

Planning and Regeneration

# **Consultation and Communication Strategy**

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Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, Best Value authorities (this includes Birmingham) are required to implement the Duty to Inform, Consult and Involve by April 2009. This has been introduced in an endeavour to embed a culture of engagement and empowerment and to widen and deepen the involvement of local communities in shaping our own futures. As an organisation, Birmingham will need to have key outcomes and measures in place across the board, which will be tested through the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) inspection processes.

The Corporate Policy and Performance Team have already developed guidance relevant to “Duty” – eg Share and Compare (which gives guidance on corporate data protocols). They are also producing practical guidance with regard to “Inform”, “Consult” and “Involve” and regarding minimum standards and good practice.

Aside from our statutory obligation identified about within the SCI, the need to consult with members of the public and customers and non-users is becoming more and more important with the onset of the above and therefore in Planning and Regeneration we are aware of the value of consultation and see it as an opportunity rather than simply a duty. There are a number of benefits to consultation:

- x Encouraging our stakeholders to become more fully involved in the decision-making process
- x Assisting decision-making about policies, priorities and strategies
- x Targeting Planning Management services more closely to what people want, avoiding what they do not want
- x Increasing responsiveness to Planning’s Contact Centre customer needs
- x Improved take-up of services
- x Potential problems with changes to services can be identified early
- x Improving local democracy
- x Improving the council image
- x Improving community understanding of council work
- x Generating new ideas
- x Testing out proposed ideas before implementing them
- x Monitoring quality of performance
- x Promoting sustainability in improving existing services and introducing new ones
- x Helping the community

With all of these in mind Planning and Regeneration will consult with stakeholders using a variety of tools and methods, appropriate to the needs of its customer groups on a range of topics and issues.

### **2.3 What are we trying to achieve**

- x We recognise the importance of carrying out consultation amongst customers and non-users wherever it is appropriate. This will make sure that services meet our customers needs and are delivered in the way that customers consider being appropriate.
- x We need to identify consultation requirements as part of the business planning process.
- x When taking decisions about service aims and the way that we deliver them, we need to take into account the views of our customers and other stakeholders, whether internal or external to the council.
- x Any consultation exercise needs to be robust, follow best practice and be of the highest possible quality within available resources.
- x We need to feed back the findings of all consultation to those who participated, as well as any action to be undertaken as a result.
- x We need to keep local people informed of progress towards actions agreed as a result of consultation.

### **2.4 Values in consultation**

To ensure consultation with customers and stakeholders is a meaningful experience, we have formulated some consultation standards. They are:

1. We will be clear about what we will consult with customers, stakeholders and providers on and when and how this will be achieved.

2. We will be aware of the limitations and constraints of any consultation exercise
3. We will ensure customers and stakeholders are clear about confidentiality

## **2.5 Who will we consult?**

## 2.8 How will we consult?

There are a wide variety of tools, which will be used, depending on the stakeholder groups to be consulted. Additionally, the methods chosen depending on the type of information we need to elicit from the data requiring facts and figures or more qualitative information and our own thoughts. In addition to the proactive consultation methods employed, we will use tools to collect customer views and comments, including complain

## 2.9 Areas of Consultation

Below lists the areas in which we have engaged, the frequency of engagement, methodology, feedback mechanisms and analysis. This will update

Area	Consultation areas	Method	Frequency of Survey		
Planning Applicants	Satisfaction levels New services Performance levels	Questionnaire by post	Ongoing – letters generated weekly based on the previous weeks decisions	Quarterly by the Business Improvement team	.Gov Plasma Screen Directors (Annually)

### Internal Consultation - Staff Interviews

Questionnaires have been attempted in the past with internal customers and this has met with limited success due to the low return rate and the necessity to have only a few questions in order for staff to take the time to complete the questionnaire. Face-to-face interviews will be with staff for no longer than 20 minutes and will be conducted with different levels of staff. Areas such as the Planning and Regeneration Enquiry Centre will be addressed allowing staff to raise any issues, which arise and require further investigation. Staff will then be invited to take part in a one-off focus group to be discussed in more depth. The interviews with internal customers will be carried out with 5% of the total population of the possible customers and the sample will be randomly selected.

### External customer questionnaire survey

Due to the large population size of customers for Planning and Regeneration customer satisfaction surveys have been deemed to be the most appropriate method for consulting with the general public. Surveys allow the gathering of information on the types of customers, their needs and wants as well as their thoughts and feelings on the service and its staff. Satisfaction surveys and who our target audiences are will be reviewed annually

### Survey Monkey – Online Survey method

This method is new to us and will be piloted on the Enquiries Team.

### Mystery Shopping

### 2.11 How we will feedback the results

We will ensure the best possible levels of inclusion ensuring that the results of any consultation exercise will be fed back to the consultees. The stakeholders who took the time to participate or respond will be informed how their views and involvement have affected the decision. The methods used to feedback will largely depend on the stakeholder group involved in the consultation. We will ensure that the right method for feeding back is chosen, to ensure the best possible levels of inclusion. Results will be published honestly and highlight where we can improve as well as where we have done well.

This is not an exhaustive list, but some of the methods to feedback include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>x Council's Internet Pages</li><li>x Councils Intranet pages (for internal consultees)</li><li>x Leaflets</li><li>x Publications</li><li>x Posters</li><li>x Council Committee meetings</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>x Displays</li><li>x Media articles</li><li>x Forums</li><li>x Meetings</li><li>x Newsletters</li><li>x Plasma screen in Reception</li><li>x Internal meetings</li></ul>
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### 2.12 What we will do with the results

All of the results will be evaluated by the responsible team/officer. These results will be considered when planning follow on or future communication or activity. Any lessons learned and good practice will be shared via the Be Heard Consultation Database. All the results will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be not shared with any third parties.

### 2.13 Be Heard Database

This is a corporate database that will house all past, current and future consultation initiatives carried out by Birmingham City Council and Be-Birmingham organisations/partners. The database is a user friendly web based tool that will encourage joint working and vastly improve the sharing of information and resources between the Council and its partner organisations when consulting with members of the public. It will also help to avoid duplication and over consultation of the public. It will also be used as a monitoring tool for Birmingham City Council and ultimately generate the usual consultation plan. Access to Be Heard is <http://beheard.birmingham.gov.uk> All the results will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be not shared with any third parties.

### 2.14 Equality Analysis and Objectives

Promoting equality and tackling inequalities is at the heart of the Councils current goals. Planning and Regeneration have a representative on the Directorates Equalities, Consultation and Engagement Steering group. This group provides the opportunity to share best practice



- x Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- x Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The new duty covers the following eight protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and `sexual orientation.

### **3. Customer Feedback**

Formal surveys are not the only way we learn what our customers think of the services we provide. This section identifies other feedback mechanisms including liaison meetings with the Corporate Contact Centre colleagues, User Forums, mystery shoppers, Councillors and service complaints.

#### **3.1 Satisfaction Surveys**

An effective customer satisfaction survey program focuses on measuring customer perceptions of how well we deliver on key critical areas of the service, these include factors like service promptness, staff responsiveness, and understanding of the customer's problem all of which form part of our Charter. Developing a customer satisfaction programme is not just about carrying out a survey. Surveys provide the reading that shows where attention is required but in many respects, this is the easy part. Very often, major long lasting improvements need a fundamental transformation, probably involving staff training or cultural change. The result should be financially beneficial with less customer dissatisfaction, stronger reputation, and happier staff. The implications of customer satisfaction surveys go far beyond the survey itself and will only be successful if fully supported.

Section 2.9 demonstrates our areas for consultation using satisfaction surveys as a method for consultation.

Appendix 1 – Planning Applicants Survey

Appendix 2 - Enforcement Customer Service

#### **3.2 Service Complaints**

The analysis of service complaints enables us to identify issues which will benefit other customers. Analysis of our Stage 1 complaints (where officers have resolved a problem for a customer without the customer having to write in formally to us) also enables us to identify everyday, 'quick fix' issues which will benefit other customers.

#### **3.3 User Forums**

All user forums are attended by senior officers who

#### **3.4 Corporate Contact Centre feedback**

Regular meetings with colleagues in customer services will ultimately create feedback. This will be generated from those advisors providing advice to planning and regenerations customers via the contact centre

#### **3.5 Mystery shoppers**

It is widely recognised that Mystery Shopping helps measure and monitor the satisfaction of service users. Poor levels of service damages customer satisfaction and can spread negative perceptions. Mystery Shopping explores the actual customer experience at a moment in time. It provides unique ways of measuring performance against set standards and identifies strengths and weaknesses. It provides a powerful tool for service managers by highlighting areas requiring improvement. Mystery Shopping can be done in a number of ways e.g. in person, by telephone, by letter.





The Culture of the Organisation - Is challenging for an organisation to build and foster a truly customer focused culture. To cultivate and embed this there must be a commitment to it throughout an organisation, from the strategic leader to the front-line staff.

Information and Access - Customers value accurate and comprehensive information that is



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Your Ref: AgenttRef



## Customer Satisfaction Survey

Your Ref:

Date: Friday 2nd March 2012

Complainants Name

Complainants Address

Site Address Here.....

Dear Sir / Madam

I am writing to you following the closure of a recent Planning Enforcement Investigation of which you notified us of the issue.

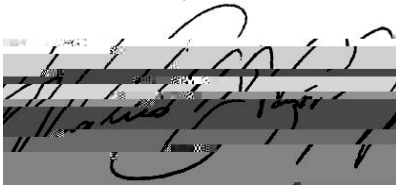
To help us monitor and make improvements Planning and Regeneration welcome customer feedback about our service. **Disregarding the outcome of the above case**, would you please spend a few minutes completing our customer service questionnaire set out on the reverse of this letter.

**Any information you provide will only be used for service monitoring and will not be used outside of Planning and Regeneration. Please return this questionnaire using the following freepost address. Freepost RSXB-ATZL-RTHU, Planning and Regeneration Customer Satisfaction, Birmingham, B1 1TU or email it to [planningandregenerationenquiries.gov.uk](http://planningandregenerationenquiries.gov.uk)**

The analysis and outcomes from the completed customer questionnaires will be published annually on our website [www.birmingham.gov.uk/planning](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/planning)

Thank you for sparing the time to complete our customer service questionnaire

Yours faithfully



Waheed Nazir, Director of Planning and Regeneration

1. Before you made your complaint, did you feel sufficiently informed about our service and what you could expect	Yes No	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
2. How did you access this information in relation to the enforcement service? You can select more than one option?	Website Telephone Visit Other (please state)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Did we meet your expectations in terms of delivering the enforcement service?  If no please explain why we did not meet your expectations in relation to the following:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Enforcement Charter</li> <li>• Timeliness of responses</li> <li>• The Enforcement Process</li> <li>• Understanding the outcome of the complaint</li> </ul>	Yes No	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Did you have any reason to contact the department during the lifetime of this case? if yes how did you contact us?	Email Telephone Writing	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Did you use our Planning Direct Contact Centre? (303 1115)	Yes No	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
6. How would you rate the quality of information provided to you by the Planning Direct Contact Centre service?	Very Good Good Satisfactory Poor N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
7. Did you have any contact with the Enforcement Officer during the processing of this case?	Yes No	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
8. How would you rate the overall professionalism of the Enforcement Officer in the following areas  If you answered satisfactory or poor to question 8 please explain further in relation to the following:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone</li> <li>• On site</li> <li>• Response times</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	Very Good	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Do you have any suggestions for improving the service we provide? If yes please explain, use a separate sheet if required.	Yes No	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>





**Planning & Regeneration**  
PO Box 28, Birmingham B1 1TU



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Your Ref:

1. Did you make enquiries with our service prior to carrying out the alleged works that were the subject of this case?	Yes No	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
2. If yes to question 1, how did you do this and what advice did you receive. (You can select more than one option)	Website Telephone Visit Other (please state)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
3. If you answered No to question 1 please explain further		
4. Did we meet your expectations in terms of delivering the enforcement service?  If no please explain why we did not meet your expectations in relation to the following:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Enforcement Charter</li> <li>• Timeliness of responses</li> <li>• The Enforcement Process</li> <li>• Understanding the outcome of the complaint</li> </ul>	Yes No	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Did you have any melo1son s846Yd 0 30.2contact the department during the lifetime of this case? if yes how did you contact us?	Email Telephone Writing	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
6. Did you use our Planning Direct Contact Centre? (303 1115)	Yes No	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

### Terms of Reference

#### Householder User Forum

The Householder User forum provides an opportunity for closer working for mutual benefit and provides the chance for agents to influence and comment upon proposed service improvements.

#### Objectives

- To provide a forum for two-way discussion of service issues, subjects and new initiatives between Officers of BCC and agents operating in Birmingham
- To provide an opportunity for agents to provide feedback on service improvements and suggest future improvements
- To provide an opportunity for agents to have issues raised for discussion

#### Stakeholders

- Officers from BCC involved in dealing with householder planning applications
- Agents who regularly submit householder planning applications

#### Scope

- The focus of activity will be on service improvement and the improvement of customer services
- The forum shall not discuss individual submitted planning applications
- The forum will operate as a consultative group from which appropriate suggestions and ideas may form part of future changes and improvements to the service. The decisions for service improvement will rest with the service

#### Operation

- The Forum will meet on a 6 monthly basis. Additionally, meetings may be convened for specific issues.
- Membership of the forum will be limited to 12 agents or less and will rotate on a bi annual basis.
- An agenda and papers will be circulated in advance of each meeting
- The agenda of the Forum meetings shall be structured according to subject or work and all members of the forum may request items to be included on the agenda.
- Agenda items should be forwarded not less than two weeks in advance of the meeting to the Office Coordinator, Planning Management
- The Forum shall be chaired by an elected non Council member
- Minutes shall be circulated within one week of the meeting
- Meetings will normally last no longer than 2 hours.

#### Sub-groups and ad hoc groups

- Ad hoc groups may be established for specific issues with the agreement of the forum
- Sub-groups may be established at the request of the Forum to cover Forum matters targeting a particular set of topics

### Terms of Reference

#### Planning and Regeneration User Forum

The Planning and Regeneration User Forum will provide an opportunity for closer working for mutual benefit and provide the chance for developers and other stakeholders to influence and comment upon proposed service improvements.

#### Objectives

- To provide a forum for discussion of service issues, subjects new initiatives and between Officers of BCC, major developers and other stakeholders operating in Birmingham
- To provide an opportunity for major developers and other stakeholders to provide feedback on service improvements and suggest future improvements
- To provide an opportunity for developers to have issues raised for discussion by the forum

#### Stakeholders

- Officers and Planning Managers from BCC involved in dealing with non householder type planning applications
- Representatives from the development industry and their agents
- Representatives from local community and interest groups

#### Scope

- The focus of activity will be on service improvement and the improvement of customer services
- The forum shall not discuss individual planning applications
- There are no decision making powers granted to the forum. Any decisions for service improvements will rest with the service. However, where appropriate comment the forum can make.

