



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2009

JULY 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Stratford-on-Avon District Council is focussed on delivering high quality services. These are services that are shaped by the communities that use them. This requires a strong commitment by the Council towards raising awareness about the Council's existing services, listening to public views and comments on services and acting upon these.

This Strategy represents a positive move towards consolidating all current activity that is involved in engaging with the public.

The purpose of the Strategy is to co-ordinate, guide and manage the Council's approach to community engagement. This means supporting and enabling all communities within Stratford-on-Avon District to participate in shaping the future of the District leading to better services that more closely match the needs and expectations of residents, businesses and visitors.

In addition, the Strategy aims to facilitate and stimulate all forms of the public being active in their community, whether this be simply taking an active interest in what is going on around them to becoming active in doing something that benefits the lives of others.

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1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Council is committed to working closely with the public as part of fulfilling its community engagement role.
- 1.2 Community engagement includes everything that the Council does to inform the public or involve the public in the Council's work. The Government defines engagement as *"The process whereby public bodies facilitate citizen and community participation in order to order to incorporate their views and needs into decision-making process."*
- 1.3 A Community Engagement Strategy is necessary to involve people in decisions about services and policies that affect their lives.
- 1.4 The Council must keep people informed and engaged via effective communication to ensure that this role is fulfilled. It must listen and respond to people's views and concerns via consultation, improve accessibility and accountability to local people, and work positively to maintain trust and confidence in the Council as a decision-maker.
- 1.5 This Strategy should be about our contact with the public and our understanding of community and individual needs. The Council needs to consider how we can become more in touch with the public, maintain a close relationship and truly give people a bigger say.
- 1.6 The Strategy is also involved in encouraging the public to become active citizens. That involves individuals and groups doing things to improve and benefit the lives of others in their community.

2. Context and Approach

- 2.1 The Corporate Strategy 2008-2012 identifies the following outcomes:
 - Residents feel able to influence Council decisions; and
 - The Council's reputation with local people is improved.
- 2.2 The Local Area Agreement also contains commitments relating to communication and consultation, including National Indicator 4 (Community Empowerment).
- 2.3 The development of a Community Engagement Strategy is influenced by a wide and complex picture that includes:
 - Local Drivers – the Council's Customer Insight Programme, the need to use customer intelligence wisely and the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) project; and,
 - National Drivers - the Government's White Paper '*Communities in control – real people, real power*', proposals arising from the 2007 Local Government Public Involvement Health Act (summarised in the Statutory Guidance – Creating Strong, Safe & Prosperous Communities July 2008) and the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) to be introduced in 2009.

- 2.4 The details of the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 are included in the Statutory Guidance publication "Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities" July 2008. It covers the new settlement between central government, local government and their partners, and citizens. For this Strategy the key elements are implementing the new "duty to involve". The publication details the need to "involve and empower communities which acknowledges that services will be improved & communities strengthened only if local people are effectively engaged and empowered". The aspiration of the duty to involve is to "embed a culture of engagement and empowerment - authorities consider as a matter of course the possibilities for ...information, consultation, involvement...across all authority functions". All authorities are required to implement the "duty to involve". There will be a responsibility to co-ordinate across Local Strategic Partnership activity.
- 2.5 The Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will take into account how well the duty to involve is being implemented by looking at:
- How well councils / partners know & engage with communities;
 - Understanding the needs of vulnerable & marginalized;
 - Extent priority outcomes have been defined with community involvement;
 - Community involvement in assessing in delivery of outcomes; and
 - Effectiveness of local partners' co-ordination of community engagement & communication of impact on their decisions.
- 2.6 Given these drivers, this Strategy is focused on:
- **Access to Information** (which links directly to communication).
 - **Having an Influence** (which links directly to consultation).
 - **Being Active in Your Community.**
- 2.7 Within this context, there is the opportunity over the life of the recently refreshed Corporate Strategy to take the development of this Strategy to look comprehensively at the Council's interaction with the public generally and in doing so to include the customer experience. This could extend to include other public sector partners, potentially leading to a truly joined up approach to community engagement. This is being delivered in part by the emerging locality agenda, which has led to the introduction of six Community Forums within the District. There will be a two-way approach to future consultation exercises with results being shared between other local authorities and public agencies.

3. Current Activity

- 3.1 The Council is already doing good communication and consultation work and this was recognised by the Audit Commission CPA inspection that reported in October 2007.
- 3.2 The Council has subscribed to the Local Government Association Reputation Campaign and continues to fulfill key requirements of this project. Effective communication continues to play a major part in ensuring that our communities remain well informed about the Council and the services it provides.

- 3.3 The consultation work undertaken by the Council is done in line with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct and the results feed directly into the service planning process. Work is undertaken on behalf of other local authorities.
- 3.4 The components of Communication and Consultation are information and involvement. Information dissemination is concerned with:
- making the public aware of our services and their availability;
 - raising the profile of the Council generally; and
 - ensuring that the public get to hear about the Council's achievements.
- 3.5 The public want information that is meaningful, interesting, relevant (i.e. targeted) and local.
- 3.6 In terms of involvement, the Council must engage in a two-way exchange of information with customers to establish their needs and wants, and their satisfaction with services. This feedback allows customers to shape the services they receive, with this customer information being used by officers to shape services, policy and strategy. Also, the Council will strive to provide a strong voice for local people, influencing what is decided at county, regional and national level.
- 3.7 Notable achievements in the last eighteen months include:
- Further enhancements to the editorial quality and content of the Council's various publications;
 - The launch and continued publication of newsletters targeted at Parish Council, Partner and Business audiences;
 - Support for the launch of the Council's Refuse and Recycling Service;
 - Increased the variety and volume of work undertaken in partnership with Councils both within Warwickshire and outside; and
 - Direct influence on the development of the Place Survey, as the Consultation Officer represented District Councils on the national working group led by Communities and Local Government.
- 3.8 In relation to performance pertinent to communication and consultation, the results from the 2008 Place Survey provide an important indication of our current position:

NI	Description	SDC	Warwickshire	West Midlands	England	National Position (out of 201 Districts)	2006 Quartile Position	2008 Quartile Position
NI3	% who have been involved in decisions that affect the local area in the past 12 months (Good performance = High %'s)	19%	14%	13%	14%	13 th	-	1
NI4	% of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality (Good performance = High %'s)	31%	28%	28%	29%	37 th	-	1
NI6	Participation in regular volunteering (Good performance = High %'s)	32%	26%	22%	23%	20 th	-	1
	Taking everything into account, satisfaction with the way SDC runs things (Good performance = High %'s)	45%	-	44%	45%	114 th	2	3
	Whether would like to be more involved in the decisions that affect the local area (Good performance = Low %'s)	23%	-	25%	27%	29 th	1	1

In addition, more than two thirds (68%) of residents say they feel well informed about the services and benefits provided by SDC. There is no benchmarking information available for this measure, but it represents a 10% increase in the response provided in 2006.

3.9 As part of continual improvement, there is an acknowledged need to continue building on our position in areas such as:

- More effectively gathering information, and focusing more attention on hard to reach and vulnerable groups, and applying the intelligence we receive from the public within our service and financial planning programmes;
- making the public more aware of Council services; and
- promoting a positive image of the Council itself generally.

4. Aims

4.1 This Strategy seeks to support and enable all communities within Stratford-on-Avon District to participate in shaping the future of the District leading to better services that more closely match the needs and expectations of residents, businesses and visitors.

4.2 To support this, our aims are to:

- Increase public awareness about services provided by the Council and the opportunities to become involved in shaping those services;

- Build on existing methods of communication and consultation to increase engagement;
- Develop new ways of involving the public in decision-making;
- Encourage, facilitate and maintain a continuous dialogue between the Council and residents, businesses and visitors;
- Engage people regularly in an open manner;
- Take every opportunity to enhance the Council's reputation and public satisfaction with the services it provides;
- Inform and confirm the Council's commitment to community engagement;
- Improve existing ways of involving communities especially hard to reach and vulnerable groups;
- Use different techniques to make consultation as effective as possible; and
- Measure the successful delivery of this Strategy annually.

4.3 The objectives of this strategy to 2012 are:

- to increase the proportion of residents who feel they can influence decisions affecting their locality (NI4) to 35%;
- to support the incidence of participation in regular volunteering (NI6) at or above the level of 32%; and
- to increase the proportion of residents expressing overall satisfaction with the way SDC runs things to 50%.

5. Delivery and Resources

5.1 The Corporate Communications and Consultation Teams working closely together will jointly lead on delivering the Strategy.

5.2 Delivery will be linked to the three main focuses of this Strategy:

- Access to Information;
- Having an Influence; and
- Being Active in Your Community.

5.3 Corporate Communications is responsible for information flowing out from the Council (access to information). The Consultation Unit is responsible for coordinating all forms of consultation (having an influence). The whole Council is involved in facilitating the delivery of the third focus, "Being Active in Your Community".

5.4 An Action Plan for corporate consultation and communication over the next two years is presented at Appendix A.

5.5 Access to Information – the underlying principles are that in everything we do, we must think about the following:

- Make customers fully **aware** of our services.
- Celebrate our **achievements** (in public) and take full credit for these.
- **Listen** to what the public are telling us and **empathise** and understand our customers' needs.

- Use **feedback** intelligently to shape our services.
 - Present a **consistent image** of the Council and its core values and support **our brand**.
 - Ensure high quality **interactions** with customers.
 - **Manage the media** effectively.
- 5.6 The channels for getting the Council's message heard are presented in Appendix B.
- 5.7 Having An Influence - It is important to get the full involvement of all elements of the community in the consultation process to ensure our priorities reflect local needs. These are:
- Residents
 - Local businesses
 - Community and voluntary organisations
 - Service users (*i.e. those who use or are likely to use services provided by the Council*)
 - Visitors (*i.e. those who visit the District, and use Council services*)
 - Other interested groups (persons appearing to the authority to have an interest in any area within which the authority carries out functions, e.g. Town/Parish Councils, strategic partners)
 - Young people
 - Older people
 - Black and minority ethnic groups (BME)
 - Gypsies and travellers
 - Gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and people of transgender
 - People with disabilities
 - Migrant workers
 - Vulnerable communities, eg. residents living in rural isolation, residents on low income and older residents living in private rented accommodation.
- 5.8 A summary of whom the Council will consult using the methods mentioned in 5.15 below is included in Appendix C.
- 5.9 Results of consultation will be disseminated via:
- Stratford-on-Avon District Council Website.
 - Consultation Activity Report.
 - E-mails to Heads of Service and above, plus key contacts relevant to the areas researched.
 - To the relevant portfolio holder(s) directly.
 - Information Sheet.
 - Warwickshire Consultation Database, accessed via Warwickshire County Council website.
 - Relevant Council Committee.
 - Extranet Library.
 - Press Releases.
 - Council newsletters and publications.

5.10 Being Active in Your Community – this involves encouraging the public to be active citizens.

5.11 The Place Survey indicates that the number of residents involved in decisions that affect the local area is already relatively high (see table at 3.8). The results suggest that older people are more likely to get involved and that the incidence of involvement across the District is uneven. For example, in the Henley/Studley area 8% of residents indicate an involvement in a decision making group set up to tackle local crime problems, but in the Southam area only 1% of residents indicate such involvement. There are no other specific local statistics available, but anecdotally it is understood that some sections of the community are currently much less likely to get involved. Our challenge is to increase the overall number and get more people active, particularly from younger age groups.

5.12 Being active can take many forms, including involvement in:

- Neighbourhood Watch
- Running of Clubs and Community Organisations eg. Scouts/Guides
- Tenants' Groups
- Allotment Societies
- Church Groups
- Trusts
- School Governors and PTA Groups
- Direct action groups/campaign groups
- Volunteering
- Public Meetings
- Community Service Type Schemes eg. litter-picking
- Youth Council/Youth Parliament
- "In Bloom"/Best Kept Villages
- Sports Groups/Clubs
- Youth Organisations.

5.13 The Council's role is to:

- facilitate;
- foster;
- promote;
- stimulate;
- coordinate Council officers' direct activity;
- act as a catalyst for;
- overcome barriers on;
- lead; and
- generally support

all such community activity.

5.14 Many of these organisations and community activities fulfil functions that generally support the Council's community ambitions, as set out in the Corporate Strategy.

5.15 The methods of engagement will be as follows:

Method	Aim
Council Publications	
Press Releases	
Web-site Stories	

Method	Aim
Face to Face Contact at Council Offices	To inform about council services
Partners Newsletter	
Parishes Newsletter	
Service Specific Leaflets	
Open Days, Road shows and exhibitions	
Public Meetings (incl. Community Forums and Area Committees)	To involve in decision-making and to obtain resident's views on council services, new policies and strategies
Opportunities to attend Council, Cabinet and other meetings	
Participation in Planning Meetings	
Questions to Council	
Petitions (ad hoc)	
Participatory Budgeting	
On-line Surveys	
Citizens' Panel	
Focus Groups	
Breakfast Briefings	
Public Meetings	
Forums	
Via Complaints Procedure	
Consultation Events, i.e. Partnership	
Employee Research	
Web casting	
Ad-hoc surveys by questionnaire	
Opinion meter	
Support introduction of Councillor Call For Action (CcfA)	To encourage active citizenship
Schemes for Local Petitions (statutory)	
e-Petitions (Council to host)	
Grants for community groups/local organisations	
Maintain a directory of community groups and signpost this to interested persons (web-based)	
Articles about volunteering in Council publications	
Support for initiatives in schools to promote citizenship	
Youth Parliament	
e-participation	

- 5.16 Everyone within the Council, including Councillors, have a role in supporting the effective delivery of the plan. All employees and Councillors have a responsibility individually and collectively for being good ambassadors for the Council.
- 5.17 Not only are Councillors a key audience, they are also critical in the delivery of this Strategy. As the 'public's representatives' and 'community champions' they play a vital role as the organisation's ambassadors. How Councillors behave, interact with the public and represent the organisation in the locality all reflects on the Council. They can also make a huge impact in helping the Council to deliver its key messages to the public.
- 5.18 Councillors have an important role in making sure that the core messages are communicated and that ultimately service delivery and making a difference to residents is the major focus for the Council. Also, Councillors are a considerable source of encouragement and influence for all community-based activities.
- 5.19 Delivery of the Strategy will be financed from within existing resources. The Council has reduced the resource allocated directly to its corporate communication and consultation functions. However, these specific resources are

expected to be supplemented by the activities of every employee and Councillor, as the effectiveness of this strategy will be a reflection of the extent to which we are all working together to achieve improved outcomes for local people. One significant example will be the deployment of resources via the Virtual District programme to improve community engagement.

6. How will this Strategy be monitored and reviewed?

6.1 This Strategy will be monitored on an on-going basis through the Council Plan and as such will be reviewed annually.

6.2 The Council's Management Team will monitor the Action Plan, which is appended to this Strategy. A six monthly update of consultation activity will be provided for Management Team and Heads of Service.

6.3 The overall success of this Strategy will be determined by:

- delivery of the **Action Plan**, appended to this Strategy;
- an increase in residents who feel satisfied by the overall performance of the Council;
- an increase in residents who feel that they can influence decisions (National Indicator 4) and who participate in regular volunteering (National Indicator 6); and
- an increase in response to Citizens' Panel Surveys.

7. Related Strategies

Customer Strategy
Partnership Policy
Planning Engagement Strategy and LDF
Diversity and Equality Scheme
Youth Policy
Corporate Strategy
Sustainable Community Strategy
Homelessness Strategy
Housing Strategy
Crime and Disorder Strategy
Greenspace Strategy
Market Towns Visions
Leisure Strategy
ICT and Business Development Strategy.

APPENDIX A

CORPORATE COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION PLAN

JUNE 2009 TO MARCH 2011

CONSULTATION PLAN

TARGET GROUP	HOW	WHEN
Residents	<i>Citizens' Panel</i>	October 2009 February 2010 July 2010 February 2011
	<i>Focus Groups (6) based on areas</i>	Ad-hoc
	<i>Budget / Council Tax Setting Consultation: Residents Postal Survey Qualitative Element (Focus Groups) On-line survey</i>	October 2009 / January 2010 and October 2010 / January 2011
	<i>Place Survey</i>	Autumn 2010
	<i>Ad-hoc Corporate Surveys (Issues Based, i.e. Sustainable Communities Strategy)</i>	Ad-hoc
	<i>Community Forums (6) based on localities</i>	Every 3 months
	<i>Customer Satisfaction Index</i>	March 2010
	<i>Participatory Budgeting</i>	2010
	SDC Employees	<i>Sunday Times Best Public Sector Organisation of the Year</i>
<i>Internal Services Quality of Service Surveys</i>		Ad hoc
<i>Staff Attitude Survey</i>		October 2010
Businesses	<i>Questionnaire</i>	February 2011
	<i>Ad-hoc consultation using different methods</i>	Ad-hoc
Parish / Town Councils	<i>Open Meetings (3 a year)</i>	July 2009 October 2009 February 2009 July 2010 October 2010 February 2011
	<i>Questionnaire</i>	November 2009
Community / Voluntary Groups	<i>Questionnaire (in partnership with VASA)</i>	TBA
Visitors	<i>Face to Face Street Surveys in Market Towns</i>	TBA
Strategic Partners	<i>Forum</i>	TBA
	<i>Questionnaire</i>	Ad hoc
Older People	<i>Questionnaire</i>	Ad-hoc
	<i>Forums (Bi-monthly)</i>	SCAN meetings at 5 locations

TARGET GROUP	HOW	WHEN
Young People	<i>Ad-hoc research - qualitative</i>	Via SDC Say So groups, County Council Youth & Community Service and Education Dept, Warks Community Voluntary Youth Service (Ad-hoc)
	<i>Young Persons Satisfaction Survey (Bi-annual)</i>	November 2009
Ethnic Minorities	<i>Via the Warwickshire Equality Partnership, also consult with one group (Eastern European Mums & Tots), and via the Equality and Diversity Forum</i>	Quarterly
People with Disabilities	<i>Via the Stratford District Disability Forum</i>	Quarterly
Gypsies & Travellers	<i>Face to face consultation at the Pathlow and Darlingscott sites</i>	Ad hoc
Migrant Workers	<i>Follow-up Study</i>	Not known
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender	<i>Both the Place Survey and SDC Citizens' Panel have demographic questions for this group</i>	Autumn 2010
Faith & Belief	<i>Stratford Faith Forum</i>	Quarterly

COMMUNICATION PLAN

Publication of Annual Report	July/August 2009
Insert Pages in County Council Publication	July 2009 October 2009
Publication of Partners Newsletter	July/August 2009
	October 2009
	December 2009
Publication of Parishes Newsletter	July/August 2009
	September 2009
	December 2009
Publication of Business Newsletter	April 2009
	October 2009
Publication of Pulse	July/August 2009
	September 2009
	October 2009
	November 2009
	December 2009
	January 2011
Council Tax Leaflet	March 2010
Update and Republish A-Z of Services	March 2010 (in Corporate Folder or in a publication)

APPENDIX B

CHANNELS FOR GETTING OUR MESSAGE HEARD

Tools/Vehicles for getting our message heard
<u>Interactions</u>
• Staff and Members (<i>i.e. our ambassadors</i>)
• Partners (<i>the people who work closely together with us</i>)
• Community Groups (<i>our close contacts</i>)
• Press and Media (<i>managed by corporate communications</i>)
• Meetings (<i>democratic process</i>)
• Call answering/voice-mail (<i>customer strategy</i>)
<u>Literature</u>
• News Releases (<i>for the media</i>)
• Newsletters and Other Publications (<i>for target audience</i>)
• Corporate Documents (<i>for target audience</i>)
• Correspondence (<i>individual contacts</i>)
• Forms (<i>individual contacts</i>)
• E-mails (<i>individual contacts</i>)
• Specific promotional material e.g. new arrangements for waste and refuse
<u>Property</u>
• Reception Areas (<i>all visitors</i>)
• Vehicles
• Events (<i>seen by all attendees</i>)
<u>Sponsorship/Promotion</u>
• Funded schemes (<i>seen by all residents and visitors</i>)
• Badge community activities (<i>seen by all residents and visitors</i>)
• My Council Campaign
<u>Technology</u>
• Web-site
• Digi-TV
• Web-casts
• Pod-casts
• Text Messaging
• Blogs (<i>e.g. Chairman's blog</i>)
• Twitter
• Facebook
• You tube

WHO THE COUNCIL WILL CONSULT

RESIDENTS

Citizens' Panel

The Citizens' Panel is the main tool used to consult Council taxpayers in Stratford District. Ideally, the Panel has 1,200 residents, broadly representative of the District, who have agreed to participate in the Panel. Perceptions of the Council as a whole are researched using the Citizens' Panel. The Panel is consulted by a series of postal/online questionnaires. Topics covered refer directly to individual service areas, Council objectives, and priorities. The Panel is consulted two or three times a year subject to need.

Focus Groups

The Groups give the opportunity for residents to raise concerns and give the Council their views and an opinion on issues that affect their local area. The Groups are an offshoot of the Citizens' Panel – a self-selecting sample of local residents. Focus groups take place where a panel of 8-12 people discusses a variety of issues. They are based around the old area committee groupings of Arden (Alcester), Stour (Shipston), Avon (Stratford), and Dasset (Southam). This will be reviewed. There is a maximum of two focus groups for each area per year.

Ad hoc Surveys

Involving council tax payers of SDC in helping to prioritise spending by the Council is seen as very important by members. SDC uses a mixture of techniques in order to achieve this. A postal survey of residents is used. A random sample of either 1,500 to 2,000 residents from the edited electoral role is used. Two focus groups across the District will take place as well.

The Council uses a bi-annual Customer Satisfaction Index (gap analysis) survey to measure public satisfaction with the services provided by the Council. This is the main technique used to monitor service satisfaction against how importance an element of a service is.

Place Survey

All local authorities are required to carry out the new "Place Survey" which replaces the former Best Value User Satisfaction Survey. The purpose of the survey is to measure what local people feel about the quality of life in their community. It asks residents about their views of their area as a place to live and how satisfied they are with local public services. This help to measure how effective we are at making a difference to individuals and to the community as a whole and the district. It is bi-annual and goes to 4,000 residents identified randomly.

Service Users

There are a number of service specific consultation exercises undertaken throughout the year – various ongoing housing satisfaction surveys, i.e. housing waiting list, benefit claimants quality of service, various surveys surrounding leisure activity

Community Forums

This includes not only residents, but parish and town councils, voluntary organisations and partners

The Community Forum is an advisory body that acts as a key vehicle for community engagement within the locality. Members of the public can raise issues of concern and wherever possible, together with relevant agencies, solutions to those concerns can be worked out. There are six located for the areas of Alcester/Bidford, Henley/Studley, Southam, Shipston, Stratford, and Wellesbourne/Kineton

The purposes of the Forum are to:

- a) Agree proposed actions affecting the locality and identify local priorities, including Safer Neighbourhood priorities;
- b) Provide the opportunity for the community to question and challenge public sector service providers about the services that are delivered locally;
- c) Link local people and organisations to the Stratford District Partnership (Local Strategic Partnership) and the Warwickshire Local Area Agreement;
- d) Support local councillors in dealing with issues in the locality and in shaping local services;
- e) Ensure that relevant information is shared and two-way communication takes place between public sector agencies and local people and organisations;
- f) Fulfill the functions of the PACT (Partners and Communities Together) for Stratford-upon-Avon; and
- g) Help shape the public services in the locality and ensure that these services respond to local needs. This includes the production of a plan identifying agreed key priorities and sharing information about the public services offered in the locality including key service contacts.

TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

Town and Parish Council liaison is an important process for SDC. Town and Parish clerks and chairpersons from all Town & Parish Councils within the District are involved. By open meetings usually held at Elizabeth House, Stratford. Clerks raise issues from their Councils, which provides useful feedback for SDC. SDC use it as a two-way consultation process giving the opportunity to discuss things of mutual interest and to inform Councils of issues they need to know. Questionnaires to all Town / Parish Councils are also sent in order to obtain feedback to help inform service provision. They will be consulted three times a year for the open meetings and bi-annually for the questionnaire.

BUSINESSES

National non-domestic ratepayers and related business organisations in Stratford District. Businesses will be consulted through targeted consultation. SDC consult with businesses through either questionnaire, targeted meetings and the website. Research will be on an ad-hoc basis, as well as a bi-annual survey, and when issues require consultation with businesses.

COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY GROUPS

Regular dialogue and work with Voluntary Action Stratford-upon-Avon District, means this sector is regularly consulted. A questionnaire will go to all members of VASA and to other community groups on a biannual basis. We will work with VASA on the results of their consultation work, and how it impacts on the area. Consultation will also take place on the "Compact". Those community groups who have applied for grants will be consulted on how the grant service can be improved and how SDC can give non-financial support. At community events there will be the chance for community groups to have a chance to have their say on a range of issues.

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

It is important to obtain the views of the organisations with whom SDC have close working relationships. These include statutory agencies, other Councils and key voluntary organisations. Questionnaires are sent to the main contact within each organisation. A Partnership event will also be held periodically.

VISITORS

The Stratford Visitor Survey will be repeated in the next few years, and further surveys of visitors to our market towns are also likely.

HARD TO REACH GROUPS

Older People

This important group in the District is consulted via the Senior Citizens' Action Network (SCAN). This group defined, as people over 50, but in practice are people of retirement age. Stratford District Council provides officer time support to SCAN. The Government's Better Government for Older People policy inspires the network. This initiative run by older people for older people, aims to improve services and policies for older people by working with them. The SCAN network enables older people to have their say. They are aided by other agencies, such as Voluntary Action Stratford-upon-Avon District and Warwickshire County Council via an annual grant. Members welcome the chance to have their say in the meetings that work as informal group discussions. There are five such forums – Alcester, Bidford-on-Avon, Shipston-on-Stour, Southam, and Stratford-upon-Avon. Questionnaires sent to all SCAN members on subjects prevalent at the time are used as an additional consultation tool. Typically, each group meets once every two months. Specific speakers are arranged primarily through SCAN chairs and SDC. SDC use the groups for policy and strategy development and help assess the impact of service change. We are looking to increase the number of participants with lower incomes and from more rural areas.

Young People

This element of consultation is part of our commitment to give young people a voice on the services that affect them too. We aim to give young people a genuine and stronger voice in the decision-making process in line with our stated Youth Policy. Classified as young people aged 25 or under, the 11-16 age group is relatively easy to engage. However, the challenge is to engage with those in the 17 to 25 year age group. A closer relationship with Stratford College is developing. The Council has developed a District-wide Youth Forum known as "Say-So", and in partnership with the County Council are looking at more locality based Youth Forums. These provide an opportunity for qualitative information. SDC work with the Warwickshire County Council's Youth and Community Service, who operate local youth forums and the County Youth Panel. In addition, the Education Service has a number of schools who operate School Councils. SDC affiliate to the Warwickshire Community Voluntary Youth Service which co-ordinates the Voluntary Youth Sector Liaison. This organisation provides access to this sector. Ad-hoc consultation on specific issues of interest can be organised through schools, e.g. youth transport across the District, play areas. The County Participation Forum meets quarterly to organise consultation across the county for young people. The main quantitative survey will be every two years based on the Place Survey and is known as the Young Persons Have Your Say Survey.

Ethnic Minorities

There are a low percentage of ethnic minority residents in Stratford District (1.3% at the 2001 Census). As there are no significant ethnic minority groups in the District, effective consultation has been difficult to achieve. However, there is a Polish Mothers group at the Ken Kennett Centre and this is used as a place for consultation. The Warwickshire Race Equality Partnership is undertaking various pieces of consultation with local black and minority ethnic groups. Almost all external SDC surveys have an ethnicity question within the respondent profile section. Later in 2009, an Equality and Diversity Forum is being set up. This important group will cover six strands, age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability and faith. The group will include representatives from SCAN, Women's' Groups, the Terence Higgins Trust, WREP, Stratford DC, and the West Midlands Faith Forum.

People with Disabilities

The re-establishment of a Stratford District Disability Forum will be used to discuss issues that help the development of SDC policies and strategies and feedback on service provision. Another way of consulting will be to survey those people of disabilities who access SDC's services, such as concessionary travel. Consultation in the future will also use mailing lists provided by the South Warwickshire Housing Association, for example.

Migrant Workers

With a relatively high number of migrant workers, as well as asylum seekers and refugees, compared to other districts due to our rural nature, this is a key group to engage. The County Council and SDC commissioned research in order to better understand the numbers of migrant workers in the District and their needs, the effect on demand on public sector agencies, identify issues arising because of the increase in numbers, and identify the experiences and aspirations in terms of the public sector of migrant workers. It also helped identify how we communicate and consult with these groups in the future. Consultation, via specific studies, that will lead to more specific consultation in the future will also be undertaken. National and regional studies are also researched.

Gypsies and Travellers

Regular face to face consultation will occur at the Pathlow and Darlingscott sites.

Gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender people

Voluntary question asked in the Place Survey (all councils in Warwickshire included question) gives some information on this sector.

Faith Groups

A Stratford Faith Forum is being set up to meet quarterly.

Vulnerable Communities

This will focus on groups such as residents in rural isolation, residents on low income, and older residents living in private rented accommodation. The techniques for consultation will be developed.

"OTHER" CONSULTATIONS

SDC Employees / Members

Regular consultation with its employees is an important aspect for an organisation to undertake.

Surveys will include staff surveys, internal quality of service surveys and ad hoc issue based surveys, e.g. Appraisals.

Regular consultation for Member development is important on the aspects of Council work they require more knowledge, and obtain their views on issues such as Ethical Governance, IT needs, Member Development etc.

Statement of Community Involvement

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) that sets out how the local authority will involve interested parties in preparing and revising Local Development Documents (LDDs) and for consulting on all planning applications. The SCI describes the consultation approaches that the District Council will employ, who it will consult and provides part of the assessment criteria for approval of each Local Development Document by the Secretary of State. The Council established the SCI in April 2006. This gives SDC an enhanced degree of community involvement and participation in planning documents. There is more linkage with community plans and strategies, village appraisals, parish plans etc. Methodologies used include surveys via the website, usage of current corporate consultation methodologies, questionnaires, etc.

Local Development Framework (Core Strategy)

Extensive consultation has already taking place on the Draft Core Strategy, with residents, interested parties, agents, and developers. With the initial consultation on the Strategy now complete the official document is due for consultation in November 2009. A variety of consultation techniques will again be used.

“Visions” for market towns and World Class Stratford

Consultation will continue on the development of the area visions, using various techniques of research. These techniques include:

- Attendance at existing community events, e.g. Alcester Street Market, Shipston Wool Fair, Southam Carnival
- Community Forums that will help develop the action plans for the visions
- Develop new Visions for places such as Wellesbourne / Kineton and Henley / Studley encompassing the views of councillors and residents
- In partnership with the County Council, work with businesses to find out their needs from the public sector (Business Information Forums)

World Class Stratford has a regular community forum as part of a programme of consultation events associated with specific schemes.

Health Inequality

Working with partners and the PCT there is a need to engage with the disengaged. This will come in the form of face to face consultation and attendance at community events such as “Tea in the Tent”. Areas of inequality in the District will be targeted.