

RMBC CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

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1) Context of consultation and engagement

1.1 How to use this toolkit

This toolkit relates mostly to formal consultations, and is aimed at helping you to plan, design and deliver a robust public consultation.

Contained within this toolkit are examples of the tools and techniques you can use within each step. The toolkit is intended as a step-by-step guide, to be referred to as and when you need it during the consultation process.

Ideally, you should be starting the process 6 weeks before the start of the consultation period, as the standard timeframe for this is 12 weeks, followed by the timeframe for Cabinet to formally consider the results of the consultation if required. It may be helpful to look at the date you need the decision by and work backwards.

In designing that consultation you can build on the engagement work you have already undertaken – but we would recommend approaching the design of a formal public consultation as a project that is different from your regular engagement activity.

This guidance has been developed in support of and in line with the **RMBC Consultation and Engagement Policy**, which is attached as **appendix A**.

1.2 What do we mean by consultation and engagement?

The words ‘consultation’ and ‘engagement’ are often used interchangeably.

In this guidance, **consultation** means ‘formal’ consultation that is needed to enable the council to make an informed decision about service changes, reductions or new services.

Engagement describes the various ways we reach out to individuals, organisations, groups and communities to attract their interest, involvement and cooperation in the services we provide.

Engagement can be undertaken for many purposes:

- Gathering insight and business intelligence
- Promoting community resilience (enabling individuals and communities to understand and improve their own conditions)
- Involving people directly in the delivery of our services

Most formal **consultation** will contain various elements – in particular **informing, listening and involving**.

1.3 Do I need to do a formal consultation or an informal engagement?

Thinking about whether you need to consult people – and when – should be a key part of your planning. You will also need to understand who needs to make the decisions.

You should consider carrying out a public consultation exercise on measures that are likely to impact significantly on residents, sections of the community, business, the public sector, charities, or on the voluntary sector. Temporary solutions should also be consulted on if the proposals significantly affect the community, or its particular sections.

The presumption should always be to involve those who will be affected, those who might be affected, or those with an interest in a proposed service change, at the earliest possible stage. Pre-consultation exercises may be as effective as the consultation ones, and should ease the actual consultation process.

Proposals for major service change, including closure of existing premises, will require approval from Full Council or Cabinet's approval. Therefore, it is imperative to demonstrate that adequate public involvement has been undertaken to help develop proposals and recommendations.

Further guidance on when to consult and on our statutory obligations to consult can be obtained from the Corporate Consultation and Engagement Group or your Head of Service/Strategic Director.

2) What you need to know before you start

2.1 When will (engagement and) consultation take place?

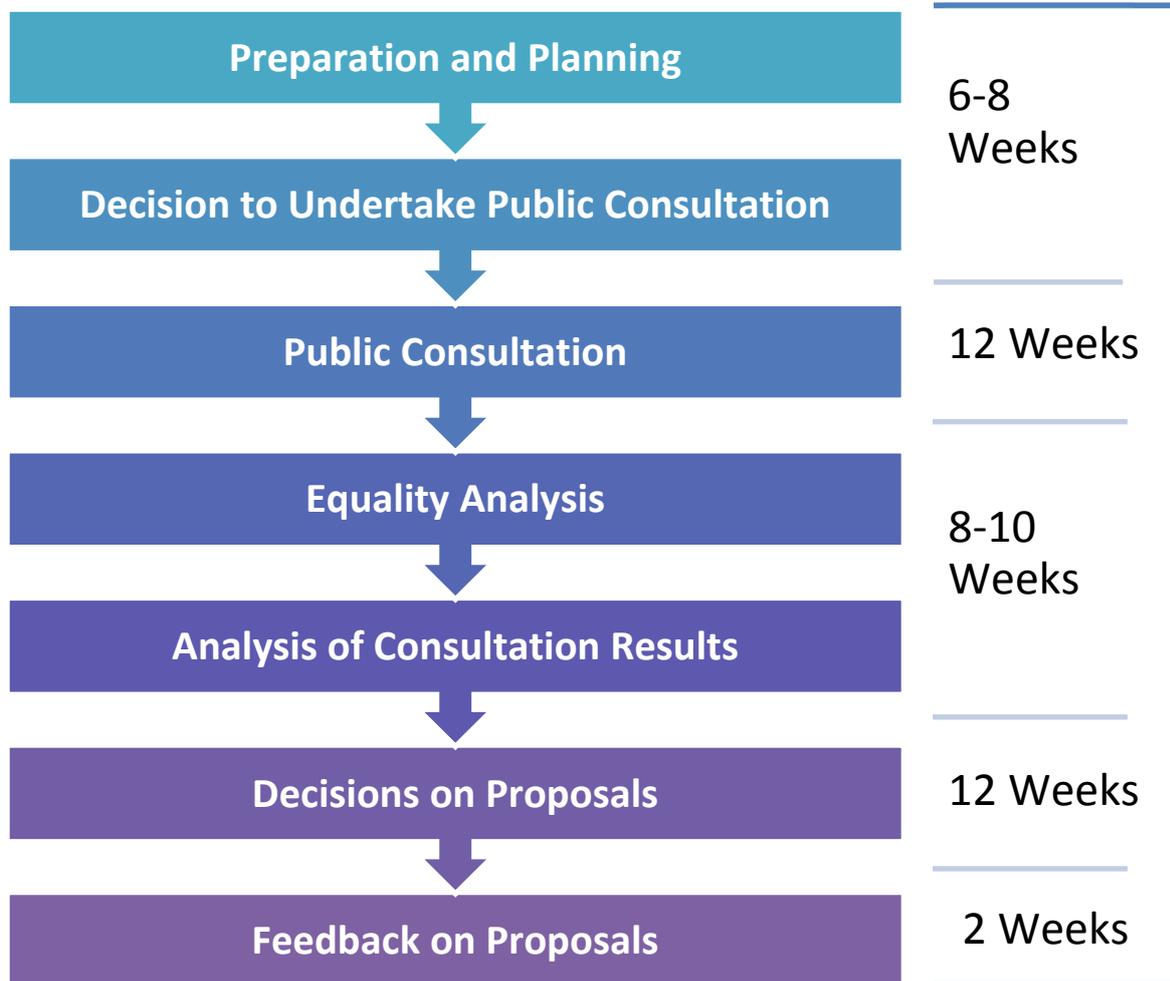
Consultation needs to take place when proposals are still at a formative stage. We should enter into the consultation with an open mind.

Formal public consultation needs to take place before decisions have been made.

Remember - it takes time to develop a robust consultation process and that it takes time to analyse the results of a consultation.

It could take at least three months to design and develop a public consultation process with robust supporting information. Another three months for the consultation to take place and - taking into account Cabinet cycles – it could take another three months before Cabinet can formally consider the results of a consultation. You will also need to contact the relevant Members for your ward/area and inform them of the consultation at the formative stage.

Suggested process (approximate timings):



Whether you should include early engagement and how long these various stages take will vary, depending on the complexity and scale of the change you are considering.

The following is a more in-depth example of an average consultation timeline. The schedule is tight and relies on robust forward planning. Do not assume you will always be able to conduct your consultation in a similar time-frame.

2.2 What will the public consultation be about?

A public consultation is not just about what we want it to be about – it is also about what the public or stakeholders expect it to be about.

Even if you have used informal engagement so far, the consultation may be the first formal opportunity for those affected by the proposals to respond.

As consultations have to be ‘entered into with an open mind’, the scope of a public consultation is therefore not limited to the practical proposals themselves, but in most cases extends to the underlying policies and the principles, priorities and assumptions that have been made in developing those proposals.

How developed should proposals be?

There is always a tension between having enough detailed information for people to understand the proposals and having enough opportunity for people to shape the proposals.

If the proposals are too detailed, this might give the impression of a ‘done deal’. Not enough detail will lead people to complain there isn’t enough information for them to make a qualified judgement on the proposals.

Finally, think about how people will perceive the consultation. Are there any potential misunderstandings? Is this subject likely to be sensitive? Giving some honest thought to such questions will help in developing a robust consultation.

2.3 What are we aiming to achieve through the consultation?

Our main aim is to inform decision-making. However, a public consultation is not a referendum. Although Cabinet will be interested to understand the level of support for the proposals, many of the decisions they need to take during challenging financial times are unpopular and will remain so.

A consultation should be about more than finding out whether people agree with the proposals or not.

To inform robust decision making, we might ask questions like:

- What could be the likely impact of our proposals?
- How can we mitigate any negative impact?
- Which option do people prefer and why?
- What alternatives are there (within the budget available)?
- What practical barriers or opportunities are there?

- Have we missed anything?
- What can we do to encourage people to get involved in delivering solutions with us?

Consultation can be a way of gauging people's appetite and interest – and a way of developing a relationship with communities which can be built upon, especially when behaviour change is key to the success of the proposals.

2.4 What do we already know?

Before you start, you will need to think about previous engagement, research, trends and business intelligence. Consider if there have been any similar recent consultations, not only in the Council but in other partner organisations.

There are lots of sources of information that can help you to develop plans. The Performance, Intelligence and Improvement team can provide you with or signpost you to these.

2.5 Who do we consult with?

The starting point is always: **who will be affected by the service change?**

This is likely to include service users and their families. It may also include other support services, the voluntary and community sector and people living near-by. Try to define your audience as accurately as possible. The answer is rarely 'everyone in Rotherham'.

If you haven't done so yet, undertaking an initial Equality Analysis (EA) will help to identify any particular groups of people who may be affected by the change and would therefore need to be included in the consultation.

At this early stage you should also consider what role the local elected Members and Cabinet Member will have and how you will communicate with them (see 4.1).

As well as contacting Members, it would also be beneficial to contact the relevant Neighbourhood Coordinators for consultations affecting specific wards. For further information please email: viewsfromrotherham@rotherham.gov.uk

Parish and Town councils should also be contacted for both borough-wide and smaller area consultations. Where possible, a letter should be sent to the relevant Parish/Town council informing them that the consultation will be taking place.

Contact details for all the Parish and Town Councils can be found here:

https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/info/200033/councillors_democracy_and_elections/467/see_local_elected_representatives/4

Many service changes will also impact on staff. You should consider how you are communicating and involving staff in the process. You should plan timely opportunities for staff to 'have their say' prior and during the consultation.

Some examples of stakeholders include local businesses, community groups, individuals, employees, schools and trade unions. You may wish to use stakeholder analysis tools that help you to identify who has an interest, who to keep informed, who should be a priority and who has influence.

2.6 Legal considerations

Case-law evolves continuously. The following is an overview of the key legal considerations around consultations.

Considerations from the Public Sector Equality Duty are covered in 2.7 below.

We need to consult for various reasons:

- Where there is a statutory requirement
- Where a group has a legitimate expectation to be consulted in accordance with case law developed by the High Court. For example, service users who have particular needs for and rely upon a service, and recipients of public funding such as voluntary organisations.
- Where the council has committed itself to consultation. For example - the council's 'Compact' with the voluntary and community sector (see 2.8)
- Where consultation is required by Employment Law

Where possible, we should consult for 12 weeks - unless there are other statutory requirements. If less than 12 weeks is allowed we must be able to justify the shorter period.

The council's current consultation standards must be followed (see RMBC Consultation and Engagement Policy - appendix A).

In summary, the standards are:

1. Inclusiveness
2. Clarity of purpose
3. Timely and Planning
4. Communicating, Consulting and Involving in appropriate ways
5. Feedback
6. Delivers change and improved outcomes
7. Capacity and Resources

Subject to the above standards, it is possible for consultation to take place on more than one proposal or for a proposal to include a fall-back position. However, great care must be taken to ensure information is clear and to avoid confusion.

You should also consider providing people with an option to explain why current arrangements should continue.

There should be a clearly recorded process:

- deciding on the groups and individuals to be consulted
- deciding on the most appropriate methods of consultation
- determining the contents of the information to be provided
- recording the responses
- demonstrating how these responses have been taken into account

When we consult with vulnerable adults – we also need to comply with the **Research Governance Framework**.

Your legal and policy framework must be checked to ensure an understanding of:

- the nature and extent of any statutory duty to provide a service
- the terms of existing contracts to deliver a service, including its duration and any penalties for terminating it early
- whether what is proposed is a departure from current council policy, which will inform the decision making

Where a decision may lead to redundancies, you must consult with staff and trade unions whilst developing and consulting more widely on a proposal.

Further consultation and a formal action plan will be required once there is a clear proposal to make redundancies.

You also need to consult where a TUPE transfer will take place as a result of a decision. Current council practice is to consult at an earlier stage. TUPE transfers are complex, the law is constantly evolving and HR advice should always be sought.

Consultation exercises should not generally be launched during local or national election periods (purdah). If exceptional circumstances make a consultation absolutely essential (for example, for safeguarding public health), you should seek advice from the Council Legal Services team.

2.7 Equalities Considerations

The **Equality Act 2010** and the **Public Sector Equality Duty** require all public authorities to have due regard for the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The **protected characteristics** outlined in the Equality Act 2010 are:

- age
- disability
- gender re-assignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

What the Public Sector Equality Duty requires

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is clear that all public authorities must have an adequate basis for decision making.

Engaging with individuals and groups across the protected characteristics can help you to gather the views and ideas of those who might be affected by your decisions.

It is important that we consult with specific groups who may be directly affected by proposals as we need to understand the impact of our decisions on different people.

A failure to engage means that we haven't complied with equality duties.

Equality Analysis

Equality Analysis (EA) is vital in identifying particular groups that may be affected by a proposed change to a policy, procedure, function or service.

In most cases, as part of the decision making process, you will also need to complete an EA in connection with the change you are planning.

The EA process uses relevant information, research and data to understand and assess the impact of a policy, procedure, function or service.

You can use your initial EA to identify any specific groups that are most likely to be affected by the proposals, or any groups who may be likely to be disproportionately affected.

The initial EA is also a good starting point to understand what monitoring and information has already been gathered and how any additional information needs to be collected.

The EA process and consultation process are linked and it therefore helps to plan them together:

EA Consultation

Initial EA/Screening

- Identifies particular groups affected most / disproportionately 
- Identifies data needs to understand impact 

Consultation design

Informs target audience for consultation – ensure

- Affected groups are reached and able to respond
- Helps identify consultation / survey design to help collate relevant info



Consultation results

Survey results

Focus group feedback

Other feedback received

Full EA

Information gathered through consultation helps inform the full EA 

In cases where the proposals you need to consult on are likely to have significant impact on one or more of the protected characteristics, it may be beneficial to undertake an Equality Analysis on the consultation process itself. This would be used to capture, document and evidence your accessibility considerations and will enable you to plan for any requirements for the relevant protected groups and ensure you have consulted with a wide range of individuals throughout the process.

In some cases a Research Governance Application may need to be completed. This is likely to be the case where you will need to consult directly with vulnerable service users.

The evidence arising from consultation and engagement will in turn help to inform the full EA process and results, including by:

- Assessing the impact on equality of particular policies or proposals
- Identifying ways to mitigate adverse impacts on certain groups

Further information about RMBC's Equality Analysis is available on the following link: [RMBC Equality Analysis](#)

Equality monitoring

You should consider the Council's Equalities Policy: [RMBC Equality and Diversity Policy](#)

2.8 Rotherham Compact

The Rotherham Compact is an agreement between public sector organisations (public services) who are members of the Rotherham Together Partnership (RTP) and voluntary and community organisations in Rotherham (referred to collectively as the voluntary and community sector or VCS). It sets out the following commitments that should be complied with on both sides:

The public sector commits:

- to actively involve the VCS in the development of policies and services
- to identify implications for the VCS when assessing the impact of new policies, guidance and efficiencies
- to conduct 12-week formal consultations on decisions, with written and published explanations for shorter timescales

The voluntary and community sector commits:

- to work together with public sector bodies to ensure representation and consultation takes place
- to provide a voice for communities to influence decisions
- to accept that, in rare cases, consultation may need to be shorter than 12 weeks

Any public consultation that involves changes in services commissioned to VCS organisations would normally be expected to be for 12 weeks.

The Compact says that we should give three months' notice to VCS sector organisations that will be affected by any change or review of contracts or support. This doesn't apply when we've previously agreed an end date.

Where a Cabinet decision that will follow from the public consultation does not directly affect VCS contracts, but is likely to have significant implications for the VCS, i.e. by increasing demand or pressure on their resources, a 12-week consultation period is desirable.

The target of your consultation may be broader than voluntary and community sector groups, for example it may include individuals or businesses, but there are some important principles in the Rotherham Compact which you should understand and implement to ensure that RMBC is compliant with its commitments in the Compact.

The Rotherham Compact is available here:

<http://rotherhamtogetherpartnership.org.uk/>

2.9 Resources and governance

You will need to consider early on what resources you have available to support the consultation – and any support you are likely to need, including the following:

- Designing the consultation
- Pulling the consultation information together
- Planning any consultation events
- Staff to support and attend the events
- Analysing the results

There are likely to be financial costs associated with the consultation. This might include:

- design and print
- venue hire
- data entry and analysis
- external facilitators or researchers

Some of these costs may be covered from corporate support resources, but in most cases you will be expected to contribute towards these costs. It is therefore useful to identify early on what budget you have available to support the consultation.

You will need to make a range of decisions. Considering your 'governance' is key:

- Who will be in charge of leading the consultation design – and who do they need to report to or escalate issues with?
- Who is ultimately responsible and at what stages do they need to be involved?
- What is the role of the Lead Member – and who will brief the Lead Member in relation to the consultation?
- Who will make the decisions as to what staffing and financial resources can be used?
- Who will sign off the consultation documents?

3) Consultation design

3.1 Consultation design – getting started

Designing and planning a consultation is an iterative process and one that benefits from a project management approach.

Before you start designing detailed documents and surveys, you will need to fill in a **Consultation and Engagement Online Form**: ([Link](#))

This will:

- clearly capture the **scope, purpose and objectives**
- outline the key consultation content
- outline the tools you will use
- detail other considerations that impact on the consultation design

The '**Consultation and Engagement Online Form**':

- is an internal working document
- can be used to capture how the consultation standards are being applied
- will be submitted to the **Corporate Consultation and Engagement Group** for comments and to help establish what support you may need
- will inform further work – such as surveys, events and other key tools

Alongside the Consultation and Engagement Online Form, it will be useful to work with the Corporate Communications Team and the Customer Services Web Team on the approach to communications and start a detailed planner linking to your political timeline. Further advice is provided on the next page.

Too often, consultations are designed by starting with the tools people want to use without considering first if those tools are the most appropriate for engaging those affected by the proposals. The resources required to deliver the consultation should also be proportionate to the impact of those proposals. The information in this chapter will help you design a consultation that is both appropriate and proportionate.

To design a consultation you start with the scope, the aims and objectives and the target audience. They form the basis from which you can work out the details, such as the length and timing, the key questions to ask, the key information to provide, the mix of consultation tools to use and the steps to ensure you reach your target audiences.

The following paragraphs go into more detail about designing and planning a consultation.

3.2 Scope, aims and objectives of the consultation

You should now be ready to develop the scope of the public consultation as well as the aims and objectives.

The **scope** of the consultation is a statement. It explains which policy, strategy, duty etc. the consultation is seeking to inform.

As public consultations have to be entered into 'with an open mind', the scope is often wider than the particular elements you will actively be looking for feedback on.

The scope is not limited to the practical proposals themselves, but extends to the underlying policies, principles, priorities and assumptions that have been made in developing those practical proposals. Unless these have been the subject of a separate public consultation, not including such principles in the scope of the consultation can leave you vulnerable to legal challenges.

In the **aims and objectives** of the consultation you can set out in broad terms what information you need to collect through the consultation to inform robust decision making.

Each objective is likely to reflect a key element of the proposals and refer to one or more of the kind of questions listed in 2.3.

Examples may be:

' to get views on the preferences for proposals to and understand the impact of these proposals on current and potential users.'

' to get views on the preference and priorities for and receive feedback on any alternative ways the council can achieve the savings required.'

The aims and objectives help you to break down the consultation into the most basic building blocks.

Please note that the Consultation and Engagement Online Form is a 'technical' document that primarily serves an internal audience – it isn't intended as the first draft of your public consultation document. So, please set out the scope and the aims/objectives in precise terms.

3.3 Considering the key content of the consultation

After you have established what the scope, aims and objectives of the consultation are, it will be useful to consider for each of the objectives:

- What does the council need an answer to in order to meet this objective? These are your **key questions**.
- What do people need to know to be able to make an informed decision? This is your **key information**.

Key questions

The key questions set out broadly what you/Cabinet would like to understand in more detail to be able to make a robust decision. The key questions are not intended to be the first draft of the survey – although they will inform the survey questions during the detailed design stage.

Key information

Your key information highlights what people must be aware of and have access to so that they can make an informed decision.

This includes information you have used to underpin your proposals or base your assumptions on.

This key information informs the content of the detailed consultation documents, web pages, briefings and presentations.

3.4 Using a mix of engagement and consultation tools

Now you can also start considering what tools you are likely to need to ensure your audience has the information they need, and you receive the feedback that will help Cabinet make an informed decision.

Put simply, a consultation should be publically available from the council website. It should make clear why change is needed, what's being proposed and how people can share their views. It will also include a deadline for responses and what will happen with the feedback.

The same information should be available in a paper format on request.

It is good practice to set out this information in a summary document, which is available in a digital as well as paper format. The Corporate Communications Team and the Customer Services Web Team can help to edit and design your document.

To facilitate the analysis of feedback, most consultations will also include a feedback form for people to use when responding and/or a survey.

A wide range of other tools can be used:

Tools that can be used to...				
Inform	Listen	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Ways in which we can do this are through the use of...				
Dedicated pages/section on RMBC Website	Public comment Focus Groups	Workshops Public meetings	Citizen Advisory Committees Consensus building Participatory decision-making	Ballots Delegated decisions Referendum
Fact sheets / FAQ document	Surveys (for residents / for stakeholders)			
Open houses				
Exhibition	Public Meetings			

Website

All public consultations should be accessible online – from a dedicated page on the Council website (where possible) with links to the documents, surveys and feedback once the consultation is completed.

Contact the Customer Services Web Team for help and advice for setting this up, for example the type and number of questions will influence the way it is presented online and if the consultation is going to be a complex one additional time will be required to set this up.

The Customer Services Web Team should be consulted with at the earliest stage of your consultation to ensure the associated content can be published in the required timescales.

Email the Customer Services Web Team: website@rotherham.gov.uk

Background information: fact sheets, FAQs

The data you have used to underpin proposals should be available for public scrutiny. Background information should be made available in an accessible and easy-to-read format.

If relevant, well researched and robust, this can be an important tool to help people understand the issues.

Pull together complex data in a simple fact sheet which can be available for download. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) allow you to present more detailed information. You could explain the data you have used to underpin the proposals or explain how changes might work in practice.

Public meetings

A public meeting gives you the opportunity to explain your proposals to people and avoid potential misunderstandings.

Public meetings can be organised as 'information events', where you only provide information and answer questions, or as 'consultation events' which are used to listen to feedback.

Depending on the nature of your target audience, it may be appropriate to hold a series of public meetings at different locations or at different times of the day/week. A degree of flexibility to deal with requests for additional meetings may be required.

You will need to consider practical arrangements such as the timing, locations, venue capacity and accessibility requirements.

Also, think about how you will structure your event, who is attending the meeting (Members, senior officers, external facilitator) and how you will capture feedback and comments.

Workshops

A workshop is an opportunity to include users and stakeholders in the design of final proposals and actively use the consultation to shape your ideas.

Workshops can be held at various stages throughout the engagement and consultation process. They are most often used to 'test' ideas, options, policies and strategies before the wider public consultation takes place.

During a public consultation, workshops could be used to provide more detailed information about a particular element of the proposals whilst allowing you to get more informed feedback to help shape that particular element.

Focus groups

Focus groups and related 'opinion research' tools such as 'deliberative workshops' can add to the depth of information you are seeking. They can be targeted at specific demographics or set up to provide a more representative sample.

The key to focus groups is that the participants are selected based on certain criteria. In many cases they are specifically recruited to participate. As such there will not be an opportunity for the public/stakeholders in general to 'have their say'. For this reason they should be considered as complementary 'research' rather than as an integral part of the public consultation.

Focus groups can be used to:

- help you understand ‘why’ people think the way they do
- get the views of specific target audiences that may otherwise be underrepresented in the public consultation response

The audience that responds to public consultations are usually directly affected. Those who fear negative impacts are more likely to respond. In some cases it may be useful to find out through focus groups what a more representative audience thinks about the proposals.

3.5 Determining the length and timing of consultation

The consultation period is the time when information about proposals is available and people are able to provide feedback. The consultation period needs to allow reasonable time for people to find out about the consultation, to absorb the information and to draft and submit a response.

A consultation period of 12 weeks is often used. This is considered a reasonable timeframe.

12 weeks is also a requirement of the Compact with the voluntary and community sector (see 2.8 above) and is recommended when consulting with town and parish councils.

There will be circumstances when 12 weeks is not necessary or appropriate.

However – running out of time is not a good enough reason to cut the consultation period short.

You should consider:

- How complex are the proposals?
- How many people or organisations will be impacted?
- How easy will it be to reach your target audience?
- How easy will it be for your target audience to formulate a response? (Organisations generally need more time – they may need to agree their response at a committee or board meeting).

Planning when your consultation will be is important as this may also inform how long it will be open for:

- If you are planning backwards from when Cabinet need to make a decision, consider the time you will need to analyse results and report to other bodies – for example departmental managers and scrutiny

- You may need to allow extra time if the consultation period includes a school holiday
- Think about the right time to launch the consultation – so you reach the most people
- There are restrictions on promotion during pre-election periods

3.6 Reaching your target audiences

Once you have worked out who you need to consult with (see 2.5) you can try and identify any broad groups of people and/or organisations that are perhaps impacted in different ways by the proposals.

Identifying the different target audiences will allow you to plan in more detail how you can best communicate and engage with those audiences.

There may be 'hard to reach' groups that would require targeted communication, engagement or consultation to ensure you understand their views and concerns.

There are existing channels which you can use to engage with your target audience.

3.7 Engagement – accessibility considerations

We have to take reasonable steps to ensure that all target audiences are able to take part in the consultation in an appropriate way.

Particular care will be required where the target audience includes vulnerable people and groups, including those protected under the Equality Act 2010 (see section 2.7).

You will need to:

General

- Work with the Corporate Communications Team to ensure the consultation is promoted via the media – as well as directly to your target audiences
- Work with Customer Services to ensure:
 - any potential customer enquiries or concerns are considered and the appropriate access channels/escalation points are put in place
 - all relevant information is available on a single web page – the Customer Services web team will advise you on how this can be best achieved
 - they have the opportunity to comment on any printed information prior to publication
- Provide contact information for people to use - a phone number and dedicated email address

Documents

- Provide opportunities for people to ask for hard copies
- Ensure all information is clearly laid out, written in plain English. You should work with the council's Corporate Communications Team to design the material
- Be prepared to offer information in different formats and languages – such as Easy Read

Events

- Hold events at locations which are accessible to disabled people
- Ensure consultation events are well promoted
- Plan the timing and location to ensure many people can attend
- Give people the opportunity to contact you if they require assistance.

It may be appropriate to pay for transport, child care or respite care

3.8 Rotherham Equalities Community Reference Group

The Rotherham Equalities Reference Group is an external scrutiny group established to support the Council in ensuring that the needs of under-represented groups and individuals are met.

This group provides a voice for diverse communities in Rotherham and helps to build positive relationships. It also raises awareness of specific equality, diversity and human rights issues affecting groups in Rotherham.

The group is made up of individuals that have a lived experience of equalities.

The group is available to:

- Help ensure that the views of diverse communities in Rotherham are represented in the delivery and any revision of services
- Consult on and scrutinise policies and procedures

If you would like to consult with the group please contact the Performance, Intelligence and Improvement team: viewsfromrotherham@rotherham.gov.uk

3.9 Communications Plan

It is vital that you make contact with the communications team at the very early stages of planning your consultation.

The team is responsible for media relations, marketing, internal communications and design for print and multimedia (please note: The creation of online consultations

and presentation of any associated information on the website is the responsibility of the Customer Services Web Team).

The team will also provide advice on departmental internal communications to ensure consistent messages.

Day-to-day communications with individual stakeholders, or small groups of partners and service users would be unlikely to require the support of the team. However, it's useful to flag this with the unit to ensure consistent, timely and accurate messages.

Email the Communications Team: corporate.comms@rotherham.gov.uk

4) Being transparent

4.1 Engaging Elected Members

Engaging Members effectively is vital and will need to be in place throughout the process. To formally start a consultation process, you may need Cabinet approval – for example, if you are consulting about a major service change or other significant service development which is likely to appear on the forward plan or is of wider public interest. If your proposal impacts on two wards or more or will incur/save £400,000 or more, it is a key decision and should be included on the Forward Plan.

Cabinet approval is usually required to carry out a consultation, including its scope, aims, and objectives. Consideration should be given in the consultation to the equality implications and how specific groups with protected characteristics will be consulted with.

Following Cabinet approval, officers will need to liaise with the Portfolio Holder on the detailed design. There may be instances where there are more cross-cutting issues which require the input of one or more Cabinet Members. You will need to ensure that each Cabinet Member is briefed on the proposals and is aware of timelines.

If the consultation is on a major service change/ development or of wider public interest, you may also need to submit the draft consultation proposals or outcomes to scrutiny. Liaise with Scrutiny Officers to determine if Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) or one of the Select Commissions may wish to consider the proposals and when this can be scheduled. Please ensure that you have considered the equality implications and these are reflected in your proposals.

All Members will need to know about the consultation – and the media implications – before the launch. You can inform them through the Members Newsletter in brief or by alerting individual Members to local issues. If the consultation is on a particularly sensitive issue, you may want to hold detailed briefings with ward members to alert them of proposals.

Please note: this doesn't take into account the communications you will be doing with staff and externally.

Before you launch –

A 'key decision' goes onto the Cabinet forward plan

Lead Member briefing

Cabinet Briefing

OSMB/Cabinet

Members Newsletter/local member notification

Reporting results –

Cabinet briefing

Members News in Brief /publish results on the website

OSMB

Cabinet Briefing

Cabinet (if needed)

Full Council (if needed)

To find individual Members for local issues: <https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/cllrs>

To inform Members through the Member Newsletter please email:

membersupport@rotherham.gov.uk

4.2 Provision of data and evidence in support of options for consultation

It is imperative that the data and evidence you use to inform your consultation is robust and will stand up to scrutiny. There are various sources including usage figures, user feedback, and results from previous consultations and reports.

Think about what you will make available and how this will support the aims of your consultation. Support is available from the Communications Team to help you present information that is appropriate for your audiences.

4.3 Preparing public consultation documents

It will take time to draft and agree your consultation. Consultation documents need to make it clear what the proposals are about and why the change is required.

When talking about proposals, you must clearly reflect that these are proposals, rather than things that have already been decided. All information must be true and stand up to scrutiny.

The questions you ask in the survey need to be clear, concise and without bias. You should consider whether you are seeking opinions or preferences and use appropriate question styles to reflect this.

Please contact the **Corporate Consultation and Engagement Group** for guidance and support in preparing your documents at an early stage.

5) Reporting findings

5.1 Responding to, capturing feedback and collating data

The information you capture and how you do this will be dependent on the tools you use and the questions you ask.

Qualitative data such as feedback and written comments may provide you a more in depth understanding of what your respondents think however consideration must be given to how you analyse the responses.

In addition to survey responses, feedback may also be provided by email or letter. Such responses will need to be acknowledged or answered and summarised for analysis.

Quantitative data can be recorded and presented in various formats.

Advice on how to do this and the appropriate methods is available from the Performance, Intelligence and Improvement Team.

Where alternative proposals have been put forward these will need to be assessed and considered when making decisions.

Additional time for analysis and assessment of proposals will need to be incorporated into your programme for reporting to Cabinet.

5.2 Preparing consultation findings reports

It is likely that you will be preparing a report for Cabinet. Specific guidance is available for preparing Cabinet Reports from Democratic Services.

You need to consider carefully how you include the data findings and what conclusions, if any, you can draw from them. Advice on statistical significance is available from the Performance, Intelligence and Improvement Team.

It is unlikely that your report will contain the full research findings although this should be available, possibly as an appendix.

There are likely to be a number of versions of the report – for different audiences. These will not be concluding or recommending different things, rather they will be tailored or summarised as appropriate.

5.3 Publishing your findings

Your report will be available to the public via the Cabinet Report.

You should also consider the other channels where you are going to publish your findings and what formats they are going to take.

You may need to make information available in different formats so that they are accessible to different audiences.

You should publish information on the Council website, send information or report back directly to those that you engaged with or provide updates and communicate directly with those affected.

6) Accessing consultation and engagement support

6.1 Where can you go for advice and support?

The Corporate Consultation and Engagement Group provides guidance, advice and challenge to ensure robust and co-ordinated communication, consultation, engagement and Equality Analysis processes are in place to support the delivery of major service change and co-ordinate the allocation of resources to support public facing consultation and engagement.

For more information and to access the group's advice and support, please contact :

E-mail: viewsfromrotherham@rotherham.gov.uk or phone 01709 334020