

## REPORT TO ENGAGEMENT DSP

**REPORT OF:** Scrutiny Support Officer

**REPORT NO.** DLS 58

**DATE:** 12<sup>th</sup> January 2006

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| <b>TITLE:</b>  | Citizen's Jury - 8 <sup>th</sup> December 2005   |
| <b>COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION:</b> | Councillor Paul Carpenter  |
| <b>CORPORATE PRIORITY:</b>                                 | Communications   |
| <b>CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS:</b>                    | Yes – subject of citizens' jury verdict  |
| <b>FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT IMPLICATIONS:</b>            | None   |
| <b>BACKGROUND PAPERS:</b>                                  | CEX302 – Council 27 <sup>th</sup> October 2005<br>CEX309 – Engagement DSP 17 <sup>th</sup> November 2005 |

### 1. INTRODUCTION

On 27<sup>th</sup> October 2005, the Council approved the proposal that the 2005 Annual Stakeholders Conference take the format of a citizen's jury to enquire into whether the Council was offering value for money. The Engagement DSP was asked to finalise the arrangements for the event, which it did on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2005.

It was decided that the citizens' jury consider:

- Refuse and litter
- Anti-social behaviour
- Economic Development
- Engagement with the public

These reflected the priorities of the council.

Nic Streatfeild from Rutland-on-Line was appointed the judge for the day as it was considered that this role needed to be filled by someone impartial and with the necessary skills.

## **2. THE JURY**

The local press was used to advertise the event and invite volunteers from the community to be on the jury. Local schools were also contacted and the Council's website used to promote the event. This was reasonably successful as most volunteers read about the event in the local press or contacted the Council after hearing local radio coverage.

On the day we had a jury of ten members out of twelve appointed by the judge (one having cancelled due to illness and the other due to business commitments). The jury was reasonably well representative in terms of age with three local school students on the jury. There were, however, only two women on the jury and very few members from hard to reach groups.

A briefing was held for the jury in the week before the event but this was poorly attended. It was believed that this may have been because not enough notice was given and that the time of day (5pm) may have been inconvenient for most.

## **3. WITNESSES**

Shortly after the jury was selected, members of the public were invited to act as witnesses for the event, to give evidence about their experience of the council's services. This was perhaps the least successful element of the event and this is likely to have been because not enough time was given to advertise this aspect of the event. Again, local media was used, posters were displayed and people who had recently contacted the council about one of the services to be considered by the jury were invited to give evidence at the event. Only three members of the public came forward and gave evidence.

Although this aspect was very challenging and not as successful as it could have been, two of the witnesses did put in a lot of work to produce some very interesting evidence. This shows that there is still potential here to develop the idea of the public acting as witnesses.

Council officers also gave evidence on each of the services by giving a presentation on their service area. The jury gave feedback on these as summarised below.

Members had little involvement in giving evidence and this can certainly be something developed at a future citizens' jury event. External partners also had a limited role.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

For the first citizens' jury organised by the council, the event was reasonably successful. The jury worked very hard and their contributions on the day were very admirable. The judge Nic Streatfeild was very competent in his role and facilitated the event successfully. However, a lot of lessons have been learned. Most importantly, too many services were considered in the day for the jury to make an informed verdict and this is something that should certainly be changed for a future event. Nic Streatfeild, Duncan Kerr and Rebecca Chadwick are meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2006 to discuss ideas for the further development of a citizens' jury and the outcome from this meeting will be reported to the Engagement DSP.

#### **5. JURY FEEDBACK**

The jury did not feel they could answer the question put to them:

*"Does South Kesteven District Council deliver a good standard of service for the money it charges?"*

Instead, the jury gave feedback about the day.

They first considered the following questions:

1. Was it a quality process?
2. Does the Council offer good value for money services?
3. How do we define value for money?

The jury reached a consensus that there had been a good job in the officers' presentations but disappointed that there were no real measures included in them from which to make a verdict on value for money. The jury considered that there had been positive progress in the first three areas but there was a communication issue. The jury also felt that because the presentations were all in different formats, it did not lend itself very well to reaching an overall verdict.

Specific comments for each presentation were:

Refuse and litter - there were no measures in the presentation to make a verdict.

Anti-social behaviour - not enough information to make a conclusion at this stage and the service had not really been in place long enough.

Economic Development - Good potential here but no measures to decide on its value for money.

Engagement with the public - not sure what the service was we were judging.

General feedback about that day was as follows.

Likes:

- The fact that the citizens' jury exists
- SKDC taking seriously the views of the public
- Public involved (open)
- Impressed with witness presentation and effort
- Some presentations contained deliverables
- Good Councillor turnout – nice to see the support from members
- Excellent facilitation
- Lunch
- All impressed with Nic Streatfeild as the judge
- Pretty well-balanced jury
- Good jury participation

Dislikes:

- Possible inadequate publicity
- Minimal press coverage
- Council accountability not clear – what is council going to do with a verdict from a citizens' jury?
- Too much in too little time
- Lack of deliverables (performance indicators) in some presentations
- Councillors did not always listen
- Would have liked handouts prior to meeting
- Lack of opportunity for juror to prepare
- Presenters didn't know what to tell us
- Presentations and all evidence should have been in a standard format
- Couldn't tell who were members of the council and who were members of the public

## **6. RECOMMENDATION**

That members consider this report and make suggestions for further improvements for a future citizens' jury event.

## **7. CONTACT OFFICER**

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