

Agenda item:

8

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

On 21 January, 2009

Report Title: Haringey Council consultation strategy development.

**Report of: Sharon Kemp,
Assistant Chief Executive Policy, Performance, Partnerships and Communication**

Signed :



Contact Officer : Janette Wallace Gedge, Consultation Manager, Communications and Consultation

Wards(s) affected:

ALL

Report for:

Non- Key Decision

1. Purpose of the report (That is, the decision required)

- 1.1. To update Overview and Scrutiny on review of consultation strategy and proposals for development of new strategy.

2. Introduction by Cabinet Member (if necessary)

- 2.1. Haringey Council was one of the first London Boroughs to adopt a consultation strategy in 2002. The strategy now requires re-thinking and updating to reflect recent and proposed legislation, encompass the best practice that has been developed since the publication of the original strategy and to take account of resident's (and others) feedback to us about Haringey consultations. It is incredibly important that as a Council the quality of our communications with residents is always improving and the process of reviewing this strategy should help us achieve that aim.

3. State link(s) with Council Plan Priorities and actions and /or other Strategies:

- 3.1. The strategy links to, and will be developed alongside, the HSP Community

Engagement Framework.
4. Recommendations 4.1. That Overview and Scrutiny note the report and provide any feedback to improve proposed actions to develop consultation strategy.
5. Reason for recommendation(s) 5.1. Proposal to develop consultation strategy inline with good practice and aligned with the work of HSP
6. Other options considered 6.1. n/a
7. Summary 7.1. The current council consultation strategy was developed in 2002. The Overview and Scrutiny review of consultation in November 2007 recommended that the strategy be reviewed.
8. Chief Financial Officer Comments 8.1. [click here to type]
9. Head of Legal Services Comments 9.1. [click here to type]
10. Head of Procurement Comments –[Required for Procurement Committee] 10.1. [click here to type]
11. Equalities &Community Cohesion Comments 11.1. EQIA will be undertaken during the development of the strategy.

12. Consultation

12.1. The current strategy requires renewing to encompass recent and future legislation

13. Service Financial Comments

13.1. Strategy and activities will be planned and managed within existing funding

14. Use of appendices /Tables and photographs

14.1. none

15. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

15.1.

15.2. n/a

16.1 Background

The current Haringey Council consultation strategy was developed in 2002. The Overview and Scrutiny review of consultation in November 2007 recommended that the strategy be reviewed and updated.

16.2 Key themes

The consultation unit has been researching the key themes for the redevelopment of the consultation strategy including the raft of new legislation that has an impact on consultation including:

- Empowering communities duty to involve
- The duty to involve and consult people about health services that includes Council Overview and Scrutiny as one of the mechanisms
- Responding to petitions
- Councillor call for action
- Participatory budgeting
- Expectation that the Haringey Strategic Partnership has a Community Engagement Framework that co-ordinates consultation and involvement.

16.3 Key drivers

All of these are drivers for the consultation strategy as consultation is acknowledged as the first rung within the ladder of participation. Consultation is the most common way to engage with residents in the borough and it is important that the consultation strategy is developed alongside and within the Engagement Framework.

17.1 Community Engagement Framework

The HSP Performance Management Group have recently approved that a Community Engagement Framework for the Borough be developed as it is a key expectation of the Comprehensive Area Assessment that consultation and engagement be actively promoted and co-ordinated :

17.2 Community Engagement Framework (CEF)

The consultation strategy will sit within this framework as a principal part of the engagement.

17.3 Overview of the CEF:

Haringey Strategic Partnership is developing a framework to co-ordinate and strengthen community engagement work across the borough. The Community Engagement Framework will reaffirm the commitment of HSP partners to community engagement and promote a shared understanding of associated principles. It will also identify and prioritise areas for further development. The CEF is being developed by a multi-agency group, supported by the Corporate Policy Team and Consultation Manager.

17.4 Detail

National and local drivers for community engagement:

Community engagement and empowerment are central themes within the legislative and policy framework and underpin many of the changes currently occurring within public services. There are both national and local drivers for strengthening community engagement, including:

As of April 2009, Local Authorities will have a new duty to inform, consult and involve communities in local decisions, policies and services.

One of the three Comprehensive Area Assessment categories concerns 'understanding local needs and translation into local priorities'.

A number of Haringey's LAA indicators are focused on empowering and engaging local people.

17.5 Benefits of community engagement:

There are a number of compelling reasons why community engagement should be at the heart of the work of the HSP:

- *Empowering people to define and shape their own community*
- *Responsive services tailored to meet people's needs*
- *Better informed citizens*
- *Better monitoring and measuring of performance*
- *Encouraging democratic involvement*
- *Building responsible citizenship*
- *Improving relationships between partner agencies and the public*
- *Building capacity*

- *Statutory obligations*

17.6 Scope of CEF

Community engagement exists in many forms and may vary in the nature and scale in which it is applied through HSP organisations. A model demonstrating a continuum of engagement and participation methods will be used. This approach will be discussed further by the partnership group that will develop the Community Engagement Framework. This group will hold its first meeting on Friday 12 December.

17.7 CEF timeframe

The CEF will be a public facing document, and we will be engaging with the local community as part of its development. We aim to take the CEF to the HSP for agreement in April 2009.

18.1 Developing the consultation strategy

Some elements of good practice in consultation are already in place.

The Consultation Charter was consulted on and has been published on the web site since 2007.

18.2 The council guidance and principles for consultation were written to go beyond the necessities covered in current and prospective legislation and to be an example of leading practice.

18.3 The COMPACT with the community and voluntary sector specifically addresses consultation and has been recognised as an excellent example.

18.4 The consultation management system (on Harinet) together with the consultation calendar and associated mechanisms have been recognised as good practice by our peers through London Councils.

18.5 The two day Making Public Work Training course that is run three times a year receives positive feedback from attendees.

18.6 The council is a Participatory Budgeting (PB) pilot and has been invited to give papers at two seminars run by the government's PB Unit.

18.7 Elements for development

The elements of consultation that are not so strong and that we intend to address through the development of the strategy include:

- Reporting on how the results of consultations are used in decision making and adding to the transparency of decisions
- Consistency of good practice throughout all consultation
- Embedding consultation at the start of business processes and not just an exercise in options at the end of the development process

19.1 The strategy

Strategy will be written for the next 4/5years to apply the principles of communication and consultation agreed in the council's Communications Strategy and will include:

- adherence to principles within the procedure note and the guidance
- an obligation to use the consultation management system to manage all consultations
- a commitment to involving residents at the start of development processes
- using only officers trained in the principles of consultation to conduct consultations
- setting up a comprehensive review and evaluation process
- an obligation to use the consultation calendar and associated mechanisms to publicise consultation to the public and allow them to get involved

19.2 The strategy will reiterate our commitment to a devolved model of consultation where units and departments are responsible for and undertake consultation on that business unit's policies, proposals, plans and projects.

19.3 It will also reinforce that all consultation is undertaken within the corporate guidelines and to the corporate standards and best practice.

19.4 The strategy will also encompass the principles we should apply to our communications and consultation.

- Our dialogue communications and consultation with local people should:
- Create appropriate resident input into decisions
- Be open and honest about why we make decisions
- Show community leadership
- Operate at the most local level possible within resource constraints
- Group services based on their target audience
- Describe outcomes ahead of policies
- Represent our community
- Be clear how to contact us
- Contribute to an understanding of how the council is making a difference to quality of life
- Improve how informed and engaged people feel
- Demonstrate our customer focus

19.5 We should do this in ways that:

- Are accessible to our community
- Are cost efficient
- Use methods most relevant to the audience
- Comply with publicity code and legal constraints
- Connect to key assessments, Place survey, residents' survey and CAA

19.6 We will include encouraging residents and other stakeholders to use the internet to respond to consultations and engage with the council decision making process whilst retaining the more traditional ways of allowing residents to take part (i.e. focus groups, exhibitions and public meetings as well as interviews and postal surveys).

- 19.7 We would include recruitment of area panels of residents as a mechanism for consulting with residents to complement our commitment to area based working and in recognition of the differing characteristics of different neighbourhoods within the borough.
- 19.8 An intention for the strategy would be to more flexible and enable residents to use the internet to take part consultations which can be more interactive than traditional paper based surveys. For example we could encourage residents to submit their views via a video clip on proposals for a CPZ.
- 19.9 As the computer generation ages residents will be more likely to use the internet and expect to undertake transactions with the council via the internet. We will also be enabling a wider participation as people who are accustomed to using the internet expect to communicate via that channel.
- 20.1 The details and timetable for implementing the strategy will be in the 2 year action plan to follow the strategy.
- 20.2 The timeline for development of the strategy would coincide with the CEF and therefore it would be ready to be adopted during 2009.