

Consultation, Communication and Engagement Strategy

Report to the Mayor in response to his consultation

As part of the Mayor's consultation, the Overview and Scrutiny Board has considered the draft Consultation, Communication and Engagement Strategy.

The Board had asked a Task-and-Finish Group to review the draft Strategy and the Group's views were reported back to the Board. The feedback included that there does not appear to be a communication protocol between partner agencies, there is an inconsistent approach to consultation across the Council and that Torbay Council is not effectively communicating the financial challenges ahead.

The Board agreed that the following response be made to the Mayor:

1. There is currently a lack of capacity within Corporate Services to effectively deliver the proposed strategy and this has potentially serious implications for the reputation of the Council and puts the authority at the risk of legal challenge.
2. The Council should look to work with partner organisations to establish a protocol for joint communications and, where appropriate, consultation.
3. In order to better inform and engage with its residents, the Council should invest in its website and assess the costs of including additional communication material with items that are currently posted to households such as Council Tax bills.
4. The Strategy should include an aim or objective of seeking to engage with and empower the public and stakeholders in order to bring about positive change for the good of the community.
5. The Strategy should make clear that any consultation undertaken by the Council should be agreed by the Corporate Support team in order that the risk of potential legal challenge can be mitigated.
6. The Strategy should address how the Council, and Councillors in particular, can manage the public's expectations in terms of consultation and engagement.
7. Consideration should be given to have a limited number of key performance indicators to measure how engaged the public believe they are in the Council's business.
8. There should be a Customer Service Training Programme for all public facing officers.
9. The feasibility of having an online e-Viewpoint Panel through a dedicated website and via social media should be explored.
10. The Strategy should include an action plan so that its effectiveness can be monitored.

At the meeting of the Board, Councillor Haddock reported that he would seek to set up a meeting between himself and Councillor Mills (as Executive Lead) and the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board task-and-finish group to review and update the document prior to it being submitted to the Council for approval. The Board hopes that this will be a positive meeting.