



# Consultation Strategy 2010 to 2015 **WORKING DRAFT**

**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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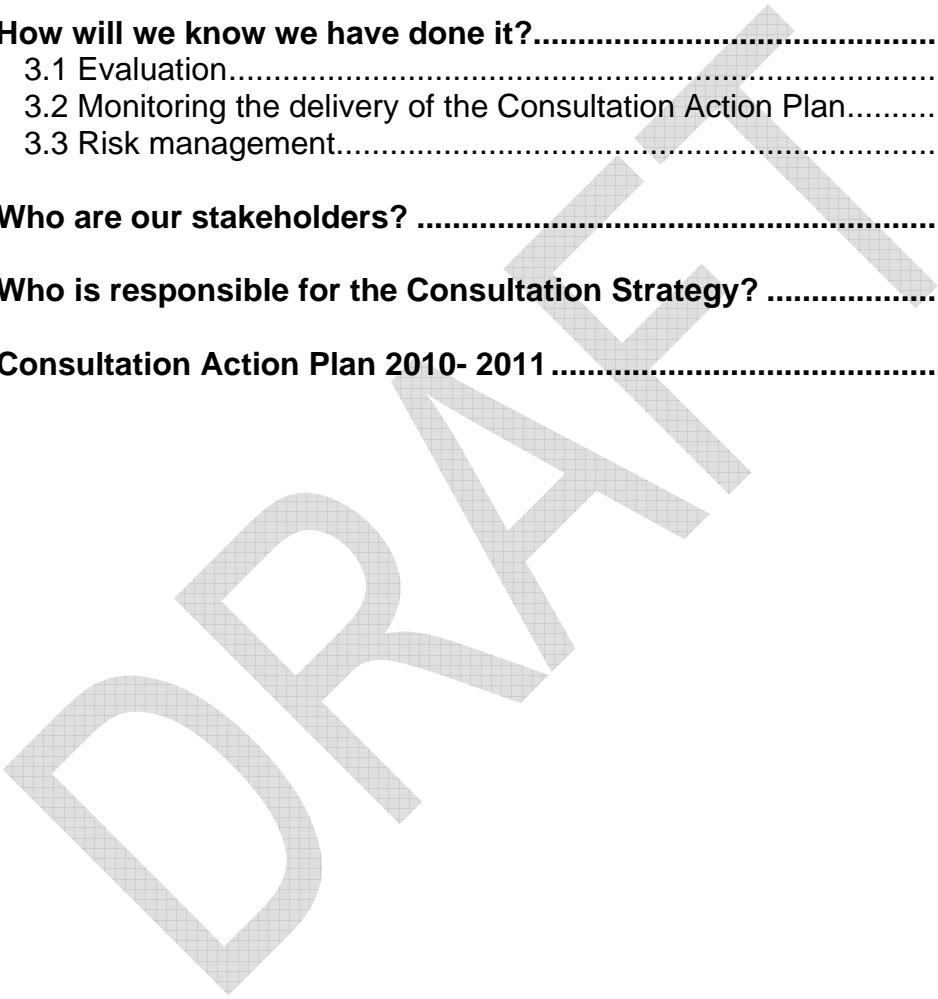
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# 1. The Consultation Strategy

## 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 and provide value for money. The strategy supports the achievement of the Council's 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 seek out 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 Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and 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 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, carried out effectively, cost effective and have a real impact on how the Council makes decisions, we will:

- Keep the Citizens Panel up to date and representative of the Borough
- Seek out new ways to involve hard to reach groups
- Investigate and trial new media options for engagement externally
- Continually improve the coordination, management and evaluation of consultation projects
- Keep stakeholders, staff and residents informed of consultations and their results
- Follow accessibility guidelines
- 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 by the Head of Consultation & Communication and incorporated into the Council's performance management framework.

### 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 Head of Consultation & Communication.

## 4. Who are our stakeholders?

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

<b>The Stakeholders</b>	<b>Interest &amp; Consultation Methods</b>
<b>Residents (including hard to reach groups and Citizens Panel)</b>	Residents are consulted with on a regular basis and decisions made as a result of consultations may affect them. Citizens Panel members take part in up to five surveys per year. Methods used include paper and online surveys and focus groups. Hand held or other devices may be hired for specific surveys.
<b>Councillors</b>	Councillors use results of consultations to inform their decisions. View reports written on consultation activities. Councillors may be surveyed through paper and online surveys and focus groups.
<b>Partners (local businesses and other local authorities/agencies)</b>	Share results of consultations and may carry out consultations in partnership. Participate in a Surrey wide consultation group to benchmark and share ideas. Work as a consortium for the Place Survey.
<b>Staff</b>	Consulted with biennially. Request Consultation & Communications Team to carry out consultations on their behalf. Need to be engaged and involved in decision making. Implement Investors in People improvement plan. Methods include online, handheld devices and paper staff surveys, online polls, intranet feedback forms, Chief Executive's blog.

## **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 consultation or involvement is appropriate. They will consult using best practice and ensure they use findings to assist their decisions.

### **The Consultation & Communications Team**

The Director of HR & Communication supported by the Consultation & Communications 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 & Communications team in all consultations. They should use consultation to assist their decision making and inform the Consultation & Communications team when this happens.

## 6. Consultation Action Plan 2010- 2011

Actions	Resource Implications High Medium Low	Target Date	EEBC Officer	Comments	Update as at November 2010	Required Outcomes
<b>NEW ACTIONS 2010 -2011</b>						
Ensure all officers and Councillors are aware of the new duty to involve and requirements of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment	M	Nov 2010	Consultation & Communication Team			Meet the duty More involvement in decision making Residents may feel more able to influence decisions
Use current case studies to show how meeting the duty	M	Mar 2011	Consultation Officers			Wider use of involvement and consultation
Continue to build partnership working on consultations	L	ongoing	Consultation & Communication Team			More value for money Sharing of resources
Work to make the duty an innate part of service planning	H	June 2011	Head of C&C			Embedded engagement practices
Provide a one page guidance note for managers re service planning and the new duty, discuss options and investigate commitment level	L	May 2010	Head of C&C			Meet the duty Better services that meet residents' needs
Identify and utilise established groups and	M	Mar 2011	Consultation Officers			Meet the duty Wider range of

Actions	Resource Implications High Medium Low	Target Date	EEBC Officer	Comments	Update as at November 2010	Required Outcomes
societies as 'representatives of local people' for consultation and engagement						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 2010	Head of C&C			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
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 maintenance of Citizen's Panel	L	Ongoing	Consultation Officers			Effective panel Improved consultation Improve satisfaction
<b>ACTIONS ROLLED OVER FROM 2005-2009</b>						
Promotion of the Consultation guidelines available on Iris	L	Ongoing	Consultation & Communication Officer	Achieved in 2006/7, further update required in 2010/11		Improved understanding of consultation and ethical and legal

Actions	Resource Implications High Medium Low	Target Date	EEBC Officer	Comments	Update as at November 2010	Required Outcomes
Establish a formal Consultation Officers Group	L		Consultation Officers	A group of officers who regularly conduct consultation activity, to share best practice, plans and experience		Improved communications between departments. Shared knowledge
Lunchtime sessions	L		Consultation Officers	On aspects of the consultation process, such as survey methods and guidelines		Shared learning and increased capacity within different service areas
Publication and promotion of revised Consultation handbook	M		Consultation Officers	The handbook needs to be updated		Up-to-date consultation methods and guidelines for all