

Consultation on the Advice & Information Strategy 2014-17

The draft Advice & Information Strategy 2014-17 was open for consultation between 9 December 2013 and 24 January 2014 using the following means:

- The document was placed on the Council's consultation webpages with an accompanying survey which was completed by 124 individuals.
- To enable feedback from residents unable to access the internet, posters, surveys and comments boxes were placed in 17 libraries and children's centres across the Bath & North East Somerset area. 3 responses were received as a result.
- A stakeholder event on 15 January was attended by 35 individuals representing 24 providers of advice, information and other relevant services.
- The draft Strategy was presented to and discussed by the Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel on 17 January.

It is noted that the on-line consultation received responses that demonstrated high levels of support for the current contract provider, B&NES CAB.

The table below sets out the key messages received during the consultation period. The feedback has been grouped under Accessibility and Content in order to separate views on style from those on the intent of the document.

	Feedback Received
Accessibility	The document needs to be produced in an accessible format.
	The language is clear.
	The principles of the Strategy are clear but there needs to be greater detail on the proposed structure of the advice sector.
	The document is too long and could feature less contextual information.
Content	The strategic context needs to be made clearer. Links to priorities, aims and objectives in key documents should be graphically illustrated.
	The Strategy needs to include the resources available for delivering its aims and objectives, financial and otherwise.
	More work is needed on identifying overlaps and duplication. In particular, a better understanding is needed of how individuals use services and the factors influencing this. An analysis of the needs of isolated people and why they do not access services should be included in this work.

	<p>The Strategy should set out evidence of need in more detail. Options for meeting needs should be included, with an assessment of suitability and a clear rationale for the proposed model.</p>
	<p>Access to advice for people living in rural areas is not addressed. The Strategy should identify barriers and ensure proposed future service delivery works towards reducing or eradicating these.</p>
	<p>It is imperative that the sector works together to enable true partnerships that are able to operate in a competitive environment. Co-location of services will help, but is not enough on its own. The Council has a role to play in leading providers towards this goal.</p>
	<p>The Strategy needs to explicitly reference developments in digital inclusion and set out how these can be used to influence and improve access to advice. The aims of the Strategy could in themselves be a key driver in improvements in digital access.</p>
	<p>The Strategy should set out who would be considered to be vulnerable and therefore prioritised for access to commissioned services. Service provision for those people not reaching the 'vulnerable' threshold would then be easier to define.</p>
	<p>The APEX project is an encouraging starting point for improving partnerships and there is good deal of common ground with the Strategy. However, its scope and profile are limited. Awareness of the aims of APEX, and indeed the project itself, is patchy and needs to be improved. Membership should be widened to include all providers of advice and information.</p>