

## Liberal Democrat Amendment Effective Consultation

Proposed by Cllr Tim Cobbett

Seconded by Cllr Hilary Gander

Effective consultation is the lifeblood of healthy local democracy, not only in its delivery but also its public perception to honestly engender and maintain the trust of communities. Resident participation in decision-making is critical to the responsible and expedient delivery of local government services. This imperative extends beyond the ballot box every four years. It is a continuous journey of consultation and engagement to ensure that reflecting residents' priorities, achieving value for money and providing excellent service delivery are at the epicentre of the Royal Borough's activities.

**Delete "To this end, words must be matched by deeds. The Royal Borough has more to do to reflect this aspiration and to make it a reality."**

### **This Council notes:**

1. The fundamental difference between 'consultation' and 'engagement' as vital disciplines in local government, the former is a component of the latter, specifically it recognises that:
  - a. Consultation involves obtaining residents' feedback on proposals as a *corollary* of engagement and should regularly consult communities on long, medium and short-term plans, to appropriately determine the Council's strategic direction, set its budgets and prioritise projects;
  - b. Engagement is the broader ongoing process of *sharing* information with residents and to seek feedback with the core objective of involving communities in the decision-making process, and that consultation is the *formal process* to meet the Council's statutory and regulatory requirements;
2. That trusted, effective and efficient consultation is needed now more than ever giving the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic **Insert "which required an emergency response for several months and is still ongoing. Recent consultation with residents and our communities included:**
  - a. **a business survey on the impact of Covid-19 (took place over early summer, 956 residents looked at and 120 completed survey - insight used to shape and signpost to relevant support; )**
  - b. **a residents e-newsletter which has 6216 subscribers since in the last 9 months; and**
  - c. **the Kingston Residents' Covid Impact Survey (2.4k visits to the portal site and 898 completed surveys. The insight is being used to prioritise and plan to support residents. Follow up focus groups are planned.)"**

**Delete points 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. and Insert new points 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.**

3. The Corporate Plan 2019 - 2023, 'Making Kingston Better, Together' outlines our ambition for community

engagement/resident involvement and our intention which makes it clear that we want to improve community engagement;

4. **The Community Engagement Framework 2019 - 2022 setting our goals to strengthen the relationship between the council and the community and actively encourages residents, businesses, students, voluntary and community groups to get involved;**
5. **The Let's Talk website which helps residents find and participate in discussions; a snapshot of recent consultations include:**
  - **Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (6 month trial, new temporary measures, part of the Government's Emergency Active Travel scheme and TfL London Streetspace Plan;)**
  - **Have your say on the future of housing in the borough;**
  - **Reimagining Kingston's Libraries (opened with an ideas capture feature on portal 1 Sept. 799 people have followed the link to the portal page and 49 ideas have been added by 39 people. Postcards being handed out at key locations to promote;)**
  - **Winter tree planting (241 applications this year;)**
  - **School streets (Following successful trial at Lovelace Primary School, 3 more schools added;)**
  - **Early engagement for housing strategy (giving residents an opportunity to have their say on what housing should be offered to residents, what types of housing are needed, and what we can do to improve the housing market in Kingston. Portal visits 933, 198 have responded. Drop-in sessions on 14 Oct. All feeding into drafting of the strategy which will be consulted on Nov-Jan;)**
  - **Business e-newsletter received by 4101 since April 2020; and**
6. **The first Citizens' Assembly held on Air Quality which saw 38 randomly selected residents consider evidence on improving air quality in Kingston. The recommendations from the Citizens' Assembly will also be used to develop our response to the climate emergency, and other relevant strategies and policies such as the Air Quality Action Plan."**
7. **The engagement with residents of Cambridge Road Estate using a range of techniques to get views from all the community at community-wide events and exhibitions to more targeted activity including young people's ideas gather feedback from their peers, photo exhibitions, use of digital channels and individual conversations. (CRE - 1,500 responses. Over 4,000 visits to the consultation on Let's Talk portal, 518 reached through street surveys. Ongoing engagement activity.)**

**This Council resolves to:**

1. Continually seek to adopt and exemplify best practice in consultation **Delete "by joining the Consultation Institute" and insert:** "as we carry on seeking to improve. The Council is a member of the New Local Government Network (NLGN) and makes use of its

**free resources and networks which includes research, best practice, advice and leading edge thinking. Over the last year, council officers have attended workshops and events hosted by Nesta, RSA, NLGN, Involve and Bang the Table."**

**Delete original points 2. to 6. and insert new points 2. to 7.**

- 2. "Pursue our new Community Engagement framework launched last autumn. Guidance and tools are available for staff to plan early and ensure engagement at the heart of the way the council operates by:
  - a. rolling out a programme to further embed engagement across all teams/roles that are involved with or responsible for any form of engagement from informing, consulting through to collaboration and decision making;**
  - b. this is supported by a toolkit and training. We are also in the process of setting up a staff network on engagement. Each service will have an engagement champion and all champions will meet to share ongoing engagement work and share ideas on best practice;****
- 3. Continue to send consultations on significant Council activities in highways, parking and planning to the relevant neighbourhood/strategic committee or delegated to a committee chair for approval;**
- 4. Operate a networked model for consultation delivery that provides advice and guidance from a core central team to embed good practice across the council to the many teams that deliver some element of community engagement. This is supported by the network and the toolkit - this means that learning is shared in wider teams;**
- 5. Support the common practice, across councils, to have Consultation and Communications working closely together. The corporate strategy and engagement function has expertise to support the organisation more effectively with its commitment of hard wiring community engagement into the decision making process;**
- 6. Monitor resident feedback from complaints and consultation evaluation to monitor performance and take learnings to improve (alongside the annual residents survey which is one way of measuring satisfaction;) and**
- 7. Commit to making it easier for residents to suggest their own ideas and not just respond to the council's ideas."**