

Subject:	Update of the 'Community Engagement Strategy.'		Status:	For Publication			
Report to:	Policy Overview & Scrutiny		Date:	2 nd July 2012			
Report of:	Director of Customers and Communities		Portfolio Holder:	Communities and Partnerships			
Key Decision:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Forward Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	General Exception	<input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Impact Assessment:	Required:	Yes/No		Attached:	Yes/No		
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required:	Yes/No		Attached:	Yes/No		
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	That Policy Overview and Scrutiny recommend to Cabinet the adoption of the Community Engagement Vision and Toolkit.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To seek the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the refreshed 'Community Engagement Vision and Toolkit.'

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:
- **A healthy and successful Rossendale** – supporting vibrant communities and a strong economy.
 - **Responsive and value for money local services** – responding to and meeting the different needs of customers and improving the cost effectiveness of services.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:
- 4.2 The current community engagement strategy is in draft form and was not formally adopted by the Council. We may therefore not be engaging as robustly as is outlined within new and emerging legislation therefore leaving the decisions undertaken by Council vulnerable to challenge for example through judicial review.

The basis of judicial review rests on the principle that every action of a public body must be justified by law. - *Laws LJ in R (Beeson) v Dorset County Council [2003]*.

The 3 grounds for Judicial review are

- Illegality
- Irrationality (Unreasonableness)
- Procedural impropriety

5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 5.1 The Council's current 'Community Engagement Strategy' is in 'draft' form and hasn't been adopted by full council however, a copy is currently available on the council's website for the community to download and utilise.
- 5.2 Given the fact that there has been a number of legal changes since the development of the community engagement strategy for example our legal duty to inform, consult and involve the community in decision making it is recommended that the present strategy is updated.
- 5.3 The revised engagement framework will utilise some of the information found in the draft community engagement strategy, but when the policy work is complete it is envisaged that the Council will have a community engagement vision and toolkit and that it will be a reference point for the Council in it on going community engagement work.
- 5.4 The new vision and toolkit will clarify what 'Community Engagement' means and be based on best practice across other public, private and third sector providers and organisations. The engagement vision will be at the front of what we do and how we do it.
- 5.5 The term 'Community Engagement' is often used as an all-encompassing term under which there have been a variety of techniques and tools developed to better engage, these include the following terms, which are clearly defined in the strategy as part of the 'ladder of engagement':
- **Informing:** Letting people know something. This may include leaflets, website information and press releases;
 - **Consulting:** Seeking views on something and using these views to inform what we do. This may include structured questionnaires such as the Citizens' Panel;
 - **Involving:** Residents become a part of the decision making process. This may include various groups providing their knowledge and expertise to inform decisions;
 - **Collaboration:** Working together with communities to identify problems, discuss them and create a positive change. This may include joint project delivery between The Council and community groups; and
 - **Empowering:** The community leads on the decision and they take responsibility into their own hands. This may include supporting the development of social enterprises.
- 5.6 The vision will be short, concise and direct; reconfirming that engagement is at the forefront of everything the council does. It will also clarify what Rossendale Council means when it says community engagement to ensure both staff and councillors are using the same language.

5.7 The toolkit will be the supporting document/s that sits behind the vision bringing it to life and will include areas like:

- An outline of the Council’s legal requirements to engage
- An outline of why and how we engage
- Practical advice and support on how to engage productively at different levels;
- Case studies both positive and negative of how to engage

5.8 Community Engagement is a responsibility for us all and teams will be required to co-ordinate and carry out their own engagement. The strategy and toolkit will enable teams to ensure that they are doing this in the right way.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6. SECTION 151 OFFICER

6.1 Any financial implications arising will be met from existing budget resources.

7. MONITORING OFFICER

7.1 Included in the report.

8. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

8.1 The implementation of the community engagement strategy will ensure that in developing proposals or when making decisions, the Council gives due regard. The Equality Act 2012 established the Public Sector Equality Duty, the duty requires the Council to give due regard to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

9. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 9.1
- Senior Management Team
 - Neighbourhood Forums
 - Portfolio Holder

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 By updating the present draft community engagement strategy through the adoption of a community engagement vision and toolkit will reconfirm and embed the importance of engaging with our communities of location and interest.

- 10.2 The vision will direct the reader to a toolkit that will provide a clear process for carrying out robust, open and transparent community engagement ensuring relevant sectors of the community are engaged in council decision making at the appropriate level and at the appropriate time. Thereby ensuring the decisions taken by the council are well informed and fulfil our legal and statutory duties.

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Community Engagement Vision and Toolkit Example community consultation exercise	Attached