

SUBJECT:	CORPORATE CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021 - 2025
DIRECTORATE:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S
REPORT AUTHOR:	PAT JUKES, BUSINESS MANAGER, CORPORATE POLICY

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To propose the introduction of a revised Corporate Consultation and Engagement Strategy to replace the 2019 edition

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This new five-year Strategy is designed to support officers and members involved in change of either a service or a policy, to understand when and where consultation is needed.

There are a number of key points to note (S 4.1) – with three notable changes:

1. Understanding our customer's needs is a key driver of One Council (P5)
2. There should be clear reference to any consultation feedback received as part of a decision-making report (P6)
3. Elected Members can play a key role in reaching harder to reach groups in their communities (P8)

3. Background

- 3.1 The original Consultation Strategy was created in November 2014 and agreed in June 2015. Alongside the strategy sits a more detailed document for officers aimed at providing guidance on best practice aligned to the strategy. This will also be reviewed once the strategy has been approved.

Since then, the Strategy was reviewed in 2017 to reflect the introduction of Vision 2020 and then again in 2019 where a planned three-year review was conducted.

This review was started in March 2021 and has the aim of bringing it in line with Vision 2025 and incorporating feedback from Members who engaged in a workshop process to improve consultation earlier in 2021.

4. Key points to note within this strategy include

- 4.1 The strategy contains direction on why, how and when we should be consulting and engaging. Some of the key points are highlighted below:

1. City of Lincoln Council has a statutory duty to consult with our communities on service delivery (Local Government Act 1999 – Best Value) (P4/5/12)
2. Vision 2025, identifies our key priorities, and sets out how we can deliver them – as part of this engaging the local community is essential (P4)
3. We should all be using the same set of consultation principles (P4)
4. Understanding our customer's needs is a key driver of One Council (P5)
5. Confirmation that consultation should be undertaken early on for any potential change – policy or service delivery (P5)
6. There should be clear reference to any consultation feedback received as part of a decision-making report (P6)
7. That the duty to ensure proper consultation has been undertaken lies across all levels of the organisation (P6)
8. Elected Members can play a key role in reaching those 'harder to reach' groups in their communities (P8)
9. Social media and innovative contact methods play an important role in both informing and consulting in today's hi-tech world (P9/10)
4. The strategy highlights the importance of Legal Service advice – especially where a substantial change is proposed, and the impact of any decision may be controversial, or have major equality impacts or significant financial implications (P10/11)
5. Our specific responsibilities to involving our tenants on matters that affect them (P11)
6. Our responsibilities under Section 11 of the Children's Act 2004 (P11)

4.2 Having already captured and included comments from the Members Workshop in March 2021 and received feedback from the Corporate Leadership Team in July; the draft strategy was then taken to Policy Scrutiny committee in August 2021 for their comments.

5. **Strategic Priorities**

Consultation can positively affect the development of all five of our strategic Priorities, so should be part of any consideration of change.

6. **Organisational Impacts**

6.1 **Finance** (including whole life costs where applicable) – no direct costs

6.2 **Legal Implications including Procurement Rules** – impacts from Legal have been included in the strategy

6.3 **Equality, Diversity & Human Rights**

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, 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

A key part of Consultation & Engagement Strategy relates to the importance of promoting Equality & Diversity in everything we do – as outlined on Page 10 of the strategy and referred to less directly throughout it.

7. Risk Implications

7.1 (i) Options Explored - n/a

7.2 (ii) Key risks associated with the preferred approach –

Consultation considerations should be built into any plans at a very early stage – if not, there could be judicial risks at a later stage, hence discussions with Legal services for key changes are a necessary early step.

8. Recommendation

8.1 Exec is asked to approve the revised Consultation & Engagement Strategy.

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?

One

List of Background Papers

None

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