



# Consultation Strategy 2010 to 2015

**Action Plan to be monitored every six months and reviewed annually**

If you have any comments on the Communications Strategy, please contact:

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**Focusing on our customers, investing in employees, improving continuously,  
valuing diversity and equality,  
providing value for money, performing with integrity openness and honesty**

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# 1. The Consultation Strategy

## 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of consultation is to inform the Council's decisions by seeking the views of stakeholders and engaging them in the activities of the Council. The information gathered through consultation assists Members and officers to make decisions that improve services, focus resources and provide value for money. The strategy supports the achievement of the Council's key priorities and applies to all consultation carried out by the Council.

## 1.2 The Consultation Strategy

Effective, efficient and worthwhile consultation is at the heart of our commitment to the community. We will encourage people to engage with us on relevant issues and investigate new ways to involve them in consultation activities and decision making.

## 1.3 Aims of the Consultation Strategy

- Promote consultation both internally and externally
- Make sure consultations represent all areas of the community
- Make sure consultations are accessible
- Adhere to all statutory requirements regarding consultation
- Ensure we meet equalities guidelines
- Communicate the results of consultations effectively
- Support the duty to involve
- Work in partnership with our stakeholders.

## 1.4 How does the Consultation Strategy fit in?

The Consultation Strategy supports the **Corporate Plan** and **Sustainable Community Strategy**. It has strong links to a number of other Council strategies and documents including:

- **Communications Strategy**
- **Customer Services Strategy**
- **Team Strategy**
- **Equality Act 2006**
- **Investors in People Internal Review Plan.**

Supporting documents include:

Customer Charter  
Consultation handbook

## **2. How will we do it?**

To make sure our consultations are well planned, cost effective, carried out efficiently and have a real impact on how the Council makes decisions, we will:

- Keep the Citizen's Panel up to date and representative of the Borough
- Keep all stakeholders informed of consultations and their results
- Seek new ways to involve hard to reach groups
- Investigate and trial new media options for engagement externally
- Follow accessibility guidelines
- Continually improve the coordination, management and evaluation of consultation projects
- Record best practice and ensure that mistakes are documented and not repeated
- Encourage staff and Members to use the results of consultations to inform the decision making process.

## **3. How will we know we have done it?**

### **3.1 Evaluation**

Consultation will be monitored and evaluated through:

- Monitoring of survey response rates
- Post consultation forms
- Feedback
- Annual newsletter to Citizens Panel members.

### **3.2 Monitoring the delivery of the Consultation Action Plan**

The Strategy is a five-year plan with a mini-review on an annual basis. The Action Plan will be monitored on a regular basis and incorporated into the Council's performance management framework by the Research, Consultation & Information Analyst.

### **3.3 Risk management**

There are a number of risks associated with consultation, which, when not managed effectively could cause a range of problems. These are monitored through the Corporate Risk Register on Iris (intranet).

Feedback about any part of this Strategy and Action Plan is welcomed and should be directed to the Research, Consultation & Information Analyst.

## 4. Who are our stakeholders?

Set out below are various key stakeholders who are important to Epsom & Ewell Borough Council.

The Stakeholders	Interest
<p><b>Residents (including hard to reach groups and Citizen’s Panel)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consulted on a regular basis on Council and local authority services</li> <li>• Representative groups may be consulted on decisions which affect them</li> <li>• Consulted on longer term plans such as corporate priorities and significant service changes</li> <li>• Citizen’s Panel members take part in up to five surveys per year</li> </ul>
<p><b>Councillors</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the results of the consultations to inform their decisions</li> <li>• Request specific consultations</li> <li>• View reports written on consultation activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Partners (local businesses and other local authorities/agencies)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share results of consultations and may carry out consultations in partnership</li> <li>• Participate in a Surrey wide consultation group to benchmark and share ideas</li> <li>• Work as a consortium for the Place Survey.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Staff</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consulted with biennially and on a regular basis</li> <li>• Request consultations</li> <li>• Need to be engaged and involved in decision making</li> <li>• Implement Investors in People improvement plan</li> </ul>

## **5. Who is responsible for the Consultation Strategy?**

### **Councillors**

The strategy is formally adopted by the Strategy & Resources Committee on behalf of Council. The Chairman of Strategy & Resources is the lead Councillor on Consultation. Committee Chairmen act as spokesmen for the Council within their own policy area and actively promote the Key priorities and Core Values in the Corporate Plan. Councillors have a duty to use consultation to assist their decision making.

### **The Corporate Management Team**

The Corporate Management Team is responsible for driving the Consultation Strategy by actively and visibly applying it to all aspects of their work. The duty to involve legislation means all areas of decision making must at least investigate whether the need for information, consultation or involvement is appropriate. They will consult using best practice and ensure they use findings to assist their decisions.

### **The Consultation & Communication Team**

The Director of HR & Communication supported by the Consultation & Communication team will be responsible for driving forward the actions from the Consultation Strategy.

### **Staff**

Everyone is responsible for carrying out effective consultation. Staff should involve the Consultation & Communication team in all consultations. They should use consultation to assist their planning and decision making and inform the Consultation & Communication team when this happens.

## 6. Consultation Action Plan 2011- 2012

Actions	Resource Implications High Medium Low	Target Date	EEBC Officer	Update	Required Outcomes
Ensure all officers and Councillors are aware of the duty to involve	M	As per Communication Plan Mar 2012	Director of HR & Comms and Research, Consultation & Information Analyst		Meet the duty More involvement in decision making Residents may feel more able to influence decisions
Use current case studies to show how we are meeting the duty to involve	M	Mar 2012	Consultation & Communication Team		Wider use of involvement and consultation
Create a consultation protocol for use by officers and Members	M	Mar 2012	Consultation & Communication Team		Better processes Better consultations
Continue to build partnership working on consultations	L	ongoing	Consultation & Communication Team		More value for money Sharing of resources
Monitor to make the duty an integral part of service planning	H	ongoing	Director of HR & Comms and Research, Consultation & Information Analyst		Embedded engagement practices

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Resource Implications High Medium Low</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>EEBC Officer</b>	<b>Update</b>	<b>Required Outcomes</b>
Provide a one page guidance note for managers re service planning and the new duty, discuss options and investigate commitment level	L	Dec 2012	Project Manager		Meet the duty Better services that meet residents' needs
Create a project plan for the consultation process to create the next Corporate Plan due to start in April 2012	M	July 2011	Project Manager		Involve stakeholders in setting priorities for resources Meet the duty
Identify and utilise established groups and societies as 'representatives of local people' for consultation and engagement	M	ongoing	Consultation & Communication Team		Meet the duty Wider range of responses Utilise current groups – value for money
Build on current internal and external best practice in involvement and share it across the Council	M	Mar 2012	Consultation & Communication Team		Better practices Identify best practice Improve techniques
Utilise more involvement techniques internally	M	Ongoing	Consultation & Communication Team		More engaged staff See results to convince change externally Improve morale Meet liP agenda

Actions	Resource Implications High Medium Low	Target Date	EEBC Officer	Update	Required Outcomes
Greater and better use of online and social media consultation techniques	M	Ongoing	Consultation & Communication Team		Improve two-way communication Engage hard to reach Improve satisfaction
Ongoing refresh and maintenance of Citizen's Panel to ensure it is fit for purpose and representative of the Borough	L	Ongoing	Consultation & Communication Team		Effective panel Improved consultation Improve satisfaction
Establish a formal Consultation Officers Group to share information and experience	L	Mar 2012	Consultation & Communication Team		Improved communications between departments. Shared knowledge
Lunchtime briefing and issues sharing sessions	L	Jan 2012	Consultation & Communication Team		Shared learning and increased capacity within different service areas
Continue Consulting with the Equalities Forum on key issues	H	Mar 2012	Director of HR & Comms <b>and</b> Consultation & Communication Team		Input from traditionally hard to reach group Better and more robust consultation on certain issues