

Report for: Overview and Scrutiny Committee, January 14th 2019
Item number: 11
Title: Consultation and Engagement

Lead Officer: Joanna Sumner, Interim Assistant Director Strategy and Communications
Ward(s) affected: All
Report for Key/ Non Key Decision: Non-Key

1. Issue under consideration

- 1.1 The Committee has expressed an interest in understanding, and helping to shape, the Council's plans for developing its approach to consultation and engagement.
- 1.2 The draft Borough Plan 2019-2023 was published in October for a period of consultation that ended in December. It contains a statement on resident engagement (attached). In addition, the Plan contains a set of 21 outcomes, each of which have a set of objectives, and proposals for how the objectives will be delivered. Outcome 18 in the Plan is "A Council that engages effectively with its residents and businesses" (attached).
- 1.3 The final version of Borough Plan will be published in early February in advance of the Cabinet meeting on February 12th, and will contain an updated version of the Resident Engagement Pledge, reflecting comments and suggestions received during the consultation period (attached).
- 1.4 The Plan will also include measures of success for the outcomes and objectives, such as performance indicators. The Local Government Association (LGA) recommends using three questions in surveys of residents to gauge the extent to which residents feel empowered to influence decisions (attached).
- 1.5 During the same period the Fairness Commission has started to meet and hold public events, the objectives of which include empowering Haringey's residents and communities, and informing Council decision-making. Views expressed by residents at the first of these public events, which took place on November 1st, are being taken into account in the revised version of the Borough Plan.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee considers the Resident Engagement Pledge, Outcome 18 that sets out the objectives for this work over the next 4 years, and the LGA's recommended performance measures.

2.2 That the Committee reflects on what works well in the Council's current approach to consultation and engagement, and what could be improved, to provide insights into how the approach can be developed.

Attachments

1. Resident Engagement Pledge from consultation draft of Borough Plan

Residents Engagement Pledge

The purpose of the residents' deal is to strengthen the relationship between the Council and residents. We can only achieve the outcomes and objectives set out in the Borough Plan if we all work together for the benefit of everyone in Haringey.

Our part

We will get the basics right – with a strong focus on ensuring customer service.

For those receiving personal services from the Council, we will ensure that all decisions taken about your care is taken with you directly involved.

We will talk to you at the start of the process when looking at changing existing services, policies or programmes, and developing new ones – so you are able to inform the ones that matter most to you.

We will be inclusive – working hard to ensure all of our communities get their voices heard. In particular, we will be proactive in trying to reach people who are not heard as often.

We will listen, and we will value what you say. We will take on board what you have said and will change our approach where possible.

We will be open and honest – we will be clear about what you can and cannot influence and the reason why you cannot influence certain decisions. Wherever possible we will feedback what we have heard; let you know how your feedback has influenced the decision-making; and, where it has not been possible to incorporate your feedback, we will explain why.

We will be open to challenge – welcoming views that challenge our approach and support us to think differently.

We will continually seek to improve our understanding of our diverse communities and our residents' experiences of life.

We will give communities a greater say in how money is spent in their areas and, where appropriate, will devolve funding to these communities.

We will ballot residents on estate renewal proposals.

The points outlined above will run through everything we do.

To further this we will also take the following actions:

Run the Residents' Survey every two years – to understand your key priorities, how the borough is changing over time, see where we are doing well and where we need to improve.

Explore the opportunity to establish a Residents Panel – the panel would be made up of a representative sample of residents who want the opportunity to have their say about Council services and life in the borough. Panel members would be invited to take part in consultation activities, provide their feedback to help improve services, take part in quick polls, be informed of public meetings and drop-in sessions, or be a part of focus groups in their area of interest. Panel members decide how involved they want to be.

Residents' Part

Whenever there is an opportunity, tell us your views directly.

Volunteer for the Citizens' Panel.

Be challenging but respectful to Council employees.

Identify where you can help tackle key complex problems, utilising your expertise to work with the Council to solve these challenges.”

2. Outcome on engagement in consultation version of Borough Plan

Outcome 18: A Council that engages effectively with its residents

Objective	How will we deliver the objective?
a) Residents and businesses feel engaged with and show high levels of trust in the Council	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Æ Deploy a range of innovative engagement activities appropriate to the issue. Æ Develop a Business Pledge and VCS Pledge that underpin the principles of the two-way relationship and our commitments to support the business community and Haringey's voluntary and community sector. Æ Use the Residents' Survey findings to identify specific areas where there is most concern and use this to inform future decisions. Æ Use the Fairness Commission to engage a wide range of residents, stakeholders, partners and experts, through evidence sessions, to understand how the Council and its partners can tackle issues of inequality and fairness
b) We demonstrate clear understanding of the needs, aspirations, opportunities and strengths of Haringey's communities - and use this to inform our decisions	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Æ Work to reform our data collection, storage and analysis so that it is robust in informing our decision-making. Æ Actively use the Residents' Survey findings to inform the development of policies and projects. Æ Pilot different approaches to open up our data for public use.
c) We make available to our residents and businesses the information and connections they need to make their own decisions and to thrive individually and collectively	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Æ Ensure that services are developed with the people who use them and with our partners who contribute to their delivery, making widespread use of user-centred design approaches, such as 'Communities First'.

3. Individual comments on Resident Engagement Pledge from consultation on draft version of Borough Plan

- Bring back area forums;
- Support people to set up residents and tenants associations;
- Communications – make sure all residents get Haringey people.
- Reach out to networks that are already developed, e.g. Neighbourhood Watch'. Link to Community Safety Committee, Residents Association
- Ward forums should be brought back
- There is a lack of respect in how residents are treated by the Council, and a culture change is needed.
- There needs to be clearer signposting for complaints and reporting issues
- There is a lack of awareness around services
- There needs to be more work to ensure Haringey staff's ways of working actually keep up with this narrative. While the Resident's panel is a step towards this, more work is needed to make sure this isn't hollow.
- Communication should be two way with action taken in response to the views of residents reported back to them
- Immediate withdrawal of all automated generated letters to residents as these cause unnecessary stress and anxiety
- There should be a statement that the Council will look to restore a level of neighbourhood or other sub-borough decision making to allow appropriate decisions to be taken closer to the individuals and communities affected.
- Customer Services need to be just that. Dismissive, confrontational attitudes are not helpful and do nothing to improve the Council's relationship with the people who live in the Borough and pay their Council Tax;

*“People need a one-to-one contact. Technology cannot replace human contact. I know I can come in any time and someone will listen to what I have to say and assist me. In the early days with TCWP I had poor English and they helped me past the early language barrier. The confidentiality was crucial to my ability to reveal all my issues. I don't trust the others who tried to help from various services because they could not speak Turkish and allow me to trust them on a deeply worrying financial problem.” **Community First attendee***

*“The key to resilience in the community is for people to be more involved in their local community” – **Community First attendee***

(Sources: Scrutiny Café, Community First, VCS Forum, Fairness Commission)

4. Local Government Association (LGA) recommended measures of council performance on engagement

- Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way [Haringey Council] delivers services?
- Overall, how well informed do you think [Haringey Council] keeps residents about the services and benefits it provides?
- To what extent do you think [Haringey Council] acts on the concerns of local residents?

The LGA suggests that, taken together, these three questions help gauge the extent to which residents feel empowered to influence decisions.