

## **ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION STRATEGY (Minute 153/02)**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report updates Members on proposals to develop a wider consultation mechanism with a view to developing a more cost effective and rigorous method of consultation with the community.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The Council has an agreed Corporate Consultation Strategy (Min 255/00).
- 2.2 At the meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee held on 11 April 2002, Members requested that investigations be undertaken to establish community consultation mechanisms to meet the ever increasing requirements for public consultation and at the same time provide responses which are statistically robust in a cost effective way.
- 2.3 Members will recall the consultation exercises around the modernisation agenda and recycling. In addition, the Council is now required to consult in areas such as the following, although the list is by no means comprehensive:
- Best Value Performance Reviews include consultation with the community particularly the users of the service.
  - Best Value Performance Indicators – there are many indicators that require consultation with the public
  - Local Plan
  - Agenda 21
  - Community Safety Audit
  - National Non Domestic Rate (NNDR)
  - Community Strategy
- 2.4 In a number of service areas, ad hoc surveys are also undertaken of service users and Council tax payers to ensure wherever possible the service is delivered in a customer responsive fashion.
- 2.5 There is thus the potential to look at rationalising the current consultation activity and look at working in a more effective and efficient way, preferably with partner organisations, to ensure that costs are kept to a minimum and also that residents are not bombarded from a variety of sources with surveys seeking their views.

- 2.6 Whatever process is decided upon, there will still be a need by statute to undertake a General Customer Survey, as part of the Best Value process, every third year. The next such survey is required in 2003/2004.

### **3 PROPOSALS UNDER INVESTIGATION**

- 3.1 Officers have investigated a number of options, including working with partners such as Essex County Council and the Castle Point and Rochford Primary Care Trust, given that community consultation in a number of areas is now a statutory requirement.
- 3.2 On the basis of those discussions there appear to be two proposals emerging to which Rochford District Council could contribute.

#### **County Council Consortium**

- 3.3 The first is being led by Essex County Council and involves other partners such as Essex Police and the Strategic Health Authority. These county-wide agencies are seeking to set up a Citizens Panel of 2000 residents throughout the county, with survey work being undertaken 2-3 times per year.
- 3.4 The District has yet to be formally invited to participate, but initial discussions suggests that the costs of joining this consortium would be in the region of £9,500 to seek an additional 500 residents to the 200 that the County Consortium would recruit in the Rochford area. This would pay for the establishment of a survey group and questionnaire and analysis.
- 3.5 The cost of additional questions, over those being developed by the County Consortium would be in the region of £2,000 - £6,500 per question.
- 3.6 The high costs involved in developing locally determined questions makes this approach prohibitive.

#### **Health Partnership Board**

- 3.7 The second option would be to work in partnership with Castle Point and Rochford Primary Care Trust (PCT). At the Rochford Health Partnership Board meeting in June it was agreed to investigate the potential for joint community consultation with Rochford District Council and Castle Point and the PCT. The PCT are keen to work with the Council in setting up a representative group of residents, and are willing to contribute towards costs. The Castle Point Health Partnership

Board also agreed to investigate joint consultation. The PCT plan to consult on the Local Health Plan for Castle Point and Rochford, including the issue of G.P. access in the area.

- 3.8 A local partnership approach to community consultation has the potential to save all partners money. Initial discussions between the PCT, Rochford Officers and Castle Point Officers has led to a brief being developed to form the basis of a tender exercise. A copy is attached.
- 3.9 Based on a proposal to recruit 500 residents willing to be surveyed in each local authority area, which would provide each local authority with a 95% confidence in statistical reliability, and provide the PCT with a survey pool of 1000 residents across their area, initial indications suggest would cost in the region of £30,000. This includes recruitment of residents, refreshing the group with new people, mailing questionnaires and analysis. The costs would be shared between the three partners.

#### **4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The District Council currently resources its major consultation exercises through the Best Value budget, for which £30,000 is allocated in this financial year.
- 4.2 Specifically one-off exercises, such as that around the modernising agenda and recycling, have typically cost around £7,000 per exercise.
- 4.3 It is hoped that through developing the partnership arrangements outlined in this report, the Authority can avoid duplication with other bodies with a consequent saving to both. Through the establishment of such a consortium approach, it is envisaged that once it is operating effectively savings will be achieved within the Best Value budget.

#### **5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Council has a statutory requirement to consult the community in many areas of its work.

#### **6 RECOMMENDATION**

It is proposed that this Committee **RESOLVES**

To endorse the approach being taken to develop a consortium approach to involving Castle Point Borough Council and the Local Primary Care Trust, with a view to operation from 2003/2004. (CEX)

Paul Warren  
Chief Executive

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**Background Papers:**

None

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**DRAFT Specification and proposal for Consultation with the residents of Rochford District Council and Castle Point Borough Council, in Partnership with Castle Point and Rochford Primary Care Trust for implementation 2003/04.**

**Aims of the consultation**

1. To regularly seek the views of residents, services users and other stakeholders on a wide range of issues.
2. To ensure feedback is obtained in a credible and constant manner
  - Statistically viable (+/-5%)
  - Representative of the community by age, sex, ethnicity, disability and geography.
3. To ensure that the Local Strategic Partnerships of both Local Authorities can benchmark the needs of the area and monitor performance against stated objectives through out the life of the partnership and the implementation of the Community strategy for the District.
4. To provide consultation on the Local Health Plan for Castle Point and Rochford including G.P. access.

**Background to the area**

**Rochford District**

Rochford is a relatively small District with a total resident population of 79,220 (Mid 2000 estimate). 60% of the population are of working age and 20% are retired. The district is made up of two urban towns, Rayleigh and Rochford together with some small settlements and rural areas. The District is contained within an area of 65 square miles and bounded by the River Crouch to the North and Southend to the South.

The area has 14 Town and Parish Councils and has 39 ward Members. There is a general affluence with high levels of home and car ownership in the area. Unemployment is relatively low compared to other parts of Essex. Although the overall impression is one of general affluence, there are pockets of

deprivation. Rochford Roche, St Andrews and Eastwood all appear in the top 30% of the governments multiple deprivation indices.

The population is an ageing one and this has implications in terms of service provision and the types of concern coming forward in terms of crime and disorder issues.

Research carried out suffers from the lack of representation from the younger population and working population being dominated by the older people.

### **Castle Point**

Castle Point Borough Council to insert background information.

### **Target Population**

The target population is those aged 16 and above who reside in the Castle Point and Rochford areas.

### **Sampling Frame**

<b>Sample</b>	<b>Rochford</b>	<b>Castle Point</b>
Population	79,200	84,500
Households	34,000	xxxxx
Ethnic Minority Population	850	1036
Population over 16 years of age	64,200	68,600

## Specification for initial costing and discussion

Activity	Criteria
<p>Recruitment of a panel of 1000 residents which match the age, sex ethnic and geographic profile of the area to meet the +/- 5% confidence level criteria for Best Value of 400 responses per local authority area</p>	<p>Face to face recruitment of residents Verification of core details such as age, race equality details, sex, address etc</p> <p>Refreshment of the Panel every year through recruitment of additional panel members, in line with the profile of the area</p> <p>Development of a database of panel members for mailing and contact purposes</p>
<p>Design questionnaires for survey purposes</p>	<p>Preparation and design of questionnaires which might cover the following areas</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. General satisfaction with services</li> <li>2. Feedback on local plans such as Health Plans, Council Plans and Strategies and Community Strategies</li> <li>3. Feedback on services in line with Best Value principles</li> </ol> <p>It is expected that there will be four surveys undertaken per year. A cost per survey would be helpful, based on an average of '25 tick box' questions with one open question.</p>
<p>Survey of sample population</p>	<p><b>Option 1</b> Surveys to be completed on a face to face basis</p> <p><b>Option 2</b> Surveys to be self completed, but mailed back to the survey company</p> <p>Please provide a cost for each option.</p>

Analysis of the data	The data should be analysed by the research company.
Reporting	<p>Reports should be produced for each of the partner organisations to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An executive summary of the findings</li> <li>• A full report and findings</li> <li>• Tables and charts detailing the analysis and the findings</li> <li>• Comparative benchmarking information if available</li> <li>• Presentation material</li> </ul> <p>All information should be available electronically</p> <p><b>Optional (To be costed separately)</b>  Presentations to Council Members/  PCT Board Members ( three presentations)</p>
Monitoring Activity	Provision of electronic updates of progress being made in the research i.e. numbers of residents responded, target date for achievement, any trends which may be emerging which can be addressed quickly by the Partners, any barriers to the research or response etc

**NB. it would be helpful to quote the comparative cost of achieving a +/- 3% confidence level, achieving a response of 1,100 per local authority area**