

PETITION

Topic: West Lancashire Pensioners' Forum, being aware of the West Lancashire Borough Council Consultation and Community Engagement Strategy 2007 – 2010" (CCES) wishes to be recognised as a key stakeholder with formal input that will ensure council's awareness of the effects of any and all decisions made about us on our homes, our safety, our wellbeing, our community, and all issues of age equality and discrimination.

The CCES states... Local people are at the heart of the Council's consultation and community engagement activity and this Strategy puts into action the Council's commitment to listen to, inform and consult local people in all sections of the community. The Council's vision is to put customer services first, and build a community second to none. It is our promise that we will not only satisfy customers, but delight them. Putting the customer first means, above all, knowing our customers. If we are to delight customers, we need to know what they want. We need to find out their aspirations, their concerns, what they think is important, and what they expect from us. We need to know what they think about the services we offer and how they would like us to improve. As well as finding out people's views and attitudes, the Council wishes to provide opportunities wherever possible for people to play an active role in influencing decisions, to enhance people's involvement with the authority, and extend community engagement. This is central to achieving social inclusion, to enhancing the well-being of the district and to encouraging involvement in local democracy.

A community development approach can assist in making community engagement successful. In addition, the Council must conform to a range of legislation and government guidance which require it to consult and engage with stakeholders. Consultation through two-way dialogue to give people the opportunity to give their views on specific issues of importance to them. The results influence the decisions that are made. Examples include: inviting people to comment on the draft replacement local plan. Participation – providing opportunities for local people to get involved in influencing decisions and developing plans that affect their communities. Examples include: running a focus group of disabled service users to discuss with Council staff how leisure facilities can be improved to meet their needs; bringing together key stakeholders to work together e.g. Ormskirk Town Centre Forum and the Local Strategic Partnership.

The CCSE also includes this; Comprehensive Performance Assessment The importance the Audit Commission places on this area of work is underlined in a special Audit Commission CPA briefing report which identifies the linked themes of user focus and citizen engagement as key drivers for improvement. It identifies five factors as critical to successful user and citizen engagement: Commitment to user and citizen engagement Understanding your communities Clarity of purpose Communicating in appropriate ways Delivering change and improved outcomes. It is likely therefore that the CPA process, and other external inspections, will continue to place increased emphasis on consultation and community engagement which will again make a significant contribution to overall ratings. The Council can expect that assessors will scrutinise councils' consultation activities in the light of the key factors listed above, as well as consider how authorities have improved since their last inspection..

We feel the best way for council to deliver the first rate service it refers to is to talk to and listen to us regularly. It is our aim that council will provide such a service to pensioners and by doing so to continuously improve its claim to transparency by keeping pensioners involved every step of the way. In support of our petition we quote the council statistic of there being 26,600 older

people in the borough, representing about 18% of the total population and 36% of the council tax-paying population.

We refer to any and all Local Government legislation which imposes duties on all local authorities and best value authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out any of its functions by providing information, consulting or involving in another way. The duties are wide ranging and apply to the delivery of services, policy, and decision making. Authorities also must consider how organisations to which their external contractors belong adhere to the principles underpinning the duty. Authorities must not discriminate in the way they inform, consult or involve local people. They must promote equal opportunities for people to engage and get involved.

In its Equality Policy Document WLBC committed itself to the following; "We will engage and involve communities in the way we plan and design our services to ensure that our service plans match the needs of the community as accurately as possible" and "We will seek to involve Members, employees, service users and our communities' in all that we do. We will ensure services are based on consultation and will also work in partnership with the Equality Target Groups to identify needs and delivering services to meet those needs". We are neither satisfied nor delighted. WLBC has failed us in respect of both equality commitments stated above. They did not engage and involve pensioners, or provide all information about the travel concession, unless it was sought under the Freedom of Information Act. They did not consult about the travel concession until they were informed of their legal obligation to do so. It is worth repeating;

On Consultation: Beatson J noted the settled law on consultation, namely that: (a) consultation must be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage; (b) sufficient reasons must be given for any proposal to enable intelligent consideration and response; (c) adequate time must be given for such consideration and response; and (d) the product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising any proposals. These were referred to in the proceedings as the 'Sedley requirements' because they were originally formulated in 1985 by Stephen Sedley QC, as he then was, in submissions in *Ex parte Gunning* [1985] 84 LGR 168. They were notably referred to by Lord Woolf in the leading case of *Coughlan (R v North East Devon Health Authority, ex parte Coughlan)* [2001] QB 213).

What do you want the council to do?:

We Petition council to meet with the officers of the West Lancashire Pensioners' Forum as soon as possible to establish a public Forum consisting of Over60s, Residents and Councillors that will meet quarterly at the Council offices to discuss any and all proposals before decisions are made about us, our homes, our safety, our wellbeing, our community, and address all issues of age equality and discrimination, and that Council puts forward to the West Lancashire Pensioners' Forum a draft document in the form of a proposed constitution of such a Forum.

[REDACTED]

Lead petitioner: Name: Raymond Brookfield Esq, Secretary of the West Lancashire Pensioners' Forum; Email address: [REDACTED]
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We, the undersigned, request West Lancashire Borough Council to consider this Petition.