CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

CONSULTATION POLICY

WHY WE CONSULT

Chesham Town Council appreciates the importance of public participation to inform policy and decision making. Whilst Members are elected to represent the views of the people through their daily contact with constituents, Members cannot be aware of the views of all the people they represent on every issue. It is therefore essential for the Council to undertake additional forms of consultation.

To encourage public participation, we wish to make information about our services and how we work freely accessible. Consultation can enable us to:

- Target our services effectively
- Improve awareness and use of our services
- Monitor user satisfaction
- Help make decisions about policies, priorities and strategies
- Represent the views of Chesham's residents
- Improve our stock of local knowledge

WHEN TO CONSULT

We recognise that consultation is not always appropriate, e.g. where the Council is limited by statutory or budgetary restrictions. It is also important to avoid "consultation fatigue". Therefore, consultation will only be used (a) where it is possible to influence decision-making or (b) when we need to identify user satisfaction or add to our stock of knowledge. Priority areas for consultation include:

- Major policy decisions where not much is known about people's views
- Controversial decisions where there is likely to be a high level of public interest
- Services that account for a significant proportion of overall spending
- New services
- Services with low user satisfaction

HOW TO CONSULT

All consultation will be carried out as part of a coherent strategy and following an agreed procedure (please see our Consultation Strategy and Consultation Procedure).

EXPECTATIONS AND OUTCOMES

Whilst consultation should have a strong influence on decisions, it should not dictate them. The results of consultation will be considered alongside other factors, such as available resources.

When consulting, we will make clear what the purpose of the consultation is and what options are available to local people, to prevent unreasonably raising the public's expectations.

We are committed to providing feedback on the results to those we consulted, and explaining how these results have been taken into account.

Evaluating the effectiveness of consultation can help us to:

- Know whether consultation is genuinely helping us to listen and respond to the public
- Plan how to improve consultation
- Use consultation resources wisely
- Know whether a consultation reached a representative sample of the population

We are committed to evaluating our consultations as part of the consultation procedure.

CORE STANDARDS

The Council has agreed to a number of core standards for our consultation work. We will:

- Only undertake consultation where it is possible to influence decision-making, or when we need to identify user satisfaction or add to our stock of local knowledge
- Be clear about what we are asking the public to comment on
- Give sufficient time for people to respond, and be clear about the timeframes
- Listen to and respect all opinions received
- Give consideration as to how the views of people who do not normally p

articipate can be obtained
- Use plain language in all documents and presentations
- Involve particular user/interest groups on an on-going basis
- Provide a summary of large documents
- Give a named contact person for returns and further information
- Give feedback to those consulted on the final outcome and explain why decisions were taken

POLICY REVIEW

Chesham Town Council is committed to reviewing its policies on a four year cycle.

Version 2 Adopted: 14 July 2014
Policy Due for Review: July 2018