

Scrutiny Review: LTP4 Consultation Successes

Background and Purpose of the Scrutiny

1. During the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board's (OSPB) discussion of the fourth Local Transport Plan for Worcestershire (LTP4), on 7 November 2017, the Board complimented the effectiveness of the consultation process for the Plan. It was agreed to carry out a short scrutiny review of the consultation process, to learn about, and share good practice.
2. The LTP4 is a strategic document which details the Council's transport aspirations. The OSPB heard examples of where changes had been made to the Plan as a result of comments received. It was acknowledged that the public and corporate response to the LTP4 was successful in terms of the volume and quality of the responses. The OSPB considered the process had worked well and commended the officers for answering every point made during the consultation in a transparent way.
3. This short, sharp scrutiny aims to highlight the important components of the success and commend them as a check list for other consultations. It is not intended to be a prescriptive format for consultations.

Methodology

4. The scrutiny work was undertaken by OSPB Board member, Cllr Paul Middlebrough.
5. Meetings took place with officers from the Council's Transport Strategy Team who had led the LTP4 consultation, with the Communications Team and with the Cabinet Members with responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure, and for Transformation and Commissioning.
6. All of the documentation relating to the LTP4 consultation is available on the Council's website: <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/LTP>

Findings

7. The Transport Strategy Team officers were very clear that any consultation should be constructed in a manner which encourages constructive responses and is in line with the Cabinet Office's *Consultation Principles*¹. Consultations should not fall foul of the law and the ideals of the Gunning principles².

Recommendation 1 Officers preparing to consult should check the legality of their plans with the Council's Legal Services.

8. The team under taking LTP4 consultation had the good fortune through personal knowledge to

¹ Government Guidance: Consultation Principles (2018)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>

² The Gunning principles are that consultation must take place when the proposal is still at a formative stage. Sufficient reasons must be put forward for the proposal to allow for intelligent consideration and response. Adequate time must be given for consideration and response

have access to a template on consultation called the public consultation toolkit. This had been introduced by a now abolished corporate team in the organisation and is no longer available. It was in some ways dated but helped to develop a framework.

Recommendation 2 Investigate any proprietary consultations templates which could be made available corporately.

9. The consultation areas must be comprehensive to achieve clarity of views when completed. It is important that technical staff and policy makers, both cabinet members, and local members where appropriate, are involved in the initial process.

10. There is likely to be a paper and web based format to most consultations. There may also be social media responses and publicity required. These need to be co-ordinated from the outset.

Recommendation 3 Inform all groups within the Council about the impending consultation so enabling them if appropriate, to have input at an early stage.

11. The resource implications and time line of any consultation should be mapped out in a Consultation Plan. The time line should be shared at the earliest with other groups to ensure they have capacity to assist when needed. In particular the resources required to collate the replies prior to analysis should be scoped.

Recommendation 4 Prepare a Consultation Plan including resources costed timeline and share it with all groups who may be needed at the earliest opportunity.

12. These recommendations are no more than good practice guidelines and are not intended to create a corporate team to undertake consultations. However it would be sensible to provide a staff handbook and good practice checklist to assist and prompt those contemplating consultations.

Scrutiny review carried out by:

Cllr Paul Middlebrough

Scrutiny support: Emma James and Jo Weston

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