

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Public Engagement and Communications Task and Finish Group

Wednesday, 14 December 2005

Present:

Councillor Brendan Glynane
Councillor Andrew Simpson
Councillor Anjona Roy
Thomas Hall
Margaret Martin

Apologies:

Councillor B Eldred
Councillor C Malpas
Councillor M Hill

1 Minutes of last Meeting

The minutes were accepted and no further discussion was required.

2 Baseline Data

Thomas Hall issued a copy of the baseline data for discussion. This is work in progress and is a sample of the types of consultation that are taking place. There are gaps eg planning, streetscene and it is anticipated that more information on consultation conducted by NBC will be available by the end of the year.

It is apparent that consultation has been unco-ordinated in the past with services undertaking their own as the need arose. There are no corporate standards for consultation.

Discussion followed on what constitutes the “general public”, who was the consultation particularly aimed at, more detail required on the frequency of consultation and the numbers of people consulted and responding. To ensure 50% of residents feel we have consulted with them we need to establish types and numbers of those we do consult with and get a sense of scale.

In certain service areas considerable sums are spent on consultation but Area Partnerships often feel that they are not aware of the consultation, not invited and there is no feedback.

The outcomes from consultation should be fed back and explanations provided as to why we sometimes are not able to deliver what we are asked for.

Suggested questions to gather more information:

- Is any feedback given post consultation
- Costs
- Are others consulting on the same topic or related matters]
- How do we ensure it is representative
- Value for money
- Evaluation

Need to look at other authorities who have good communication and consultation arrangements – a starting point for this would be those councils who have been recommended or have won awards in this field with Local Government Chronicle or APSE.

UCN may be able to assist in involving young people.

Agreed in the future to look at external bodies; companies/ charities to look at the methodology used to engage people - how do they obtain public opinion which feeds into providing better products / services also what budget they allocate to such projects.

Public Relations Plan is part of the strategy as well as the development of a proactive approach to promoting our message.

Summary:

T Hall to continue to populate the data adding size of consultation and the perception rating (internal view) of its effectiveness

Key Lines of Enquiry especially Theme 1 are very relevant to the work of this group and could be incorporated.

This meeting has identified the gaps

Next meeting will look at the data.

Thomas please note:

*Future meeting dates to be arranged with Tracy Feltham on her return
Root and Branch structure available on the intranet but can be copied to all
councillors.*