



POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday 19th March 2025

REPORT TITLE:	CONSULTATION POLICY
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF LAW AND CORPORATE SERVICES

REPORT SUMMARY

This report requests the Policy & Resources Committee to give consideration to adopting the draft Consultation Policy attached at Appendix A to the report.

The draft policy is presented further to a request by Members at the October 2024 meeting of the Committee. It is informed by a consultation undertaken with all Members of the Council and an informal Member Working Group which had representatives from all political groups.

The report contributes to the delivery of the Wirral Plan 2023-2027 by ensuring that the Council's decision-making process is as effective as possible.

This matter affects all wards and is a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Policy & Resources Committee is recommended to approve the adoption of the Consultation Policy attached at Appendix A to the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 It is considered good practice for the Council to have a Consultation Policy which details the key principles as to how the Council will undertake consultations which then informs the making of decisions. This policy does not relate to any consultations with Council employees.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No alternative options have been considered in light of the request of Members at the meeting of the Committee in October 2024.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The overall aim of this policy if approved, is to ensure that when the Council consults with residents in respect to the services it provides, it does so in an inclusive, consistent and transparent manner, demonstrating that understanding the needs of residents, customers and partners is fundamental to the decision- making process.
- 3.2 The Member Working Group considered that the draft policy should be written in plain English, be clear and unambiguous so that resident's, Members of the Council and Officers are clear on how the Council will undertake future consultations.
- 3.3 Council's frequently have a legal requirement to consult with residents and this is especially true for issues such as planning and traffic regulation orders. If the Council fails to run a statutory consultation in line with those rules, then the Council could be vulnerable to legal challenges such as judicial review.
- 3.4 The Consultation Policy will be supported by a training module on the Council's Training Platform FLO for staff. Targeted training and support will be further provided by the Improvement & Performance Team who support Directorates in undertaking consultations.
- 3.5 The adoption of the policy will demonstrate that the Council is committed to listening to local people and enabling residents, partners, visitors and businesses to shape their neighbourhoods and the services they receive. The need to positively engage with, listen to and act upon stakeholders' views is increasingly important across all public sectors.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implication arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A requirement to consult will usually in the following circumstances:
- a. there is a statutory duty to consult.
 - b. where there has been a promise to consult

- c. where there has been an established practice of consultation
- d. when consultation in the circumstances would otherwise be appropriate.

5.2 When the Council chooses to consult, it will need to be guided by the following principles

- a. consultation must be undertaken at a formative stage
- b. sufficient information should be provided to enable informed feedback
- c. adequate time should be given for consideration of responses; and the feedback given should be conscientiously taken into account, prior to a decision being taken.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report over and above those already experienced by officers planning for and undertaking consultation with residents.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 There are no foreseen risks arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 An informal Member Working Group with representatives of all political groups met on two occasions to contribute to the drafting of the policy:

- Councillor Jean Robinson – Labour Group
- Councillor Ian Lewis – Conservative Group
- Councillor Keiran Murphy – Green Group
- Councillor Phil Gilchrist – Liberal Democrat Group

8.2 All Members of the Council were asked to share their views and experience of Council consultations. Twelve detailed responses were received. All feedback was shared and presented to the Working Group at the January meeting.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

9.2 The equality impact assessment can be viewed by following this link:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no direct environment, biodiversity and climate implications arising from this report

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no direct community wealth implications arising from this report.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Consultation Policy
Appendix B – Accessibility Supporting Document

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Constitution
Cabinet Office Principles
The Gunning Principles

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Policy & Resources Committee in accordance with Section 1.2(a) of its Terms of Reference, which includes responsibility for any decision making on any cross cutting policies which impact on other committee areas and 1.2 (f) undertaking responsibility for developing and monitoring the enabling corporate services.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date