

Lewes District Council
Communication and Consultation Policy
April 2008

Policy Objectives

1. To keep residents, staff, partners and businesses well informed and regularly consulted so they can influence improvement in the quality and nature of services provided to them.
2. To improve access to services and use communication to promote equality of opportunity.
3. To be open and honest in communicating and consulting with customers and communities.
4. To give accurate information, be realistic about what can and cannot be achieved and give feedback to those whom we consult.
5. To give best value in the use of resources for communication and consultation in co-operation with partners in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

Community Outcomes

This Policy is intended to achieve the following outcomes (for every outcome there is a performance measure).

- Residents say that they are kept well informed about Council services and issues that affect their communities.
- Residents say that they believe it is worthwhile to participate in community activities, local democracy and decision making.
- Residents say that they are consulted in a way that enables them to identify needs and priorities in their communities.
- Residents say that they are consulted in a way that enables them to influence the quality and nature of services available to them.
- Residents, Partner Organisations and Businesses are satisfied with the way that they are consulted on the Council's annual budget proposals before the council tax is set.

Workforce outcomes

- Staff say that they are kept well informed about Council activities and the relevance of their work to the Council's key objectives and priorities
- Staff are satisfied with the way that they are consulted in advance about potential changes that affect their work

Service Outputs

- a) Deliver a community newspaper to every house in the District at least quarterly

- b) Ensure that publications take account of the needs of people with disabilities and Black and Minority Ethnic communities.
- c) Issue frequent press releases to keep the Council's work in the public eye
- d) Produce a consultation programme at the beginning of each financial year
- e) Maintain a Citizens Panel of local residents and use it as a means of consultation
- f) Provide informative material for team briefings
- g) Prepare an annual consultation programme with residents' partners and businesses on relevant issues
- h) Undertake regular surveys of residents' opinions on service quality
- i) Use clear branding to ensure that the Council is recognised as the originator of its own communications
- j) Ensure that the Council's web site, leaflets and other publications are up to date and in line with the guidelines for effective communications

Workforce outputs

- k) Ensure that a weekly newsletter is delivered electronically to staff
- l) Provide a training programme for staff and councillors to improve communication skills
- m) Promote continuous improvement to services through a dedicated "Sharing and Learning" page on Infolink to share research information, consultation results and identify models of good practice

Performance measurement

Action Plans

- An action plan to deliver improvements in the communication service for each following year will be included in the Annual Council Plan.

Monitoring Outcomes

- Performance indicators for the community outcomes to be achieved will be set each year in the Council's Annual Performance Plan

Monitoring Service Outputs

- Results achieved under each performance indicator will be produced regularly.

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Action Plan for 2008/2009

The following actions will be implemented

- a) Training will be provided for staff to improve communication with residents and other stakeholders
- b) To make the LDC website immediately recognisable to residents, visitors, staff and councillors and to improve and enhance the quality of the content on the website.
- c) To promote and emphasise the range of services offered by LDC on our website and to make the website more user friendly and minimise the number of links needed to reach the information. To ensure everything on

the website is up to date and relevant and to work with the IT department to re-design and launch a new look website by the end of 2008.

- d) Induction courses provided for new councillors and staff will contain a module on communications and will include practical, helpful information on best communication and consultation practice
- e) Systems will be developed to ensure that when consulting with specific groups in the community (such as people with disability, young people and black and minority ethnic people) we will take account of their particular needs.
- f) Lewes District Local Strategic Partnership and the Local Area Partnerships will be involved in projects for consulting with local communities.
- g) Monitoring and evaluation systems will be put in place to test the effectiveness of every consultation exercise
- h) The results of consultation projects will be made available to councillors and staff to support the continuous improvement programme.

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