

Haringey Council

Agenda item:

[No.]

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

On 22 October 2007

Report Title: **Consultation Strategy Report**

Forward Plan reference number (if applicable): **n/a**

Report of: **ACE, PPP&C**

Wards(s) affected: **ALL**

Report for: **Information only**

1. Purpose

1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has requested a report on the council's consultation strategy. This report is intended to give information on developments since the strategy was adopted in 2002.

2. Introduction by Cabinet Member (if necessary)

2.1 I would welcome the views of Overview and Scrutiny members on the development of a new Consultation Strategy for the Council and how we might improve the way we conduct consultation currently.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Overview and Scrutiny are requested to provide their views on what should be included and addressed in the proposed revision of the council's Consultation Strategy.

Report Authorised by:

Tim Dunning ACE PPP&C.

Contact Officer: Janette Wallace Gedge, Consultation Manager

4. Director of Finance Comments

4.1 Current budget for the Consultation Team: £93,900, this does not include the cost of any consultations which are borne by the individual services.

5. Head of Legal Services Comments

6. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

6.1 None applicable

7.1 Background

Consultation has a major part to play in achieving council priorities particularly: ***delivering excellent, customer focused, cost effective services.***

Conducting effective consultation will also be a major contributor to the mandatory LAA target of ***increasing the percentage of residents who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area.***

7.2 The Haringey Council Consultation Strategy

The current Consultation Strategy (Appendix A) was adopted in 2002. An Effective Procedure Note and Consultation Guidance as well as a comprehensive Consultation ToolKIT were introduced in 2006 to support the implementation of the strategy.

(<http://harinet.haringey.gov.uk/intranet/toolsandprocesses/consultationtoolkit>)

Although the Strategy needed renewing we took a decision to wait until the *Stronger, More Prosperous Communities White Paper* moved into legislation. We felt it was sensible to await the outcome of the legislative process and any consequent guidance.

We have also recently adopted a new sustainable Community Strategy putting people at the heart of change, and a new set of council priorities and council plan. Now is therefore an appropriate time to revise the strategy.

There are several factors which are likely to have an effect on the strategy and the way the Council consults, including:

- The new ***duty to involve*** from the Stronger More Prosperous Communities Bill
- The **Community Call for Action** also included in the Stronger More Prosperous Communities Bill.
- The review and proposed amendments to the **Cabinet Office consultation guidance**

After the publication of the new Stronger More Prosperous Communities Bill it is intended to use the Corporate Consultation Working Group to review and redraw the strategy.

7.2.1 Duty to Involve

The likely outcomes of the introduction of a duty to involve include involving people at an early stage, being clear about when it is appropriate to communicate, when to engage and when to consult. In fact Haringey's strategy implementation has already introduced good practice in this area and the Consultation Manager has been involved in the working group advising DCLG on this new duty.

7.2.2 Community Call for Action (CCfA)

The CCfA should only need to be used when the proper channels fail to produce a solution. If consultation is done properly the use of CCfA should be minimal. Ensuring that Council

Services consult appropriately and completely on proposals and developments will therefore assist in keeping the CCfA mechanism for particularly difficult and cross cutting problems. Certainly, conducting an effective consultation or research survey would be a useful tool to help in responding to CCfAs. The Head of Performance and Improvement and the Democratic Services Manager (Scrutiny) have been developing a model of how the CCfA procedure might work, which will be piloted.

7.3 The current Haringey Consultation Model

The Council runs a devolved model for consultation with responsibility for the consultation residing in the service area developing the project. Advantages of this system are that officers conducting consultations are directly involved in the project and therefore hear first hand how it affects residents. Disadvantages are that officers running consultations are not aware of best practice in running effective consultation and may not allocate sufficient resources. The implementation strategy has been designed to overcome these disadvantages.

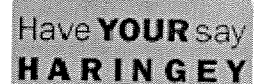
7.4 Implementation of the strategy

The consultation team is composed of three people. In December 2005 the consultation function was moved from Policy to Communications to form the Communications and Consultation Unit. This has enabled the forging of much closer links with the Communications team and more effective joined up working. The Consultation team has also formed strong working links with Neighbourhood Management. This has provided access to Area Assemblies and an opportunity to use the assemblies as an effective part of the consultation mechanism.

Implementation is based on making it easy and simple for people to get involved.

There are main two strands to the implementation:

- Firstly, focussing on residents making consultation approachable.
- Secondly, supporting officers and services in conducting excellent consultation

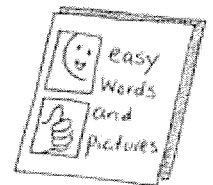


Have **YOUR** say
HARINGEY

7.5 Focus on Residents

A key issue was making sure that residents and other interested parties had sufficient information about consultations taking place. Over the last 12 months an entire section has been developed on the web site - Have your Say Haringey. This has proved to be an approachable and user friendly way of encouraging people to engage with the council. There have been 16,250 page views of the site since April 2006.

The section is designed so that residents can see exactly what consultations are currently running and how to respond to them. There is also a consultation charter which tells people what to expect. The consultation finder makes it easy to see what consultations have been previously undertaken and what has resulted from those consultations. The main information on the web site is available in our most requested community languages and as an Easy Words and Pictures version. There are 119 records of consultations in the consultation finder and 132 consultations have been posted through the site in the first 12 months of operation.



Although the web site underpins consultation communication it is, of course, necessary to have paper based communications. This is where the link with the Communications team has been invaluable. The web site is linked to the Have Your Say Haringey column in Haringey People each month. This feature has information about consultations and we have introduced a Vox pops feature with pictures and comments from residents on topical issues. This is designed to let residents see that *people like them* take part in consultation.

A calendar of consultations was designed and posted to the web. The information to populate this calendar was originally gathered via a simple to complete Word based form. This pilot format was later used as the basis of an electronic form. Whilst designing the system for posting consultations it became obvious that a system for posting consultations to the web site would lend itself to an integrated consultation management system. This was designed in conjunction with IT Services and now contributes to the support for officers conducting consultations.

The consultation charter was available on the web site for several months during which we invited comment. The feedback received was generally very positive. The charter sets out what residents can expect from each consultation and complements the guiding principles and effective consultation standards. These are reinforced in the staff training courses and regular reminders to officers involved in consultation.

7.6 Supporting officers undertaking consultation

The training course for all those involved in consultation was redesigned so that it supports officers conducting consultation programmes and encourages the concept of simple and easy to take part in consultation. Fifty staff have gone through the two day Making Public Consultation Work Course since February 2006.

A comprehensive online toolkit to help officers use the proper systems and methods has been developed and is available on Harinet.

The Consultation Management system (which populates the consultation calendar and issues key date reminders to officers) was introduced in December 2006. Since then more than 40 people have completed the training seminar.

The Internal calendar was designed to avoid:

- Conflicting consultations
- consultation fatigue for residents
- duplication of surveys
- encourage joined up working between services

In fact what this has highlighted is that different services are very rarely consulting the same communities at the same time.

A future development of this calendar allowing our Strategic Partners to post their consultations is envisaged.

A traded service was set up in December 2006 as many officers were requesting additional assistance with specific issues. A contractor has been working in with the team since that time on the basis that their salary and costs are covered by departments. This service has been popular and is proving to be a money saver in that the team can provide assistance

which would normally be sourced from outside contractors, for example questionnaire design and data entry for surveys.

The traded service has provided over 300 hours of consultation services to departments including:

- Focus groups with residents for the fly tipping review
- Focus group and survey of 'experts' for the Statement of community involvement for Planning Young People's survey design and training of peer interviewers
- research and consultation with Secondary School Heads and Careers Advisers to inform the plan for integrating Connexions services
- Parking Charges review consultation design and reporting

The more recent developments have been in emphasising what consultation is and what it isn't – as well as the importance of reporting back the result of the consultation and the effect those results have had on the final decision. An information paper has been circulated via senior managers drawing attention to the differences between information and consultation. (see Appendix B)

Recently distinctions of consultation have been drawn out to encourage services to clearly show that:

- consultation is finding out what the potential effects of a proposal might be and how those effects can have an impact on people's lives
- and consultation is not a vote for or against a proposal or project.

And to encourage respondents to explain their objections so that for example a proposal may go ahead but some elements may change as a result of the consultation.

7.7 Working with partners

The consultation team has made sure that we have effective links with Neighbourhood Management and that the Area Assembly structure has become integrated as part of the consultation mechanisms. This also gives an opportunity to work with our partner agencies such as the TPCT and the Safer Neighbourhood Police Teams. The links with Homes for Haringey have also been strengthened.

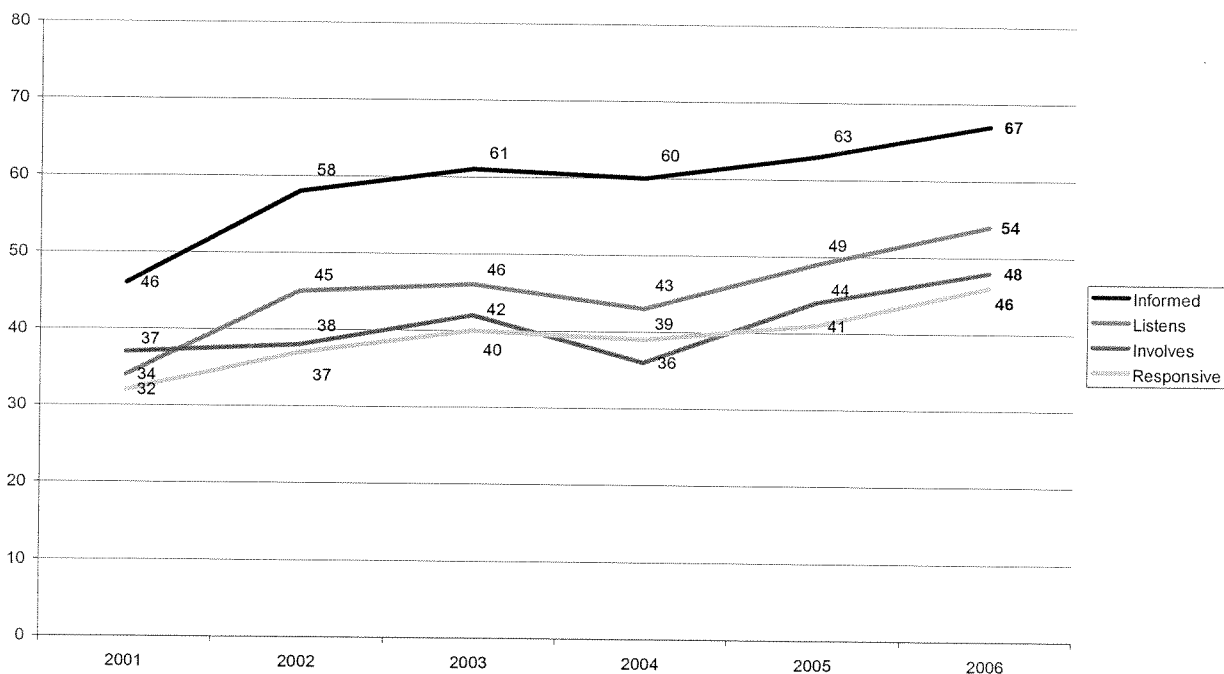
7.8 Measuring the effectiveness of the strategy

The improvements that have been made in conducting consultation were recognised late last year by the Department for Communities and Local Government which showcased Haringey for its work in connecting with communities.

The results from the Annual Residents Survey (conducted by an independent survey organisation) show that:

The percentage of residents agreeing that Haringey Council listens to residents concerns has risen from 34% to 54% and the percentage of residents agreeing that the council involves residents in decision making has risen from 37% to 48% since 2002 with a continuing upward trend. Haringey is now above the London average for involving residents in decision making. There are also significant increases in the results for keeping residents informed and responding to residents concerns.

Consultation Dimensions Residents' survey



7.9 Response to consultations

There was a major consultation conducted in the summer of 2006 to inform the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy 2007 – 2016. Over 1200 responses were received from residents and businesses throughout Haringey as well as comprehensive response from our community stakeholders.

The work which has been done in raising awareness of the value of consultations internally and how useful they can be in working with residents and other stakeholders is shown by the number of new initiatives including an innovative postcard consultation in Haringey People on highways improvements which has resulted in over 3500 responses.

7.10 Summary and recommendations

It is now five years since the council consultation strategy was developed and published. Although the main elements still apply, many of the documents referred to are out of date and most of the implementation has moved beyond the original recommendations.

It is therefore being recommended that a revised and updated consultation strategy be developed, and we would appreciate Members' views on the development of the strategy.

The following documents would also inform the new strategy:

- Council Plan
- Community Strategy
- Haringey COMPACT

- Local Government Involvement in Health Act
- LINks terms of reference and guidance
- Cabinet Office guidance
- Stronger, More Prosperous Communities Act
- Local Development Framework and Statement of Community Involvement.

Appendix A

Haringey Consultation Strategy (Approved 2002)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Government clearly identifies the need to consult. In the White Paper 'Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People' it states:

'The Government wishes to see consultation and participation embedded into the culture of all councils and undertaken across a wide range of each council's responsibilities.' (para 4.6)

'Effective authorities will consult and engage with their local communities in carrying out their reviews. The Government will not prescribe when and how that should be done. Different forms of consultation are needed for the different services and at different stages and there are existing statutory requirements in some areas' (para 7.21)

Effective consultation, as the Government stresses is an integral component of modern government. Many new initiatives are in place, such as Best Value, and Community Strategies or are in the process of being developed, such as E-Government. However one of the main proponents for consultation has been the ever-increasing awareness of the community of having rights, a voice to be able to influence the services provided to them.

- 1.2 Consultation, as clearly stated by the Audit Commission enhances the capabilities of Members to reach decisions. Consultation is a vital tool for Members and Council Officers; it enables them to gather views, ideas, opinions of the community thereby enabling them to be responsive to the community and make informed, responsible decisions about policies, service delivery and priority setting. It is however the responsibility of the Members and Council Officers to balance the views of the communities with the possible constraints of resources and statutory requirements. However any decision, especially those that go against the results of the consultation must be clearly justified to the community. In addition the roles of the elected members, Council Officers, Chairs of Assemblies and so on in the consultation process should be clearly understood to avoid misunderstandings, which could be detrimental to the effectiveness of the consultation.

Haringey Council's Vision is *to measurably improve the quality of life for the people of Haringey by tackling some of our biggest problems and making it a borough we can all be proud of.*

- 1.4 The involvement and participation of the community and other partners is essential to achieving this vision. Haringey Council recognises the fundamental importance of undertaking effective consultation in order that decisions regarding service delivery and policy development are based on 'sound' reasoning and these are transparent and accountable to the community. Successful consultation will move towards creating an environment of trust, which will facilitate a stronger partnership to be developed between the Council and the community and other partners.

- 1.5 Haringey Council appreciates that, although a considerable amount of consultation is already being undertaken consultation can be more effective. The Annual Residents Surveys clearly demonstrate that the residents do not feel they have a 'voice'. It is the commitment of the Council that consultation will actively reach more people and overtly demonstrate to the community that they have a real 'voice', influence and are part of the democratic process.
- 1.6 Haringey Council consists of 26 Business Units each developing their own policies and service delivery. However it is accepted that the community, and staff within the Council, should view the Council as one identity – *One Council*. Consultation provides an excellent vehicle to further enhance and develop this image. Therefore a key aim of this strategy is to carefully co-ordinate consultation and enable business units and partnerships to work effectively together, compliment each other and provide each other with vital information. This approach will alleviate many factors which often frustrate the community, for example consultation fatigue, duplication of consultation issues, mixed messages and so on.

2. Corporate Consultation Strategy

2.1 The vision of the Consultation Strategy:

Through effective consultation Haringey Council will promote active citizenship, civic pride and partnership working between the Council and Haringey's diverse communities and its other partners.

This will support the Council's Vision and Values and Council Policies, such as Equal Opportunities.

- 2.2 This overarching strategy will apply across the whole Council and enable effective, co-ordinated consultation to be undertaken. Therefore it is vital that the concepts and principles of the Consultation Strategy are integral in the consultation strategies, business plans and policies of individual business units, corporate initiatives and other major initiatives, such as New Deal for Communities.
- 2.3 The strategy builds on the positive consultation already undertaken within the Business Units and corporately and has been produced by the Consultation Working Group which consists of representatives from all Business Units.
- 2.4 Consultation has to be undertaken at all stages, from the long term planning (corporate) to the delivery of services within individual business units to local regeneration programmes. It is however essential that all these consultations are co-ordinated and vital information gathered is shared.
- 2.5 This new Consultation Strategy will build on the good work already being undertaken, both within the business units and corporately. Gaps and/or omissions will be addressed proactively to further improve good practice by formulating a Consultation Working Group (facilitated by the Corporate Consultation Team), which will:
- develop high and consistent standards of practice

- create mechanisms for co-ordinating consultation to avoid consultation fatigue and exclusion
- promote joint consultation, when applicable
- improve communication both internally and externally, thereby enabling sharing of valuable information and a forum to learn from each other
- recognise the diversity of the community and all equality is integral in all consultation - this will widen the sphere of consultation
- ensure the best use of resources
- work towards a trusting climate between the Council and the community which will enhance effective consultation and hence improve the reputation of the Council

The Consultation Working Group will ensure that consultation within Haringey is planned, co-ordinated, professional and utilises the resources to the best advantage.

3. What is Consultation?

3.1 The Audit Commission states that consultation is:

‘..... a process of dialogue that leads to a decision. It can be a powerful tool for improving the quality and cost effectiveness of services and for ensuring that policy makers stay in touch with citizens’

3.2 The Consultation Strategy will therefore consider consultation as:

- a two-way, open and accessible process, to gather the views, behaviour and responses of the community so that it may inform the Council’s decision-making process
- a vehicle which will enable communities, individuals, organisations and businesses to participate in the decision making process

‘Information giving’ will not be considered consultation within this document however it is appreciated that many Business Units have to undertake statutory consultation, which only involves providing information. This activity will be co-ordinated within a corporate consultation programme.

4. Monitoring and Evaluating The Consultation Strategy

4.1 The Consultation Working Group will meet quarterly to monitor and evaluate the Consultation Strategy and report the outcomes to the management boards and elected members. This information will be distributed to members via Insight and when applicable reports.

5. Future Work

5.1 It is important that the Consultation Strategy is continually evolving. For effective consultation it is essential that the Voluntary Agencies, Partnership Agencies (such as

the Health Authority, Police) and Government Agencies are totally involved and actively participant within a shared Consultation Vision. A Voluntary Sector Compact is needed and the new overarching Haringey Strategic Partnership could help to develop closer partnership working on consultation.

6. Issues to be addressed for Effective Consultation

6.1 Key Principles of Consultation

Haringey Council is committed to improving the communication channels between the Council and the local community. A key aim of this strategy is to make it worthwhile for local people to tell us what they think of our services and our proposals. The Council will do this by adhering to eight guiding principles in all its consultation activities

- 1. Careful forward planning**
 - this being part of business plans and allocation of resources and
 - communication with Members, other business units and partners
- 2. Being clear about what the consultation is for**
 - it is important that consultation leads to action and that the communities' responses inform decisions – will the results of the consultation make a difference?
 - understanding what you know is better than asking again
 - make the purpose of the exercise clear
 - there should be agreement about roles and expectations
 - everyone should know what will happen next
- 3. Actively engaging the whole community**
 - ask the right questions of the right group
 - be aware of all avenues for accessing people and stakeholders
 - use Plain English and consider using other languages, interpreters
- 4. Giving enough time for people to be consulted**
 - a minimum of one month for a consultation period unless there are pressing reasons of urgency (e.g. a Government timetable)
 - avoid consultation during holiday periods and religious festivals
- 5. Choosing the right method**
 - ensuring that the method of consultation is determined by the information required and the target groups of people being consulted.
 - consult people in various ways
 - it is essential that all mechanisms of consultation are robust and statistically valid
 - if feasible, ensure that the process is shaped by the people being consulted.
- 6. Providing Feedback**
 - publish responses and results

- provide written and if necessary oral feedback to respondents on the final decision

7. **Monitoring consultation**

- systems of collating and monitoring the information must be in place in all business units

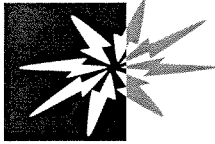
8. **Co-ordinating consultation within this corporate framework**

6.2 In the light of the recent research conducted within Haringey – ‘Towards a Consultation Strategy’ the following activities need to be undertaken to improve the quality of consultation:

- **Formation of a Corporate Consultation Working Group.**
This will provide the opportunity to co-ordinate consultation, develop joint working, share experience, skills, information, offer support and further develop the strategy and a programme. This is to include information on other unit’s service delivery and/or project development.
- **Designated Consultation Officer within each Business Unit.**
This Officer will sit on the consultation working party and be able to ensure a two way flow of information between the units and initiate and develop the consultation programme and strategy
- **Resource Implications**
Effective consultation can only be achieved if there are sufficient resources, whether this is monetary and/or staffing. Careful consideration needs to be undertaken in this matter regarding possibly ‘earmarking’ budgets, consultation by internal staff not being ‘added on’ to their role, centralising budgets for large scale consultations which include a number of Business Units and so on.
- **Standards for Consultation**
Formulate quality standards for consultation
- **Database of contacts**
Database of all possible groups, association etc who would be useful to contact to be engaged during consultation
- **Database of specialist support and help**
Database of approved external consultants/agencies, corporate consultation team, corporate communication team
- **Comprehensive mapping of consultation**
Mapping of all planned consultation, with a brief abstract including aims and objectives, target groups, timescales, feedback and any partner agencies.
- **Resources and Information**
Centrally held resources and information to help plan and undertake consultation.

including development of practical, flexible guidelines

- **Staff Training**
Identification of training needs for Council Officers and Members, which may include training in techniques of consultation, including analysis of data, software packages
- **Clarification of Roles**
Seminar with all units by the Communication Team and Corporate Consultative Team to clarify their roles in supporting consultation.
- **Commitment and Support**
Ensure the support and commitment to effective consultation by senior management and members
- **Closer Collaboration between Corporate and Directorate Consultation**
A structure developed so that Corporate Consultation and Directorates' Consultations can inform the whole Council as well as specific Business Units.



Haringey Council

Appendix B

Market Research, consultation and community engagement

Exploring the relationships and distinctions.

Purpose:

This briefing has been written to explore the differences and connections between research, consultation and community engagement.

As the council engages in more research and more consultation it is useful that we differentiate between them and don't mingle these activities together.

Understanding the differences and the similarities and how the different activities fit on a continuum would be useful in the context of increasing our knowledge of our customers – the residents and ratepayers of the borough. This briefing offers definitions and commentary.

Market research

The following definition is given by the Market Research Society.

“Market research is one of the most useful tools in business, any business. It is the way in which organisations find out what their customers and potential customers need, want and care about. This involves the collection and interpretation of confidential data concerning people, products, services and organisations. The key elements in obtaining good research material is that researchers talk to a few people to get the views of many, and that it only works if they talk to the right number of people, ask the right questions and interpret the results correctly.

Research has a variety of uses, from the testing of new products, to employment and customer satisfaction surveys, to social and opinion research. It can help organisations and individuals identify new market areas and assess the scope and potential success of a particular advertising/marketing campaign and develop new policies and future activities.

One of the biggest growth areas for market research over the past few years has been in the field of opinion research - understanding more about the public's

view on social topics such as politics, the environment, religion, and moral issues. “

This could be summed up as **the collection and analysis of information which informs an organisation about its users.**

Consultation and Engagement

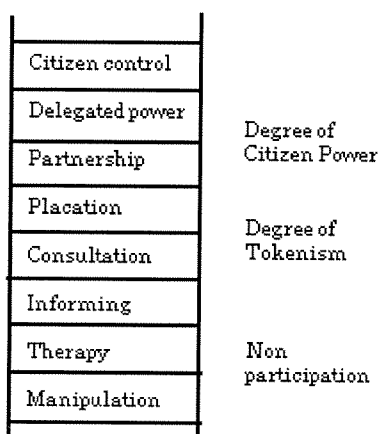
It is probably most useful to consider consultation and engagement as stages along a continuum within a framework of overall participation (by citizens, the public) in the decision making processes and the delivery of services.

Research Information Consultation Engagement

The council defines consultation as a *process of dialogue that leads to a decision.*

One useful way of considering consultation is as a conversation - where we as service providers engage in a conversation with our users and partners.

There are recognised authorities in this arena. Firstly Sherry Arnstein, who wrote about citizen involvement in planning process in 1969. Her ladder of participation (Arnstein’s Ladder) is shown below and a brief description is attached as appendix 1.



However this tends to assume that citizens should be involved and wish to be involved at all levels.

The second person is David Wilcox. He is the author of the Framework of Participation which was written in 1994 and funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

David Wilcox wrote the guide as a resource for professionals seeking to get other people involved in social, economic and environmental programmes. It is based on his extensive body of work and his continuing work in this area throughout the UK.

David Wilcox’s Framework of Participation has 5 stages which are detailed below and which show the relationship between each stage.

The power of this framework is that in recognising the stage we can estimate if it is appropriate to the work we are engaged in and if it is the stage we intend to be at.

Quote from David Wilcox: which explains the framework: *I do not suggest any one stance is better than any other - it is rather a matter of 'horses for courses'. Different levels are appropriate at different times to meet the expectations of different interests*

The stages describing the level of participation are:

- **Information** – where we simply give information about a proposal or project
- **Consultation** – people are offered some choices and there is a clear feedback mechanism (see below for further detail)
- **Deciding together** – means accepting other people's ideas, and then choosing from the options you have developed together
- **Acting together** – Acting together may involve short-term collaboration or forming more permanent partnerships with other interests
- **Supporting independent community interests** - means helping others develop and carry out their own plans. Resource-holders who promote this stance may, of course, put limits on what they will support.

Further information can be found at <http://www.partnerships.org.uk/guide/index.htm>

David Wilcox's explanation of consultation is useful to consider:

Consultation is the level of participation at which people are offered some choices on what is to happen, but are not involved in developing additional options. It is appropriate where, for example:

- An authority or organisation aims to improve a service.
- There is a clear vision or plan for a project, and limited ways of carrying it through.

Choose a different level if:

- Your decision won't be changed by what people say (information).
- You are not clear what you wish to do and are seeking ideas (Deciding together).
- You don't have the resources or skills to carry out the options presented (Acting Together).

It is unrealistic to expect individuals or small groups suddenly to develop the capability to make complex decisions and become involved in major projects. They need training - or better still the opportunity to learn formally and informally, to develop confidence, and trust in each other. This can be developed over time as indeed it is in many of the engagement and participation activities undertaken by the Council.

This is intended to act as a discussion document and enable officers of the council to identify the appropriate stance for each project or proposal. As we often use surveys as part of our consultation it is important that we don't assume that a survey is sufficient consultation.