Engaging with Communities
Task Group
Notes

Notes of the meeting of the Engaging with Communities task group held on Wednesday 8 October 2014 at the Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde.

Members present:

Councillor E Anderton  Councillor McKay
Councillor Bannister  Councillor Moon
Councillor C Birch  Councillor Ormrod
Councillor Jones  Councillor Walmsley

Others present:

Councillor Peter Gibson, Leader of the Council
Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer
4 members of the public

EC.10  Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Lady Atkins and Brooks.

EC.11  Declarations of Interest

None.

EC.12  Notes of last meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 23 September 2014 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

EC.13  Engaging with Communities – a vision

Cllr Peter Gibson, Leader of the Council, attended for this item.
Cllr Gibson said that the Shaping Your Neighbourhood (SYN) initiative was not intended solely as a mechanism to make grants, although that remained an element of it. SYN was about how local councillors could be champions for their communities, and it recognised that different areas had different needs. SYN was likely to prove more effective than its predecessor, the Local Strategic Partnership, and it incorporated all the strengths of that arrangement. The council stopped supporting the Local Area Forums as it was believed that local communities could run them better themselves and this had proved to be the case, Poulton being a good example.

Cllr Gibson referred to a wide range of methods of engagement that were already in place. Cllr Gibson and the Chief Executive had undertaken a number of ward walks and the Chief Executive, accompanied by the Economy Portfolio Holder, Cllr Pete Murphy, had discussed planning issues with a number of Parish and Town Councils. There had also been face-to-face consultations (e.g. Fleetwood Market and Ferry Task Groups), the Life in Wyre survey (3000 forms recently sent out) and other consultations (e.g. Rossall sea defences) as well as the use of Facebook, Twitter, the Wyre Voice magazine and the council’s iBus.

Looking to the future, Cllr Gibson said that it was very important that SYN gets ‘buy-in’ from councillors and residents. Councillors would play a key role in finding out how people wanted the council’s services to be tailored to meet their needs. A Neighbourhood Plan would enable residents to say where they would like developments in their areas. The Leader had already commenced a series of visits with the Chief Executive to discuss planning issues with Parish and Town Councils, which had been welcomed.

Cllr Gibson informed the task group that 80% of residents were on line, which provided great potential to improve engagement.

In summary, Cllr Gibson specified four priorities for developing engagement in the future:

- The role of Lead members needed to be developed
- Councillors needed to engage more with residents’ and other established community groups
- Advantage should be taken of the opportunities afforded by electronic engagement
- The council’s services needed to be tailored to best meet the needs of residents

In response to comments and questions from members of the task group (in brackets), Cllr Gibson added:

- Neighbourhood Lead Members do not work to a set brief; they all have an officer mentor and they learn from each other (Cllr Moon)
- Lead Members report to Full Council (Cllr Moon)
- Engagement is a two-way process; we need to be conscious of how communities engage with us (Cllr C Birch)
Residents need to be made aware of all the services that Wyre provides; having a Unitary Council would make things much simpler (Cllr C Birch)

The council needs to engage more closely with residents’ groups (Cllr C Birch)

It is important that residents take ownership of issues and services (Cllr Walmsley)

It is not for the task group to write a protocol or strategy about engagement, but all useful evidence gathered during the review should be fed into the work of the Transformation Team (Cllr Moon)

There is potential to work more closely with traders (Cllr Bannister)

Cllr Gibson alluded to the task group’s Scoping Document and indicated that its contents were consistent with his vision for engaging communities. He added that whatever the task group recommended, so long as it ‘added value’, would be given full consideration by the Cabinet.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Gibson for his report and contribution to the meeting, adding that the comments that had been made would be very helpful in guiding the task group towards a number of areas where they could add value.

EC.14 Scoping Document

The task group considered a revised draft of the Scoping Document and agreed that the changes that had been made helped clarify their task (see, attached to these notes). The task group agreed to one minor amendment, namely the addition of the words “pertinent to particular geographical areas” to the ‘Purpose of the Review’.

RESOLVED that the revised draft Scoping Document, as amended, be agreed.

EC.15 Next Steps

Members agreed that one of the immediate priorities was to obtain the views of representatives of established community groups across the borough. The point was made that there was a great number of these, which made it difficult to decide which ones to speak to. Ideally each one should have the opportunity to contribute to the review but this was clearly impracticable unless by electronic means.

It was agreed that a short series of questions about the council’s engagement be sent out to members of the Engagement Network in order to elicit their opinions. Councillors, many of whom were also members of the Network, would not be included in that survey; an alternative method of obtaining their views would be used.
At Cllr Walmsley’s suggestion, all councillors would be sent a list of different methods of engagement and they would be asked to rank them from 1 to X. This would give an indication of the main ways in which councillors currently engaged with communities.

The role and effectiveness of Neighbourhood Lead Members was another area that members viewed as essential to effective engagement. The task group decided to invite the Lead Members to the next meeting of the task group to explore their role and ideas about how the council might improve engagement. Four of the six Lead Members would be invited. Cllrs McKay and Jones were the two others but they were both already taking an active part in the task group so would find it conflicting to also appear as witnesses.

Councillors also agreed that they would like to see if there were any examples of best practice in engaging with communities in the North West from which they might learn. Peter Foulsham agreed to make some enquiries and advise the group at their next meeting.

EC.16 Date and time of next meeting

Provisional date - Monday 10 November 2014 at 6pm in CR2.
# Engaging with Communities - Task Group

**Scoping Document – FINAL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review Topic</th>
<th>Engaging with Communities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chair</strong></td>
<td>Cllr Lesley McKay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Membership</strong></td>
<td>Councillors Emma Anderton, Lady Atkins, David Bannister, Colette Birch, Roger Brooks, Kerry Jones (Vice Chair), Paul Moon, Patsy Ormrod and Dave Walmsley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Officer Support</strong></td>
<td>Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose of the Review</strong></td>
<td>To identify ways to improve community engagement and ensure that residents are more involved in shaping the design and delivery of services pertinent to particular geographical areas.</td>
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| **Aims of Review**     | - To consider the way in which the council currently engages with the community.  
- To consider the effectiveness of the Lead Member role  
- To identify ways in which the council can better support Lead Members and councillors to engage more effectively with their communities  
- To contribute to a review the effectiveness of the Engagement Network and to help identify improvements that will encourage and enhance community engagement with individuals and established community groups.  
- To consider how engagement can be improved in areas that do not have established community groups  
- To identify ways in which the Council can engage more effectively with Parish and Town Councils.  
- To review current methods of on-line engagement and identify opportunities for future development |
| **Methodology**        | - Reviewing relevant reports and documentation  
- Interviewing witnesses at task group meetings  
- Attending a selection of meetings of local community groups, as observers.  
- To review positive community engagement work undertaken by other local authorities |
| **Scope of Review**    | - The review is limited to how the Council engages with communities, using councillors as its primary resource |
| **Potential Witnesses**| - Leader of the Council  
- Cllr Pete Murphy (Chairman of Councillor Development |
**Group**
- Chief Executive
- Head of Transformation
- Wyre Council’s Lead Members for Shaping Your Neighbourhood
- Backbench/Ward councillors
- Representatives from Town and Parish councils
- Representatives of local community groups
- Councillor Development Officer (or appropriate line manager)
- Representatives of ‘good practice’ examples of community engagement in other Local Authorities
- Anti-Social Behaviour/Licensing Enforcement Officer (regarding ‘Pride Weeks’)

**Documents to be considered**
- Business Plan Project Brief
- Shaping Your Neighbourhood Evaluation Report – submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee by the Head of Transformation on 28 April 2014.
- LGIU Policy Briefing – People-shaped places – How Lambeth let residents redesign the neighbourhood (June 2014)

**Risks**

**Level of Publicity**
Low

**Indicators of a Successful Review**
- Increase in number of residents who know who their local councillor is
- ‘Life in Wyre’ survey results, around how well the Council runs its services

**Intended Outcomes**
More effective council decision-making.

**Approximate Timeframe**
To be completed by 31 December 2014 (so long as the results of the ‘Life in Wyre’ survey can also be taken into account.

**Projected Start Date**
23 September 2014

8 October 2014