

AGENDA ITEM:

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Meeting	CABINET
Date	1 JUNE 2004
Subject	CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
Report of	CABINET MEMBER FOR VALUE AND EFFECTIVENESS
Summary	This report seeks to provide a strategic approach towards community consultation and engagement, and outlines the main activities that are proposed to be included in the Strategy

Officer Contributors	Assistant Chief Executive
Status (public or exempt)	Public
Wards affected	All
Enclosures	Appendix A- mechanisms for taking forward the consultation and engagement strategy
For decision by	Cabinet
Function of	Executive
Reason for urgency / exemption from call-in (if appropriate)	N/A

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1 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the proposed strategy for consultation and engagement be approved.

2. RELEVANT PREVIOUS DECISIONS

- 2.1 Council Policy Conference 13 February 2003-Private Members Bill

3 CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 'Putting the Community First' requires a robust framework for obtaining the views of our communities and using them to shape service delivery.
- 3.2 This report outlines how the Council should take forward its power of community leadership and duty of community planning contained in the 2000 Local Government Act.

4 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 There is a corporate risk that a failure to consult and engage effectively with communities and work with partners to tackle key priorities will adversely affect the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and result in lower resident satisfaction levels.
- 4.2 Consultation and engagement activities need to be planned to avoid the risk of 'consultation fatigue' and declining levels of community involvement.

5 FINANCIAL, STAFFING, ICT AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None specifically arising from this report. The principles in this report will be taken forward from within existing resources

6 COMMENTS, IF ANY, OF THE COUNCIL'S STATUTORY OFFICERS (Head of Paid Service, Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer)

- 6.1

7 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 7.1 This report encompasses a response to the Private Members Bill put forward by Councillor Sloam at Council Policy Conference on February 13 2003. However the Strategy outlined in this report covers a broader remit of how consultation, intelligence, and community engagement and partnership working should best be organised to effectively assess community needs and wishes and improve service delivery, assisting in 'Putting the Community First'.
- 7.2 The rationale for doing so is best articulated by the Local Government

Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), who state that ‘to develop a clear idea on what outcomes are desired; to understand what is important; and to identify what to focus on and improve; councils must listen, learn and engage with service users, local people, community partners and all other stakeholders’.

- 7.3 Consultation only represents a small proportion of engagement processes, which encompass any or all of the following:

Market research- finding out what people think about the Council and its services

Consultation- a policy or activity is being developed and views are sought on priorities before proceeding

Involvement- a spectrum ranging from local people having their say to volunteering as active citizens and co-producers

Partnership- joint work between the council and an external private, public or voluntary agency/ies for a specific purpose

- 7.4 A strategy also needs to address areas identified as requiring improvement in the last Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), such as collecting and using wide-ranging information in the community, and better feeding back the outcome of consultation to the community. Moreover, it is likely that the next round of CPA will place a much stronger emphasis on consultation, engagement and partnerships, and the Council’s role as a Community Leader.

- 7.5 The Strategy also complements a number of other current initiatives. For example most people’s contact with the council will be at the point of service delivery; when a service is requested; or when things go wrong, and therefore the Customer Care Best Value Review is central to effectively listening to the customer and capture and act on their concerns. A key theme of the Children and Young People’s Best Value Review is how young people are empowered to have a say in matters which affect their lives. Community engagement will be central to the success of strategic development and regeneration schemes. Finally, intelligence gleaned from our engagement activity and better baseline information on service profiling and take-up, obtained through segmentation analysis, will assist the Council in meeting its statutory equalities duties. It is also a response to the Government’s increasing interest in concepts of civil renewal and active citizenship.

7.6 The Consultation and Engagement Strategy

- To assist in Putting the Community First through using engagement to assess community needs and wishes and improve service delivery
- To provide an overall context within which we engage with service users and the wider community
- To ensure consultation (and other engagement) is conducted professionally;
- To ensure consultation is used and communicated effectively
- To ensure Barnet’s residents and civil society has the fullest possible opportunity to become involved

- To ensure a co-ordinated and cost effective approach to these activities

7.7 The Strategy will be delivered through the following activities:

7.7.1 Consultation

- Taking a more selective approach to consultation to minimise 'consultation fatigue' and linking it more closely (through the corporate planning process and the production of an Annual Work Plan) as well as reviewing the most appropriate mechanisms used; and strengthening the role the Corporate Performance Office play in advising Services.

7.7.2 Community Engagement

- Extend the meetings between Cabinet and community groups, using the Corporate Plan and the five key themes as the basis for the next phase of this work
- Develop Scrutiny enquiries as a means of engaging the public in policy development
- Developing on-line methods of consulting and engaging the community
- Developing the role of the Civic Network and encouraging it to be driven by Barnet's communities themselves

7.7.3 Partnership Working

- Continue to develop the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) as the vehicle for overseeing the implementation of the Community Plan and encouraging better understanding and joint working (including joint consultations) between the key partners; and improving reporting back to the wider community

7.8 Data and Intelligence

- Ensure relevant data sets all held in easily accessible place and available to all Departments and partners, including through Geographical Information Systems (GIS)
- Develop knowledge management through an electronic solution to capture information about different communities based on consultation and other intelligence

7.9 Subject to the agreement of Cabinet on the principles behind this approach, each of the objectives in the above paragraphs will lead into a specific work programme with targets. The variety of engagement mechanisms currently used are listed at Appendix 'A', and they will be adapted to meet the needs of

the new strategy.

8 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 'Community Engagement' at www.idea.gov.uk

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