

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 One of the Sustainable Community Strategy Flagship Projects is the establishment of a common community engagement framework for the New Forest District.
- 1.2 The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) has developed this project through its Active Communities Community Action Network (CAN) and agreed the draft framework in December 2009.
- 1.3 This report seeks Cabinet's approval to the framework.

2 THE FRAMEWORK

- # 2.1 Attached at the Appendix is the draft Community Engagement Framework as agreed by the LSP. It is intentionally short and concise with an emphasis on simplicity. It is pitched at a strategic level and is aimed primarily at partners. The framework gives good recognition to the democratic process and should help reinforce members role in community engagement.
- 2.2 The framework establishes shared values and principles for partners to work to, to provide for better quality engagement with communities, avoiding duplication of effort and making better use of resources across agencies.
- 2.3 Part of the project is the development of a Community Engagement Toolkit designed to help practitioners across the agencies in the Partnership in their task to inform, consult, involve and empower communities. This will give access to tools, techniques and forums which will be particularly useful in helping achieve better engagement with hard to reach groups. The LSP intends to hold a workshop for practitioners to launch the framework and toolkit. Some form of promoting elements of the approach to the public will also be developed.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The successful implementation of the framework should result in more efficient working and potentially some overall cost savings.

4 ENVIRONMENTAL AND CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no significant implications arising from this report.

5 EQUALITIES & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The effective implementation of the framework and use of the toolkit should enable better engagement across agencies with hard to reach groups providing a better understanding of the needs of such groups.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 An agreed framework should help bring about more efficient and effective engagement across the district and make better use of the results of such engagement. The toolkit will be a valuable resource for all those involved in engagement.
- 6.2 The District Council has a lead role in bringing about effective engagement in the district and leading the Local Strategic Partnership to produce more efficient and effective ways of working between its partners.

7 PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

- 7.1 I support the agreement of the framework amongst partners and hope that it delivers the potential that it has to bring about more efficient and effective engagement. The role of the democratically elected member is fundamental to the whole process and this is recognised in the framework.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 That Cabinet approves the community engagement framework.

For Further Information Please Contact:

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Background Papers:

“Together We Can” - New Forest District’s Comprehensive Community Engagement Framework (Final Draft)

Who is the framework designed for?

All partners in the New Forest District Local Strategic Partnership and the communities and individuals they serve. Communities are both communities of interest eg young people, users of a particular facility etc and geographical communities eg localities – a parish, a street etc. A list of partners signed up to this framework is available at Web link

What do we mean by engagement? (Insert diagram showing inform, consult, involve and empower with a few examples of mechanisms / initiatives against each)

What is the framework trying to deliver? It’s about being clear:

- how people can take part in and influence the work of public, private and voluntary sector agencies
- how those agencies can work better together to share resources, learning and information for the benefit of the people of the district
- what is expected of everyone, agencies and the public, when they are involving or being involved
- what the agreed targets and priorities are

I’m a member of the public, how can I influence what is going on in the District?

There are many ways you can influence what goes on. Each agency has its own ways of providing those opportunities to help people become involved. These can be found atweb link to each agency – name, contact details, main involvement opportunities, programme of events, results from involvement – develop NFDC as example.

Why do agencies need to share resources, learning and information better?

There is a significant opportunity to improve decision making and efficiency in the use of resources. A great deal of time and money is spent in trying to involve people but it needs to be co-ordinated better to avoid duplication of effort, ensure quality is maintained and to share information and learn lessons

What do you mean by shared values and principles and what are they? Basic rules of engagement - things that we can all agree to make sure everyone trying to involve others and those getting involved know what is expected of them. These are:

- Elected members are the prime route for representing the views of the public and their involvement should be a key consideration in any engagement activity
- Engagement activities are a genuine attempt to find out what people think and feel
- Every contribution made by the public will be seriously considered as a contribution to the final decision
- The way in which opportunities for involvement are delivered will not disadvantage any sector of the community
- The quality of the way those opportunities are delivered will be high, giving everyone easy access at the right time for them to influence decisions

- Every effort should be taken by agencies to make the best use of time and money through working together to involve people on issues relevant to them
- Everyone is clear about how much influence people have at the time they are involved
- Relevant information is presented in a clear and concise way that helps people join in
- Everyone is clear about how and when feedback on the results of involvement will be given, including how the results have influenced final decisions
- Everyone is committed to improving how opportunities for involvement are delivered
- Everyone involving themselves, the public or organisations, should do so in a manner that respects all others

How will this translate into the right things happening on the ground?

The delivery of the framework is supported by a Community Engagement Good Practice Guide designed to offer help and advice to all those trying to involve people and also for those wanting to become involved. A copy of the toolkit can be found at web link.

What are the targets and priorities that will be delivered?

The main things to achieve by April 2012 are:

- People have improved opportunities to shape their communities and the services they receive
- More people feel better informed
- More people feel they can influence local decision making
- More people have been involved in decisions that affect the local area
- Businesses have better opportunities to influence decisions that affect them
- An annual programme of involvement opportunities is published
- An approach to data sharing has been agreed across the Partnership
- Greater efficiency in the use of resources through avoiding duplication of effort