

North Tyneside Council

Report to Cabinet

9 March 2015

ITEM 7(c)

Response to Overview,
Scrutiny and Policy
Development Committee-
Community
Conversations

Portfolio(s): Community Engagement

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Carole Burdis

Report from Service

Area:

Corporate Strategy

Responsible Officer:

Jacqueline Laughton (Head of
Corporate Strategy)

(Tel: (0191) 643
7070

Wards affected:

All wards

PART 1

1.1 Purpose:

This report seeks Cabinet's approval of the proposed response to the recommendations contained in Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee's Review of Community Conversations.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (1) Agree the proposed response to Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee.

1.3 Forward Plan:

Twenty eight days notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 2 February 2015.

1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

This report relates to the following priority in the 2014/18 Our North Tyneside Plan:

- Our People will be listened to by services that respond better and faster to their needs.

1.5 Information:

Background

- 1.5.1 The Authority's approach to community engagement is set out in the Our North Tyneside Communications and Engagement Strategy 2014. It confirms the commitment of the Authority, as a 'Listening Council', to deliver a co-ordinated two-way communications and engagement approach that reaches all relevant audiences and supports ward councillors in their role in the democratic process and as community leaders.

- 1.5.2 The strategy encompasses a variety of tailored engagement approaches including:
- Digital and web based engagement to give direct feedback to services and offer on-line consultation and questionnaires
 - Residents' Panel to enable targeted engagement on specific issues
 - Mayor's Listening Events giving residents a face to face opportunity to raise ward level issues directly with the Elected Mayor, cabinet members and ward councillors
 - Single issue engagement events for example on anti-social behaviour, flooding and for carers
 - Community Conversations to generate insight from the public, highlight local priorities and to support service planning. A variety of approaches have been employed including the out-and-about summer programme which met residents in their own communities, formal meetings, and drop-in events in community venues.
- 1.5.3 Further development is planned including: running on-line forums similar to those offered by the Safer Estates Team, creation of a dedicated section of the Authority's website to provide digital engagement opportunities and feedback, and linking more of the Authority's local face-to-face engagement activity, currently delivered by service areas, under the Community Conversations brand. The resulting increased range of engagement activities will widen the reach of the Authority's Community Conversation engagement programme to residents and provide more opportunities for member involvement.
- 1.5.4 This approach is in-line with the aims of the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee's Community Conversations sub-group. Its Community Conversations Review Report sought to help to develop and establish successful ward based engagement and provide support to ward councillors. The recommendations arising from this report were presented to Cabinet on 12 January 2015, at which time Cabinet agreed to consider and formulate its response. The recommendations were as follows

Recommendation 1: That, for member-led activity, ward members, as community leaders, are best placed to determine how community conversations/engagement can best be undertaken within the wards they represent. Members from each ward should therefore agree and forward their preferred approach to the Communications and Engagement Team, who will be available to provide support. The preferred approach should then be incorporated into the engagement programme.

Recommendation 2: That

- (a) feedback cards be made available at all engagement events;
- (b) feedback cards be progressed fully and appropriately to provide timely feedback to all parties; and
- (c) the methods to provide feedback, concerns/issues be publicised in Our North Tyneside magazine and available on the Authority's website.

Recommendation 3: That

- (a) an approach be explored/developed to alert ward members to any engagement activity in the ward they represent, and
- (b) a comprehensive programme of engagement/community conversation events be available to the public via the Authority's website and be always kept up to date.

1.5.5 The proposed response to these recommendations is given in the table below:

<p>Recommendation 1:</p>	<p>Accept in principle – ward members, as community leaders, do need to play a key role in Community Conversation activity - alongside the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement. This role is to help to identify issues important to communities and by being involved, in the different ways already available, to enable their communities to have their say. However, as outlined in the Communications and Engagement Strategy, consistency of approach must be maintained to ensure all residents across the borough have an equal opportunity to have their say. Providing an opportunity for members to identify a different approach in each ward would not be appropriate or achievable within resources.</p> <p>In line with Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee’s wish to see the continued development of Community Conversations, the Community Conversation events being held in February and March 2015, will involve community and voluntary sector groups and provide an opportunity for ward councillors to meet informally with residents at drop-in events. These will be supported by the Communications and Engagement Team. Feedback will help to identify future ward issues and priorities for incorporation into the community engagement approach. There will also be additional opportunities resulting from the merger of corporate and service engagement resources. The full range of engagement opportunities for residents will be set out in a refreshed Communications and Engagement Strategy, which will be considered by Cabinet in June.</p> <p>As outlined in 1.5.2 and 1.5.3 of this report the methods of delivering and of branding community level engagement will continue to develop and ward members will be notified of any planned engagement activity in their wards.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2:</p>	<p>Accept</p>
<p>Recommendation 3:</p>	<p>Accept</p>

1.6 Decision options:

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

Option 1

Cabinet agrees the proposed response to Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee’s recommendations.

Option 2

Cabinet rejects the proposed response to Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee’s recommendations and proposes an alternative response.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

1.7 Reasons for recommended option:

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

In accordance with part 4 section 3 paragraph 19 of the Council's Constitution Cabinet is required to respond to Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee's recommendations within two months.

The proposed response is in-line with the Our North Tyneside Communications and Engagement Strategy.

1.8 Appendices:

None

1.9 Contact officers:

Jeanette Hedley, Communications and Engagement Manager, tel. (0191) 643 5077

Esther Windass, Tennant and Resident Involvement Manager, tel. (0191) 643 7742

Anne Foreman, Communications and Engagement Advisor, tel. (0191) 643 2225

Alison Campbell, Financial Business Manager, tel. (0191) 643 7038

1.10 Background information:

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

(1) Our North Tyneside Communications and Engagement Strategy, August 2014.

(2) Community Conversations Review, Report to Cabinet 12 January 2015

http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/pls/portal/NTC_PSCM.PSCM_Web.download?p_ID=557964

PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

2.1 Finance and other resources

Members will be alerted via newsletter and e-mail. Information can be shared on the council website free of charge and feedback cards can be created at minimal cost.

2.2 Legal

There are no legal implications.

2.3 Consultation/community engagement

2.3.1 Internal Consultation

The Head of Corporate Strategy and the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement were consulted.

2.3.2 External Consultation/Engagement

All Community Conversation participants are given the opportunity to complete evaluation forms, the findings from these have informed the Communications and Engagement Strategy and development plans for Community Conversations.

2.4 Human rights

There are no direct issues relating to human rights arising from this report.

2.5 Equalities and diversity

There are no direct issues relating to equalities and diversity arising from this report.

2.6 Risk management

There are no direct issues relating to risk management arising from this report.

2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no direct issues relating to crime and disorder arising from this report.

2.8 Environment and sustainability

There are no direct issues relating to environment and sustainability arising from this report.

PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Deputy Chief Executive
- Head(s) of Service
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s)
- Chief Finance Officer
- Monitoring Officer
- Head of Corporate Strategy