicable*

15 Background Papers

15.1 *None*

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**Previous report(s):** Scrutiny People - 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011

**Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: N**

**Ward Members Notified: Y**

**Appendices:**

**A. Comments from Scrutiny Panel for People, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011**

**B. Consultation Strategy**

**C. Consultation Toolkit**