

**REPORT BACK FROM COUNCIL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
ON REFERRED MOTION**

- 1 At its meeting on 13 September 2011, the Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered a Motion in the name of Hazel Watson referred to it by the Council on 19 July 2011. The Motion was as follows:

‘The County Council’s Annual Governance Statement 2010/11 states that on the issue of public consultation the County Council has a “Lack of clear consultation policy” and that the planned action is “policy to be implemented in July 2011”.

This Council recognises the importance and value of effective public consultation for making sound decisions to reflect the wishes and needs of Surrey residents, and:

- (1) Agrees to draw up a consultation policy for the County Council, that observes the best practice principles of consultation as set out in “The Consultation Charter” produced by the Consultation Institute.
- (2) Commits to implementing public consultation, in a way that learns from successful consultations carried out by other councils.
- (3) Agrees that the creation of the consultation policy itself should be subject to the best practice principles of consultation.’

**Discussion at the meeting of 13 September 2011**

- 2 In introducing her Motion, Hazel Watson highlighted the best practice principles identified by the Consultation Institute, and encouraged the County Council to apply these in its consultation arrangements. The Committee noted that there were recent good practice examples of consultation by services within the Council which were being shared within the organisation, and that the principles adopted by the Council were in line with those highlighted by the Consultation Institute. However, in order to further strengthen the Council’s approach to consultation, a draft Consultation and Engagement Policy has been developed. This was itself launched for a twelve-week consultation period on 12 September 2011, as part of Digital Surrey Week.
- 3 To help ensure that responses to the consultation are maximised, a range of approaches have been adopted to allow those interested to comment. A dedicated section has been set up on the existing Have Your Say website through which the draft policy to be viewed and commented on, and this has been publicised internally to Members and staff and externally to partners, residents and businesses to promote and encourage participation in the consultation. The Committee suggested that the draft policy should also be publicised through *Surrey Matters* to ensure that

members of the public who do not access information electronically are given the opportunity to respond. Borough, District and Parish Councillors were also suggested as an effective way of promoting the consultation.

- 4 The Committee agreed the need for a transparent consultation policy, and felt that the Council's commitment to effective communication should be stated clearly. The Committee was also supportive of the arrangements made for consultation on the draft, and noted that once finalised there would be a comprehensive internal and external communications campaign to ensure good awareness of the policy's contents and commitments.

**Decision by the Select Committee:**

- 5 The general principles of the Motion were supported.

**Recommendation to Council:**

- 6 That the general principles of public consultation set out in the Motion be supported.

Denise Le Gal  
Chairman, Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee