

# The Dacorum Compact

Consultation and Policy Appraisal  
Code of Good Practice



**September 2005**  
**Produced in partnership**

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## 1.0 Introduction

The Consultation and Policy Appraisal Code of Good Practice is to be viewed in conjunction with the Dacorum Compact, which was signed by over 50 voluntary and community groups and the main local statutory agencies, including Dacorum Borough Council, Dacorum Primary Care Trust, Hertfordshire County Council Adult Care Services and Hertfordshire Constabulary.

This is the second of the Codes of Good Practice, which will add more detail to the principles laid out in the Compact document, which defines the relations between Dacorum Borough Council, other Statutory Bodies and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Dacorum.

Development of the Consultation and Policy Appraisal Code of Good Practice has involved an extensive consultation process co-ordinated by the Dacorum Borough Council, with input from a variety of voluntary and community groups and statutory agencies.

## The Consultation and Policy Appraisal Code of Good Practice

### 2.1 Aim

This Code of Practice aims to:

- Establish effective and meaningful consultation with the voluntary and community sector on relevant issues.
- Share the results of this consultation with the voluntary and community sector
- Support and develop inclusive mechanisms for consultation.
- Ensure consultation procedures are accountable and transparent.

*"Consultation is a process of dialogue that leads to a decision. It can be a powerful tool for improving the quality and cost effectiveness of services and for ensuring that policy makers stay in touch with citizens."*

*Audit Commission.*

### 2.2 Context and Scope

The 'Code of Practice on Consultation and Policy Appraisal' builds on the principles enshrined in the Dacorum Compact.

The Dacorum Compact is an important building block in improving relationships between the local sectors. It recognises the unique role and added value of the work of Voluntary and Community organisations and has been endorsed by a wide range of organisations across both sectors.

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The Local Government Act 2000 places a duty on Local Authorities to prepare community strategies for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK. The Dacorum Compact supports these activities by acting as a tool to forge the new and evolving pattern of relationships between the sectors and the development of the Local Strategic Partnership.

The success of the community planning process will in part depend on the need for consultation exercises to be genuine and thorough. For Voluntary and Community organisations, consultation presents an opportunity to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on policy making, on behalf of the people and causes they work for.

### **2.3 Shared Vision and Shared Principles**

In addition to the vision and principles stated in the Dacorum Compact all partners recognise the value of consultation that:

- Provides early and unhurried input into policy development.
- Supports the principles of accountability, accessibility, inclusiveness, and clarity.
- Is informed, balanced, relevant, transparent and honest
- Covers the implementation and monitoring aspects of policy proposals where relevant and appropriate.
- Takes account positively of the specific needs, interests and contributions of minority groups and those serving socially excluded people.
- Aim to use language, which is clear and simple, avoiding unnecessary jargon, acronyms and abbreviations.

### **2.4 Undertakings by Voluntary and Community Sector Partners**

In addition to the undertakings stated in the Dacorum Compact, when participating specifically on consultation issues the Voluntary and Community Sector commit to:

- Advise Statutory Partners of groups that should be consulted, and share proposals with other interested groups within agreed time-scales
  - Respect confidentiality requirements attached to Statutory Partners consultation material
  - Send feedback by the deadline requested
  - Ensure that feedback is accurate and relevant and fairly reflects the views of consultees
  - Ensure that volunteers, members, trustees and employees participate in consultation and share feedback widely on its outcomes.
  - Promote opportunities for liaison on consultation proposals between community and voluntary organisations working in the same activity or services.
  - Ensure that, within available resources, services users, carers, volunteers, members and supporters are informed and involved, and where possible, consulted directly, in consultation exercises, as appropriate.
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## 2.5 Undertakings by Borough Council and other Statutory Sector Partners when participating in consultation activities

In addition to the undertakings stated in the Dacorum Compact, when participating specifically on consultation issues the Statutory Sector commit to:

- Developing clear consultation processes that explain aims, procedures, boundaries set and the timescales involved.
- Respect and value the campaigning role of the Voluntary and Community Sector, while acknowledging that this may conflict with statutory agencies' policies, plans and decisions.
- Whenever possible, consult with the Community and Voluntary Sector on issues likely to affect it prior to new policies and procedures being developed.
- Ensure that resources are available for consultation and *where possible*, be willing to change proposals and policies as a result of such listening.
- The Statutory Partners will state clearly what it is that is being consulted on, and if appropriate what elements of the proposal or consultation documents are for information.
- Provide background material where appropriate and ensure it is accurate and up to date to the best of our knowledge
- Explain which groups of people are being consulted with and why their input is important (i.e. because they may be particularly affected by a change of policy etc)
- State how much time is available for the consultation and endeavour to give consultees enough time to consider the issues properly. That is, we intend to wherever possible allow at least three months for every consultation exercise but recognise that sometimes circumstances beyond our control will not make this possible. For example, time-scales for formal consultation under the new planning system is prescribed as six weeks for the main documents and four to six weeks for supplementary documents.
- Tell people who took part in the consultation what the overall results are and publish the final decisions/outcomes as soon as they are known.
- List the voluntary and community sector participants that took part in the consultation.

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