

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL - REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet
2.	Date:	23 rd March 2011
3.	Title:	Government Consultations
4.	Directorate:	Chief Executive's

5. Summary

This report was requested by PSOC in December 2010 and is intended to provide a clear way forward for dealing with forthcoming Government consultations, in light of discussions at PSOC on 3rd December 2010 and 25th February 2011. On 25th February PSOC agreed these recommendations and asked for the report to be referred to Cabinet.

6. Recommendations

That Cabinet Members

- **Consider and discuss the proposed approach for dealing with consultation responses.**
- **Agree to receive a quarterly report on forthcoming consultations in which lead Cabinet Members and Scrutiny Committees will be agreed.**
- **Note the need to maintain flexibility with such a system, allowing for consultations not covered by the plan to be dealt with accordingly.**
- **Consider the first of such reports and the approach to responding to those currently outstanding (Table A)**
- **Agree that the Corporate Policy team act as the first point of contact for arranging responses to government consultations**

7. Proposals and details

PSOC received the initial report on this matter on 3rd December 2010. The Committee considered a corporate approach to handling Government consultations and importantly for the effective engagement of elected members in determining RMBC responses.

The report is also timely as the Government continues to issue a significant number of consultations which require a response from the Council. Some of these are very service specific for example consultation relating to planning application fees however others have wider more strategic implications and will require a different level of engagement to develop an informed response and our process should reflect this. In addition Members should note that whereas the previous Government had agreed standards for consultation, which included a minimum consultation period of 12 weeks, these standards are no longer applied and in recent consultations timelines applied by Government and other agencies have varied widely.

There were some key principles outlined in the approach being suggested. These were:

- Strategic and Council-wide consultations to be considered by PSOC and Cabinet
- Service specific consultations to be considered by the appropriate Scrutiny panels and Cabinet Members
- Timeframes allowing, the route would be via scheduled meetings
- Where Government deadlines dictate a faster approach a flexible approach will be required, which would include the following options
 - PSOC to be used for service specific consultations as it meets more regularly
 - Special meetings called to appraise responses
 - Clearing responses via Chairs of panels and Cabinet members

The most effective way to maintain an overview of the programmes of consultations is to forward plan as much as possible. It is proposed to bring a quarterly report to PSOC and Cabinet which would enable them to plan ahead, agreeing an approach in advance and determining which consultations would be prioritised in terms of impact on the Council's priorities. The first one of these programmes is contained below in table A. There are two things to note when considering this. Firstly a level of flexibility will need to be maintained as some consultations will come at very short notice, restricting our ability to plan ahead. Secondly, the co-ordination of officer support to this will be carried out via the Policy Team, ensuring that the lead officers are aware of the consultation and associated timetable, and where necessary to take a report to SLT.

TABLE A

Consultation	Deadline	Scrutiny Panel	Cabinet Member	Comment
Healthy Lives, Healthy People	31 st March	Adult Services and Health 10/2/11	Cabinet	Already underway. High priority
Specialist disability employment support	28 th Feb	Adult Services and Health	Adult Independence Health and Wellbeing	Consultation almost passed
National Curriculum Review	14 th April	Children and Young People Services	Safeguarding and developing learning opportunities for children	Timeframe allows for full process and is of high priority
Strengthening families, promoting parental responsibility Green Paper	7 th April	PSOC	Cabinet	This is a key issue for the Council and timeframe allows for full process
Giving Green Paper	9 th March	Democratic Renewal	Community Development, Equality and Young People's issues	Very short timeframe left and falls outside of next scheduled panel and Cabinet Member meeting. Priority needs to be considered.
Road Network policy	1 st May	Regeneration	Regeneration and Environment	Timeframe allows full process
A New Approach to Refreshing the National Enforcement Priorities for Local Authority Regulatory Services Consultation,	6 th May	PSOC	Cabinet	Timeframe allows full process
Proposals to introduce a Community Right to Challenge consultation,	3 rd May	Democratic Renewal	Community Development, Equality and Young People's issues	Timeframe allows full process
Proposals to introduce a Community Right to Buy – Assets of Community Value consultation,	3 rd May	PSOC	Cabinet	Timeframe allows full process
More effective responses to anti-social behaviour consultation	3 rd May	Democratic Renewal	Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods	Timeframe allows full process

8. Finance

There are no direct financial implications arising from the report. Management of the consultation process would be from within existing resources.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

It is clear from government announcements to date about the forthcoming programme of reform, and the associated consultations, that there will be significant policy implications for the Council. There will also be policy implications for the Council working in partnership, both with other organisations and the expectations of working with communities.

The Council continues to monitor the Government's policy development, and is well placed to understand the implications of the broader policy agenda; the legislative programme; and effects on local priorities. In order to be able to influence the direction and detailed proposals it will be important to ensure that processes for responding to consultation are robust, effective and timely.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

As set out above the policy implications for the Government's legislative programme are significant and will impact across all Corporate Plan priorities and all Directorates. 10 out of the 23 government Bills would have an impact for Local Government.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Reports to PSOC 3rd December 2010 and 25th February 2011

The detail of all background papers and source documents are listed against the workstreams in the Council's Reform implementation plan.

12 Contact

Deborah Fellowes,
Policy Manager
Commissioning, Policy and Performance
Deborah.fellowes@rotherham.gov.uk Tel: 22769