

TAMWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNICATION, CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES

2006 - 2008

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. In order to deliver its corporate vision and objectives, Tamworth Borough Council has to put communication, consultation and participation (CCP) at the heart of activities the local community and its partners.
- 1.2. The Borough Council puts great value on what local people say to us about the current state of Tamworth and its future. A great deal of communication, consultation and participation activity is already conducted by various departments across the organisation. What is currently lacking is co-ordination of how this activity is planned and scheduled and how the information gathered is shared across the organisation and with stakeholders.
- 1.3. The intention is that by adopting this new strategic approach, the Borough Council will increase its ability to utilise the contribution of local people by enhancing the way in which we use the information provided to us, creating improved and more productive opportunities for community involvement in our activities. The Council should also be able to communicate the results and impact more clearly and more regularly.
- 1.4. The purpose of these strategies is to providing a clear direction and focus for CCP activity and a means of measuring progress and success. It is also intended that these strategies will provide a framework and guiding principles for the development of future plans and action and encourage dialogue and thinking within the Borough Council and with local citizens.
- 1.5. Implementing the strategies successfully will support the work of the Borough Council in achieving its corporate vision and priorities.

“By 2020, Tamworth will become the preferred place to live and raise your family in the Heart of England”.

By working with others we will

- Actively tackle the cause & impact of crime & anti-social behaviour.
- Become a cleaner, greener & more floral Town.
- Deliver Value for Money.
- Become accountable, approachable & visible.
- Raise our profile within the Heart of England.
- Improve health standards, Housing & education for people of Tamworth.
- Enhance the provision for Tamworth’s Youth.
- Ensure our people matter.

- 1.6. The communication, consultation and participation strategies have been developed to reflect the desire by Tamworth Borough Council to improve its performance in these areas. They have been produced following consultation with managers and staff from across the organisation alongside discussion with the Corporate Management Team and elected members. Wherever possible, development of the new approach has also been guided by reference to best practice from other local authorities and government organisations.
- 1.7. The main focus of the strategies is intended to be external facing but internal communications will play a significant role in the delivery of any project or activity.
- 1.8. A crucial element in ensuring that the Borough Council achieves its vision and objectives is ensuring that staff are informed and empowered. A dedicated internal communications plan will ensure that effective internal communication is linked and contributes towards future planning and delivery of projects and services.

2. Our Vision

- 2.1. The approach set out in the communication, consultation and participation strategies builds on themes originally set out in the communications strategy produced for the Borough Council in August 2003. One of the aims of the earlier strategy was to make sure that;

“our audiences be informed of, understand and think positively of what we do. Citizens should be encouraged to take advantage of our services with opportunities to inform and advise us of their views, aspirations and concerns.”

- 2.2. Although this still holds true it is now also recognised that there is a greater need to facilitate local consultation, participation and engagement beyond the traditional models of consultation and communication.

- 2.3. Recognising these greater levels of involvement, our vision for communication, consultation and participation for the future is to;

Make greater efforts to use the contribution of local people in developing the future of Tamworth by improving the way in which we use the information provided to us, creating more opportunities for community involvement in our activities and communicating the results and impact more clearly and more regularly.

- 2.4. Because it is recognised that there are strong and often unbreakable links between communication, consultation and participation, it has been decided to develop strategies jointly for communication, consultation and participation activity.

3. Strategic Approach

- 3.1. A key feature of the Borough Council's future strategic approach to CCP will be to adopt a co-ordinated management approach to all of the communications, consultation and participation activity taking place across the organisation and with partners.
- 3.2. The co-ordinated management approach will enable the Borough Council to pursue a clear direction for CCP activity and facilitate a move away from a reactive approach that can often lead to missed opportunities and duplication of effort.
- 3.3. In order to facilitate the strategic management approach, corporate strategies for communications, consultation and participation will be developed. It is recognised that there are clear links between the three areas. The advantage of individual strategies is the provision of a more flexible and tailored approach in each area of CCP to supporting the corporate aims and objectives.

4. Implementation & Management

- 4.1. Linked to each strategy will be implementation plans setting out the specific activities required to achieve the aims and objectives of that strategy. In the main, these plans will be developed and managed at directorate and operational level but have clear links to the overall strategic objectives. The aim of these implementation plans will be to build year-on-year on the existing platform of activity and move the Borough Council towards its vision.
- 4.2. The impact of the communication, consultation and participation strategies will be measured against the broad objectives linked to each specific area. Milestones and targets will also be established for all actions set out in the linked implementation plans. The first stage of implementation will be to audit existing plans for consultation and communication and participation activity and produce a council-wide delivery plan for this activity by March 2007.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 5.1. Monitoring and evaluation of operational and directorate level plans will take place at that level. Evaluation of the overall strategies and corporate implementation plans will be the responsibility of the Corporate PR and Consultation Manager reporting quarterly to the Corporate Management Team.
- 5.2. The key focus of evaluation activity will be to identify the difference made and value added to the planning and implementation of services and projects by adopting the principles set out in this strategy. Only by making this shift and embedding best practice principles of communication, consultation and participation into the Borough Council's planning culture will the full impact and benefit be witnessed by our stakeholders

6. Communications Strategy

6.1. The communications strategy will guide the two-way process of sending and receiving messages to key audiences. The objectives of this strategy are to:

- Increase awareness, understanding and take up of Borough Council and partnership services.
- Increase positive perceptions of the work of the Borough Council and partnerships amongst key audiences.
- Ensure clarity and consistency in all communication activity.
- Ensure that the Borough Council explores new methods of communication with key audiences and is able to anticipate and respond to developments.
- Establish and develop mechanisms for ensuring that staff are aware of their role in delivering the vision and objectives and have the opportunity to contribute to future planning.
- Ensure that wherever possible the Borough Council adopts and demonstrates best practice in its communication activities.
- Ensure that the Borough Council achieves best value for the resources invested in communication and demonstrates the value added to the organisation and to the local community.

6.2. The following actions represent an overview of some of the main activity required to both achieve the objectives set in this strategy and also short-term operational objectives/targets.

Stage 1	2006/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of organisation wide communication delivery plans.• Establish the role of the Corporate Communications Team at the centre of communication activity.• Audit current policies and procedures for communication.• Audit current communication practice.
Stage 2	2007/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop good practice guides and toolkits for staff on effective communication activity.• Develop and improve mechanisms for communicating results of consultation and participation activity.• Development of internal communications plan

7. Consultation Strategy

7.1. The consultation strategy will support activity where stakeholders are engaged to put forward their views on the planning, delivery and impact of services and initiatives. The objectives of this strategy are to:

- Embed the principles of consultation with the local community in all planning and business development and ensure that the results are clearly communicated.
- Increase opportunities for community and partner consultation in Borough Council activity, planning and decision-making.
- Ensure clarity and consistency in all consultation activity.
- Ensure that wherever possible the Borough Council adopts and demonstrates best practice in its consultation activities.
- Ensure that the Borough Council achieves best value for the resources invested in consultation and demonstrates the value added to the organisation and to the local community.

7.2. The following actions represent an overview of some of the main activity required to both achieve the objectives set in this strategy and also short-term operational objectives/targets.

Stage 1	2006/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of organisation wide consultation delivery plans.• Establish the role of the Corporate Communications Team at the centre of consultation activity.• Audit current policies and procedures for consultation.• Audit current consultation practice.
Stage 2	2007/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop good practice guides and toolkits for staff on effective consultation activity.• Expansion of the Tamworth Listens consultation brand and consultation project.• Develop mechanisms for shared planning of consultation activity.• Develop and improve mechanisms for communicating results of consultation activity.

8. Participation Strategy

8.1. The participation strategy will govern the opportunities created for the direct involvement of local stakeholders in the design, improvement and running of services and initiatives. The objectives of this strategy are to:

- Embed the principles of participation with the local community in all planning and business development and ensure that the results are clearly communicated.
- Increase opportunities for community and partner participation in Borough Council activity, planning and decision-making.
- Ensure clarity and consistency in all participation activity.
- Ensure that wherever possible the Borough Council adopts and demonstrates best practice in its participation activities.
- Ensure that the Borough Council achieves best value for the resources invested in participation and demonstrates the value added to the organisation and to the local community.

8.2. The following actions represent an overview of some of the main activity required to both achieve the objectives set in this strategy and also short-term operational objectives/targets.

Stage 1	2006/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of organisation wide participation delivery plans.• Establish the role of the Corporate Communications Team at the centre of communication and consultation activity.• Audit current policies and procedures for participation• Audit current participation practice.
Stage 2	2007/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop good practice guides and toolkits for staff on effective participation activity.• Development of a clearer policy approach towards stakeholder participation in business planning.• Develop mechanisms for shared planning of participation activity.• Develop and improve mechanisms for communicating results of participation activity.