

# Minutes

## *PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP*

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP  
HELD ON FRIDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2010, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 3, COUNTY HALL,  
AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.27 AM.**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr B Allen, Mrs M Baldwin, Mr P Cartwright, Mrs A Davies and Mr R Reed

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr M Chard, Policy Officer - Overview and Scrutiny  
Ms H Wailing, Democratic Services Officer

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D Anson MBE, Mr H Cadd, Mrs B Jennings, Mr P Rogerson and Mrs R Vigor-Hedderly.

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

### **3 INTRODUCTION OF THE REVIEW**

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

Members then discussed the format for the review, and who should be invited to provide information and evidence.

The following points were made:

- The Council Consultation Policy should be looked at, including the Council's definition of a Consultation. Kim Parfitt (Senior Communications Officer) and Sarah Ashmead (Head of Policy, Performance and Communications) should be invited to speak to members about this. The Deputy Leader could also be invited to give information on the process for consultations.
- Current and past consultations should be looked at, as well as the process used for consultations (who decides that a consultation is needed? Where is the democratic,



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



member-led process? Is a consultation always needed? How do you ensure that a consultation is representative? For consultations which affected most/all residents, e.g. changes to libraries or buses, how were residents being targeted for consultation?)

- Consultations looked at could include the Bucks Debate, Waste Disposal (energy from waste), changes to bus routes (although this had already been discussed in some detail by the Overview and Scrutiny Commissioning Committee), changes in library hours and changes to Day Care services. The Cabinet Member and officer should be invited to speak about each of these.
- A Parish Council should be questioned about their view of Council consultations. It was suggested that this be a Parish Council from South Bucks (e.g. Gerrards Cross, Denham or Iver).
- A questionnaire (four questions) could also be sent through the Bucks Association of Local Councils (BALC) by e-mail to Parish Councils. This could include asking them if they would like to attend to give evidence.
- A Notice of motion which had been passed at full Council some years previously, to change 'consultations' to 'public engagement,' should be looked at.
- Officers who led on consultations within services did not seem to take a consistent approach.
- A consultation portal existed. All consultations should be included on the consultation portal and in theory the results from these consultations should feed into Cabinet and Cabinet Member decisions.
- Campaigners' interests were not always the same as patients'/clients' interests.
- A question needed to be asked about whether outcomes from consultations were deliverable – do consultations raise false expectations?
- A countywide e-mail service should exist to contact residents for consultations, although it was also noted that 'one size does not fit all.'
- The Consultation Institute could be contacted as part of the Review. Ben Page, Chief Executive of Ipsos Mori, could also be contacted.
- Members of the Residents' Panel could also be contacted to find out if they felt that their input to consultations had been worthwhile.
- The Transport for London website listed upcoming consultations, and could be looked at as a model.
- A previous waste disposal consultation had been carried out through professionally-facilitated events, which had been effective.
- Elected members should be consulted separately to residents.
- Public engagement did not always mean that anyone needed to respond.
- When constraints (e.g. budget) meant that no choice was available, residents should be provided with information, rather than a consultation. However allowing an option not to consult could be open to abuse.
- Would it be possible to contact previous consultees? This would be checked, as there could be an issue with data protection.
- Bucks County Show – why was this always held in the Aylesbury Vale? Also, why was the Council so involved in the show? Were there other ways of consulting and informing residents?

It was also proposed that the Police and Fire Authority could be contacted to obtain best practice on consultation process, but it was agreed to put this idea on hold due to capacity.

A member of the public, Richard Bates, was in attendance. He suggested that the Milton LiNK could be contacted to obtain best practice as it was very successful, with a lot of members, and was very good at consultations. He also recommended that contact be made with Community Impact Bucks, which was now a countywide organisation.

A member also suggested Age Concern as a VCS organisation which could be contacted.

Agreed:

- Guests should be invited to attend Committee meetings at County Hall, rather than members going to visit guests at outside venues.
- A press release could be prepared for the Review, although it was acknowledged that this was self-selecting. Twitter could also be used.
- A strapline would be put on the Consultation portal to inform people that the Review was being carried out and to invite people to come forward who had been a consultee in the last twelve months.
- Members would go out into the Market Square in Aylesbury to ask passers-by four pre-agreed questions.

Members could do the same in their local areas too. Examples of questions which could be asked: Have you ever taken part in a BCC Consultation? Which one? Did you understand the questions being asked? Did you get feedback on the outcome, and were you satisfied? Those who said they had not taken part in a consultation should be asked if it was because they were not interested or if they had not had information.

Those questioned could be asked for their postcode, to check they were a Buckinghamshire resident.

- Two days would be needed to question those people invited for the Review, plus a 'wash-up' day.

#### **4 GROUP DISCUSSION**

See agenda item 3

#### **5 CLOSE OF MEETING**

**CHAIRMAN**