

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Community Engagement Framework 14 January 2010

Report of the Corporate Director (Finance and Performance)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek the Committee's support for the revised version of the Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership's (LDLSP) Community Engagement Framework and recommend to full Council that it is formally adopted as guidance for all the council's future community engagement work.

RECOMMENDATION

- (1) **That the Committee support the LDLSP's revised Community Engagement Framework and recommend that the Framework be adopted by Council and that all future engagement work undertaken by the Council follows the principles of engagement set out in the document.**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 Council Business Committee, at its meeting on the 3rd September 2009, considered an urgent business report regarding a consultation being carried out by the Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership in respect of its draft Community Engagement Framework.
- 1.3 Following consideration of the report, the Committee agreed a draft response to the consultation and further agreed :-

"That the Committee recommends 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." (min. No. 9 refers)

- 1.4 The Committee's decision was referred to Council on the 16 September 2009 however at the time of writing the Council report, it was not envisaged that there would be a need for a significant change to the CEF documents. However, the LDLSP Project Group that had been set up to draft the CEF received a number of

responses, that needed further consideration and they agreed that the CEF should be redrafted with changes in both presentation and format.

As a consequence, Council was advised not to formally adopt the CEF at that time but to await the outcome of the redraft exercise.

Council resolved that

“That Council note the content of the draft Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Community Engagement Framework at this stage and await the amended Framework as result of comments received as part of the consultation exercise before considering the formal adoption of the Framework.” (Min No 46) refers.

2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 The revised Community Engagement Framework (CEF) document is attached as an appendix 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 and their responses to the LDLSP’s consultation exercise on its first draft of the CEF.
- 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.

3.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

Option 1

To recommend to Council adoption of the LDLSP’s Community Engagement Framework and that all future engagement work undertaken by the Council follows the principles of engagement set out in the document.

Option 2

Not to recommend to Council adoption of the Framework

Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

Option 1 is the preferred option in that it would satisfy the council’s Corporate Plan priority to adopt the LDLSP Community Engagement framework. The Council’s own

Consultation Policy and procedures will be reviewed to ensure that they are aligned with the engagement framework.

4.0 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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Ref:

WORKING TOGETHER WE WILL IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR EVERYONE IN OUR DISTRICT



Lancaster
District
Local
Strategic
Partnership

Our Place • Our People
Our Future



Community Engagement Framework

framework

Jacqui Thompson, Chair of Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership.

Foreword

Our promise to you is that we will listen to you, consider your ideas, report our findings and tell you how you have helped to shape our decisions.

The Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership (LDLSP) strongly believes that local people know best what needs to be done to improve their quality of life. This places engagement with local communities and their involvement in decision making at the very heart of our existence. We want all those who live, work, study visit and play in the Lancaster district to share their views, influence our decisions and ultimately play an active role in shaping future service delivery.

We launched the Sustainable Community Strategy, our long term plan for the future of the district in 2008, with a promise to promote involvement and ensure strong engagement with our communities. This will be a guiding fundamental principle of everything we do and will form an integral part of our future working practice rather than a token gesture or single activity.

We have considered how to work across all the organisations which together make up the LDLSP to engage with you, our communities, in a more co-ordinated and efficient way. We know that some organisations within the partnership have more experience in this area than others – we will seek to share expertise where it exists for the benefit of all. We know you do not want to give the same message again and again to different organisations - we want to reduce this duplication. We know that you are more interested in some issues than others – we want to target those people most likely to be affected. We know that some people experience disadvantage, inequality or discrimination – we will take particular care to involve those people we often fail to reach.

This Community Engagement Strategy sets out our commitment to you, explains what we mean by engagement and how we plan to take this forward. It seeks to ensure that opportunities to engage are comprehensive and appropriate for all sections of the community. This work will change and adapt as our communities and local circumstances change and adapt. We will keep it constantly under review to ensure that it continues to deliver its key aims and objectives. I am excited by this development and the opportunities for ever closer working that it brings, and I look forward to reporting the future success which I am sure will follow.

Introduction

Our Sustainable Community Strategy is a shared vision of how the area could look in 2022.

It states:

Working together we will improve the quality of life for everyone in the Lancaster District.

To achieve this vision, communities within the Lancaster district need to be engaged to ensure that improvements reflect their needs and desires.

Only by genuinely engaging with our communities can Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership (LDLSP) improve and develop services which truly meet local need and aspiration, and ultimately contribute to the realisation of the shared vision.

What is community engagement?

Community engagement can mean different things to different people. However, the LDLSP has defined community engagement 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’.

Aim of Community Engagement Strategy

The aim of this Strategy is to set out clear principles for community engagement in the Lancaster district to provide guidance for all organisations that form the LDLSP so they can engage collaboratively with communities, to use results of this engagement to develop more responsive policies and to deliver improvements in services.

Objectives

Through the Community Engagement Framework, there should be:

1. A clear understanding of and commitment to community engagement;
2. Opportunities for communities to shape and influence the development and delivery of quality services, and policies that reflect local needs and priorities;
3. Tools in this Strategy for the LDLSP to use as good practice in community engagement activities;
4. Community engagement is carried out in a way that is timely, transparent, honest, and accessible to all, and is carried out in a co-ordinated and consistent approach;
5. Relevant engagement proportionate to issues and likely benefits;
6. Sufficient information provided to the communities to enable them to participate meaningfully in the community engagement;
7. Feedback provided to the communities about the way their participation shaped the decisions made.

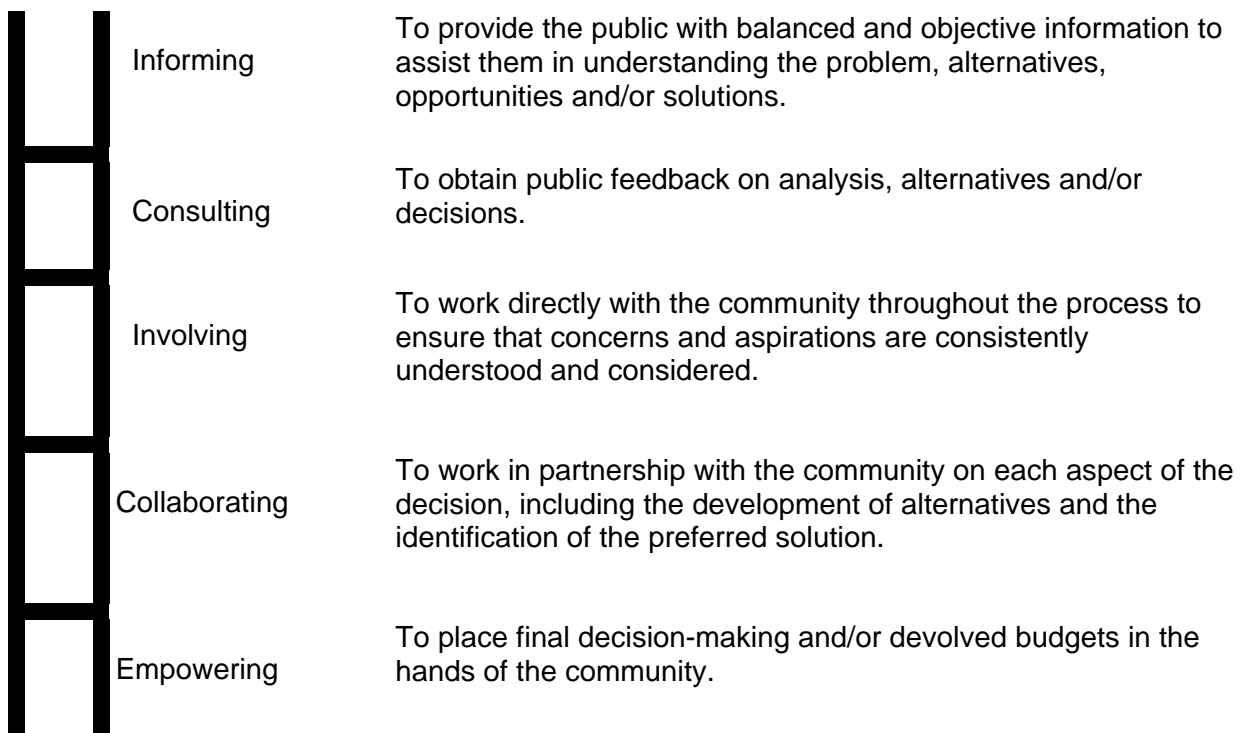
Types of community engagement

There are many different words used to describe community engagement – ‘participation’, ‘involvement’, ‘consultation’ and ‘research’ are just a few and they are often used interchangeably.

Within this framework the word ‘participation’ means that the community is actively taking part in one of the five engagement activities described below.

When planning and carrying out engagement activities in the Lancaster district, LDLSP partners will include one or more of following types of engagement from the below described ladder of participation and provide necessary support to enable engagement.

The ‘**ladder of participation**’ model suggests that there are different engagement levels.



(www.peopleandparticipation.net, 2009)

Why is engagement important?

- The community has the right to influence and participate in the planning and delivery of services and decisions that affect them;
- Community engagement can improve working relationships between partners, and the relationship between partners and their service users;
- LSP partners and the VCFS sector can strengthen their role in community leadership;
- Potential issues arising from proposed changes to services can be identified and addressed;
- User satisfaction with services can be monitored over time;
- Services can be targeted more closely on providing what people want and need; and
- Supports better equality and diversity.

Results of community engagement

- A clearer picture of need and aspirations of Lancaster district communities:
- By having a clearer picture the right approach can be used to engage the whole community:
- Community engagement can promote civic pride, pride of place and good relationships which all contribute to community cohesion:
- People will be able to transfer the skills and experience they gain from participating in community engagement activities to other aspects of their life:
- When people feel they are involved and listened to, health and well being can improve particularly mental health and happiness:
- Local people will know how they can get involved and will feel that the LDLSP is listening; and
- If knowledge is power then informing communities is an empowering activity.

Measuring success

The following National Indicators (NI) will help to measure the success of our Community Engagement Framework. They are:

- Percentage of people who feel they can influence local decision making (National Indicator 4)
- Percentage of people who believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area (National Indicator number 1)

What is a community?

Communities can be best defined as groups of people with something in common. These can be:

Community of place

People living in a neighbourhood and localities such as housing estates or villages. These locations will usually have defined physical boundaries.

Community of interest

A group of people with a shared interest or experience, which might cut across other communities. A community of interest includes service users (for example, people interested in climate change, members of a disability support group, patients registered with a particular GP, library users, pupils of a school).

Community of identity

A group of people with something in common - how people identify themselves or how they are identified by society, usually by demographic characteristics (age; disability; ethnicity; faith; gender; sexual orientation and transgender).

A person will usually see themselves as belonging to a number of communities. This means that communities can be very diverse and consideration must be given when approaching different communities. Some people may feel that they are not part of a community regardless of sharing some of the above characteristics. A lack of identity with a particular community should not result in exclusion from the decision making process affecting that community.

In summary, the commitment by LDLSP partners is to engage with all people:

- Regardless of the communities they belong to
- Wherever such engagement has the potential, subject to cost considerations, to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the district.

Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership Community Engagement Principles

A number of community engagement commitments have been developed to make sure all community engagement and consultation activity follows good practice. LDLSP partners should follow these when conducting all consultation/community engagement work.

Clarity of Purpose	Before beginning any engagement activity, it will be clear why it is happening, what it will achieve, who is involved, what the community can and cannot influence, and how the information gathered through the engagement activity is going to be used.
Evidence Base	Relevant available research, knowledge and community intelligence will be used to help plan engagement activities. Engagement activities won't be carried out if the information is already available.
Proportionate	The approach to engagement and resources will be proportionate to the issue and likely benefits within the resources that partner services have.
Communication	Communication will be tailored by using a variety of accessible and inclusive ways to promote and provide information on engagement opportunities to communities.
Timing	Sufficient time will be allowed to design and carry out engagement activities that are inclusive and encourage participation from all relevant communities. How the information shapes the future of services must also have a realistic time frame.
Partnership	There will be a co-ordinated approach to information provision, consultation, involvement, shared relevant information and intelligence. This will avoid duplication of effort and reduce consultation fatigue.
Integrity	There will be a culture of openness, honesty and accountability when engaging with communities, it is important not to raise unrealistic expectations.
Inclusive	The best and most appropriate methods of engaging with communities will be used to make sure as many people as possible are involved. No one must be left out by design.
Action	Where possible action will be taken on the results of engaging communities. Where it is not possible sound reasons will be fed back to communities.
Feedback	Inclusive and accessible feedback to the community will be provided about the engagement activities carried out and will explain how the community's input contributed to the decision-making process. Feedback will be built into the whole process from the start.
Monitoring & Review	Engagement activities will be monitored and reviewed and reported on periodically to the community.

The **Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership (LDLSP)** co-ordinates activities to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of the District and its communities.

Our Current Partners:

Age Concern	Lancaster District Sustainability Partnership
Arnside and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership	Vision Board
Lancaster & District YMCA	Lancashire Local – Lancaster District
Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	Lancaster & Morecambe Citizens Advice Bureaux
Equality and Diversity Engagement Network (EDEN)	Lancaster & Morecambe College
Environment Agency	Lancaster Parish and Town Councils
Furniture Matters	Lancaster University
Help Direct	Lonsdale Carers
Job Centre Plus	National Coalition Building Institute
Lancashire Association of Local Councils	NHS North Lancashire
Lancashire Constabulary	North West Learning & Skills Council
Lancashire County Council	One Voice Disability Services
Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service	Signposts
Lancaster City Council	University of Cumbria
Lancashire Community Cohesion Partnership	
Lancaster District Community Safety Partnership	
Lancaster District Children’s Trust Partnership	
Lancaster District Community Leaders Group	
Lancaster District Council for Voluntary Services	
Lancaster District Older Persons Partnership	

Acknowledgements

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Most of all, the partnership would like to thank everyone who has taken part in the research including partners, individual members of community, various community groups, parish councils, businesses etc.

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For further information on the project and background information and papers, please visit www.lancaster.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-priorities-and-key-documents/local-strategic-partnership/ldsp-communications-community-engagement-fram/