

Leicestershire County Council Consultation Standards (2005)

Standard 1 - Consult and involve people widely

We will:

- promote a culture of consultation through involving people to achieve greater openness and inclusiveness.
- build consultation into our plans for improving services being sensitive to the resource implications for those taking part.
- where possible, and not subject to other statutory requirements, seek to allow 12 weeks for written consultations on the development of policy in order to maximise participation. If for any reason it is not possible to allow this period of consultation the reasons for this will be made clear in the consultation document.
- bring our consultation activity to the attention of all interested parties and publicise it in ways most appropriate to the people we need to reach.
- ensure that our consultation involves representatives from the relevant community consulting at the closest level to the people affected by any decisions.
- actively listen to the views of the public and other stakeholders.
- consult people at the earliest opportunity and at the right time to give genuine opportunities to influence decisions whilst being sensitive to cultural/religious events.
- have a nominated consultation officer in each Department who will act as an adviser on consultation practice
- actively involve Council Members so that they may advocate on behalf of the community.
- comply with the requirements of legislation including the Human Rights Act, the Data Protection Act, the Freedom of Information Act and laws relating to discrimination and equality.
- ensure that staff are supported to develop the skills needed to carry out effective consultation.

Standard 2 - Join with partners to share good practice

We will:

- work positively with our partners to support joint consultation activity so that good practice is shared and duplication or repeated consultation with the same people or groups is avoided.
- share information with other relevant partners (in line with data protection) to ensure that the views of local people are used to best effect to improve services.

Standard 3 - Ensure that all relevant sections of the community are heard

We will:

- work with local communities and use a variety of ways to increase communication, involvement and participation e.g. face to face consultation, the Internet, discussion groups and postal surveys.
- show evidence of involving traditionally excluded groups of people in our consultation e.g. young people, Looked After Children, disabled people and black and minority ethnic people.

Standard 4 - Ensure that consultation is accessible to all people who take part

We will:

- use appropriate skills and techniques to ensure that the needs of different groups of people, such as disabled people and people from minority ethnic communities are taken into account.
- ensure that consultation and involvement is accessible to all by using a variety of formats including written, spoken and pictures. This may involve signs and symbols for people with learning disabilities; British Sign Language Interpreters, Text Direct, induction loops and

Minicom for profoundly deaf people; language interpreters for people whose first language is not English; large print and Braille for visually impaired people; or guide communicators for those who are deaf/blind.

- use plain, simple, concise, clearly laid out and jargon free communication avoiding technical language (where this is necessary a glossary of terms will be provided).
- use accessible venues and equipment.
- arrange our events at reasonable times and dates
- provide or arrange advocacy support for people who request or need it e.g. vulnerable people, people with learning disabilities, Looked After Children/Young People.

Standard 5 - Provide clear and concise information before consulting

We will:

- provide appropriate advance publicity and information about consultation exercises or events.
- provide clear information stating why we are consulting, who will be involved and affected, what any proposals are, time-scales for responses and how the consultation information will be used.
- make consultations open, wherever possible, with no options being ruled out. If services, decisions or proposals cannot be changed we will make this clear from the outset.
- provide contact information for enquiries giving name, address, telephone (including fax/mobile numbers where appropriate) and e-mail address details.

Standard 6 - Record all our consultation accurately

We will:

- record consultation faithfully using anonymous quotations wherever possible.
- provide a summary of responses.
- list the groups of people we have consulted and provide these as an annex to consultation documents and reports.
- prepare a summary report, not more than four pages, outlining the consultation process including details of why the consultation was undertaken, when it took place, how it was carried out, who was involved, the main findings and resultant outcomes.
- record all consultation activity on the County Council's Consultation Database.

Standard 7 - Give clear and simple feedback to people and show how the consultation has been used to inform Council services and policies

We will:

- analyse our information carefully with an open mind paying particular attention to possible new ideas and approaches, the impact of proposals and strength of feeling from people.
- give people feedback on the responses received within three months showing how the consultation results will influence the service or policy. Where timescales for implementation are longer, this may need to be supplemented by further feedback.
- review and evaluate our consultation to test whether the Standards have been followed and to ensure continuous improvement.

Consultation and community involvement will only succeed if supported by good customer care practice