

Chesham Town Council's Consultation Strategy

1. Introduction and Objectives

We are committed to consultation. We want to ensure that Chesham's residents, our service users, and all other interested parties have the opportunity to be involved in planning and prioritising our services.

Our objectives for consultation are to:

- Monitor user satisfaction
- Inform decision making
- Target services effectively
- Involve local people in the democratic process

The implementation of this strategy will assist:

- The Council to be open and responsive to the views of all stakeholders
- The public to be involved in decision making
- Awareness that the Council actively seeks and values the public's input

2. Target Audiences

The stakeholders to be consulted will depend upon the purpose of the specific consultation. However, stakeholders will fall into the following groups:

Key Customers

- People who pay directly
- People who pay indirectly (e.g. Council Tax Payers)
- Internal customers (i.e. other staff)

Non-Users

- People unaware of the service
- Dissatisfied ex-customers
- Potential future customers

Others

- Residents
- Businesses
- Interested organisations/agencies

3. Key Elements of Consultation

Please refer to our Consultation Procedure for details of our consultation methods. The key elements of our procedure are listed below:

- Identifying whether consultation is necessary
- Identifying the objectives – why are we consulting?
- Check what consultations have already taken place and use these/build on these as appropriate
- Identify the stakeholders to be consulted
- Decide what questions to ask
- Determine what consultation methods should be used
- Start the consultation
- Analyse and use the results
- Disseminate the results
- Evaluate the consultation
- Keep a record of the whole consultation process

4. Standards and Data Protection

In the Council's Consultation Policy, we have 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 participate 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

We will make every effort to ensure that the consultative process is anti-discriminatory and does not preclude participation on the grounds of any protected characteristic.

We will gather and process information in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). This Act applies to data that identifies a living, individual, natural person and does not apply to data once identifiers linking it to a natural person have been

removed. If personal data is to be collected, we will ensure that data subjects will be provided with a clear explanation of what will happen as a result of providing information. If the respondent agrees to be interviewed and answers the questions, this is considered sufficient consent. Explicit consent will be obtained for processing sensitive data, including a detailed explanation of how the data will be used.

Sensitive data includes:

- race or ethnic origin
- political opinions
- religious beliefs
- physical or mental health

Information we collect during consultations will only be used for research purposes.

5. The Role of Members

Their role as community leaders gives Members a major input into the consultation process. Members will play a key role in the implementation of this strategy through:

- Instigating consultation initiatives
- Feedback from their involvement in local groups and partnerships
- Their relationship with residents
- Feedback from Council surgeries

6. Evaluation

All consultation initiatives will have clear objectives set, which are Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic and Time-bound. Each consultation exercise will be evaluated against its objectives in order to help us to improve our consultation work.

Version 2 Adopted: 14 July 2014

Strategy Due for Review: July 2018