

BRIEFING	TO:	Members of OSMB
	DATE:	8 September 2026
	LEAD OFFICER:	Barbel Gale, Governance Manager
	TITLE:	OSMB Scrutiny Review - The Council's Consultation Process
1. Background		
1.1	The topic was selected for scrutiny review following concerns raised about the effectiveness and accessibility of the Council's consultation processes. In particular, there was concern that some consultations are undertaken during periods such as the summer holidays, when residents, stakeholders and service users may be less able to participate, potentially affecting response rates and the representativeness of feedback received.	
1.2	The review provides an opportunity to examine how the Council engages with interested parties and whether current consultation methods are achieving the desired level of participation. This will include hearing evidence from existing approaches to Consultation across the Council in order to understand the present position, identify best practice, encourage cross-directorate learning and identify any areas for improvement more generally. The review will be supported by the Council’s Policy, Performance and Improvement Team who provide central support for those responsible for consultations.	
1.3	A key focus of the review will be accessibility, ensuring that consultation processes are inclusive and enable all sections of the community to participate. The review will also consider examples of good practice from across the Council, including consultation approaches used by each of the Council’s Directorates, to identify lessons that could be applied more widely.	
1.4	In addition, the review will explore how feedback is communicated to participants following consultations. This includes considering the effectiveness of "You Said, We Did" approaches and ensuring there is clear communication where suggestions cannot be implemented, helping to demonstrate transparency, accountability and the impact of public engagement.	
2. Purpose of the Review		
2.1	The review will assess whether the Council's consultation arrangements enable residents and stakeholders to participate effectively, particularly where consultation outcomes are intended to inform decision-making.	
2.2	Through examination of selected consultation case studies and stakeholder evidence, the review will identify opportunities to improve accessibility, participation and communication of outcomes.	
3. Scope of the Review		

3.1	The review will examine a small number of recent consultation exercises to assess whether the Council's current arrangements support accessible participation, timely engagement and effective feedback to residents. The review will use selected case studies to identify strengths, areas for improvement and examples of good practice.
3.2	The review will focus on three key areas: • Planning and Governance - including consultation planning, timing, governance arrangements, quality assurance, corporate guidance and the use of consultation tools and platforms. • Accessibility and Participation - including equality considerations, engagement with under-represented groups, digital inclusion, and approaches used to engage children and young people and other communities. • Feedback and Impact - including the analysis of responses, communication of outcomes, transparency, accountability and the influence of consultation findings on decision-making.
3.3	Benchmarking information, case studies and examples of good practice will be used throughout the review to support assessment of these themes and identify opportunities for improvement.
4. Out of Scope	
4.1	The review will not: • revisit decisions already made following individual consultation exercises; • assess specific service policies except where used as case studies; • evaluate political or legislative requirements for consultation; • investigate complaints relating to individual consultations.
5. Key Stakeholders to Engage	
5.1	The review will seek evidence from a small number of key stakeholders representing those responsible for consultation activity and those who regularly participate in, or support participation in, Council consultations. Internal Stakeholders: • Director of Policy, Strategy and Engagement • Head of Communications and Marketing • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead • Representative from Children's Services • Representative from Adult Social Care • Representative from Corporate Services • Representative from Regeneration and Environment
5.2	The review group would also benefit from speak with the following people or groups: • Community and Voluntary Sector Organisations. • Residents and Community Representatives, such as a Tenant Representative, Parish and Town Council Representative, or a Resident Association Representative. • Young People and Inclusion Groups, such as a Rotherham Youth Cabinet Representative, a School Council Representative, or a Disability Forum Representative

5.3	The review will also draw upon good practice and benchmarking information from a small number of other authorities, including City of Doncaster Council, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, and Sheffield City Council.
5.4	This mix of stakeholders will provide insight into the Council's current consultation arrangements, the experiences of residents and community groups, and examples of good practice from elsewhere.
6. Proposed Methodology	
6.1	Stage 1: Baseline Briefing and Case Study Selection • An introductory briefing from officers outlining the Council's current consultation arrangements. • Identification of a maximum of 2 recent consultation exercises from each Directorate to be used as case studies throughout the review.
6.2	Stage 2: Evidence Gathering Session • A single evidence session bringing together relevant officers, community representatives and service representatives. • Examination of the selected case studies. • Consideration of accessibility, timing, participation levels and feedback arrangements. • Presentation of benchmarking information from comparator authorities as supporting evidence rather than a separate review activity.
6.3	Stage 3: Findings and Recommendations Workshop • Review of evidence gathered. • Identification of strengths and opportunities for improvement. • Development of practical recommendations for enhancing consultation activity.
6.4	Expected Outputs • Findings based on evidence from selected case studies. • Identification of examples of effective practice. • Recommendations to improve accessibility, participation and feedback mechanisms.
6.5	This provides a concise and proportionate methodology that is achievable within a short scrutiny review while still gathering evidence from officers, residents, stakeholders and comparator authorities.
7. Potential Initial Key Lines of Enquiry	
7.1	KLE 1: Participation and Accessibility • Timing of consultations • Accessibility and inclusion • Engagement with under-represented groups • Participation levels
7.2	KLE 2: Feedback and Influence • How responses are considered • Communication of outcomes • "You Said, We Did" • Confidence in consultation processes • Examples of good practice

8. Draft Evidence Timetable	
	Session 1: Baseline Briefing and Case Study Selection Purpose • Understand current Council arrangements. • Agree case studies for further examination. Witnesses • Director of Policy, Strategy and Engagement • Head of Communications and Marketing • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead
	Session 2: Combined Evidence Session Purpose • Explore experiences of delivering and participating in consultations. • Examine selected case studies. • Consider accessibility, timing, participation and feedback. Witnesses • Relevant officers • Community representatives • Youth representative • Voluntary sector representative Supporting Evidence • Comparator authority benchmarking summary. • Examples of good practice.
	Session 3: Findings and Recommendations Workshop Purpose • Consider evidence collected. • Identify key findings. • Agree recommendations.