

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

**Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership
Community Engagement Framework - Consultation
3 September 2009**

**Report of the Corporate Director (Finance and
Performance)**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek the Committee's response to the Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership's (LDLSP) Community Engagement Framework consultation.

RECOMMENDATION

- (1) That the Committee consider the LDLSP's Community Engagement Framework consultation documents and agree the draft response attached as Appendix A on behalf of the city council for submission prior to the deadline of 7th September.**
- (2) Recommend that the Community Engagement Framework be adopted by Council, subject to the outcome of the consultation exercise not significantly changing the draft documents, and that all future engagement work undertaken by the Council follows the principles of engagement set out in the document.**

1.0 Introduction

Community Engagement can be defined as 'the involvement of citizens, through locally based representative bodies and individually, in influencing and shaping those decisions which directly impact on their local environment and the quality of their daily life'.

- 1.1 A new ‘duty to involve’ came into force on the 1 April 2009. It is set out in Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act. The ‘duty’ requires authorities to “ *take those steps they consider appropriate to involve representatives of local persons in the exercise of any of their functions.*” It specifies three ways of involving that need to be covered in this consideration:
- Providing information
 - Consulting
 - Involving in another way
- 1.2 Statutory Guidance states “we would also encourage authorities to work with partners through their Local Strategic Partnership to co-ordinate information provision, consultation and involvement and to share relevant knowledge...” (1)
- 1.3 The recent (statutory) Place Survey identified that only a quarter of residents (25%) in Lancaster district agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area. This figure is below the Lancashire average (28%). The government has established a new National Indicator (NI 4) to track performance in this area.
- 1.4 The Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership (LDLSP) includes as part of its Policy Framework the development of a Community Engagement Framework (CEF) which will enable partner engagement with communities within the Lancaster district so that improvements in social, economic and environmental well being can be achieved. This exercise has now been completed and the LDLSP wish to consult with its partners on the draft CEF so that it can be formally adopted by partners.
- 1.5 The partner consultation exercise finishes on 7th Sept and full council will be formally asked to adopt the CEF, as amended following the conclusion of the consultation exercise, at its meeting on 16th September. A draft suggested response is attached as **Appendix A**

2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 The Community Engagement Framework (CEF) document is attached as **Appendix B** to this report and has been designed from the start in partnership and builds upon the experience of the work of partners within the LDLSP, individual community members, small groups and organisations.
- 2.2 The CEF comprises a charter setting out the principles of community engagement. It sets out the strategic vision and guiding principles for community engagement within the Lancaster district. This framework will be used as the starting point for the delivery of all community engagement by the LDLSP and its constituent organisations and is designed to supplement and support our statutory responsibilities in this area.
- 2.3 Advice and guidance notes have been developed which build on research, experience, and best practice and will help members of the LDLSP to use methods of engagement that are consistent with the principles of this framework and will provide partners with a ‘menu of opportunities’ which will enable them to tailor their engagement around the needs of particular individuals/communities. It will also enable the LDLSP and its partners to develop an annual consultation and engagement strategies and plans.

2.4 Adoption of the CEF will demonstrate commitment to community engagement across the LDLSP partners in the following ways;

- A co-ordinated and consistent approach to community engagement is utilised that will help reduce the impact of “*consultation overkill and fatigue*”;
- Community engagement is carried out in a way that is transparent, honest, and accessible to all;
- Sufficient information is provided to the community to enable them to participate meaningfully in the community engagement process;
- Community engagement is inclusive by providing opportunities for members of the Lancaster district community to express their views and to have their views listened to with respect;
- Communities of interest, place, and identity are able to participate in decisions that affect or impact on them;
- The outcomes of community engagement shape decision-making and service delivery;
- Commitment from all partners to listen and act upon outcomes of community engagement to effect change
- Feedback is provided to the community about the way their participation shaped the decisions made.

2.5 Through the development and implementation of a Community Engagement Framework, the LDLSP (and its partners) recognise the value to be gained by seeking to engage beyond the statutory requirements by working together rather than individually placing community engagement at the heart of service determination, planning and delivery.

2.6 By taking a community engagement approach to policy and service planning and delivery, decisions can be shaped by community needs. By providing feedback to the community about the way we use their participation to shape our decisions, we will create confidence in the community that the services we deliver meet local needs and will create positive public perception of the services provided to the Lancaster district.

2.7 A number of outline business benefits will arise through the adoption of community engagement principles:

- Community engagement can improve working relationships between partners, and the relationship between partners and their service users;
- LSP partners and the voluntary and community sector can strengthen their role in community leadership;
- Potential issues arising from proposed changes to services can be identified and addressed;
- Take-up of services can be improved, making unit costs lower, especially where there is a charge for services;

- User satisfaction with services can be monitored over time, providing a useful performance indicator on improvements to the quality of services;
- The commissioning of services can be targeted more closely on providing what people want, and avoiding what people do not want; and we can make better use of the resources and expertise in the voluntary and community sector.
- Better community intelligence on the needs and aspirations of our communities will also enable the commissioning and delivery of services to be targeted more closely to addressing the needs of these communities;
- Communities can be empowered to define their aims for their community and can support the development of locally based solutions to neighbourhood issues;
- Local people can be involved more in decision making and rejuvenating the local democratic process;
- Community Engagement can increase civic pride and pride of place;
- People will be able to transfer the skills and experience they gain from participating in community engagement activities to other aspects of their life;
- Participating in Community Engagement activities can help improve the health and wellbeing, particularly mental wellbeing of individuals and the community; and providing information to communities helps the community to be better informed on how local services are delivered

2.8 Two strands of work have been carried out to provide the base information for the production of the framework – research and consultation.

3.0 Research

3.1 Research on current engagement activity in the district and on best practice has been carried out. The research set out to determine what engagement methods are currently in use and what research into engagement is currently being undertaken by other agencies and partnerships within the district.

Specifically, this research involved statutory agencies the voluntary sector and members of the business community. The findings will help to avoid duplication of work between agencies and partnerships.

4.0 Details of Consultation

4.1 Consultation work has focused upon the following groups/communities

Young People 11-17 years
 Young Adults 17-25 years
 Older people 50 years +
 Communities from Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe
 Communities from South East Asia
 Muslim and Hindu communities
 Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender community
 People with disabilities

Housebound people
Super-output communities [each relevant geographical area separately]
Carers
Students
Business owners and managers
Parish and Town Councils.

The consultations have tried to determine how different groups are generally engaging at the moment, how they are using their current engagement methods, whether current engagement methods are working and to ask them how they would like to be engaged with in the future.

5.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

Option 1

To agree the council's response to the consultation exercise and recommend to Council adoption of the LDLSP's Community Engagement Framework subject to the outcome of the consultation exercise not significantly changing the draft documents, and that all future engagement work undertaken by the Council follows the principles of engagement set out in the document.

Option 2

As option 1 but to agree an amended response

Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

Either option would satisfy the council's Corporate Plan priority to adopt the LDLSP Community Engagement Strategy. The Councils own Consultation Policy and procedures will be reviewed to ensure that they are aligned with the engagement framework.

6.0 Conclusion

Formally adopting the framework will demonstrate the community leadership role required of the Council in leading its communities. It will enable the full range of business benefits set out the report to be fully realised and improve working relationships between partners and the relationship between partners and their service users.

The implementation of the Community Engagement Framework will deliver tangible business benefits to the LDLSP and its partners and by working together rather than individually place community engagement at the heart of service determination, planning and delivery.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Sustainable Community Strategy forms a part of the Council's Policy Framework. The Community Engagement Framework forms a part of the LDLSP's policy framework.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

The adoption of the Community Engagement Framework will have positive benefits in support of all aspects of equality impact assessment.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no new budget implications arising from the adoption of the CEF. The costs of implementing the CEF will be met from individual services consultation budgets. Ultimately, the commissioning (or de-commissioning) of services should be influenced by community engagement, and this supports achieving better value for money in service delivery.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 officer has been consulted and has nothing further to add.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act places a statutory duty on members of Local Strategic Partnerships to ensure that community engagement informs decision making at all levels.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has nothing further to add.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2009

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