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A CONCORDAT FOR COMMUNICATION and CONSULTATION WITH MEMBERS



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A CONCORDAT FOR COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION WITH MEMBERS

1. Introduction

1.i The issue of effective communication and consultation between officers and Members is a crucial factor in the implementation of the new Constitution in Stockton-on-Tees. The Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members is intended to ensure that Members have access to all necessary information and that communication and consultation between Officers and Members is effective and comprehensive - enhancing Member involvement in the decision making processes.

1.ii The Concordat covers issues relating to:

- Provision of Information to Members
- Consultation with Members
- Decision Recording Systems
- Consultation with external Consultees
- Monitoring Arrangements

2. Provision of Information to Members

2.i Agenda Notifications

a) All Members will receive Agenda notifications for:

- Council Meetings
- Cabinet Meetings
- Scrutiny Committee Meetings
- Select Committee Meetings
- Quasi – Judicial Committee Meetings

2.ii Access to Cabinet and Committee Reports

a) Reports to Cabinet, Select Committees and Quasi-Judicial Committees will be available electronically.

b) Paper copies of Cabinet Reports will be sent to all Members and will be available in the Members Library and to individuals on request (via the Democratic Services Unit).

- c) Copies of all reports will be placed with Group Secretariats.

2.iii Cabinet Decision Records

- a) Cabinet decision records will be available within two working days of the Cabinet meeting.
- b) Copies will be made available for inspection in Group Offices, the Members Library and Democratic Services Unit.
- c) Copies will be sent to Members electronically within two working days of the Cabinet meeting and also by the first available courier delivery. Appropriate decision records will be sent to Education Representatives by first class post.
- d) Cabinet decisions (delegated and/or Key Decisions of Cabinet) are subject to the call-in provisions outlined in Part 4 of the Constitution

2.iv Availability of Minutes

- a) Minutes of all meetings of the Cabinet, Scrutiny Committee, Select Committees and quasi-judicial Committees will be referred to full Council.
- b) Copies will be available in the Members' Library and to individuals on request.

2.v The Members' Information Bulletin

- a) The Members' Information Bulletin will be produced every three weeks (with special editions being published when appropriate). The Bulletin is an important aspect of the member information system and officers will ensure that issues of interest to Members are included.

3. Consultation with Members

3.i General Provisions

- a) Decisions made by officers under delegated powers fall into two principal categories, namely:
 - Decisions delegated to officers in consultation with Cabinet Members
 - Other Decisions delegated to officers (which are not required to be taken in consultation with Cabinet Members).
- b) Officers to whom decisions have been delegated have a duty to ensure that effective consultation takes place. Consultation between officers and Members will be undertaken within the terms of the Concordat, the Authority's Consultation Strategy and the approved Protocol on Member/Officer Relations.

- c) Every effort will be made to ensure that Members have a realistic time scale to respond to consultation and, where appropriate and reasonably practicable, this time scale will be sufficient to enable Members to consult with their constituents. Members will be informed of any time restrictions which may apply relating to the process of consultation, particularly where urgent action is needed in the Council's and/or the public interest.
- d) When preparing reports to Cabinet and/or Committees, officers will include details of any consultation undertaken and any comments from Members.
- e) Some officer delegated decisions will be Key Decisions (as defined in Article 13 of the Constitution) and will be subject to the requirements of the regulations relating to such decisions, (eg requirements relating to recording and publicising decisions) and to the call in provisions outlined in the Constitution (Part 4 of the Scrutiny and Select Committee Procedure Rules refer).

3.ii Decisions by Officers in Consultation with Cabinet Members

- a) Officers to whom decision making powers have been delegated, subject to consultation with Cabinet Members, (as detailed in Part 3 of the Constitution), will ensure that such consultation takes place.

3.iii Other Decisions delegated to Officers

- a) Officers acting within the remit of their delegated powers will ensure that they identify, at an early stage, issues upon which Members should be consulted. These will include:
 - issues of interest to Cabinet Members,
 - issues of interest to Ward Members
 - issues of general interest to all Members.
- b) Officers will ensure that appropriate consultation takes place.

3.iv Consultation with Cabinet Members

- a) Officers will ensure that appropriate consultation is undertaken with Cabinet Members on issues relating to their thematic areas.
- b) Officers will also ensure that appropriate consultation is undertaken with Cabinet Members with geographical portfolios on strategic issues, (i.e. policy issues, regeneration initiatives), relating to their geographical area.
- c) The Cabinet Members with geographical portfolios will be available to discuss issues relating to wards within their geographical area with Ward Members.

3.v Issues for Consultation with Ward Members

- a) Members will be consulted on all issues which impact upon their ward. Such issues may typically include:
 - Ward specific changes to service delivery
 - Planning applications and proposals
 - Regeneration initiatives
 - Programmed maintenance of street lights, carriageways and/or footpaths
 - Roadwork improvement schemes
- b) Officers will identify issues which may have cross boundary implications and will consult with Members accordingly.

3.vi Issues for wider consultation with Members

- a) There are a number of issues upon which Members will need to be consulted in order to fulfil their roles as Community Leaders. These may typically include:
 - Issues relating to changes in service delivery
 - Issues relating to access to services
 - Charges and concessions
 - Issues relating to community resources
 - Determination of grant aid to the voluntary sector
- b) Officers will ensure that appropriate consultation takes place with Members.

4. Decision Recording Systems

4.i Officer Decisions - Decisions taken in consultation with a Cabinet Member and/or Officer Key Decisions

- a) Details of decisions taken in consultation with Cabinet Members and Key Decisions (whether or not taken in consultation with a Cabinet Member) taken by officers will be made available in the following ways.
 - Decision records will be made available on the Intranet
 - Decisions records will be sent to Group Leaders and Secretariats
 - Copies will be placed in the Members Library
- b) Additionally, all Members (and, where appropriate, Education Representatives), will receive paper copies of Key Decision Record Sheets.
- c) Decision Record Sheets will include:
 - The reason for the decision
 - Details of consultation undertaken

- d) Details of decisions made by officers in consultation with Cabinet Members and Key Decisions made by officers will also be reported to the Performance Review and Audit Committee on a quarterly basis.

4.ii Other Decisions

- a) Appropriate decision recording systems have been introduced to ensure that all significant officer decisions are recorded – these provisions are in addition to the legal requirement to record certain decisions, i.e. Key Decisions.
- b) Significant officer decisions will be reported to Performance Review and Audit Committee on a quarterly basis.

5. Consultation with External Consultees

- a) Consultation with external Consultees, (eg. residents, community groups, businesses etc), will be undertaken within the framework of the Authority's Consultation Strategy. To assist with the implementation of the Consultation Strategy, a Guide to Effective Consultation has been produced and circulated to officers and Members.

6. Monitoring the Concordat

- a) Any complaints or concerns relating to the implementation of the Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members should be submitted via the Councillors Complaint/Enquiry form, or by letter, fax or e-mail to the Members Services Officer, highlighting that the complaint or concern relates to the Concordat.
- b) Any such matter will be investigated in the same way as Member complaints
- c) Quarterly monitoring reports will be prepared to advise Members about issues arising from complaints or concerns relating to the Concordat.



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