

**TITLE OF REPORT: ITEM REFERRED FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
22 SEPTEMBER 2015 – CONSULTATION STRATEGY 2016-2020**

The following is an extract from the Draft Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 22 September 2015.

52. CONSULTATION STRATEGY 2016–2020

The Communications Manager presented the report entitled Consultation Strategy 2016 – 2020.

She informed Members that the Strategy was last reviewed in 2010 since when financial pressures and a huge growth in digital communications, combined with changes to statutory consultations had significantly altered the communications landscape.

The Strategy would put in place a process to consider whether the duty to consult applied and, if it did, the extent to which consultation was needed. She stated that although on-line usage had grown it was still appropriate to use a combination of survey methods.

Members asked several questions including whether results of consultations were weighted in order to provide a more accurate result and whether consideration would be given to developing an app to gain views.

The Communications Manager advised that independent consultants were used for the District Wide Survey and the information gathered was weighted. However the Council did not have the resources to do this with in house surveys. In respect of developing an app, this could be considered along with the use of social media.

There was some concern about the difficult to reach and it was suggested that some surveys should be undertaken on a face to face basis in different locations. Concern was also expressed about the proposed delegation of responsibility for deciding whether the Duty to Consult applied and whether any decision not to consult would be recorded.

The Communications Manager advised that locations of physical surveys were considered on a case by case basis as was how consultations were publicised. In respect of the Duty to consult, in some areas this was an express requirement and therefore was not addressed in this Strategy.

The Strategic Director for Customer Services advised that the Strategy would ensure that a conscious decision was taken about consultation and that all reports, including delegated decisions would include details of consultations carried out and what form that took.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) That the proposed Consultation Strategy for 2016 – 2020 be approved;
- (2) That the responsibility for deciding whether the Duty to Consult applies to proposed changes of policy/service be delegated to the relevant Head of service in consultation with the Executive Member for that service area.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the Consultation Strategy 2016 – 2020 prior to consideration by Cabinet.

[NOTE: The report to which this referral relates is Item 12 on this agenda.]