

# Customer Engagement and Consultation Policy

## 1.0 Policy Summary

Effective engagement with customers is essential to the delivery of any public service. This policy sets out how Stonewater will encourage customers to have a central role in the business, meeting the necessary regulatory requirements and making a significant contribution to improving homes and enhancing the services that they receive.

## 2.0 Policy Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Embed customer involvement at the heart of Stonewater's activities;
- Sustain and increase the levels of involvement through good practice, innovation and commitment;
- Ensure that customer engagement adds value to the work of Stonewater;
- Ensure that customers have a genuine opportunity to influence the services that they receive;
- Use engagement with customers as a driver for continuous improvement and service development.
- Set out Stonewater's commitment to consulting customers on matters that affect them.

## 3.0 Policy Details

### 3.1 Engagement Framework

Stonewater will maintain a range of structures for participation in order to provide customers with sufficient and appropriate opportunities for effective formal involvement and influence. These are detailed in the Customer Engagement Strategy. The Strategy sets out:

- The approach to customer involvement in local governance;
- The links between local governance and engagement with customers;
- How Stonewater will support a broad range of customer involvement;
- How Stonewater will ensure that involvement makes a positive contribution to service delivery and value for money;
- Methods of effective communication with customers including the use of social media and digital communications;
- The means of ensuring that Stonewater meets the needs of a diverse population;
- How Stonewater will review its approach, impact and value for money periodically to ensure that it remains effective and delivers the right outcomes;
- How Stonewater will undertake an equality and diversity impact assessment of resident engagement to demonstrate that the approach meets the needs of diverse communities.

The engagement framework will recognise the diverse needs of customers and will seek to be inclusive of these.

### 3.2 Methods of Engagement

Stonewater will capture customer feedback and have involvement from a range of groups and individuals to reflect the demographics of the customer population. A variety of methods will be used to encourage engagement including the website, face to face contact, social media and corporate communications both electronic and hard-

copy.

A range of involvement methods will be available to include formal and informal activity, short term and standing groups of customers, an online panel and face to face contact.

The online insight panel reflects the demography of the customer group and will be used to capture a wide range of customer experience data.

### 3.3 Customer Consultation

Stonewater will consult all customers and potential customers on matters that substantially affect them fully and clearly, in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements. In keeping with the spirit of this policy Stonewater will also aim to consult on matters that affect customers but fall outside the legal and statutory requirements.

In addition to complying with legal requirements for the management and investment of leaseholders service charges, Stonewater will also consult leaseholders from time to time about other options for protecting and managing their contributions. Such consultation will be transparent and allow leaseholders to have appropriate influence over the stewardship of their service charge monies.

Stonewater will produce and maintain good practice guidance relating to consultation. This will take account of statutory, contractual / regulatory requirements and recognise other good practice in the sector.

Consultation with recognised customer representative groups may be undertaken separately from, or alongside consultation with individuals dependent upon the scope, content and implications of the outcome.

Alternate methods of consultation are outlined in section 3.2 above.

### 4.0 Key Outcomes

Involving customers in decision making demonstrates tangible outcomes, reflects value for money and achieves efficiencies. Stonewater will:

- Involve customers in assessing outcomes from their involvement and publicise these;
- Publicise the efficiencies made as a result of customer involvement
- Produce an annual report for customers;
- Ensure that customers are involved in the business planning process;
- Have a panel of customers who independently scrutinise and review our services;
- Comply with statutory, regulatory and good practice requirements when consulting customers;
- Consider the use of cost effective ways of involving customers such as 'on line' and electronically through 'virtual groups, where appropriate.

### 5.0 Equality and Diversity

Stonewater will maintain/ update customer profiling information, and record customer engagement activity on an ongoing basis, conducting an Equality Impact Assessment on an annual basis.

Where gaps are identified Stonewater will take action to engage with hard to reach groups, using external partners if necessary.

Customer engagement groups (excluding the customer insight on line panel) will have a Code of Conduct which includes reference to the business requirement that they work towards social cohesion and in a manner that is inclusive and non- discriminatory.

### 6.0 Date of issue

1 April 2015