

APPENDIX B

DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY - BUDGET CONSULTATION 2015/16

INTERNAL PROTOCOL FOR RESPONDING TO CORRESPONDENCE

Aim

- 1 To capture all consultation returns and to apply a standard approach to the level of response from the County Council to questions and comments received about *Doing Things Differently*. This requires a system to record all correspondence in a single database (consultation portal) supported by a process that ensures an acceptable and uniform level of response is provided across departments.
- 2 This protocol applies to all forms of correspondence relating to *Doing Things Differently* (including conventional mail, email, telephone, social media, petitions and e-petitions). Specific rules and protocols may apply to formal legal correspondence and, as such, correspondence in this respect will be dealt with by legal services.

Handling Correspondence

- 3 The following details how correspondence received through the various channels about *Doing Things Differently* will be handled. In the majority of instances the appropriate level of response should be in accordance with to the Guidelines, and example responses, set out at section 4.
 - 3.1 Correspondence received via *Doing Things Differently* Freepost (received by senior consultation officer)
 - logged on the consultation portal by senior consultation officer
 - an assessment of the nature of the contents of such correspondence will be undertaken, and if it is considered that a more appropriate and timely response would be better provided by someone other than the formal addressee, then it will be passed via the DTD Programme Officer to the relevant departmental representative for acknowledgement/full response/information.
 - 3.2 Correspondence received by Leader, Members and Chief Executive (personally addressed)
 - The addressee may wish to acknowledge/respond personally. In which case the response can be sent in accordance with the Guidelines (Section 4).
 - A copy of the response to the correspondence should then be attached and forwarded to the senior consultation officer for it to be logged on the consultation portal
 - where the Leader/Members/Chief Executive does not want/wish to respond personally, the correspondence should be forwarded to the senior consultation officer who will log it on the consultation portal, and then send it to the DTD Programme Officer for acknowledgement/full response/information.
 - 3.3 Correspondence received directly by corporate/service director/department (sent directly to the service)
 - correspondence acknowledged/responded as appropriate by corporate/service director/representative in accordance with the Guidelines (Section 4)
 - correspondence, and a copy of the response, will be forwarded to the senior consultation officer for logging on consultation portal and to and DTD Programme Officer for monitoring purposes.

- if correspondence relates to a more detailed issue that affects a specific service department, then responses will be collated and analysed by the service that will provide the senior consultation officer with the number of consultation responses and analysis of findings at the end of the consultation period. This information will be included separately in the consultation report to County Council's Finance & Property Committee on the 9th February 2015.
- 3.4 Correspondence received by Customer Service Centre (CSC)
- CSC adviser will log comments on the consultation portal
 - if correspondence is received which cannot be answered by information contained on *Doing Things Differently* web page, CSC will advise senior consultation officer
 - senior consultation officer will record correspondence on the portal and forward it to the DTD Programme Officer for acknowledgement/full response/information.
- 3.5 Correspondence received via social media (Twitter/Facebook/YouTube/LinkedIn)
- respondents should be encouraged to visit the website and use the *Doing Things Differently* consultation questionnaire to give their views/comments and or feedback
 - information received via social media will be fed back, via the senior consultation officer, to service areas for their consideration
 - all comments received via social media will be captured and analysed by the digital team and be passed to the senior consultation officer and programme officer for inclusion in Committee reports(s).

Guidelines

- 4 The following guidelines must be followed and it should be noted that correspondence passed to senior consultation officer for logging and or processing will not be retained. Original correspondence must be retained by the relevant department as appropriate.
- 4.1 General comments** – These will not be formally replied to. Anyone commenting on-line will be directed to the website for updates.
- 4.2 Letters/emails where the Leader, Members or Chief Executive have requested a response** – A personal letter/email will be sent back addressing the issues raised. DTD Programme Officer will prepare the response and progress as required. In most instances a simple formal acknowledgement letter/email, as in the example below, will be sufficient to ensure consistency and not create undue workload for the department. Only in exceptional circumstances should we enter into further detail, in order to avoid inconsistency of response and raising expectations.
- 4.3 Local MPs** – A personal letter/email will be sent back addressing the issues raised. DTD Programme Officer may want to obtain a steer from corporate/service director on the appropriate level of response. Only in exceptional circumstances should we enter into further detail in order to avoid inconsistency of response and raising expectations.
- 4.4 Key stakeholders/Partners** – Level of response to be decided by DTD Programme Officer. If a general letter/email of acknowledgement is deemed appropriate please see examples below.
- 4.5 Petitions** – Petitions should be forwarded to the Senior Consultation Officer who will record all petitions received. It is expected that in accordance with the Petitions scheme, petitions relating to *Doing Things Differently* consultation will not be individually presented to County Council meetings but responses to them will be agreed in the *Doing Things Differently* report to the Finance & Property Committee on the 9th February 2015. The Senior Consultation Officer will ensure that the relevant service department, via the DTD Programme Officer, is aware of the petition and will send a general acknowledgement letter to the petition lead or first name on the petition explaining the process that will be followed.

In the event that a petition is presented to County Council on a *Doing Things Differently* issue. The Chairman will make clear that the petition will be treated as part of the *Doing Things Differently* consultation process and a response will be provided in the *Doing Things Differently* consultation report to Finance & Property Committee on the 9th February 2015.

- 4.6 Staff comments** – DTD Programme Officer will discuss these with the line manager of member of staff. Managers must be aware that this process is not a substitute for consulting with their staff and or discussing any specific impact of their existing outline business cases (for further information see Managers Resource Centre).
- 4.7 Media Enquiries and or Matters of Media Interest** - All media enquiries and where correspondence is considered to be of high media interest, from an MP or local personality/VIP, these must be referred to the Communications & Marketing Team.

Example responses by letter and or email

Dear *Name*

County Council's Consultation on *Doing Things Differently* Budget Consultation

Thank you for the letter/email you sent to the County Council about *Doing Things Differently*. Your comments will be considered as part of the consultation process.

All correspondence received will be taken into account prior to decisions being made at the County Council Policy Committee on the 2nd July 2014.

Thank you.

Dear *Name*

County Council's Consultation on *Doing Things Differently* Budget Consultation

Thank you for the letter/email you sent to the County Council about *Doing Things Differently*. Your comments will be considered as part of the consultation process.

Unfortunately until decisions are made by County Councillors I am unable to answer your specific question about what the proposals will mean for your personal situation. However, once the next steps are clear, the Council will write to customers who use the services to explain exactly what the changes may mean for them.

In the meantime please refer to our website for the latest news: <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/>

Thank you

Key Contacts

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