

North Tyneside Council Report to Cabinet

8th July 2013

ITEM

Title: Community
Engagement

Portfolio(s): Community Engagement

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Carole
Gambling

Report from Directorate: Chief Executives Office

Report Author: Jackie Laughton Strategic Manager,
Policy, Partnerships, Performance and
Communications Tel: (0191) 643 7070

Wards affected: All

PART 1

1.1 Purpose:

The purpose of the report is to seek agreement to a new approach to community engagement.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet

(1) Delegate responsibility for establishing new ways of engaging with residents to the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and the Strategic Manager for Policy, Partnerships, Performance and Communications and in consultation with the Head of Law and Governance.

(2) Agree to support an Overview and Scrutiny investigation into community engagement and receive a report on the outcome and recommendations of this review.

1.3 Forward Plan:

This report appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 22nd May 2013.

1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

The report relates to the following section of the Council Strategic Plan 2012/15:
Delivering the Plan – Working in Partnership - We will review the way we involve our residents and businesses to see if there are improvements and new ideas to involve greater numbers of our population.

1.5 Information:

1.5.1 Background

In April 2013 Cabinet agreed to stop Area Forums and develop new ways of engaging with residents that included a greater focus on Ward Level engagement.

This report sets out new principles for community engagement that will underpin this new approach and result in a greater focus on partnerships between Elected Members, Residents and the Council that is built on taking time to ensure full engagement in “Our North Tyneside”.

The purpose of community engagement is to ensure that local people and organisations influence and help to shape the decisions that affect their lives so that the Council and its partners can understand the needs and issues of local communities and work with them to develop “Our North Tyneside”.

Engagement is not just about getting individual views from residents, it is also about getting the whole community to work together to make decisions about their local neighbourhood.

1.5.2 Engagement principles:

Community engagement in North Tyneside will be underpinned by the following principles; we will ensure:

Elected Members, Residents and the Council will work together to listen and involve the people affected by issues, plans and developments.

A targeted consistent approach to engagement; that matches methods to the audience, subject and time with clear outcomes and feedback for everyone.

Improved co-ordination across the Council and with our partners.

Clarity and honesty about how engagement influences council decision making.

Engagement is a continual process that includes regular feedback.

1.5.3. Levels of Engagement



We will be creative and ensure that all activity takes account of different levels of engagement, from reading the Council magazine, visiting the website, filling in an online questionnaire, taking part in a street walk about, attending an event, or visiting a council building to find out more about something of interest or concern.

1.5.4 **What will community engagement in North Tyneside involve?**

We will focus on ensuring that we promote ways that people can get involved in community engagement opportunities and receive clear and timely feedback on the outcome of any engagement. This will include opportunities for individuals, groups, organisations and businesses.

There are many ways that residents and other stakeholder can already help to influence Council decisions and get involved in community engagement activity. Our approach will further develop these including making better use of the Residents Panel, developing involved tenants, and working with the Young Mayor on ways our young people get involved. It will also seek to systematically share and use information gathered during existing engagement, e.g. with service users, to inform decision making.

Elected Members have a key community leadership role. As part of our new approach we will spend time working with Elected Members to shape the new ward level engagement. This will be led by Elected Members and will focus on issues that are of relevance to people living or working in a ward. This means that although engagement in each ward will look and feel different, it will all adhere to the principles set out in this report.

The Overview and Scrutiny committee will undertake a study of past approaches and help to shape a new, more inclusive approach that is based on listening, learning and involving people in their local communities.

Community engagement will include working with organisations and businesses that have a stake in North Tyneside on a range of issues such as Council budget engagement and other relevant issues or developments.

Community engagement will also include people working for the Council, many of whom also live in North Tyneside, giving them more opportunities to get involved. This will include increasing membership of the staff panel and reviewing our internal communications.

1.5.5 **How will community engagement be coordinated?**

The Council has established a Communication and Engagement Network. This is made up of representatives of all service areas and the Council's Business Partners. This network will oversee a work plan of engagement, aimed at improving coordination, avoiding duplication, and will oversee the implementation of an engagement tracker system and engagement toolkit.

1.6 **Decision options:**

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet

Option 1

Cabinet can agree to the recommendations set out in section 1.2 or this report

Option 2

Cabinet can ask for further information on proposals to develop Community Engagement

Option 3

Cabinet may decide to wait for the outcome of the Overview and Scrutiny report before they agree to a new approach to community engagement.

Option one is the recommended option.

Reasons for recommended option:

This will allow for the establishment of new ways of engagement including at a ward level

1.7 Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report.

1.8 Contact officers:

Jackie Laughton, Strategic Manager, Policy, Partnerships, Performance & Communication, tel: (0191) 643 7070
Felicity Shoesmith, Manager, Partnerships & Involvement Team, tel: (0191) 643 7071
Alison Campbell, Finance Business Manager tel: (0191) 643 7038

1.9 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) New Ways of Engaging with Residents, Cabinet report 8th April 2013
- (2) North Tyneside Council Engagement Strategy 2012-2015, published January 2012
- (3) Community Engagement Framework

PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

2.1 Finance and other resources

As part of the 2013/14 Financial Planning and Budget process a proposal to save £0.120m from the area forum budget was agreed, which is to be delivered by replacing Area Forums with more direct forms of engagement.

It is anticipated that cost of delivering the new ways of engaging with residents will be managed within existing budgets. However, if new proposals, when finalised, do require any additional funding, a further report will be brought to Cabinet for approval.

2.2 Legal

There are no legal implications directly arising from this report. If new ways of engaging with residents are proposed which require changes to the constitution or a further decision of Cabinet or Council a report will be presented accordingly.

2.3 Consultation/community engagement

2.3.1 Internal Consultation

Internal consultation has taken place with Elected Members, the Communication and Engagement Network and the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny

2.3.2 External Consultation/Engagement

Many of the approaches set out in this approach have been developed with residents and other stakeholders.

2.4 Human rights

There are no human rights implications directly arising from this report

2.5 Equalities and diversity

The Council will seek to engage with people from all sections of the community, in line with the borough's population profile.

A proportionate approach to the collection of data on participants' equality characteristics will be adopted - categories contained in the Corporate Equality Monitoring Form will be used to ensure data consistency/comparability. These are based on the characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. Equality data will be used to identify any groups that are under- represented in an engagement, so that mitigating action can be taken. All data collection and storage will be in line with legislation on data protection, data reporting and confidentiality.

2.6 Risk management

Any risks as a result of changes to the way the Council engages with residents will be addressed in line with the councils risk management policy

2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no crime and disorder issues arising from this report

2.8 Environment and sustainability

The development of new ways to engage with residents will include greater use of electronic methods which will have environmental benefits through a reduction in travel to meetings and energy used in buildings hosting meetings.

PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Chief Executive
- Strategic Director(s)
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s)
- Chief Finance Officer
- Monitoring Officer
- Strategic Manager Policy, Partnership, Performance and Communication