


Haringey Council

Report for:	Cabinet – 16 September 2014	Item Number:	
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Title:	Community Engagement in the Planning Service
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Report Authorised by:	Lyn Garner – Director of Regeneration, Planning and Development 
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Lead Officer:	Stephen Kelly
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Ward(s) affected: All	Report for Key/Non Key Decisions:
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1. Describe the issue under consideration

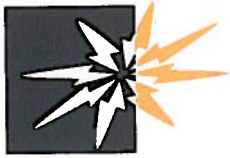
1. As part of its work programme for 2013/14, the Environment and Housing Scrutiny Panel agreed to assess how the planning service engages and involves the community in local planning processes.

2. The overarching aim of this work was to:

'To assess whether residents and communities have appropriate opportunities to engage meaningfully in local planning processes through community engagement and involvement strategies within the planning service (with particular reference to the Statement of Community Involvement).'

3. In undertaking this work, the Panel consulted widely with the following stakeholders and agencies:

- Local community groups (via an on line survey and a dedicated meeting);
- Local planning officers (Assistant Director, planning policy officers and development management officers);
- Developers (through a planning consultancy)
- Other local authorities (Islington, Hackney)
- Specialist contributors (Planning Advisory Service, Planning Aid for London).



4. The panel concluded that a number of issues inhibited engagement and involvement by local community groups, residents associations and local residents in planning consultation processes:
 - The complexity and volume of planning processes;
 - A failure to recognise and utilise the community knowledge, skills and understanding of local issues in planning processes;
 - The need for *greater transparency in planning processes (the role of the Planning Authority)*;
 - *The need for greater trust, openness and joint working in local planning processes.*

5. The Panel have accordingly made a number of recommendations to support community engagement with planning which focused on the following areas:
 - Measures to support community capacity building (improve trust, developing skills, improve understanding);
 - Measures to support the capacity of planning officers (consultation skills, accessibility, approach);
 - Measures to support early engagement in planning consultation processes;
 - Measures to further involve members in planning consultations;
 - Measures to improve the quality (and accessibility) of planning proposals;
 - Greater use of new technology.

2. Planning Service Response

The Scrutiny Panel review came at a time of significant change for the planning service. New leadership and the focus required around improving performance against National Indicators had already lead to a pro-active "improvement plan" (DMIP) being developed for and resourced by the Council as part of its corporate improvement programme. The programme has been positive in addressing speed of decision making and the focus on meeting emergent and recently introduced national performance standards. Alongside the focus on "speed" in decision making the DMIP, together with feedback that has been made directly to the service management team, also identified a series of qualitative actions that embraced the issues examined by scrutiny to achieve greater participation and openness to the planning process.

The appended schedule therefore contains the service's response to each of the recommendations made and highlights where progress has already been achieved, or is in train. The DMIP is in the process of being "refreshed" by the new management team in Planning. This exercise has allowed for careful consideration of the Scrutiny Panel recommendations and, as the attached schedule demonstrates, where possible the service has or will be incorporating the recommendations into the updated improvement plan.



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Some of the recommendations that seek to extend the reach and involvement of external groups in the planning process, will have budgetary implications. Against the background of reducing resources, the service is already having to consider the significant costs of written consultation and engagement (some 175,000 letters per annum are already sent out by the service notifying of applications and DM forum meetings). In addition, the aspirations for the recruitment and retention of highly skilled staff capable of effective community engagement will also represent a challenge, given competition with our neighbours, and the scarcity of skills available. Investment in and retention of professional skills and staff to support community groups and the establishment of additional groups and forums proposed by the Scrutiny Panel will therefore need to be carefully balanced alongside other budget priorities. The service is nevertheless committed to training, and to engagement with the community (see table) but the pace and frequency of such engagement (including scope to use Area Forums) will necessarily be limited by budget resources (unless other sources of income can be developed).

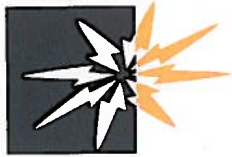
In respect of Member participation and awareness, the service has recently completed induction training for all new Planning Committee Members and is developing a programme of member engagement for the year ahead, focused around a greater number of shorter "briefing" type events. The recommendation for the expansion of IT resources, both through the Transformation Projects and through expanded GIS and digital imaging capabilities will have budgetary implications for enhancements beyond those contained within the existing Transformation Programme. These have also not yet not been fully costed or funded. Officers will continue to seek to identify resources to facilitate these important developments.

Haringey has an exciting future - the regeneration and development plans for the whole Borough require an efficient, accessible and trusted service with the expertise and capability to secure high quality outcomes in collaboration with the Community and with Developers. The recommendations from Scrutiny Panel provide some helpful insights and support for officers already implementing a far reaching improvement plan for the Planning Service. This plan already includes specific actions which have been "validated" by the Review. As the table appended demonstrates the further recommendations, as far as they can be contained within existing resources, have been accepted and form part of the ongoing work of the service.

3. Cabinet Member introduction

The Planning Service is committed to improving understanding of and participation within the planning process. In that regard, the findings of the Scrutiny Panel provide welcome validation of the work that the service has already identified as necessary and is already undertaking. The additional insights into how the Planning Service can further improve participation with the Community are also helpful for the evolution and "refresh" of the improvement plan which me and my officers are currently undertaking.

4. Recommendations



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That the recommendations from the Scrutiny Panel are noted.

5. Alternative options considered

N/A – The report represents the Planning Service consideration of the recent recommendations from Scrutiny Panel

6. Background information

The report follows Scrutiny Panel's recommendations following a comprehensive reviewed of public participation in the planning process. This reached the broad conclusions (above) and has been shared with the Planning Service.

7. Comments of the Chief Finance Officer and financial implications

At this point the recommendations within this report have not been evaluated to determine the cost of implementation.

It is likely that there will be cost implications associated with additional training, extra public meetings and use of technology and at this point no budget has been identified to fund these initiatives. Therefore the exact cost would need to be determined before any recommendations proceed to Cabinet, so that it is clear whether additional funding is required.

8. Comments of the Assistant Director of Corporate Governance and legal implications

The Assistant Director of Corporate Governance has been consulted on the preparation of this report, and makes the following comments.

The promotion of democratic engagement underpins a number of recent legislative developments relating to Planning and is to be encouraged.

Notwithstanding these developments, Planning remains a statutory process with local decision making open to both statutory appeal and judicial challenge.

The recommendations touch on a number of different elements of that process and will inevitably go some way to increasing the accountability and robustness of local decision making.



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The report raises a number of issues which will need specific legal advice and guidance as they are being implemented.

9. Equalities and Community Cohesion Comments

The report sets out a series of recommendations that seek to improve participation in the planning process for all. The recommendations encompass online, written and physical (face to face) meetings within which equalities and community cohesion aspirations form a key consideration. There are no other specific implications from the wider aspirations within the report that would have a differential impact upon groups or individuals with protected characteristics.

10. Head of Procurement Comments

Not relevant

11. Use of Appendices

A schedule of recommendations, together with specific comments is appended to the report, setting out the detailed response of the service to each of the recommendations made by Scrutiny Panel.

12. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Summary of Recommendations:

The Panel has made a number of recommendations to support community engagement with planning which focused on the following areas:

- Measures to support community capacity building (improve trust, developing skills, improve understanding);
- Measures to support the capacity of planning officers (consultation skills, accessibility, approach);
- Measures to support early engagement in planning consultation processes;
- Measures to further involve members in planning consultations;
- Measures to improve the quality (and accessibility) of planning proposals;
- Greater use of new technology.

<u>SCI SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	<u>SERVICE RESPONSE</u>
<p><u>Capacity Building (Community)</u> That there should be an ongoing programme of information provision for local community groups, residents associations, CAACs and residents to build links, confidence and trust between the planning service and the local community and specifically to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote an understanding of the local planning process; • Support their engagement and involvement in the development of planning policy; and • Support their input into consultations on planned development; • Further encourage the cascading of planning information and awareness within the community 	<p>Re-establish Policy Member Advisory Group for new administration and clarify membership. ToR and the nomination process will be clarified and agreed with the Lead Member. (SN) .</p> <p>Community Conference for all amenity societies to be held annually. (TM)</p> <p>AD to meet with Conservation Area Advisory Committees and Amenity Groups with PH to a programme (CD to arrange).</p> <p>Web site to continue to be refined to ease access on planning cases, strategic schemes and -frequent updates on Plan-making.</p>
<p><u>Capacity Building (Community)</u> Provision of generic training on planning policy issues (e.g. the Local Development Plan and local planning guidance) and an update on specific</p>	<p>See above. An annual community conference is proposed and additional information to be made available on the website following migration to the new platform.</p>



Haringey Council

Community Engagement by the Planning Service

April 2014



A PROJECT BY THE ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL

www.haringey.gov.uk

<u>SCI SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	<u>SERVICE RESPONSE</u>
<p>planning policy issues (e.g. new legislation, new local planning policies, and current planning policy consultations).</p>	
<p><u>Capacity Building (Community)</u> Provision of advice and training on the process for considering planning applications (including pre-application engagement, development management fora, the role of the Planning Sub Committee and advice on making representations about planning policy and development proposals)</p>	<p>See above – Community Conference to identify community leaders and review support needs and capability. Additional information on the role of the Planning Sub Committee has been prepared and is available on the website and at Planning Sub Committee meetings.</p>
<p><u>Capacity Building (Community)</u> Provision of an information sheet/website detailing all sources of independent planning advice available to local residents, community groups and residents associations and guidance on how to get involved.</p>	<p>To be web based. To be part of upgraded web page project. (EW)</p>
<p><u>Capacity Building (Community)</u> As part of the corporate customer transformation project, consider the potential for planning officers to provide planning surgeries within the community.</p>	<p>Move towards fee based service delivery to engage Corporate savings project presents challenge with this objective. Support to communities and discussion with Community Leaders to determine what is feasible.(EW)</p>
<p><u>Capacity Building (Officers)</u> Officers should take up the support and training offered by the Planning Advisory Service, including ensuring that consultation programmes are coherent and targeted, make use of new methods and are properly evaluated. This should support the development of their skills/ techniques regarding community engagement and a 'train the trainer' session in order to support community engagement.</p>	<p>Formal training completed by PAS Need to identify community leaders to roll out second phase "train the trainer" (EW)</p>
<p>Planning consultations should be seen in the context of wider corporate engagement and should draw upon consultation skills, prior learning and resources available elsewhere in the Council (e.g. parking, regeneration,</p>	<p>Meeting has already taken place between Planning and Communications. Alignment of DPD's and planning outcomes to be linked to corporate plan narrative for future coms at key stages of</p>

SCI SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS	SERVICE RESPONSE
<p>public health and CYPs).</p> <p>A coordinated approach should be taken with other Council consultations, with a view to a common consultation database being used by all services.</p>	<p>consultation. (EW/ SN)</p>
<p><u>Feedback</u></p> <p>To improve the feedback given to respondents as part of planning policy consultations as well as respondents to individual planning applications, ensure that the outcomes of the consultation are accurately noted and recorded within final planning decisions / documents.</p>	<p>Consultation outcomes are one of the key pieces of evidence that inform that emerging planning policy documents. Following consultation on draft policy documents, consultation outcomes reports are prepared, and, final reports are put on the website. Additionally, copy of consultation report to be provided to all respondents with an email address. (SN)</p> <p>Planning applications - we currently give feedback to all those who send in comments on individual planning applications in accordance with the SCI. This is under review as all reports and information on applications is now available on our website.</p> <p>Potential for corporate solution (in due course) to provide more tailored response. AD to investigate scope for a technology support system to engage (possibly as part of wider corporate CRM)</p>
<p><u>Consultation and Feedback</u></p> <p>In consultation with the local community and reference groups, the planning service develop brief guidance notes and practical sources of advice to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist the community in commenting on planning applications and contributing to planning policy consultations within the context of what counts as material considerations; • Guide and signpost householders with submitting properly validated planning applications. 	<p>Guidance on how to comment on planning applications is provided on all letters sent out on the reverse of all letters to neighbours about planning applications. Signposting is given to the Planning Portal and the Interactive House and validation requirements are included in the validation checklist on the website. A more formalised paid pre-application service for householder applications is being developed. (EW)</p>
<p><u>Consultation and Feedback</u></p>	<p>To be implemented Autumn 2014 (EW)</p>

<u>SCI SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	<u>SERVICE RESPONSE</u>
<p>An additional condition is placed on decision notices when granting planning permission, especially for larger schemes requiring applicants to place a copy of the notice on the site premises during construction so as to facilitate community inspection and monitoring and where necessary, enforcement.</p>	
<p><u>Early involvement</u> Pre-application engagement is embedded within the planning consultation structures to ensure the earliest engagement possible with ward councillors, local residents associations, CAACs, local businesses, traders associations and members of the public (the reference group).</p> <p>For major proposals, in addition to any consultation undertaken by the applicant, the Council should ensure that the Development Management Forum (DMF) is held at the pre-application stage. This should be linked to greater coordination with the considerations of the Design Panel at the pre-application stage.</p> <p>There is a pre-committee call over meeting established, open to all members of the Planning Sub Committee, to provide information to members including details of the planning applications to be considered and the planning path taken (e.g. DMF, site visits, consultation).</p>	<p>A new Planning Protocol was adopted by the Regulatory Committee in June 2014. This includes the provision for pre-application briefings on the larger schemes to the Planning Sub Committee (the first one took place on 28 July 2014,</p> <p>New SCI under development and will be subject to consultation (SN/EW).</p> <p>Development Management Forum provisions have changed by new Planning Protocol so that where possible proposals are discussed at the pre-application stage. The Design Review Panel terms of reference under review and will be confirmed in September 2014. (EW)</p> <p>A call over procedure for Planning Sub Committee is now in place from July 2014 (EW)</p>
<p><u>Early Involvement</u> In line with the Localism Act 2011, a revised planning protocol should give greater clarity as to how members can be involved in the pre-application process (including clear and consistent advice on predetermination and predisposition), and in particular how ward councillors for the areas affected by the proposed development can be engaged with. The service may wish to consider the development of a model based on best practice in other local</p>	<p>Completed and a revised Planning Protocol was adopted in June 2014 (EW)</p>

<u>SCI SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	<u>SERVICE RESPONSE</u>
<p>authorities for their Planning Committee to be formally engaged at the pre-application stage (e.g. Hackney, Croydon & Islington).</p>	
<p><u>Early involvement</u> Further consideration should be given to the facilitation of provision for community engagement, including some funding within Planning Performance Agreements for complex planning proposals to allow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The identification of key stakeholders; • More time for involvement of local stakeholders (including the reference groups); • The development of clear consultation timelines and planning milestones in the planning process. 	<p>PPA protocol under review (EW)</p> <p>To be determined by the PPA. Neighbour notification template has been updated to reflect timelines for responses.</p>
<p><u>Early involvement</u> Explore provision within the customer transformation project for residents to provide with email address, so as to facilitate the receipt of notification alerts for planning development/policy in their ward (and or set at a radius of 500m).</p> <p>A local consultation should include as a minimum local councillors, residents, associations, community groups, businesses and traders associations together with other residents who proactively request inclusion – the reference group.</p>	<p>Dependent upon wider corporate CRM and stakeholder management software.</p> <p>How to balance the cost implications of consultation and the developments predicted impact will be considered and reported through the Cabinet Report for the refreshed Statement of Community Involvement. (EW)</p>
<p><u>Early involvement</u> Update the procedure for how members are involved in the planning process for delegated decisions during both the application and consultation stages. This should include the retention of the weekly distribution list of new</p>	<p>The weekly list sent to all members of the Council has been retained. Planning Sub Committee has a monthly report on all major applications including those recently granted planning permission. Applications determined under delegated powers are also reported monthly to the</p>

<u>SCI SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	<u>SERVICE RESPONSE</u>
<p>planning applications, the reporting to Planning Committee of major applications in the pipeline and also recent delegated decisions.</p>	<p>Planning Sub Committee. (AA)</p>
<p><u>Planning Consultations</u> Within planning consultations, processes should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise the use of participative methods; • Maximise access to planning officers; • Include an evaluation as standard; • Involve the reference group (e.g. members, residents associations, community groups, business and traders associations). 	<p>Part of ongoing service engagement and development, to be reviewed as part of updating the Statement of community involvement. Role of reference groups to be determined having regard to appointment process and scheme specific characteristics.</p>
<p><u>Planning Consultations</u> The planning service should reconsider how Area Fora are used for planning consultations particularly in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the reach, participation and involvement of the local community; • links to development management forum at the pre-application stage; • improving the presentation of consultation documents which may support better understanding and engagement at these fora. 	<p>Part of a corporate response required. The future of Area Forums and the role of them in consultation, would require potentially greater frequency in some areas and risks duplication with other consultation programmes.</p>
<p><u>Improving quality of planning proposals</u> Greater use of community consultation events to support the formation of pre-planning advice and information for the top 10 planning issues i.e. to create a detailed checklist of information that's needed and how it is presented (N.B what are the top planning issues for the community e.g. design, heritage, conservation, enforcement capacity, durability of materials</p>	<p>A report on design quality is being prepared with associated action plan. (SK)</p>

<u>SCI SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	<u>SERVICE RESPONSE</u>
landscaping etc).	
<p><u>Member development</u> In recognition of the important roles of the ward councillor and the planning champion, engagement, involvement and ‘planning champion’ have, there should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum (Level 1) programme of member training and development for all 57 councillors to further enable them to represent community interests within their wards; • More Councillors given full (Level 2) training in planning so as to increase the pool of Councillors available to sit on Planning Committee; • Further training on planning policy (scope and content of documents as well as timetable for remerging documents); • Bespoke web page(s) providing information, advice and support; • Clarity over key local contacts in the planning process. 	<p>A 2 day training programme has been delivered for all members of the Planning Sub Committee and was offered to all members of the Council.</p> <p>Ongoing (level 1) programme of events to be commenced from Autumn 2014 reflecting aspirations for wider engagement and dialogue on planning and related matters.</p>
<p><u>Member development</u> The planning service develop a ‘feedback loop’ whereby periodically (every 6 months) a review process is undertaken with members to look at development schemes that have been authorised, the purpose being to review development help and ensure that future proposals reflect the views and aspirations of the community and are policy compliant</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p><u>Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)</u> In the updating of the SCI the community is consulted so as to reflect the emerging consultation priorities and processes listed elsewhere within this report: Renewed emphasis on the role of members and the reference group;</p>	<p>SCI scheduled for review and a short executive summary will be developed as part of an updated SCI. (SN/EW)</p> <p>There is an SCI webpage and the website is regularly updated. . (SN)</p> <p>Importance of pre-application discussions and involvement has been given greater status by the introduction of pre-application briefings to</p>

<u>SCI SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	<u>SERVICE RESPONSE</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of pre-application discussions and involvement to be given greater status. • A dedicated webpage to be provided for the SCI so as to allow for more frequent updates and the provision of useful links for the community. • That a short executive summary of the SCI be developed and distributed among the reference group. 	<p>Planning Sub Committee – these are public meetings which are webcast and moving the discussion at Development Management Forums to the pre-application stage.</p>
<p><u>New technology</u></p> <p>Given the importance of digital processes in conveying information and advice in support of planning processes, it is recommended that the planning service reviews the layout, function and utility of the planning section of the so as to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that GIS technology is fully utilised in planning processes (to enable real location viewing of planning applications (e.g. Wiltshire) and assist in planning notifications; • Ensure that the website can be used to capture and report community intelligence that may assist planning enforcement; • Ensure that feedback provided within planning and development proposals is clearly labelled; • Ensure that existing planning notification, consultation and reporting media (e.g. press, posters, letters) are maintained so as to be best utilised to underpin the increasing shift towards web based services. 	<p>The layout, function and utility of the planning section has been reviewed as part of the DMIP and a new structure is being rolled out as part of the transfer of the Council's website to a new platform. This should bring greater clarity. New GIS officer to be recruited to Council to increase capacity.</p> <p>Information available for public access from the website is being upgraded to include information on planning enforcement history, listed buildings and trees. There is an online planning investigation form for members of the public to report alleged breaches of planning control.</p> <p>Discussion on automatic notification of planning applications through the website is underway as part of the Customer Service Transformation programme of migration to self service.</p>
<p><u>New technology</u></p>	<p>Cost of model and data for whole Borough to be subject of a business</p>

<u>SCI SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	<u>SERVICE RESPONSE</u>
<p>To improve the accessibility of planning documents it is recommended that the planning service consider the acquisition of 3D modelling software, so as to help the reference group and other interested parties better visualise (and obtain a more accurate representation of) planned major development and planning proposals.</p>	<p>case. Selective areas of greatest change likely to be prioritised.</p>

