

REPORT TO COUNCIL

REPORT OF: Chief Executive

REPORT NO. CEX302

DATE: 7th September 2005

TITLE:	Stakeholders Conference and Extraordinary Council Meeting Thursday 8th December 2005
COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION:	Councillor Mrs. Frances Cartwright (Organisational Development)
CORPORATE PRIORITY:	Organisational Development
BACKGROUND PAPERS:	None

Background

1. As members will be aware the 8th of December is scheduled as the date for the Council's Annual Stakeholders Conference.

This year we are proposing that the Annual Stakeholders conference adopts the format of a Citizens Jury charged with the responsibility to investigate whether the Council delivers value for money to its residents. This will require us to select twelve residents who will reflect the diversity of the District. They will be asked to consider (and challenge) evidence presented, by witnesses who will include Members, Officers and local community representatives and then come to a verdict on whether the Council is delivering value. To make the event of interest to the wider community and the press, witnesses will be encouraged to use photographs as part of their evidence. To provide a clear structure for the event, it is proposed that we investigate each service in turn.

2. This is a very innovative idea. The key to its success will be securing the services of a person with the right skill sets to play the role of the "judge" or more precisely "investigating magistrate". This is the key role in the continuity of the event. He or she will ensure that the jury gain the confidence required to challenge the evidence presented to them and help them consider their "verdict". However as in a genuine court, this role will not actually contribute to the decision that is the preserve of the jury. In order to ensure an impartial approach we are currently seeking to identify someone with a background in broadcasting to fulfil this role.

3. The outcome of the event will be both an increased public understanding of the services and performance of the Council and an increased understanding by the Council of how it is perceived by the public. In addition to this, the Council should have a better understanding of its customers' expectations and the best means of meeting them. Hopefully residents will also have a better understanding of the financial and legal constraints on the Council.
4. Depending on the final number the event will be held in either the Council Chamber or the Guildhall theatre. A decision regarding the venue will be made nearer the time, however to assist members with their diary commitments the timings will be as follows:

9.30	Coffee
10.00	Citizens Jury Part 1
12.30	Lunch
13.30	Citizens Jury Part 2
15.30	Event ends.

5. If the Council approves this idea it is proposed that the finalisation of the arrangements be delegated to the Communications and Engagement DSP with a request that they finalise the arrangements at their meeting on the 17th of November.
6. At 16.00 on the same day (the 8th of December) it is proposed to hold an Extraordinary Council meeting to consider the strategic choice of landlord. This is a vital stage in the preparation for the ballot on the future of the housing stock and is a decision that has to be taken at this time if the Council wishes to be successful in this application to the ODPM to progress with the ballot. The outcome of this decision will constitute a key component of the details that will be provided to tenants in the ballot pack.

Recommendation

7. That the Council approves:
 - i) the proposals for the format of this year's annual Stakeholders Conference on the 8th December and asks the Communications and Engagement DSP to finalise the arrangements by its meeting in the 17th November.
 - ii) That an Extraordinary Council meeting be held at 16.00 on Thursday the 8th December to consider the strategic choice of landlord.

Duncan Kerr
Chief Executive