

Specific questions and observations on the 5 stages of consultation

Stage One: When considering a potential change to service or policy, the Head of Service, in conjunction with the relevant Executive Member, should consider whether the Duty to Consult applies and should agree a proportionate approach to consultation. The Head of Service should carefully consider the Gunning Principles when designing any consultation activity.

- Can we assume that this applies equally to a project or action plan?
- Under what circumstances would it be inappropriate to consult?
- What is meant by ‘the relevant executive member’? Is it the Portfolio holder, a representative of the Portfolio Holder or a local representative?

Presumably, the factors to be taken into account when deciding whether to consult, or whether a particular approach is proportionate, are a mix of the degree of impact (financial, quality of life etc) and the number of people, businesses, groups etc affected.

- How will the Head of Service and the relevant Executive member make a decision?
- What publicly available evidence will there be that such impacts have been taken into account?

Stage Two: Service area to consider the issues to be addressed as part of a consultation and identify the key stakeholders to be consulted at an early stage. These key stakeholder groups should be agreed in conjunction with the relevant Executive Member. Consideration should be given to how to include and engage any minority or disadvantaged groups in the consultation.

- How is the service area to ensure that all issues have been identified?
- What guidance will be given on the identification of key stakeholders?
- What publicly available evidence will there be that key stakeholders have been identified and contacted?
- How is an ‘early stage’ defined?
- In the event that there is no response from them, what evidence will there be that consideration has been given to the engagement of ethnic minority or disadvantaged groups?
- Should not key stakeholder groups be agreed in conjunction with relevant Ward Members as well as Executive Member, given that they have the most local knowledge of groups etc?

Stage Three: If appropriate, hold an initial key stakeholder consultation to consult on overarching themes and principles.

- Why only overarching themes and principles?
- Why/when would it not be appropriate?
- Would it not be better to do this at an earlier stage to ensure that all issues are identified (i.e. at stage 2)?

Stage Four: After considering responses from key stakeholders, draw up a more specific and targeted public consultation using appropriate methodology. Consideration should be given to how to include and engage any minority or disadvantaged groups in the consultation. Advice can be sought from the communications team on methodology and survey wording.

- Is this only about overarching themes and principles? It is not clear at what stage proposals are produced.
- As before, evidence of consideration required – see bullet 5 stage two.

Stage Five: Publicise consultation responses where appropriate and publicly demonstrate how consultation responses will be used in the next steps of the project. Adopt a 'You Said, We Did' approach to giving feedback. Keep people who have participated in the consultation informed about the progress of the project.

- Why/when would it be inappropriate to publicise consultation responses?
- What exactly will be publicised – an analysis / interpretation, or the responses themselves?
- This seems late to demonstrate how consultation responses will be used – that should surely be made explicit at the time of inviting responses.
- How long will responses be available for public scrutiny?