

SUBJECT:	A REVIEW OF THE CONSULTATION STRATEGY AND HOW THE COUNCIL ENGAGES WITH THE PUBLIC
DIRECTORATE:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK
REPORT AUTHOR:	LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider the methods by which the Council engages with the public, assist with the review of the Consultation Strategy and providing comments to shape engagement with communities in the future.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 In order to review the methods and success of engagement with the community, by way of background, the public sector equality duty is relevant as well as the current Consultation Strategy and Guidelines. The Strategy and Guidelines are up for a review later in 2018 and 2020 respectively and therefore member's comments on these documents would be welcomed. It is an opportunity to review the larger consultation exercises undertaken as well and to explore current methods of engagement and explore new ways of linking with communities for both officers and members.

3. Engagement with communities

- 3.1 The Council undertakes a variety of work with communities, both by staff and members.

3.2 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The PSED means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

There is a requirement for the Council to pay particular attention to this and for officers to complete an Equality & Diversity Analysis for decisions relating to changes in policy/new services made by the Council or at the very least a statement confirming that this has been considered.

3.3 Consultation Strategy 2015-2018

This was updated in March 2017 with a light touch review to include the Vision 2020, and is attached at Appendix A. There will be a fuller review in June 2018 with a view to ensuring it spans the next 3 years. Members comments on this document would be welcomed. Any outcomes from this meeting will be fed back to the Policy team to incorporate into their review.

3.4 General Consultation tools

(1) Citizens Panel

The Council's Citizens Panel has approximately 640 members. The responses are analysed and inputted as an IMPS measure. The response rates are around 50% over the past 3 years. In the survey a question is asked as follows: *The City of Lincoln Council provides many services. Overall, considering all contact you have had with the council, how satisfied are you (with 5 different aspects of contact)?* In July there was also a question asking "Do you feel that CLC acts upon the concerns of residents?"

Attached at Appendix B is the breakdown of these responses received in July 2017 for member's consideration.

The Panel for November 2017 included questions specifically related to how residents feel about living in their community. The questions are attached at Appendix C and the responses will be tabled at the meeting.

(2) Housing – bi-annual Star survey

This survey is carried out every two years and is known as the STAR survey. The survey is conducted by an independent company called BMG research. This was last carried between October and November in 2016. Overall results showed that:

• Satisfied with overall service	88%
• Satisfied with quality of home	88%
• Satisfied with neighbourhood as a place to live	82%
• Satisfied that rent provides value for money	89%
• Satisfied with repairs and maintenance	86%
• Satisfied that views are taken into account ¹	70%

(3) Customer Mystery Shopping and Customer Services Surveys

There are two sections to the mystery shopping carried out by tenants. They carry out 'traditional' mystery shopping over the phone and also carry out exit surveys with residents in the reception area. In 2016/17 our tenant mystery shoppers got busy with their shopping. They made a total of 53 calls and completed 130 surveys with customers. Their feedback showed that you could don't see the ticket screen from all areas of reception and as a result an extra screen was installed. In addition to this it was noticed that the property shop counter was particularly busy on a Wednesday morning and as a result an extra member of staff was made available.

3.5 Other general surveys which are carried out

These include:-

- Christmas Market
- Other Events Team led surveys or questionnaires

3.6 Christmas Market

The University of Lincoln conduct a survey of visitors to the event, which has been done each year since 2013. The latest figures of the results received are from 2015 and are appended to this report. Unfortunately the results from 2016 and 2017 have not yet been received but should be available in the next few months.

A copy of the two different types of questionnaires issued at the 2017 market are also appended to the report.

Members

Members are continuously engaging with their constituents through direct contact, ward surgeries and attending meetings within their areas.

This committee considered how the council's members engage with communities in December 2016, the minute of which stated:-

The Reserve Independent Person noted that public appetite for involvement with local councils was limited unless motivated by an issue directly relevant to particular residents. Equally, many prominent local services were offered by different bodies, which made engagement more challenging. The Council appeared to be doing everything it could to improve engagement and had faced similar challenges in improving engagement through Local Democracy Week activities with local schools.

The Independent Person highlighted the differences between attendance levels for city-wide meetings and parish-level meetings, with the possibility of higher attendance levels for meetings with a more local focus.

Members:

- discussed the considerable efforts made by the Council to engage with people.*
- noted that there remained confusion about which councils were responsible for which services.*

- *agreed that people tended only to be interested in council services when a problem had been encountered.*
- *discussed how neighbourhood panels could feed into engagement.*
- *considered whether it was more appropriate for the Council or for political groups to take a lead on engaging with the public.*
- *highlighted the difficulty in ensuring that councillors did not divulge exempt or confidential information to people while engaging with the public.*
- *noted the varying attendance levels at local meetings across the city.*
- *questioned whether there was any evidence that the availability of neighbourhood working support made a difference to community participation levels.*

The Legal and Democratic Services Manager advised that she would relay members' queries regarding neighbourhood working to the relevant team.

RESOLVED that members would continue to oversee the manner in which the Council engaged with local communities and highlight any potential future improvements.

It was therefore felt appropriate that this committee specifically considers the Consultation Strategy and more details about what the council does to shape its policies and services.

A review is being undertaken by CMT early in the year as to how members are able to engage further with Vision 2020.

A report specifically on methods of carrying out casework appears separately on this agenda.

4. Other engagement with communities

4.1 Corporate Peer Challenge

The Corporate Peer Challenge took place in early 2017 where an inward review by a peer group of the Council was undertaken on 6 different external partners, a range of internal staff (Management, Members and officers) and focus groups including tenants residents and voluntary services. The outcomes were positive with only 6 key recommendations, which have all been incorporated into ongoing work programmes.

4.2 Lincoln Tenants' Panel

The Lincoln Tenants' Panel (LTP) is a group of tenants and a Leaseholder whose aim is to ensure your views are represented at the council. They work hard and put in many unpaid hours to help improve the service tenants receive.

In 2016/17 they have:

- Helped us to develop our anti-social behaviour service with the aim of achieving Accreditation

- Monitored performance on areas including, rent, repairs and customer services
- Discussed all housing related Executive Committee reports and informed the decision making process
- Attended Housing Scrutiny Committee meetings to ensure tenants' views were Considered
- Reviewed the empty property process and made recommendations for Improvements
- Recruited further members to the panel.

4.3 Leaseholders Forum

Throughout 2016/17 several meetings of the leaseholder's forum were held. Leaseholders attended and discussed topics including anti-social behaviour, fly tipping and service charges. The aim of the forum is to encourage closer links between leaseholders and the council.

4.4 Tenant empty property inspectors

The tenant empty property inspectors check 10 per cent of all empty properties before they are let. This is to see if they are meeting the lettings standard. Last year a total of 53 properties were inspected and 31 fully met the standard. Further work was carried out to those that didn't. One thing the inspectors noticed was that the standard of cleaning had reduced and we were able to use their results to get our contractors to improve

It should also be noted that as the way we communicate with our residents, businesses and workers changes, we have added more social media into the mix – e.g. advertised the presence of a current survey through Twitter, Facebook and Instagram

4.5 As well as the more regular things outlined above, there have been recent consultations relating to the following changes of services:

- Neighbourhood Working Service
- Western Growth Corridor
- Sincil Bank regeneration project
- Birchwood Leisure Centre
- Residential Parking

4.6 There is much ongoing work with partners on projects, including:-

- Ongoing support for the Community Cohesion Steering Group with strategy currently being refreshed by a sub-group of the Steering Group
- Promotion of World Hello Day on 21 November each year, co-ordinating events and supporting partners in organising activities
- The Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee has become involved with determining the scope of the Skills Project

- The ongoing Living Wage and anti-poverty campaign
- Engagement with the voluntary sector, including the recent extension of the Volunteer Policy to include opportunities for staff
- Support to local charities such as helping make Food Bank referrals sustainable
- Various Vision 2020 projects such as Lincoln's Social Responsibility Charter
- The proposed Lottery project
- Links with the university, including Fresher's Week, have been improved

4.7 The council continues to support the neighbourhood boards and following the review of neighbourhood working, Urban Challenge have been appointed to support the eight neighbourhood boards that we have across the city. This contract started on the 1st November 2017 and a specific element of this contract is to:

“Hold a workshop with members to identify their role in the boards, and their relationship between the board, the community and the council”

4.8 The Council recently held a disability forum to establish a way to improve consultation opportunities on council services/policies in respect of disability and is working with Peoples' Partnership to establish ongoing links.

4.9 Corporate monitoring form will be reviewed in 2018 which captures data about individuals and this will feed into engagement with the communities.

4.10 Improved the website access to encourage more engagement with the Council, particularly in line with the Customer Experience Strategy (previously Channel Shift)

5. Suggested methods to improve engagement with communities

5.1 There will be a review soon by the Policy team of how the Panel reflects the diversity of the city and what steps need to be taken, if any.

5.2 For staff and members to continue to link with partners, residents, and businesses as outlined above.

6. Strategic Priorities

6.1 High Performing Services

By engaging with the communities in Lincoln, the Council can ensure that their services are high performing and therefore meet residents' needs.

7. Organisational Impacts

7.1 Finance (including whole life costs where applicable)

There are no financial implications in this report.

7.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

There are no legal implications in this report.

7.3 Equality and Diversity implications

This report raises awareness for the requirement for consideration of equality and diversity under the Equality Act 2010 when undertaking consultation.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 That members note the report, consider the Consultation Strategy and provide comments to feed into the review, note the current ways in which the Council engages with its communities and consider ways to improve these.

Is this a key decision? No

Do the exempt information categories apply? No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? No

How many appendices does the report contain? 6

List of Background Papers: None

Lead Officer: Becky Scott, LDSM
Telephone (01522) 873441