NOTICE OF MOTION

TITLE: DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK IN BURY COUNCIL

Proposers: Councillors Judi Sheppard, Carol Birchmore, Des Duncalfe, Ken Simpson, Mike Smith and Mary Walsh

This Council notes:

1. Bury Council undertakes consultations on policies, strategies, services and proposals that can significantly affect residents, businesses and local communities.
2. Effective consultation enables residents to contribute to decision-making, helps the Council understand local needs and concerns, and promotes transparency, accountability and public confidence.
3. Recognised good practice emphasises clear objectives, appropriate consultation methods, accessible participation, sufficient time for responses, objective analysis and feedback explaining how residents' views have informed decisions.
4. Consistent standards are needed to ensure that consultations are meaningful, inclusive, transparent and proportionate to the significance and potential impact of the proposals concerned.

This Council believes:

1. Residents should have a genuine and accessible opportunity to influence decisions affecting their lives and communities.
2. Consultation must be more than a procedural exercise. Responses should be properly recorded, objectively analysed and given appropriate consideration before decisions are made.
3. A review of existing consultation arrangements should identify current guidance, gaps, inconsistencies and opportunities for improvement.
4. A Council-wide consultation framework should establish minimum standards for planning, conducting, analysing and evaluating consultations, supported by practical guidance and toolkits.
5. Consultation materials should clearly explain the purpose of the exercise, the proposals under consideration, the scope for influencing decisions, how responses will be used and any relevant limitations.

6. Responses received through different channels should be appropriately captured, objectively analysed and presented to relevant decision-makers, including the principal issues raised and any significant differences in views.
7. Proportionate summaries of consultation findings should be published, explaining how residents' views have informed decisions and, where appropriate, why significant suggestions or objections have not been accepted.
8. Consultation methods should reflect the subject, scale and potential impact of each proposal, using a suitable combination of online, written, face-to-face and other engagement methods where necessary to address barriers to participation.
9. External providers undertaking consultations on the Council's behalf should meet appropriate standards for accessibility, impartiality, data protection, recording responses and reporting findings.
10. Officers and others involved in designing, delivering and evaluating consultations should receive appropriate guidance and training.
11. The Council should learn from participants' feedback, previous consultations and good practice elsewhere, including effective use of digital and non-digital communication.
12. Proportionate oversight and reporting arrangements should monitor the implementation and effectiveness of any framework, identify improvements and report progress to the appropriate Council committee or other suitable governance body.
13. Any framework must complement, and must not replace or weaken, specific statutory consultation requirements or other legal duties applicable to individual decisions.

This Council resolves to:

Request the Monitoring Officer, working with the Executive Director (Strategy & Transformation) and relevant corporate services, to oversee a review of the Council's existing consultation arrangements and bring forward proposals for a proportionate Council-wide consultation framework, addressing the principles and standards set out in this motion and having regard to statutory consultation requirements and recognised good practice.

The proposals should be presented to the appropriate decision-making body within six months of this motion being agreed, for consideration and approval, and should include a clear timetable for implementation, oversight and progress reporting.

Supporting statement

Effective consultation is essential to transparent, accountable local government. Residents should have a meaningful opportunity to contribute to decisions affecting their communities and be able to see how their views have been considered.

This motion asks for an officer-led review of existing arrangements and proposals for a consistent Council-wide consultation framework. It sets out the standards that should inform that work, including accessible participation, accurate recording, objective analysis, clear feedback and appropriate oversight.

The aim is to improve consultation across the Council, strengthen public confidence and support informed decisions, while keeping arrangements proportionate and respecting all applicable statutory requirements.