

CABINET MEETING

Agenda Item 116

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Community Engagement Framework – Consultation Feedback		
Date of Meeting:	20th November 2008		
Report of:	Director of Strategy & Governance		
Contact Name:	Emma McDermott	Tel: 29-3944	
Officer:	Angie Greany	Tel: 29-5053	
	E-mail:	Emma.mcdermott@brighton-hove.gov.uk angie.greany@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision	Yes	CAB 2870	
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Following a detailed development process overseen by a working group of the Local Strategic Partnership, the 2020 Community Partnership has developed a draft Community Engagement Framework. The Framework is in response to a range of recent national policy and legislative drivers as well as local evidence presented to the LSP in December 2007.
- 1.2 The LSP is scheduled to approve the Framework in December 2008. At which time all members of the LSP will be expected to sign up to the Framework.
- 1.3 As a 2020 Community Partnership policy document the Framework provides a strong basis for improved partnership working on community engagement, It establishes a clear set of standards for all partners to meet when carrying out community engagement and identifies and initial set of actions.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet support the adoption of the Community Engagement Framework at the 2020 Community partnership meeting 2nd December 2008.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet sign up to the Framework subject to its approval by the 2020 Community Partnership.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

3.1 The purpose of developing the Framework was to determine a common understanding and approach to community engagement across all members of the 2020 Community Partnership. This common understanding will include:

- clarifying the role and meaning of community engagement
- establishing a set of standards for community engagement applicable to all partners
- identifying Partnership priority actions that will improve the planning and delivery of community engagement, particularly regarding the quality and the co-ordination of activity

3.3 The Stronger Communities Partnership will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the Framework. This will include developing a more detailed action plan to take forward the priority actions identified in the framework. Appendix 2 gives the terms of reference for the Stronger Community Partnership.

3.4 The 12 week consultation period on community engagement finished on 5th September. A wide range of community and voluntary groups, public bodies and partnerships in the city were consulted through a variety of means. Appendix 1 provides a summary of the process.

3.5 The **over-arching messages** were that community engagement should:

1. enhance peoples lives and be fulfilling
2. provide opportunities for all
3. improve services and support better use of resources

3.6 The **key issues** raised by respondents can be summarised as follows:

a) Information

Keep engagement clear, timely and jargon-free. Keep messages simple and relevant. Be open and keep an honest dialogue. Use a range of methods i.e. Community Radio, word of mouth – written material can be too long and inaccessible for some.

b) Areas of influence (what can/can't be influenced?)

(Linked to no.1) Be clear about processes, do not raise unrealistic expectations and offer clear information and explanations as to why certain things can or do not happen following public input.

c) Two way dialogue (Communication)

Must be two-way process with feedback being important – people want to know how they have changed/improved things. More realistic timeframes for consultation are needed to allow this to happen. A joined up and co-ordinated approach is needed with improved guidance and support for those producing information/communications.

d) Support for a co-ordinated approach

(Linked to above) Statutory sector partners need to work more closely together. Greater communication between officers and members, other public bodies and senior level management were highlighted as essential. Simultaneous requests for involvement stretches and stresses many groups, raising feelings of concern and anxiety at being unable to represent their groups' interests at the appropriate time and place. In the worst case, such pressure gives a perception of being 'managed out' of the process because public responses are a nuisance or difficult to handle.

e) Resources and training (individuals and organisations in public and third sector)

Commitment to long-term funding for voluntary and community organisations and for community development. This was viewed as critical to the success of community engagement. Plus training and development that mixes sectors and organisations up. Training and support to all partners that improves skills and knowledge and builds strong relationships and better understanding between different people and organisations.

f) Creative approach to partnership working (not "usual suspects")

Public bodies should take a more creative and flexible approach and not rely on the usual routes, representatives or individuals to deliver outcomes. People expressed a need for more "informality" and the use of existing links that groups have and the provision of resources to facilitate this kind of reaching out – work to involve people in different ways, looking at good practice to improve people's experience of getting involved – strengthening and sustaining these relationships. Expand and broaden representation with more practical ways to engage – importance of community buildings both in terms of ownership and potential engagement tools.

g) Feeling at home and feeling safe (more control/taking responsibility)

There was lots of commentary and feeling expressed about the importance of feeling that you are a part of the community, and how people feel this builds or contributes to community cohesion, people's willingness to engage and people feeling and being empowered. Clear message that improving the other 6 issues would have direct impact on this.

3.7 Practical Solutions

In response to the issues raised respondents were asked to suggest practical solutions. Following discussions at various consultation meetings/events it became apparent that respondents thought there was some 'basic activity' that the 2020 Community Partnership members should be getting right and some potential 'new activity' that could be explored. The basic activity recognises that there is good community engagement happening in the city but that there is a lack of consistency, quality control and sustainability. The new activity recognises that there is potential additional activity that could be happening in the city.

Suggestions for Basic Activity
Ensure an introduction to and explanation of the Framework is part of new staff induction in public bodies and community and voluntary organisations
Include engagement skills, knowledge and experience in job descriptions and person specifications as a matter of course for relevant posts
Produce a guide (or identify a place) where clear information and advice is accessible to all organisations to follow when carrying out community engagement work and activities
Seek to secure long-term partnership funding for community development work across the city
Promotional work with businesses - encourage and support local businesses to actively support and be involved in their local community
Enforce the research governance protocol - public bodies to use an agreed method for carrying out research
Develop a common policy for supporting community representatives (reward & recognition) - public bodies to have an agreed and consistent approach
Publish and keep up-to-date a database of the type, the results and the impact of the consultations
Publish and keep up to date a 'get involved' webpage on the 2020 Community Partnership website - information that provides up-to-date links and information about how residents can get involved across all public agencies and linked to the community and voluntary sector
Seek to secure long-term partnership funding for Stronger Communities Partnership
Develop a policy on how public services will be co-ordinated in neighbourhoods
Develop a community workers network with an annual conference
Establish a review and evaluation process for all engagement initiatives undertaken by public bodies that allows all partners to learn from good practice and mistakes

Recognise and resource where necessary new or alternative groups that have stronger representational abilities or support appropriate existing groups to improve their representation on public body forums and city-wide partnerships
Develop a partnership funding strategy that recognises the long-term role of the community and voluntary sector in enabling community engagement especially with chronically excluded groups and neighbourhood based communities

Suggestions for New Activity
Support the development of community anchors (independent multi-purpose community led organisations in neighbourhoods)
Trail an 'Ask the Executives' annual public meeting where citizens can come and ask the Chief executives of the Council, Police and Primary care Trust questions
Run an annual 'get involved' campaign culminating in an celebration event of active citizenship and with 'active citizen' information available all year round in public buildings
Explore opportunities for more innovative ways to share information with the public and communities, for example community radios, on street internet service points
Develop a cross sector training and development – that involves residents, community groups, public bodies employees and councillors learning together
Explore the opportunity for a communications hub for public bodies – through which they share information and co-ordinate their communications with residents
Develop a volunteering scheme for public sector employees (in the voluntary and community sector)
Support to councillors to be community champions through the provision of ward budgets and staff support
Support the development of community buildings as a neighbourhood resource for use by the community and service providers equitably

Explore the transfer of assets, such as community centres to community groups. where there will be a long-term benefit to the community

Develop an on-line participation tool that supports two-way dialogue between citizens and public organisations starting with the council
--

3.7.1 Detail regarding the development and implementation of the actions will be the responsibility of the Stronger Communities Partnership. This includes sourcing funding for long-term actions that cannot be delivered through the prioritisation of staff resource, linkage and co-ordination of existing activities or partnership working. The expectation is that all partners will, where appropriate, be expected to contribute to actions. In addition, funding sources outside the city will be investigated including potential funding available through national government's Action Plan for Empowerment and the implementation of the White Paper 'Communities in Control'.

3.8 Feedback on the Aims of the Framework and the Standards for Community Engagement

3.8.1 In addition, to feedback on key issues respondents were asked to comment on the proposed vision and objectives for the Framework. The overarching message was that the vision and objectives whilst acceptable were too complicated and duplicated, making the purpose of the document unclear. Therefore the proposal is to have a set of key aims for the Framework which reflect the issues raised.

With regards to Standards for Community Engagement the key message from respondents was that the suggested Standards were comprehensive and understandable. However, many respondents commented on the 'flexibility' standard which focused on ensuring any engagement activity was flexible and could be tailored to different communities needs. Respondents suggested that it should have a stronger reference to equality of opportunity and explicit recognition that some communities and individuals face additional barriers to being involved and this should be concerned and addressed during any engagement activity.

Copy of the final draft Framework and the accompanying consultation report attached.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 See appendix 1 for a summary of the consultation on the community engagement framework. It also provides details of the next steps for signing off the Community Engagement Framework.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 Financial Implications:

Except where specified that funding needs to be secured in the long term, it is anticipated that actions can be achieved through the prioritisation of staff resource, linkage and co-ordination of existing activities and partnership working. Proposed actions include securing long-term partnership funding for community development work and the Stronger Communities Partnership.

Specific financial implications will be identified and addressed through the development of the detailed action plan.

Finance Officer Consulted: Anne Silley

Date: 01 October 2008

5.2 Legal Implications:

The proposed approach to community engagement set out in this report will assist the Council in meeting the new “duty to involve” which will come into force on 1st April 2009. Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 requires authorities to take those steps they consider appropriate to involve representatives of local persons in the exercise of any of their functions, where they consider that it is appropriate to do so. This is in addition to existing statutory consultation requirements in relation to specific issues.

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 03 October 2008

5.3 Equalities Implications:

An overarching message from the consultation was the need to ensure that all engagement activity provide opportunities for all. Within the Standards included in the community engagement framework is one specifically on equality and diversity. In addition, several of the actions proposed will improve the practice of organisations and groups carrying out community engagement. A rapid impact checklist was completed on the consultation document for the development of the framework and a full equality impact assessment will be carried out on the final version.

5.4 Sustainability Implications:

The development of the framework has a direct link to the achievement of the four priorities in the UK’s Sustainability Plan – sustainable communities using engagement and partnership to reduce poverty and environmental degradation. The Framework will provide clear standards for any engagement activity undertaken to achieve this priority,

5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

The development of the framework is being guided by a sub-group of the 2020 Community Partnership on which the Police, the Crime Disorder Reduction Partnership and the Partnership Community Safety Team are represented. The framework will reflect the engagement priorities of these three areas.

5.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

The framework establishes a common approach to and understanding of community engagement across the LSP partners. It establishes a set of standards for engagement that will drive up the practice of all partners. It helps to ensure a co-ordinated approach to community engagement which will make better use of resources and avoid duplication. Critically, the adoption and implementation of the Framework will ensure that the council is in a strong position to meet the new duty to involve which is due to come into effect in April 2009.

The risks are ensuring that both statutory agencies and communities have the capacity and skills to meet the standards of the framework, and that expectations are managed with regard to the changes the framework will bring about in the first year (2009/10). In the first year the Framework will focus on achieve embedding the standards and delivering key actions.

5.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

The framework has implications city-wide as it has been commissioned and will be adopted by the 2020 Community Partnership and therefore apply to all the members of the Partnership. Consequentially it will have implications for all Directorates within the Council.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The process of drawing up the framework involved extensive consultation with city partners, and in the drawing up of the framework a wide range of proposals was considered."

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 National policy drivers, and the need to standardise current practice around community engagement and participation, make the creation of a single framework opportune. The process of drawing up the framework involved extensive consultation with city partners, and in the drawing up of the framework a wide range of proposals was considered."

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Community Engagement Framework Development Timetable
2. Terms of reference for the Stronger Communities Partnership

Attachments:

1. Final draft of the Community Engagement Framework
2. Final draft of the Framework Consultation Report

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

1. Community Engagement Framework consultation document (May, 2008)
2. Community Engagement Review (BHCC, 2007)

Community Engagement Framework – Development Timetable Summary

Background

A great deal of work has already taken place since the 2020 Community Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership) set up a short-life Working Group, in April this year, to take this work forward -

- The Working Group has met four times and has one more meeting planned
- Meetings have been held with the Community & Voluntary Sector Forum Representatives on the Working Group to plan and deliver community and voluntary sector engagement
- Meetings have been held with a wide range of individuals, groups, partnerships and agencies

The timetable below shows the key activities that have taken place and the deadlines for decision making.

WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING	WHEN
<p>Circulation of consultation document to wide range of stakeholders as identified by the Working Group:</p> <p>MPs, MEPs, CVSF membership, LSP board, Public Service Board, managers of all LSP partnerships, all elected members, neighbourhood action groups, local action teams.</p> <p>12 week consultation period starting 16th June and ending 5th September</p>	16 th June
<p>Framework discussed at/presented to the following events/meetings/groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Councillors seminar (Members of Conservative, Green, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties present) ○ Council tenants session (representatives from across the city - ○ Community workers conference (council, primary care trust and voluntary and community sector workers) ○ Stronger Communities Partnership meeting and annual conference inc. session with the Federation of Disabled People ○ BHCC overview & scrutiny commission ○ 2020 Community Partnerships: Learning Partnership, Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership, Arts Commission, Advice Strategy Services Group, Strategic Housing Partnership, Economic Partnership ○ Public service board ○ Children & young peoples consultation & communication group ○ Sussex Partnership Trust 	June – September

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ City employment skills group ○ BHCC community safety forum ○ Mosaic 'bring a dish' day ○ Local action teams - Bevendean ○ Neighbourhood actions groups/forums: Tarnar, Eastern Road, Hangleton & Knoll, Bristol Estate, Portland Road & Clarendon, ○ Adult learning group and Neighbourhood learning in deprived communities group ○ Advice services network ○ Adult social care transformation group ○ Racial harassment forum executive panel ○ Refugee community groups meeting ○ Domestic violence forum ○ Older persons council and pensioners forum ○ Youth consultants ○ Community development managers group ○ Black and minority ethnic community partnership ○ BHCC departmental management team meetings ○ BHCC workers forum, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender; Black and minority ethnic; and Disabled workers ○ Community and Voluntary Sector Forum e-Dialogue ○ Sussex Community Interpreting website 	
Deadline for consultation responses	5 th September
The Framework Drop-In – Review and Comment	8 th September
Working group meeting	9 th September

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.....

NEXT STEPS	WHEN
Statutory Partners i.e. Police, Health, Fire Service – sign off	October/ November
LSP Partnerships i.e. Healthy City, Learning Partnership – sign off	October/ November
Public Service Board – final comments	14 th October
BHCC Overview & Scrutiny Commission – final comments	21 st October
Working group – close down meeting	6 th November
BHCC Cabinet – sign off	20 th November
Stronger Communities Partnership meeting – sign off	20 th November
2020 Community Partnership board – sign off	2nd December

Stronger Communities Partnership Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Stronger Communities Partnership exists to lead, develop and support active community engagement in strategic planning and decision-making processes, in order to improve local service delivery, partnership working and reduce inequalities in Brighton and Hove.

With a strategic remit, the Partnership will link with others in the wider family of partnerships on community engagement issues. The Partnership is not responsible for overseeing Stronger Communities programme delivery.

Aims

The Stronger Communities Partnership aims to:

1. Bring together and support communities to have a meaningful voice, in local groups and on the 2020 Community Partnership (and its wider family of partnerships)
2. Champion, support and build capacity around community engagement in decision-making in both the third and public sectors
3. To oversee delivery of the strengthening and involving communities targets in the Local Area Agreement
4. Develop successful partnership across sectors and organisations to achieve its purpose

Objectives

- 1.1 To facilitate active participation and engagement between the community and voluntary sector and statutory providers, bringing together organisations and communities
- 1.2 To improve representative structures and processes in the city, in order to strengthen involvement of the community and voluntary sector in strategic planning and decision-making
- 1.3 To review the impact of the area based grant funded community engagement activity
- 2.1 To host the Community Engagement Framework, including monitoring implementation, partners compliance and develop ongoing actions to achieve its objectives
- 2.2 To promote good practice around engagement, showcasing Brighton and Hove's achievements as a Community Empowerment Champion
- 3.1 To build relationships with partners to improve engagement opportunities for citizens and communities to influence and shape service design, planning, commissioning, delivery and monitoring/evaluation focusing on neighbourhoods and inequalities
- 3.2 To ensure the needs of the different groups and communities are reflected in the City's partnerships and service provision
- 3.3 To champion the Compact and other tools which enable good practice in partnership working, especially on community engagement and representation
- 3.4 To receive recommendations and performance reports from its sub-group the Stronger Neighbourhoods Group for action, comment and/or decision

Membership of the Stronger Communities Partnership

CVSF representatives

Elected representatives

- Four elected representatives from neighbourhoods, to represent all neighbourhoods in B&H
- Four elected community based communities of interest groups from the following equality strands: Age, Faith, BME, LGBT, Disability and Gender, to represent equalities in general (to include one representative from the emerging Equalities Coalition).

Support officers

- Two area based community development representatives
- CVSF / SCP support officers

Statutory agency representatives

Strategic Officers

- LSP Co-ordinator
- Chief Exec's Policy Unit Officer
- Voluntary Sector Unit Officer
- Equalities and Inclusion Team Officer
- Neighbourhood Management Team Officer

Officers with a strategic remit for community engagement from statutory agencies/council departments (those involved in the Community Engagement Framework working group)

- Police
- PCT
- Housing; BHCC and RSLs (Social Landlords Forum)
- Adult Social Care
- Customer Services
- CYPT
- Environment
- Adult learning
- Employment and skills (economic development)

Others

- Local Authority Councillor (who is also represented on the Stronger Neighbourhoods Group)

The membership may grow and develop to reflect new activities and emerging issues. Each statutory organisation or department is responsible for electing/nominating their representatives. This process must be transparent and allow for change every two years.

Expectation of members

- Members should participate in Partnership meetings, email discussions, and any structures such as working groups
- Members should represent the Partnership externally as agreed, in which case they should represent the views of the Partnership
- The Partnership can agree specific roles for members and delegate responsibilities to these roles
- Working or sub-groups should report back to the Partnership, and may also include organisations who are not Partnership members
- Each organisation will have a named individual as the Partnership member, however other members of the organisation are welcome, provided they have been briefed. They cannot vote
- Members of the Partnership may nominate a deputy to attend in their absence who should be fully briefed. The deputy is entitled to vote
- All members of the Partnership are expected to liaise with colleagues in their department, organisation or sector
- Members should adhere to the Nolan Principles of Public Life.

Decision–Making

- Decisions may only be taken when the meeting is quorate (quoracy shall be 4 voting members)
- Decisions will be made by consensus where possible. If this proves impossible, a vote will be taken and a simple majority required. Each member of the Partnership has one vote, except CVSF/SCP staff
- The Chair's vote carries when a vote is split
- In exceptional circumstances (e.g. a decision is required before the next meeting) decisions may be made by email and the Chair will co-ordinate this process. Any decisions should be confirmed at the next meeting.

Values

- **Equality:** The Partnership will ensure that it promotes equality in all its work and will be active in ensuring its work is meeting the needs of the full diversity of its communities
- **Accountability:** The Partnership will support the interests of all its members and work in an open and transparent way, with good communication between partnership members and their membership organisations/sectors
- **Respect/Co-operation:** The Partnership will aim to achieve its aims through co-operation and collaboration whilst recognising, respecting and reflecting difference
- **Partnership:** The Partnership will affect its work through the development and maintenance of strong and effective partnership working
- **Communication:** The Partnership will communicate regularly with stakeholders at appropriate key times. Information on the Partnership / minutes of meetings and other associated work carried out by the Partnership will be made available to members of the CVSF as well as to staff within statutory agencies. This will be the responsibility of the relevant partnership member.

Chair and Vice-Chair

- The Chair shall always be a full member of the Community and Voluntary Sector Forum
- The Partnership will elect its Chair and Vice Chair at its first meeting following the CVSF biennial elections. These two representatives will then go to be LSP representatives.
- The Chair will agree the agenda for meetings with the SCP Officer and will chair, or make arrangements for chairing of meetings.

Servicing and Support

- Using SCP resources, the SCP Officer will arrange for meetings to be serviced and will provide support to the Chair and Partnership members
- The SCP Officer and other supporting officers will provide reports and other information needed for the Partnership to make effective decisions
- A clear brief outlining roles and responsibilities and a Stronger Communities Induction Pack will be provided for all members of the Partnership.

Meetings

- The Partnership will ordinarily meet quarterly, with the facility to call additional meetings if necessary
- Under normal circumstances members will be expected to attend all four meetings a year and to give prior notice of any non-attendance
- Notes of meetings will be taken and circulated in an accessible format to members of Partnership for onward distribution
- The agenda and any relevant papers will be circulated at least 7 days before the date of the meeting
- All papers will be drafted in clear and simple language and in an accessible format and hard copies of any documents sent by e-mail will be made available to all members

- Meetings will take place in an environment that encourages and supports active participation by all members of the Partnership and special needs provision will be available at all times
- CVSF representatives are eligible to claim for their time spent in Partnership meetings, including preparation and follow-up, in line with CVSF's reps' expenses policy.

Conflicts of interest

- Members must declare any actual or potential personal interests they have in any item on the agenda or as they arise during a meeting
- If they have a personal interest members must also consider whether or not that interest is a *prejudicial personal interest* and take the necessary action
- For the purposes of this Partnership, a personal interest is, generally, one that affects a member (individually, or a person/ body/organisation a member has a close connection with) more than other people in Brighton and Hove. If a member of the public, knowing all the relevant facts, would view a member's personal interest in the item being considered as so great that it is likely to prejudice the member's judgement of the public interest, then the member has a *prejudicial personal interest*.
- If a member has a personal interest: they must declare the interest but can stay, speak and vote.
- If a member has a *prejudicial personal interest*: they must declare the interest, cannot speak or vote on the item and must leave the room

Confidentiality and data protection

- The Partnership will respect confidentiality, and operate within the requirements of the data protection act
- Business will normally be carried out openly and transparently. In exceptional circumstances, and with agreement of the meeting, members can request an issue is discussed confidentially, and the discussion will not be minuted.

Powers

- The Partnership may establish sub-groups or commission pieces of work or activity, which help to deliver its aims and objectives.

Reports and Review

The Partnership will review its Terms of Reference in April and October of each year.

