

DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Employee Communication and Consultation

1.0) Introduction

- 1.1 Down District Council (DDC) wishes to ensure that its staff who are not members of a recognised Trade Union have appropriate information and opportunities to contribute to the development of its policies and practices that affect them, to make their views known, and to have those views taken into account in the Council's decision making process. The Employee Communication and Consultation Policy is designed to meet these needs.

2.0) Purpose

- 2.1 Management recognise the importance of communicating with non recognised Trade Union members and to that end is seeking to establish an Employee Consultation Committee (ECC.) This policy aims to follow the principles set out in the Information and Consultation of Employees Regulations 2004.

The Council believes effective internal communication and consultation is vital for achieving its purpose, vision and objectives as set out in the 2006-2009 Corporate Plan. Therefore this document describes:-

- Why communications and consultation are important
- The difference between communication and consultation
- How communication and consultation will operate within DDC
- Process for electing staff representatives
- Trade Unions and Consultation
- Topics for inclusion within the process

3.0) The Importance of Communication and Consultation

- 3.1 Good communication and consultation are central to effective management processes and are important when dealing with changes in working practices and procedures. Consulting with employees allows them to perform at their best as they know their duties, obligations and rights, and have the opportunity to make their views known on issues that affect them. Effective employee communication can:-

- **Improve organisational effectiveness** - time spent communicating at the outset of a new project or development can minimise misunderstandings.
- **Improve management performance and decision making** – by allowing employees to express their views enables the Council to arrive at sound decisions which are more likely to be accepted.
- **Improve employees' performance and commitment** – with accurate information about their jobs, targets and feedback, performance should improve. Furthermore commitment is also strengthened where employees are aware of what the Council is aiming to achieve and how, as individuals, they

can influence decisions.

- **Help develop greater trust** - discussing issues of common interest and allowing employees the opportunity of expressing their views can promote improved manager/employee relations.
- **Increase job satisfaction** – providing employees with an understanding of how their job fits into the workings of the Council as a whole.

4.0) Communication Vs Consultation

4.1 Employee communication is the provision and exchange of information between management and employees. Current, formal, methods used to support employee communication are:-

- Core Brief
- Team Meetings
- Job Chats
- Intranet
- Down Time
- Local Joint Consultative Committee (LJCC for recognised Trade Union members)

Consultation is a process by which management and employees, or their representatives, jointly examine and discuss issues of mutual concern, through seeking acceptable solutions to problems through a genuine exchange of views and information. Consultation involves management actively meeting with employees or their representatives, and taking account of views before making a decision.

5.0) Consultation and Collective Bargaining

5.1 Consultation is distinctly different from collective bargaining, for example over pay or changes to terms and conditions, where both the employer and the trade union take responsibility for fulfilling the bargain. This is not the same as consultation and is not addressed within this policy. With consultation the responsibility for decision making remains with management.

6.0) How communication and consultation will operate within DDC

- 6.1 It is intended for management to meet with non unionised representatives from all directorates on a regular basis. Meetings would be chaired by the Clerk and Chief Executive, or other member of the Senior Management Team (SMT), supported by a representative from Human Resources. From time to time depending on the items for communication/consultation there may be a requirement for other SMT members to be present or other officers as deemed appropriate.
- 6.2 It is intended that ECC meetings would take place, initially, at least four times per year. The availability of employee representatives and the nature of the communication may dictate the frequency of meetings. Once established, the frequency of the meetings could change to meet business demands and if required additional meetings could be called either on an adhoc or regular basis.

- 6.3 Meetings would be chaired by alternate rotation on an annual basis by a management representative and by an employee representative.
- 6.4 For all meetings there will also be a vice-chair nominated by management and local employee representative who would alternate accordingly (ie management representative chair/employee vice-chair and vice-versa). The role of vice-chair would also rotate on an annual basis between management and employee representatives.

7.0) Election of Representatives

- 7.1 For ECC meetings to be effective it will be necessary to ensure the views of all staff who are not members of a recognised Trade Union are represented. Therefore employees interested in representing the views of their colleagues would need to be nominated as a representative.
- 7.2 One representative¹ would be invited from each of the following Council directorates to represent the employees from that section. The current directorates are as follows:-
- Clerks Department/Corporate Services
 - Environmental Services
 - Cultural and Economic Development
 - Recreation Services
 - Building Control / Services

Therefore normally five employee representatives would attend ECC meetings. However it is recognised that from time to time it may be necessary for additional staff from any particular directorate to attend. In these situations prior agreement on the number and reason for additional employees attending would need to be sought from the relevant Director before being able to attend.

- 7.3 It is the responsibility of each directorate to propose/submit staff wishing to join the Employee Consultation Committee, and directorates may wish to ballot their section in cases where more than one employee is interested in joining the committee.
- 7.4 Once nominated, representatives would remain in that position for a maximum period of 12 months. The period would begin from the date of the 1st ECC meeting following election to the position. After this period representatives must stand for re-election. The maximum number of consecutive terms a representative can hold would be determined by each area, there is no maximum provided they continue to enjoy the support of their colleagues.

8.0) Trade Unions

- 8.1 The Council recognises the following Trade Unions for consultation and collective bargaining purposes, GMB, NIPSA, UCATT and UNITE. They are considered by the Council to represent the collective views of all the staff who are subscribing members of these unions. Using the existing LJCC management is able to consult with union members via this process.
- 8.2 Recognised Trade union members are not eligible to be nominated as ECC representatives as the aim of the ECC process is to foster communication and consultation with non-unionised employees. Trade union members who wish to

¹ A nominated deputy would also be required from each directorate

engage with the Council are able to do so via the LJCC.

9.0) Topics for Consultation

9.1 Examples of topics on which information will be provided and on which employees will, as appropriate, be consulted could include:-

- The development of employment policies, codes of practice and regulations
- The Council's arrangements for training and developing staff
- Health and Safety
- New equipment
- New ways of working
- Decisions likely to lead to substantial changes in work organisation or in contractual relations.

The above is not an exhaustive list and other items may be included from time to time

10.0) Role of the Representative

10.1 Following appointment, representatives would be expected to contribute to the ECC process by:-

- Attending Meetings.
- Seeking views from the colleagues they represent.
- Sharing information and feedback from ECC meetings with the colleagues they represent.
- Adhere to the agreed rules for timely submission of agenda items and for feedback from their colleagues.

11.0) ECC Meeting Format

11.1 This policy does not extend to cover the format or procedures to be followed at ECC meetings, these matters along with roles and responsibilities should be determined at the inaugural meeting. Once established, the ECC representatives and management would be responsible for the review and maintenance of agreed rules and procedures etc.

11.2 Minutes taken at the meetings should be by way of an Action Sheet to be signed jointly by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee and that actions would be agreed at the end of the meeting; minutes to be made available and displayed for the attention of all employees.

12.0) Disagreement

12.1 While the objective of both the Council and the Trade Union representatives should be to consult with a view to reaching agreement it is recognised that at times there will be disagreement on issues.

13.0) Reports and Action Points

- 13.1 DDC will provide administrative support for this purpose. Decisions made and jointly agreed Action Points of meetings will be displayed on notice boards throughout Council premises and will be available on the 'W' Drive and Intranet. Actions points would be agreed at the end of each meeting by the chair and vice-chair.

14.0) Handling Confidential Information

- 14.1 Employees participating in this process will be bound by a duty of confidentiality and are not authorised to reveal to employees or third parties any information which, in the legitimate interest of the Council, has been expressly provided to him/her in confidence. This obligation will continue to apply even after the cessation of an employees term of office as a representative and/or their employment with the Council.

15.0) Monitoring and Review

- 15.1 It is intended to review this agreement annually to ensure it continues to meet the purpose as set out in 2.0

DATE OF ISSUE
JANUARY 2009



Employee Consultation Committee (ECC) Nomination Form

THIS FORM SHOULD BE COMPLETED IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN JOINING THE ABOVE COMMITTEE, THE FORM SHOULD ALSO BE COUNTERSIGNED BY YOUR LINE MANAGER; INCOMPLETE FORMS WILL BE RETURNED.

Name _____

Directorate _____

Department _____

Proposed by _____

Seconded by _____

Please provide a brief description of why you would like to join this committee.

I understand the following:-

1. I will be expected to represent the views and opinions of my colleagues in a fair and consistent manner.
2. I will be expected to share the information received at meetings and to seek feedback on items discussed through timely communication with my colleagues using a variety of media, for example face to face, email, notice boards and so on.

Signed (Representative) _____ Dated _____

Line Manager Use

I support the above application and understand that reasonable, paid, time off will need to be granted to facilitate:-

1. Attendance at ECC meetings
2. To prepare agenda items
3. To consult and inform employees on the issues discussed as part of the ECC meetings

Signed (Line Manager) _____ Dated _____

THIS FORM SHOULD BE RETURNED TO HUMAN RESOURCES

[WHERE MORE THAN 2 NOMINATIONS ARE RECEIVED FROM ANY DIRECTORATE THE PROCESS AS SET OUT IN PARAGRAPH 7.3 WILL APPLY AND ALL NOMINATIONS FOR THAT DIRECTORATE WILL BE RETURNED TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE SERVICE.]