

## **CORPORATE CONSULTATION STRATEGY**

### **1 PURPOSE**

This report introduces the Corporate Consultation Strategy for Members' consideration and comment (See Appendix 1). Whilst the document is non statutory in itself, it will provide a useful framework for a number of the statutory activities undertaken by the Council, which require consultation as part of the process.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 Consultation is becoming an increasing focus of attention and activity in itself in relation to the work of the Council. The Authority has always carried out a wide range of consultation with its residents and customers on service provision, one off projects and specific issues. However, the introduction of Best Value and the imminent legislative requirements in respect of new political structures and community planning means that it is important that the Council develops a strategic context for its consultation activity. A Corporate Consultation Strategy is something that the External Auditors have highlighted that this Council should have in place. They have identified it as one of the targets for the Authority in their Best Value Audit Recommendations and Action Plan, which has recently been considered by Audit Committee.

### **3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 The Council has already taken two key decisions which will aid the consultation process in this financial year – agreement to a budget allocation of £30,000 for Best Value consultation purposes and more recently, to participation with other Essex Authorities in a General Best Value Opinion Survey. Whilst the consultation requirements under Best Value are well documented and in many areas quite prescriptive, it is important that both Members and officers have some form of framework within which to develop, progress and manage the consultation process, in other words, some form of Corporate Consultation Strategy.
- 3.2 It is apparent from the demands that will be placed upon the Authority in a number of areas – the review and preparation of a new Local Plan, the development of a Community Plan, the preparation of a Cultural Strategy, the review of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy – that there would also be some merit at this stage in securing a new mobile exhibition facility. Not only could it help with bringing to the

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community many of the strategic issues outlined above, it would also be useful in helping to re-enforce the Council's presence across the District at one-off events.

- 3.3 The type of facility envisaged is a relatively small scale trailer which could be towed by a number of the Council's vehicles. It would open at the sides and the front to provide extended exhibition space. There is money in the budget for such a facility although from estimates received the actual cost is likely to be nearer £15,000-£18,000, rather than the £10,000 allocated. Nonetheless, if Members agree that such a facility would be a useful addition at this point in time and approve an overall budgetary sum, then the purchase can be progressed. A sketch layout plan is included as Appendix 2.

## **5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Nothing specific

## **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

There is £30,000 set aside for Best Value consultation in this financial year and a £10,000 budgetary provision has been set aside within the capital programme for the provision of a mobile exhibition unit. Should Members be minded to agree to the purchase of the exhibition unit there will need to be an adjustment to the Capital Programme. The Members Budget Monitoring Working Group is meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> July to discuss progress on the Capital Programme and this issue could be raised with the Group at that time.

## **7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Consultation is a requirement of many of the statutory activities the Council undertakes.

## **8 PARISH IMPLICATIONS**

The Consultation Strategy is likely to have an impact on all Parish and Town Councils.

## **9 RECOMMENDATION**

It is proposed that Council **RECOMMENDS**

- (1) That subject to Members' consideration and comment, the Corporate Consultation Strategy as attached be agreed

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- (2) That the purchase of a mobile exhibition unit be agreed in principle, at a cost not exceeding £18,000, subject to additional provision being made in the Capital Programme by the Members Budget Monitoring Working Group.(CE)

Paul Warren

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**Background Papers:**

None

For further information please contact Paul Warren on (01702) 546366