

LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL RESPONSE TO LDLSP CONSULTATION

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the production of the LDLSP's Community Engagement Framework (CEF).

The Council views the creation of the CEF as a significant step forward in ensuring that the views of the communities in the Lancaster District can be heard and help shape local policy decision making. The council has included in its Corporate Plan support for developing this framework and has contributed fully to the project team who prepared the framework. It is clear that the adoption of a common approach for community engagement throughout the LDLSP partners will have undoubted benefits and these are outlined in the documents.

The adoption of the framework will help the council and other partners to demonstrate that it takes community engagement seriously and will help improve key performance indicators linked to statutory and Local Area Agreement targets for engaging with the public and local communities.

The council is all too aware that on occasions it is very difficult to secure a response from all those with a view or opinion on any issue when consulting, especially individual members of the public who are not members of an organisation or group. The adoption of this framework therefore should help partners ensure that there is an opportunity for all community views to be expressed and recorded to help inform decision making.

More specifically, there is nothing in the framework that the council would disagree with. The principles of the framework are consistent with the council's own consultation strategy and toolkit and those views expressed by the council at the recent stakeholders' event on community engagement.

The draft framework is a very comprehensive and lengthy reference document. If it is to be adopted and used by partners, it needs to be user friendly and easily accessible. Partners need to be able to find their way around the documents quickly and easily. However, as it is a long and wordy document, and in some places repetitive, we would hope that when considering responses to the consultation, the project group take the opportunity to review the structure and format of the documents to sharpen the focus of the framework. In particular, the framework could be improved and made more user friendly for partners accessing the documents, by the use of more pictures, charts and diagrams and better indexing.

The Council believes that the framework should include a reference list of contacts for local groups and organisations. This would assist partners to engage effectively with communities by speeding things up, ensuring that the right people are contacted, and providing some consistency in the consultations. In particular, this would help partners ensure that local communities across the whole Lancaster District were included and the theme of City, Coast and Countryside championed. The development of such a reference list should be prepared as soon as possible but should not delay partners adopting the framework.

To conclude, this is a good piece of work and a good starting point to improve community engagement. However, the council recognises that the preparation and adoption of the framework is the easy part. The next stage of how partners implement and use the framework will be critical to determining the success of the framework and the LDLSP should have a clear idea of how this should be promoted and delivered within the partnership.