APPENDIX

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT - SCRUTINY REVIEW

SUMMARY OF ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION – 25 APRIL 2015
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY GROUPS
MUNICIPAL CHAMBERS, BUCCLUECH STREET, DUMFRIES

Members:
Councillor Ivor Hyslop
Councillor Patsy Gilroy

Attendees:
Frank Smith, Disability & Age
Frank Morgan, Disability & Age
Andrew Dorman, Race
Peter Stevenson, EDWG Member

Officers:
Andrew Reed, Policy and Performance Advisor
Melinda Dolan, Police and Performance Advisor
Liz Manson, Senior Manager, Planning and Performance

Questions and Issues:

What are your Experiences of contact with the Council and how can they be addressed?
The group were aware that there are multiple ways to contact the council, and made specific reference that internet and online contact would be lower within their groups, due to confidence in using computers and technology.

There were also comments in respects of getting to the right person, and that telephone enquiries tended to result in signposting to other officers, or waiting on the appropriate officer to respond. A single point of contact (who had knowledge) would be beneficial.

There were mixed opinions to automated systems, and the group accepted that some people prefer the system, as it may take them to the direct person who could help. Others felt that they preferred speaking to an actual person so clarity could be put across.

Social Media is a growing presence on both getting information to and from the Council. As with the earlier technology discussion, it was felt that awareness of training on technology, and access to technology provided by the Council needs to be increased.
What is your involvement in consultations and engagement?
Members of the group discussed the amount of consultations and the deadline for consultation that they receive from the Council. As the representatives were from groups, which have multiple other groups as members, felt that the timing of consultation request was an issue and that given the size of many documents, it was very difficult for them to circulate and then gain a comprehensive response within the deadline.

There was acceptance that officers also have multiple demands and restricted timelines, and enquired whether it was possible to provide an executive summary on large documents for groups, which summarises the key points for consultation. It would also be useful for hypothetical case studies to be used, which may enable better context for the consultation and groups required to provide a response.

There was also comment in respect to consultation fatigue, as groups were being asked for responses to multiple documents and reports, and that the executive summary could be applied here as well.

It was noted that controversial reports gather more response and provokes people to be involved, but if there are no real concerns then it is unlikely there will be much of a turn out or response to the consultations.

How do you liaise with Elected Members?
Members of the group identified that they did not have regular contact with Elected Members; however, they tended to go to specific committee representatives, but not to their local areas Elected Members. They focussed on decision making Elected Members, such as Convenors or Chairs.

It was noted that if the profile of Elected Members was raised in respect to how they can help, and their roles within their local area, that the groups may make more use of them in the future.

What would help you in future public involvement?
The groups agreed that a Council Information sheet which detailed
- When the Council meets,
- Dates for the diary, and;
- Potential consultation periods
This would assist the groups in planning when and how they use their group members. This could also possibly reduce a clash or build-up of a large number of consultation requests.

More information and planning appeared to be the key requests from attending groups.

Consultation should be genuine and not delivering pre-conceptions, or tick box exercises. Therefore the groups would appreciate feedback on what has been changed because of their responses to consultation, and what has not happened and why would be useful.