

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council's

Consultation Strategy (2004-07)

Purpose & Overview

The purpose of this Strategy is to set out the overall direction, and nature, of significant improvements that we wish to achieve in consulting the public and other stakeholders, along with the means, in broad terms, of achieving them. It stems from an analysis of our research strengths and aspects of our research where there is scope for improvement. Its scope is confined to consultations that are initiated by the Council and over which we have discretion over the content and process.

The overall direction is prescribed by the following three aims:

- (1) To further improve the overall cost effectiveness of our research.
- (2) To better enable and encourage everyone to express their views
- (3) To further improve the consistency with which we undertake research of a high technical quality.

For each of these three aims we then set out those key areas of activity where we expect to achieve improvement along with specific targets.

Statement of Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for delivery of the Consultation Strategy rests with the Chief Executive.

Overall responsibility for maintaining and updating the strategy, as well as co-ordinating an annual progress report to Members, rests with the Central Services Director. All Services will provide evidence for the annual report.

Overall responsibility for overseeing progress in delivering the strategy rests with the Cabinet.

Specific responsibilities are set out in the following tables and these will be cascaded down into the appropriate service/section performance plans for 2004/05(+).

Aim 1: To further improve the cost effectiveness of our research

Key Areas of Activity

Targets

(To meet in achieving our aim)

(We expect to have most impact in achieving the above aim)

<p>1. Operating a more structured approach to assess, and seek to improve, the impact/cost ratio of research. (All Services)</p>	<p>1.1. Introduce, by 30/6/04, a more structured approach to justify each consultation in advance, evaluate its impact and thereby improve impact/cost ratio of future research. (Central Services Director)</p>
<p>2. Developing and continually refining a research programme to improve its overall impact/cost ratio. (Central Services Director)</p>	<p>2.1. Annual summary report to Management Team, by 31st March, of forthcoming research regarding the Council's key priorities for the coming year. (Central Services Director)</p>
<p>3. Partnership working, including joint or shared research with other agencies. (All Services)</p>	<p>2.2. Map existing research activity and identify significant gaps, by 30/9/04. (All services – coordinated by Central Services Director)</p>
<p>4. Enabling and promoting electronic research in ways that provide real benefits to both the Council and respondents in terms of saving time and cost, speed and convenience. (Central Services Director/Information Technology Manager)</p>	<p>2.3./ 3.1. Establish a council-wide cyclical research programme, informed by impact/cost analysis and opportunities for partnership working, by 31/3/06. (All services – coordinated by Central Services Director)</p> <p>4.1. Subject to testing and confirmation of the financial and operational benefits, enable the option of completing Citizens' Panel questionnaires on-line so that the data is immediately ready for analysis, by 31/3/05. (Central Services Director/Information Technology Manager)</p>
<p>5. Improving corporate access to information from research. (Central Services Director)</p>	<p>4.2. Subject to the (above) Citizens' Panel experience as a pilot, establish, by 31/3/06, a realistic programme for extending 'real' electronic consultation to other quantitative research. (Central Services Director/Information Technology Manager)</p> <p>5.1. Enable and promote direct electronic corporate access to the results of Citizens' Panel surveys, by 31/3/07. (Central Services Director)</p>

Aim 2: To better enable and encourage everyone to express their views

<p>Key Areas of Activity (We expect to have most impact in achieving the above aim)</p>	<p>Targets (To meet in achieving our aim)</p>
<p>1. Maintaining the Citizens' Panel. (Central Services Director)</p>	<p>1.1. Refresh the Citizens' Panel by 31/12/04, subject to this being warranted by the corporate research programme – see Item 2, Page 6. (Central Services Director)</p>
<p>2. Applying the "Consulting Hard to Reach Groups – A Good Practice Guide". (All Services)</p>	<p>2.1. Provide appropriate training as part of our diversity training to all relevant staff by 31/3/05. (Central Services Director)</p>
<p>3. Undertaking quantitative research of young people's views in partnership with schools. Young people are our largest "hard to reach" group. (Young People Steering Group)</p>	<p>3.1. Complete a quantitative research pilot project by 31/3/05, subject to co-operation from at least one willing school. (Young People Steering Group)</p>
<p>4. Providing better feedback on the results and outcomes of research. (All Services)</p>	<p>4.1. Complete a council-wide review of the nature and extent of research feedback to respondents, by 31/3/06. (Central Services Director)</p>
<p>5. Exploring, and learning from, opportunities for innovation in the way we undertake research. (All Services)</p>	<p>5.1. Summarise research innovations in the annual progress report to Members. (Central Services Director)</p>

<p>Aim 3: To further improve the consistency with which we undertake research of a high technical quality.</p> <p>Key Areas of Activity (We expect to have most impact in achieving the above aim)</p>		<p>Targets (To meet in achieving our aim)</p>
<p>1. Achieving consistently good practice in questionnaire design. (All Services)</p>	<p>1.1. All Quantitative research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% compliance with technical check-list from 1/4/04 (All Services) 	<p>1.1. All Quantitative research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% compliance with technical check-list from 1/4/04 (All Services)
<p>2. Achieving consistently good practice in research based on sampling. (All Services)</p>	<p>2.1. Quantitative research based on sampling from 1/4/04:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum sample of 400 cases (completed questionnaires) where the total number of people who could be surveyed is 2000(+). (All Services) • Minimum sample size to be pre-determined with assistance from the Improvement & Development Unit where the total number of people who could be surveyed is less than 2000. (All Services) • Response rates for Citizens' Panel surveys to average 80%(+). (Central Services Director) • Minimum 50% response rates for other postal surveys. (All Services) 	<p>2.1. Quantitative research based on sampling from 1/4/04:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum sample of 400 cases (completed questionnaires) where the total number of people who could be surveyed is 2000(+). (All Services) • Minimum sample size to be pre-determined with assistance from the Improvement & Development Unit where the total number of people who could be surveyed is less than 2000. (All Services) • Response rates for Citizens' Panel surveys to average 80%(+). (Central Services Director) • Minimum 50% response rates for other postal surveys. (All Services)
<p>3. Building qualitative research capacity. (All Services)</p>	<p>3.1. Qualitative research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use professional facilitator(s) at the next genuine opportunity to run a focus group and help to build in-house capacity. (All Services, in liaison with Improvement & Development Unit) 	<p>3.1. Qualitative research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use professional facilitator(s) at the next genuine opportunity to run a focus group and help to build in-house capacity. (All Services, in liaison with Improvement & Development Unit)