

2. DRAFT CONSULTATION POLICY

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The purpose of this report is to provide an amended draft of the proposed Consultation Policy for discussion.

INTRODUCTION

At the workshop on 3 April 2003 the Consultation and Communication Committee suggested some amendments to the draft Consultation Policy. These amendments have been incorporated into the policy and it is now presented back to the Committee for consideration.

BACKGROUND

A fundamental principle of the new Local Government Act is the importance of community consultation over local services and decision making (Section 14(1)(c)). Community consultation is seen as a key ingredient in quality decision-making and policy development. Consultation must take place with the right people for the right purpose and in the right way (Section 78). Legal action may result if consultation is not undertaken when required or is undertaken incorrectly.

The Council's current policies are consistent with the new legislation but are inadequate. There are also some discrepancies between policies, and the level of detail within each policy varies. The Committee therefore agreed that it was appropriate that the Council should review its consultation policies.

DRAFT POLICY

A redraft of the policy is attached for discussion. This initial draft of the policy has been amended as a result of the Committee discussion at the workshop meeting 3 April 2003.

Councillor Wells is unable to attend the meeting on 17 April 2003 but has asked that the Committee make some minor amendments to the redrafted policy (sent to Committee members 8 April 2003). Councillor Wells was very happy with the policy but suggested that the Committee consider the following amendments:

- Putting the word significance in inverted commas "at least anywhere we're using it in the special LGA'2 context".
- Moving the statement regarding "elected member input at the right time" into the principle section under the new heading of accountability.
- Change the 'openness' heading to 'fairness'.

The Committee will need consider whether it wished to consult on this policy and if so, the extent of consultation it wishes to undertake.

One option would be to consider that this is merely a review and rewording of an existing policy rather than any major change in direction or impact and therefore that no consultation is necessary.

Another option would be to decide that it is important that the development process for this policy demonstrates the principles and standards it is proposing. Therefore the Council should undertake a planned and thorough consultation process.

Staff

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Committee adopt the draft consultation policy.
 2. That the Committee consider the level of consultation it requires to be undertaken prior to final adoption of the policy.

Chairman's

Recommendation: For discussion.