

To: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 10 November 2014

Report of: Head of Policy, Culture and Communications.

Title of Report: Draft Community Engagement Plan 2014 – 17 Consultation Results and Analysis

Summary

Purpose of report: This report presents the results of consultation on the draft Community Engagement Plan and shows how the comments received have been handled.

Key decision *No*

Executive lead members: Cllr Bob Price, Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning; Cllr Christine Simm, Culture and Communities

Report author: Sadie Paige

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan – Strong, Active Communities

Background

The consultation period was December 20th 2013 to March 31st 2014.

47 individuals submitted their feedback on-line using the eConsult portal and four group submissions were received by email. One of the email submissions has been entered in eConsult; the other three did not fit within the survey template and have been kept separate. The eConsult comments will be covered in Part 1, while the email submissions will be covered in Part 2.

Profile of on-line responders

58% of the respondents who provided gender information were female (26) compared the Oxford Census 2011 data of 15+ age group (51%). 100% of the respondents who provided ethnicity information were White (39) compared the Oxford Census 2011 data of 15+ age group (80%).

The breakdown of the respondents who provided their age information is presented below. The table shows that the age groups (19- 44) are under-represented and the age groups (45- 74) are over-represented, when compared to the demographic profile of Oxford

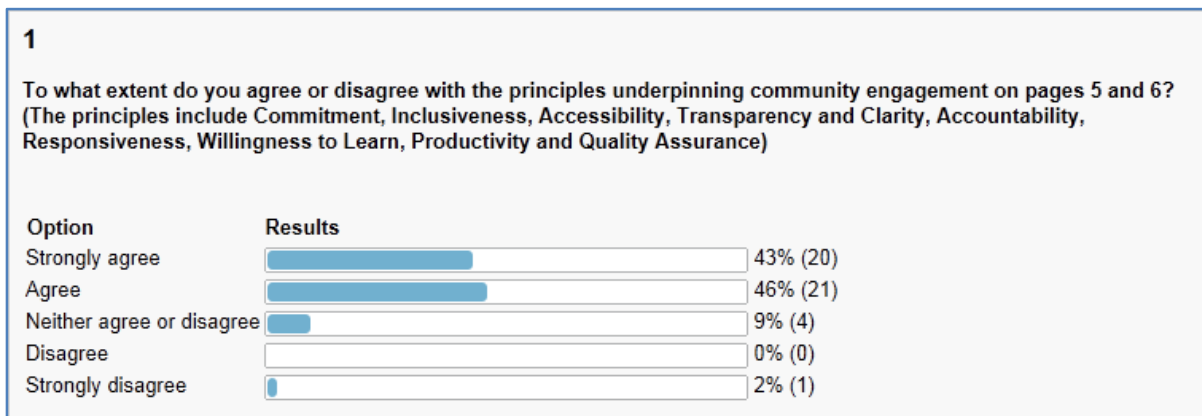
residents as a whole. There were no responses from people under 19 or over 74, although 24% and 5% respectively of Oxford residents fall into those age ranges.

age range	count	%	Oxford %
19-24	1	2.5%	14.9%
25-44	7	17.5%	31.9%
45-59	18	45.0%	14.2%
60-74	14	35.0%	9.4%

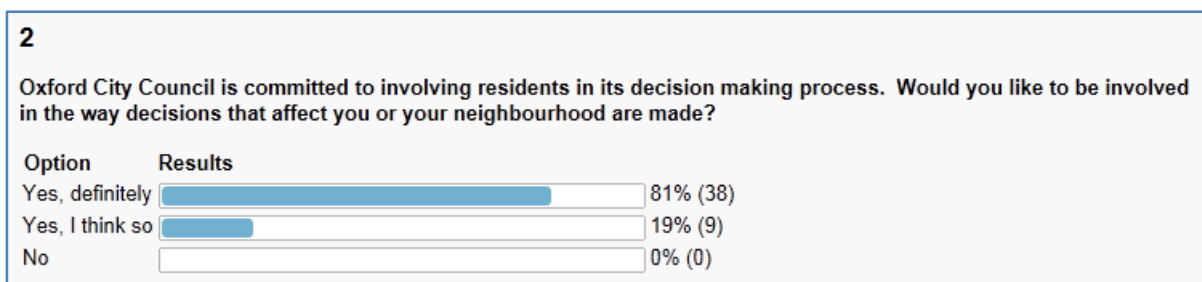
Comments have been reproduced verbatim i.e. typos have not been corrected.

Part 1 Feedback from eConsult

This covers each survey question in turn: the responses given by the consultees and how the responses have been handled. Many of the questions gave consultees the opportunity to provide free-form comments. In these cases the comments are presented in the left hand column of a table and a description of how they were handled in the right hand column.



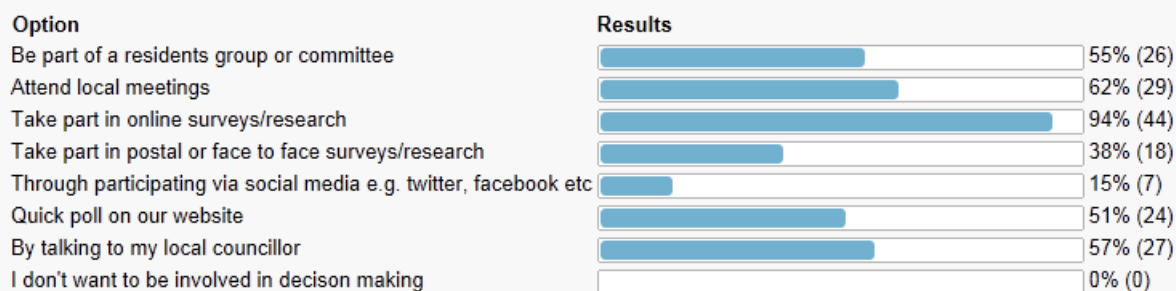
89% of responders agree or strongly agree with the principles. This level of support for the principles of engagement contributed to the decision to re-structure the Policy Statement around the principles. However, based upon comments from later questions, changes have been made to the definitions of some of the principles.



Although this result is not surprising, it does mean that we were getting considered feedback. In other words, if 100% people had selected “No”, the responses to subsequent questions would have been less valuable to shaping the final Community Engagement Policy Statement.

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In what ways would you like to get involved in making decisions about your neighbourhood?



The responses show that people want a variety of ways of getting involved in local decision making – both on-line and face to face. This has informed the new community engagement principle of Flexibility. Although fewer than 15% of respondents selected social media, it has been proposed that the development of the use of social media and digital technologies in community engagement will be pursued as a way of being more accessible to young people. (Note that 80% of respondents to this survey are aged 45 or above.)

For Q3 three additional ways of getting involved were suggested:

Comment	Action
By being allowed access to planning applications	This comment has been passed to an officer in the City Development team, who is making improvements to the City Council's Planning website. It has also been passed to the officer who is updating the Statement of Community Involvement (in Planning). The responder will be invited to take part in website and SCI improvements.
Direct contact from Council staff wherever specialist advice is required	Service Areas have lists of subject matter experts who are routinely invited to provide input, so perhaps this is a blind spot. I will contact this respondent directly and add to our list of subject matter experts.
Participatory budgeting; alternate reality games	This will be added to the Consultation Toolkit.

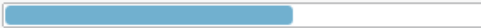

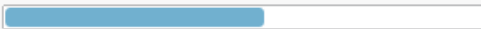


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Do you feel there are barriers to getting involved in the decision making process?



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If yes, what are those barriers?

Option	Results
Lack of time	 60% (21)
Language barrier	 0% (0)
Lack of information to make an informed decision	 54% (19)
Don't have access to a computer / the internet	 0% (0)
Physical barrier (unable to get to organised events)	 6% (2)

Not surprisingly “Lack of time” is a big barrier to getting involved. We will be exploring the possibility of conducting quick polls on the City Council’s website, and this requirement has been passed to the Business Improvement team. In addition, we will continue to challenge consultations that require the reading of big documents, whilst recognising that “Lack of information to make an informed decision” was also a big barrier. All consultations are required to have a named point of contact with email address and phone number, which will hopefully help to address this problem. Consultations are assessed as part of an approval process, and the assessment criteria will be more clearly aligned to the revised principles of community engagement. The principle of Inclusiveness and Accessibility recognises that alternative methods of involvement need to be provided to people who are not able to attend organised events.

For Q5 the following additional barriers/comments were noted.

The analysis of these comments highlighted both the importance of the principles of community engagement and the need to be applying them more rigorously. The principles were reviewed for clarity and relevance, and the revised Community Engagement Plan (to be called the Community Engagement Policy Statement) was re-structured around these principles.

Barrier	Commentor Action
Unable to get actual replies to questions	All consultations are required to have a named point of contact with email address and phone number. Our principle of Transparency and Clarity states that sufficient information must be available to consultees.
timing of meetings: at dinnertime. Why not have a few late morning or afternoon meetings?	This is an on-going challenge. Our principle of Accessibility requires that we carefully consider the timing and location of community involvement events.
The East Area Parliament was so successful that the Labour Group got rid of it.	The Community Engagement Policy Statement develops the “Engaging Our Communities” themes set out in the Council’s Corporate Plan 2014-18; this does not include local parliaments.
Resistance to expertise external to the Council and poor accountability.	All Service Areas have a list of key stakeholders and subject matter experts so this may be an omission. The individual will be contacted to address the comment. Our principle of Transparency and Clarity requires that we hold ourselves better to account for the publication of results and decisions.

residents comments are often a 'box ticking' exercise without being taken seriously.	Our principle of Transparency and Clarity requires that we hold ourselves better to account for the publication of results and decisions, to demonstrate that feedback is taken seriously. In support of this a new performance measure has been put in place.
Cynicism about being taken seriously; nothing changes so whats the point culture; not informed	
A perception that our comments are not taken seriously.	
Lack of serious response to citizen inputs.	
Reluctance or inability to fully understand issues.	It is hoped that through the application of Transparency and Clarity (including the analysis of feedback and development of policies etc.) issues can be understood.
MENTAL HEALTH	Our principle of Inclusiveness and Accessibility require that we use the appropriate method of engagement. Oxfordshire Mind and Oxford Mental Health Users Group have been invited to register with the City Council's consultation portal, and a request to publicize consultations through their newsletters will be made.
Meetings not always well publicised and local opinion is often ignored even when given	I will review the meetings mentioned in the Community Engagement Policy Statement and contact all the meeting owners. They will be reminded of the Principles of Community Engagement.
Long reports, or too many not of particular interest, would tend to put me off.	On some occasions long reports are required to provide enough information for residents who want to be involved in making decisions, but in line with the principle of Inclusion and Accessibility, we try to keep this to a minimum and provide summary reports where possible.
Lack of information about what decisions are being made and how to best input into the process	I will contact the respondent. Perhaps the Policy Statement / website needs to be clearer.
Council will not allow access to planning documents	See response to same comment in Q3 above
As part of the boating community I see consultation going on with little representation sort.	We will add the Boating Community to our list of Residents' Groups that are invited to consultations.

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In your view, are there particular areas and/or services where we should engage with you more often?

The "No" or "N/A" replies are not presented here.

In response to this question consultees have identified which services/areas they would like more frequent engagement, as well as making comments about how they would like to be involved. The "which" comments have been fed back to the relevant service provider (whether within or beyond the City Council), while the "how" comments have been used to define the Principles of Community Engagement.

Engage more often	Comment or Action
Yes, wherever the Council is attempting decisions where expertise in the community is better qualified e.g. specialist ecologists and naturalists.	Add to contact database
working with like-minded residents and councillors to improve the community and environment for people living in Oxford City Central.	No specific action taken
We want to ensure that Rose Hill and Ifley new-build houses and public buildings are well insulated and use their roof space for pv panels to the maximum extent. We can work with the Low Carbon Hub to put out share offers for pv panels on public buildings such as schools. We have already secured the agreement of the City Council to cover the new Community Centre for Rose Hill with pv panels.	No specific action taken
Voluntary community group issues, anti-social behaviour. Changes or issues which impact on children, young people and young people with impairments	The Oxford residents' satisfaction survey which covers anti-social behaviour will, from autumn 2014, involve a broader section of the population. Children and Young Peoples' Plan will be reviewed in the context of this feedback.
Views of older people who have difficulty with mobility.	Our inclusiveness principle (of Community Engagement) requires that the opportunities to participate in decision making are not limited to the able-bodied.
Use of pavements, vide the debacle over locating cycle racks near St Andrews school in Headington. The use and abuse of pavements by cyclists. Designation of uses for shops.	The principle of flexibility means that such decisions should be made with the input of impacted parties. Illegal cycling on the pavement should be brought to the attention of Thames Valley Police. If planning permission is required, then any change of use must be approved. The process is detailed in the Statement of Community Involvement.
Traffic and road use. Business rents and rates. Planning decisions.	Traffic and road use is the responsibility of the County Council, although we use the annual resident satisfaction survey as a broad measure of traffic related issues, and have in some cases secured funding to make improvements. Business rates are set by central government but there is an appeal process outlined on the City Council's website . Planning decisions are required

	to follow statutory consultation guidelines. Our “feedback” principle ensures that responders are apprised of results and decisions made.
There is no point in 'engaging' with communities unless the communities are listened to - something which the City council seem PROUD NOT to do. IE the huge opposition to the closure of Temple Cowley Pools, and the refusal of councillors and officers to listen.	On page 5 of The Community Engagement Policy Statement 2014 – 17, the Council’s position is clarified: “Community engagement supports, informs and improves decision-making by elected councillors, but it does not replace it; the responsibility for the final decision on any issue that involves the Council’s resources rests with the city’s elected councillors.”
The proposal mentions Oxford and its residents what it doesn't mention is that Oxford services Oxfordshire as the main destination and shopping destination. Oxfordshire residents should be consulted on things such as the redevelopment of the Westgate centre and the Botley road because the protestors who tend to be residents of the city do not represent the people from the surrounding area who have to travel into the city to access the facilities that are not available in the rural towns and villages of Oxfordshire.	This is a very good point. It is addressed through our Inclusiveness principle, and we are now being more attentive to this geographic dimension to inclusion. This point will be raised at the County (Oxfordshire) Consultation Officers’ Group meeting in November.
The communication between the city council front line staff (for example the repairs team) and the contact admin staff (the call centre) seems to get very confused and often leads to the wrong worker being sent to the wrong job (electrician instead of plumber). this costs time and money. Direct contact between tenant and the repairs team is needed.	This customer feedback has been communicated to the Repairs Team.
provision of pedestrian and bicycle paths.	There is an opportunity to comment on pavements in the annual resident satisfaction, but this is slightly different and will be taken up with the Cleaner Greener Board.
pre school care, libraries	These services are the responsibility of the County Council, although libraries will be included in our next annual resident satisfaction survey.
Practical, local stuff like work being done in our immediate area that misses a problem that locals could have identified to be sorted efficiently at the same time as other work. Good work being done with consultation / engagement at a more strategic level - now try using more local knowlege at the practical level	There is a Report It capability on the Council’s website, but I wonder if some of our thinking on how to use the web might also help make improvements here.
Planning..	The feedback has been provided to the Planning department; they are currently reviewing their Statement of Community Involvement

Planning, Transport, HMO development	See above for planning. Consultation on transport is generally led by the service provider (e.g. Network Rail), but it is included in the scope of Planning Documents created by the Planning Department (in consultation with the public). There are several HMO consultations carried out each year; we are now paying close attention to the inclusion of tenants as well as landlords.
Planning decisions. Retention of green space.	See above for planning decisions. It is possible for residents to provide input on green spaces either through our annual resident satisfaction survey, or as part of consultation on specific site developments.
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES NEED TO BE GIVEN MORE INFO SO THEY CAN ENGAGE	See Q4 above
Oxford City could do more to counter Oxfordshire County's policies which continually prioritise commuters and tourists over local residents (e.g. Headington traffic 'improvements'). Local open meetings should be held as people are more likely to drop in to their local community centre / hall than take the time to fill in online consultations. Also, people ask more questions face to face and a more acceptable solution is often reached. It is very easy to ignore online / social media comments (offensive Tweeting being a good example) and people don't see Council business as 'social' until a policy has been implemented and individuals are adversely affected.	The responder will be contacted for improvement suggestions.
Matters regarding funding/finance, and its impact on reducing services.	This is covered in our annual Budget Consultation
Many.	No comment
local transport: bus and coach schedules, bus and coach stops. HMOs: poor external upkeep. While it is comforting to know that licensed HMOs are basically safe for their occupants and nearby residents, many of them look decidedly decrepit from the street, and the letting agents leave signs up long after new tenancy agreements have been signed.	Consultation on transport is generally led by the service provider (e.g. Stagecoach), but there is the opportunity to provide feedback through the Oxford residents' survey, in which case the comments are passed to the local transport liaison officer at the County Council. Good point – for HMO consultations “local residents” will be considered as impacted parties.
local history	This is covered in our on-going Heritage Plan consultations
Litter collection/recycling.	This is covered in our annual

	resident satisfaction survey.
It is a great pity that so little was done to engage with local residents over the plans for the Castle Mill development. The general policy in favour of growth appears to have been decided upon without proper consultation.	The Goodstadt Report has highlighted areas for improvement and they are being implemented. This includes the review of the Statement of Community Involvement.
in short the boating community is often overlooked as I've heard recently perceived in relation to the JLHT /OCCP canal project.	This responder will be contacted directly.
How to solve the housing crisis in Oxford!	This is one of the top priorities of the City Council and there will be substantial investment over the next few years.
Housing - location and number of multi occupations (high level of private rented in city and getting higher) Street furniture and layout - makes a direct impact on experience of being in a neighbourhood Leisure services - Temple Cowley Pool is still a thorn in the side of any kind of consultation and leaves a bad taste after all the petitions etc. that had so many respondents on them City Centre events to balance the positive and the negative	Planning permission is now required for housing of multiple occupants. Page 5 of The Community Engagement Policy Statement 2014 – 17, clarifies the Council's position: "Community engagement supports, informs and improves decision-making by elected councillors, but it does not replace it; the responsibility for the final decision on any issue that involves the Council's resources rests with the city's elected councillors."
grants given to community groups, e.g. music services, pegasus theatre	The Culture Strategy is being revised and will go out for consultation in October/ November 2014.
General experience of the parts of Oxford which I frequently use, pass through, see, or value - i.e. not just the buildings immediately adjacent to or in sight from my own home. In my case, this would mean all the alternative N-S routes from Grandpont to the areas around St Giles Church and Jericho, Port Meadow and Univ Parks, and the railway and bus stations: not only via St Aldates, Cornmarket and St Giles, but also via the footbridge and New Inn Hall St, or by car via Oxpens; or via Turl St or Radcliffe Square and Parks Road and Keble Road,	The responder will be contacted to advise best way to keep informed of these types of consultation.
Decisions that affect the living environment. At the moment, decisions are taken for the Community without resident consultation surveys.	Our resident satisfaction survey covers these topics.
Controversial planning decisions	See above for comments that relate to improvements in Planning
Bus transport from north to south oxford, avoiding the walk along Cornmarket	The County Council is responsible for the Transport Strategy.
At the moment it is unclear what are the areas where you are engaging people and how this happens. It would be	This responder will be contacted directly. Possible

great to have a more comprehensive approach or a way in which people could easily access information about the decisions that are being made and how to best input into them.	review of the Policy Statement.
All topics	No comment
More engagement in Donington, and other small pockets of deprivation. More engagement with private tenants. More engagement with older people through elderly-led (and controlled) organisations, rather than younger people claiming to represent us. More continuous local engagement, rather than separate consultations. More engagement through online community networks. More engagement with participation professionals, rather than assuming Oxford knows best.	This covers and provides suggestions for meeting our Flexibility and Inclusiveness principles.
Planning, housing development, traffic, parking	These are all topics of regular consultation – the responder will be contacted directly.

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In your view, are there particular areas and/or services where you think we should engage with you less often?

For Q7 23 people responded “no” and others had the following comments

Engage less often	Comment or Action
Politics	No comment
Loads, like the success of the East Area Parliament which threatened the Labour Group, so it was done away with. So it seems to me that the only consultation that this council wants is badly attended meetings with people going to them who have no views. And if the council have something to hide - like the Roger Dudman Way planning application - then the public are misled.	The principles included in the Community Engagement Policy Statement and the review of the Statement of Community Involvement are intended to address this perception.
Less printed material posted	The Council aims to minimise the amount of printed material, but recognises that some residents do not have a computer or internet access.
Crime - let TVP and the experts deal with this I dn't feel as if I engage with services often at all as an owner occupier in East Oxford	The antisocial behaviour information that is collected as part of our community safety survey is used by Thames Valley Police and the Community Safety Partnership.
Fewer council newsletters: instead fund hyperlocal independent newsheets and blogs.	This feedback has been sent to the Council's Communication Team Lead.
Consultation should be relevant and meaningful at all times, i.e. don't ask everyone's opinion on everything or they will stop contributing. Also, local residents are just that. We are not 'stakeholders', 'customers' or any other such fatuous term of appeasement. The NHS is a Council stakeholder, I am not.	We make a distinction between stakeholders and residents in our decision-making process. In many cases the stakeholders will be involved in developing options, which then go for broader consultation with the general public.

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Is there anything else you like to see included in the Community Engagement Plan 2014-2017?

For Q8 seven people answered “no” and the following replies were submitted by others:

Other comments	Responseor Action
Yes. Mention is made of engaging those who may not be engaged due to barriers of language. Whilst this is right - this must be by ensuring that the people affected are given opportunities to learn the English language - otherwise we risk ghettos.	We will do this by making sure that, where feasible, surveys are tick box and in plain English. We are also exploring the idea of filling in surveys as part of an English language course.
Whoever is running this consultation should watch this TED talk, particularly point 1, from the beginning to minute 2 approx) http://www.ted.com/talks/dave_meslin_the_antidote_to_apathy.html	Yes, it makes a good point well.
We hope that community renewable energy plans will be on the list.	Community led energy projects are a god example of community empowerment and will be added to the next revision of the Community Engagement Policy Statement.
Undertaking to publish results of surveys/opinion polls	This is encompassed in our principle of Feedback. Results of surveys are now published on our consultation portal within 8 weeks of closing.
THERE NEEDS TO BE MORE INFORMATION IN LOCAL NEWS LETTER'S AS A LOT OF OLDER PEOPLE DO NOT HAVE A COMPUTER'S LET ALONE INTERNET	Currently information about consultations that are of immediate concern are included in local newsletters. We can explore extending this to include broader consultations.
There needs to be mention of how the City Council plans to engage with students. It is repeatedly mentioned that students make up a larger than average proportion of the city's population and yet the document makes no reference to how the Council plans to engage with this section of its population! From Oxford University Student Union Vice-President (Charities and Community)	I met with Dan Tomlinson and this has been added to the revised version. We are now actively contacting the Student Union on topics of interest.
Some ACTION to enable people to be listened to by councillors. Access to all planning applications in hard copy.	Contact information for City Councillors is available on www.oxford.gov.uk . This will be included in the revised version.

	The planning department is reviewing its Statement of Community Involvement and will be consulting later in 2014.
Report corrective action to resolve issues brought up by local residents... and how long it takes them to be resolved..	This is beyond the scope of the Community Engagement Policy Statement, but I will explore the idea of making performance targets and actuals more visible.
priory list. creating an agenda to create a top 5 or 10 list of things that people really would like.	This is done partly through our resident satisfaction survey and partly through the annual budgeting process.
<p>Outline Response from Oxford Green Party</p> <p>Consulting over the Xmas/New Year period was unfortunate and is likely to lead to a poor response rate to this important consultation.</p> <p>Our views on consultation are well known. Using the terminology in the draft plan, our views are that the Council is extremely poor at consulting residents. On planning, it does the statutory minimum consultation in most cases. And even where there is a clear opposition to its plans (for example, St Clement's Car Park redevelopment and the demolition of Temple Cowley Pool), it ignores the views of the majority. The abolition of area committees is a case in point. Despite a majority vote by residents in favour of retaining local powers and budgets, the Council pressed ahead and abolished them anyway. They represented a means by which local residents could be 'Empowered'.</p> <p>The reliance of the creation of Neighbourhood Fora in the Plan is unfortunate. These would seem to have few advantages and many disadvantages. they are in no way a substitute for the powers that were previously delegated to the now abolished Area Committees.</p> <p>As acknowledged in the report, the Area Fora are now 'talking shops' with no clear reporting in to the Council's decision making processes. They have no support (for example, minutes are only taken if Councillors agree to write them). So, we believe that the Council needs to be enhancing its engagement with local residents not relying on existing structures.</p> <p>The Council should return to full Area Committees with delegated powers; and improve its consultation processes more generally.</p> <p>Oxford Green Party c/o 41 Magdalen Road OX4 1RB</p>	<p>The consultation period was extended until end March 2014.</p> <p>The Statement of Community Involvement is currently being revised by the City Planning department and will go out for public feedback later in 2014.</p> <p>The draft will be informed by lessons learnt from projects such as those mentioned here.</p> <p>The decision regarding Area Committees is a political one, and beyond the scope of the Community Engagement Policy Statement</p>
No. This draft plan seems well thought out and it will come down to implementation details, on which I hope we will have	Thanks

an opportunity to comment in due course.	
No. It looks sound.	Thanks
no, I think its' well written and comprehensive	Thanks
More inclusion of Oxfordshire residents as opposed to residents of the city of Oxford.	This point was made and covered above in Q6
Just continue to consult,inform and communicate with the local community.	Thanks
I might have missed it but didnt' see much by way of leisure service provision ? Not just facilities but activities generally - more emphasis on well being for everyone meaning a commitment to the arts and to sports (in the widest sense) provision. Lots of research from Joseph Rowntree Trust and others about benefits of active leisure in older age and during periods of economic stress, So possibly engagement via the arts generally like in the Rose Hill example for instance - connecting with people while they are engaged in other activity which is pleasing and purposeful. Also open spaces and engagement on the multi use of parks etc - dog owners versus sports etc.	The Community Engagement Plan did not cover specific services, but we do gather feedback on leisure and parks services through the resident satisfaction survey as well as venue-specific surveys. The comments here relate to the Culture Strategy which will go for consultation later in 2014.
I believe local opinion is not given the importance it deserves	We aim to demonstrate that this is <u>not</u> the case by publishing results of consultations and how they have shaped decisions.
How to provide good, affordable local housing.	The Community Engagement Plan did not cover specific services, but we do gather feedback on housing concerns through the resident satisfaction survey as well as housing-specific surveys.
Effective Area committees where residents can express views and have a valid vote.	This is a political decision that's outside the control of the owners of the Community Engagement Plan.
a way to address the lack of consultation offered to the boating community when decisions are made that effect them.	The responder will be made aware of our eConsult portal.
A statutory consultation meeting of residents in a local hall upon sensitive issues.	Our principle of Flexibilityrequires that we evaluate each of our consultation events and ensure that the most appropriate form of engagement is followed, and for sensitive issues we do convene meetings for locally impacted residents.
A provision for all resident-based groups within Oxford to meet together, say twice a year, so that we can share our thoughts, observations, and concerns. I note the availability of social media, but this something not everyone has access to.	This is an interesting idea, but not in our plans. A smaller scale alternative would be to invite your local councillor to a residents' group meeting.

<p>A key to effective consultation is outcomes. Local residents, myself included, often feel our participation was in vain as comments appear to be ignored, glossed over or paid lip service to, at best. I appreciate not all comments and suggestions can be accommodated, but evidence of some modification to plans / policies based on local opinion would be a big boost.</p>	<p>This is a recurring theme throughout this consultation, and one which we are taking very specific action to address. In addition to our new principle of Feedback, we now have a performance measure that holds officers to account for publishing results of consultations.</p>
<p>A dedicated group for people with disabilities</p>	<p>This is an interesting idea, it is not in our current plans, but will be explored as part of next year's plan development.</p>
<p>I will describe this in more detail in a separate e-mail, as there is so much Oxford could do to catch up with Bristol, Bonn, Bremen, Porto Alegre, Milan, New England town meetings and other leading exponents of e-democracy, citizen participation and citizen control.</p>	<p>Thanks</p>

Part 2 Feedback received via email

1. From David Newman and the Oxfordshire Green Party

David Newman
Oxfordshire Green Party
81B Donnington Bridge Road
Oxford OX4 4BA

Tel. 01865 429750, 077707 35474
<drdrnewman@gmail.com>

Oxford City Council
St. Aldates
Oxford OX1 1BX

31 Mar. 2014

Draft Community Engagement plan

I am responding to your consultation on the Draft Community Engagement plan on behalf of the Oxfordshire Green Party. The Green Councillors group have asked me, as an expert on e-participation, to write this response.

Since moving to Oxford 2 years ago, I have been disappointed in the gap between the way public consultations are carried out here, and best national and international practice.

5. Principles of community engagement

Since the first question in your online questionnaire asks about the principles on p. 5-6, I will first respond to those. The list of principles is good, but could be extended. Categories reflecting sets of values on which professionals judge public consultations are listed at <http://www.e-consultation.org/Theory> and explained in Value Conflicts in e-Participation (Newman, 2006). The categories found were:

- A) Honesty and transparency
- B) Facilitation (of process)
- C) Citizen participation in decision-making
- D) Structure (of activities)
- E) Impact
- F) Stakeholders/participants involvement
- G) Feedback
- H) Relevance (to problem or people)
- I) Preparation
- J) Support for constitutional goals
- K) Feasibility and sustainability
- L) Fidelity
- M) Security

□

Some of these evaluation categories concern the processes of consultation, that will form part of the forthcoming action plan. However, there are principles not listed in the Draft Community Engagement Plan.

⑩ Honesty is joined with transparency, making sure that there is no manipulation of the process or outcome (e.g. when an apparently objective reason is given to justify a politically biased choice).

⑩ The constitutional goals include democratic ones, aimed at reversing declining democratic participation. With turnouts of 30% in local elections, and small responses to consultations, this is an important goal. But increasing democracy does not appear to be an aim of Oxford City Council, at least in this document.

⑩ Citizen participation in decision-making is a very important criterion for both consultees and researchers in public participation. Yet it is explicitly excluded in the context of these principles.

The argument that the Council operates within the context of a representative democracy is spurious. There is a long tradition of citizen involvement in local government through consultation and partnership processes, separate from the representative role of councillors. We do not have to choose just between representative and direct democracy. The literature on democratic theories and practice includes many other alternative ways of achieving democratic governance, such as deliberative democracy, and networked governance (where decisions emerge from interactions between stakeholders). (J. Morison & Newman, 2001; John Morison, 2004).

Citizen engagement requires the sharing of power. It is limited sharing, but it still means that neither councillors nor officials, let alone the Cabinet, can make all decisions on their own. If there is no way for citizens to at least influence or modify decisions, then there will be no participation. The best consultations as reported by our focus groups of consultees in the north and south of Ireland (Fagan, Newman, McCusker, & Murray, 2006)□,

'... giving people a voice, better decision making, more informed decision making. More I suppose... a sense of participation and control over their own lives and things that are important for them, you know? That's the theory of why we need to do it...'

□It is the control over your own lives that drives deep engagement, with good feedback as a minimum to get any engagement. From the perspective of the consulters, it is this deep engagement that reveals the experiential knowledge needed to make better-informed decisions. It is a common complaint of officials that they do not have enough relevant information to make decisions that avoid unanticipated consequences. Yet to transfer knowledge from of a mother taking her children to school to a Permanent Secretary requires the consulter to humble himself before her practical knowledge. In knowledge management terms, perceived status is a barrier to knowledge transfer.

Yet in Oxford, citizen and community input has often been ignored. Take for example the large numbers of people who have signed petitions to save Temple Cowley Pools. Each time, the petitions have been rejected by a whipped vote of councillors. There has not even been the reasoned justification that official bodies give when rejecting the recommendations of citizens' juries. Raw power has over-ridden reasoned argument. In the past there are many occasions when council leaders have not shown a willingness to learn (principle 7) or a commitment to make a genuine attempt to understand and incorporate other opinions even when they conflict with the existing point of view (principle 1).

We welcome the principles listed in this document, but not the context which can hinder their honest application in community engagement.

Based on the broader feedback, presented in Part 1 above, the Community Engagement Plan has been restructured and renamed. This is because many of the comments alluded to way that the City Council engages local residents in decision making, and as a result the principles of community engagement have come to the fore... they will drive the way that we

manage our community engagement. To strengthen this focus the number of principles was, in fact, reduced.

While recognising that it is highly desirable, it is not a specific aim of the Community Engagement Policy Statement to increase democratic participation. That said, our principle of Accessibility and Inclusiveness is aimed at ensuring that as broad a group as possible of residents are made aware of, and are invited to participate in decision making. We are exploring the use of social media and new technologies as ways of achieving that.

6. Methods of community engagement

The ladder of participation model is a shortened form of Arnstein's ladder.

8	Citizen Control	Degree of citizen power
7	Delegated Power	
6	Partnership	
5	Placation	Degree of tokenism
4	Consultation	
3	Informing	
2	Therapy	Non-participation
1	Manipulation	
0	Coercion	

Note that consultation is a degree of tokenism, not of citizen power. It is important that Oxford City does not limit itself to the lower levels of this ladder, but devolve power on local issues to local citizens, just as it would like central Government to devolve more power to the council.

We agree, as stated on p. 7, that effective engagement means identifying the kinds of participant (not audience) that need to be involved at each stage of the process on any given issue. However, the consult stage starts too late in the process. It is possible to consult people before any analyses, alternatives or decisions are made. In particular, it is possible to find out what people's needs are, and what problems they want the council to help them solve. In other words, public participation in agenda setting. See http://www.e-consultation.org/guide/index.php/Technology_matching_for_E-consultation. (J. Morison & Newman, 2001) and http://www.e-consultation.org/guide/index.php/Technology_classification (D. Newman et al., 2007). These show how far thinking on participation has advanced since David Wilcox's 1994 guide.

During consultation it was recognised that the Ladder of Participation was not an appropriate metaphor for the Council's aspirations for Community Engagement, and that we should take a flexible ("horses for courses") approach to consultation - this is reflected in our new Flexibility principle. New methods of engagement have been added to the Toolkit, including Co-Production, Participatory budgeting and alternate reality games.

Our principle of Transparency aims to ensure that consultation takes place before decisions are made.

7. Inform

There are ways community groups can make use of council data to answer their own questions, so it is important to make as much council data openly available for manipulation by computer programs (using RDF on the semantic web, not PDFs).

Agreed. This currently managed through our Social Research Officer and the Statistics About Oxford website
http://oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decC/Statistics_about_Oxford_occw.htm

8. Research

It is important to make good use of research in decision-making. So we agree wholeheartedly with the importance of the two kinds of research mentioned here. Add to that the usefulness of community involvement in this research, by supporting research collaborations with community groups, and school and university students.

9. Consult

As mentioned above, consultation can start much earlier, in agenda setting, not just as a final rubber stamp to approve or reject fully formed plans. Indeed, some of the most interesting forms of consultation involve community design, as happens in participatory mapping sessions in developing countries, or some neighbourhood planning forums, where people gather to make maps showing current usage of land, and possible new uses.

Although Oxford City Council has a well-established consultation process, it is rather traditional, and falls short of the state of the art of Bristol City Council, Bonn and Bremen in Germany, participative budgeting in Porto Alegre, the use of online discussion forums to bring people from neighbouring municipalities together around Milan, or many of the practices discussed in the annual e-democracy conferences in Austria or even Prescott's Local E-Democracy project.

When Bristol City consults on parks, it gives people the chance to be a park warden for a day. Councillor Sam Hollick ran a participatory budgeting exercise, asking Holywell residents to decide on how to distribute his allocated small project budget. New York

The Community Engagement Policy Statement presents a high-level overview of the Council's consultation process. It should be noted that all projects start with data gathering and gathering the opinions of stakeholders, using a range of methods, and again we have a variety of approaches to consultation as described in the Consultation Toolkit. That said, we are grateful for the suggestions provided above!

10. Collaborate

Since the analysis of problems, the development of alternative options, and the ranking of solutions are part of any decision-making process, or indeed, of all learning processes (David R Newman, Johnson, Webb, & Cochrane, 1997), it is disingenuous to say these are not decision-making forums. The point is to make the most effective use of collaborations and partnerships in different stages of decision-making processes: and then to not ignore all this work when the final formal decision is made. We need decisions based on data, information and knowledge, not raw power.

The Area Forums could be a great opportunity for citizen design of locally appropriate solutions, rather than sticking to one size fits all models across the city. But they will not deeply engage citizen participation (both in number and time), until they have devolved powers to make and implement decisions on local issues. And it is notable that many Area Forums hardly ever meet, despite the claim that the council provides an area support officer to organise and publicise meetings.

There was a local model that worked, that of Area Committees, with devolved power to make decisions on local issues. A serious commitment to community engagement requires and equally serious commitment to community decision-making power over the issues that affect them locally.

A community partnership could do more than an area forum, but here there are two problems to overcome:

1. To involve a diverse range of groups within the area, rather just those friendliest to the council. The lists of groups represented look rather like "the usual suspects".
2. Areas of greatest need may be large, like the ones identified, or pockets of deprivation inside areas that on average are in less need. Community partnerships need to be set up to deal with these pockets of deprivation.

There is not much resident involvement so far. When tenants representatives criticised the council, they were replaced by people who never criticise the council. Community Associations are in dispute

with the Council, as they have been offered tenancy agreements with so many conditions they could easily lose their premises. There is a pattern of the Council acting as the master of Oxford, dictating terms, not humbly serving their masters, the people of Oxford. Collaboration needs to be as equals with the powerless, not just with the powerful in the Oxford Strategic Partnership.

We agree that there is a need to involve stakeholders and impacted residents in different stages of the decision-making process. The options that the dialogue generates and the feedback on those options is provided to the ultimate decision makers.

11. Empower

This part of the document has too many limitations, as if the Council wants to avoid any empowerment of citizens. Contrast that to New York City, who invited in America Speaks to organise a meeting of 6000 New Yorkers to decide on what to do with the Twin Towers site. There were 600 tables of 10 people, all having facilitated conversations, with their points fed by computer to a team of who picked out common ideas and positions, which all the tables then voted on. By the end, they knew that the people of New York wanted new tall skyscrapers, so they changed the city plans for the site.

There are lots of benefits for localising power. This plan should not try to prevent that, but instead take risks, do trials, and evaluate the results.

The Council recognises the value of people being involved in decisions that directly affect their lives. In August 2014, training on Coproduction was trialled. This method of consultation will be added to the Consultation Toolkit with links to training materials.

12. Next steps

One important next step is for Oxford City Council to become a corporate member of the Consultation Institute, and then send the top officers, and the Executive on courses to learn about the benefits of effective participation.

The two Consultation Officers are members of the Consultation Institute, and we are working with Finance to get budget in place for corporate membership.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. David Newman

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2. Email submission from Oxford Civic Society.

January 2014

Response to the Draft Community Engagement Plan 2014-2017

Overall comments

Thank you for inviting the Oxford Civic Society to comment on the Draft Community Engagement Plan 2014-2017.

The overall message that we glean from this report is 'more of the same'. We presume, therefore, that there is no ambition to change or develop engagement processes, and it is considered there is limited need to improve them. Is this the unstated intent? We recognise that local authorities are under severe financial constraints, but nevertheless we would expect to see statements about the 'direction of travel'.

The draft plan is structured around the widely accepted 'ladder of participation' model; inform, research, consult, collaborate, empower. Picking up key points on some of these 'rungs':

- We are pleased to note that some weaknesses in **consultation** processes are recognised – specifically inclusiveness and accessibility to the consultation process and a need to improve consultation feedback. It is not stated how this will be done (although the document states in Section 1 that this is a how rather than a what plan).
- **Collaboration**, in our opinion, is the 'rung' where greatest returns can be made. Indeed we suspect this is also the view of the authors of this plan, as most 'column inches' are devoted to the topic. We are very surprised not to see more information on the future of Neighbourhood Partnerships and Neighbourhood Planning. We develop this point below.
- We do suspect there are more opportunities for **empowerment** if there is the will. We recognise this is not easy, and often not appropriate for democratic and accountability reasons. But, there is clearly no (political) intent to devolve decision making below the City level. We agree that decisions must be made by properly representative bodies, but surely there is scope for some devolution to areas / wards. The old 'area committees' had certain strengths in this respect although we are not advocating a return to them as previously constituted because there were clearly weaknesses, especially in the way they handled planning applications.

There is no evidence in the document about how good or poor community engagement currently is. Have any measures been made? With respect to **consultation**, for example, we suspect many residents would say this is poor – there is cynicism that consultations are window dressings.

We note and applaud the City's ambitions for strong active communities (*Corporate Plan 2013-2017: communities that are socially cohesive and safe, and citizens who are actively engaged in pursuing their own well-being and that of their communities*). We recognise that the Draft Engagement Plan is about engagement with decision making. It does not cover the important topics of community building and mutual support between citizens. But we think a linkage between decision making and community building should

be recognised. Stronger communities will engage more with the City's decision making processes. Building stronger communities and supporting community engagement in decision making are mutually supportive.

We also note that planning consultations are not included in this paper, as the subject is covered elsewhere. We suggest the process for planning consultations should at the very least be recognised in the engagement plan as we suspect the public's poor regard to planning consultations reflects badly on all attempts by the City Council to consult, however well they are carried out.

Specific comments

Section 1 (Executive summary)

We note it is the intent of the Community Engagement Plan to set out how engagement will be done. We consider that the document will be strengthened if it incorporates more 'how' actions.

Section 4 (Understanding our communities)

We note that in areas of deprivation the capacity for community involvement is lower than in more affluent areas. This is clearly true. The document states that it contains a plan for how Oxford City Council will address this imbalance. We are not convinced this is adequately covered.

Section 5 (Principles of community engagement)

We note the nine 'principles underpinning community engagement'. Points 5 and 6 (accountability and responsiveness) are particularly important. We suspect residents have a poor view about the Council's performance here. We urge that the plan includes some actions to improve these processes.

Section 7 (Inform)

We are puzzled about the statement 'informing residents is also achieved through Neighbourhood Forums'. We have seen no evidence of the City engaging with Neighbourhood Forums to do this (assuming this is referring to Neighbourhood Forums as set up under the Localism Act).

Section 9 (Consult)

We are pleased to note that the City recognises the need to improve inclusiveness and accessibility (paragraph 6), and accountability and responsiveness (paragraph 7). There are no statements about how this will be achieved.

Section 10.1 (Collaborate – Area Forums)

Area Forums are not successful. There seems to be recognition that this is the case, but no stated intent to improve them. We understand a review of Area Forums was carried out about two years ago. Was a report published?

Section 10.2 and 10.6 (Collaborate – Community Partnerships and Neighbourhood Plans)

We applaud the City's work in developing Community Partnerships. They seem to be showing some successes.

In comparison, the section on Neighbourhood Planning is very bland. It gives no indication of how they might be embraced, or indeed any willingness to embrace them. And we are puzzled by the statement the 'Council's preference is to start with Community Planning'. What is meant by that? The phrase 'Community Planning' is not defined.

There is no mention of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). We suggest the document should contain statements about how CIL will support community engagement and

community empowerment. Indeed, the relationship of CIL policy to both Community Partnerships and Neighbourhood Forums could helpfully be developed.

The impact of the Localism Act on community engagement structures and processes is omitted from the plan, although surely it is of relevance (and is likely to continue to be of relevance after the next general election, whichever colour of government is in power). An LGiU policy briefing (January 2014) is timely in this respect. See extract below.

Section 10.7 (*Collaborate – Oxford Strategic Partnership*)

We note there is recognition that there are weaknesses in the OSP process. But the document contains highly generalised statements about what will be done to address the weaknesses.

Section 11 (*Empower*)

As previously stated, we agree that empowering people at community level is not easy and is often not appropriate, but we would like to see an intent to devolve some powers to Councillor-led bodies at a local area level and a consideration of how more powers might be devolved to community groups and other agencies.

We note there is no mention of Parishes. We assume the Council does not support the concept of creating more city parishes, although they do provide an element of local area empowerment. We think this is a subject worth exploring.

We also note (and this surely is not contentious) that there is no mention of helping communities help themselves. Perhaps this is not seen as being of relevance to decision making.

Section 12 (*Next Steps*)

This section of the plan could usefully be strengthened and clarified. For example, we are unclear what is meant by a 'system for evaluating community engagement activities'.

Recommendations

The following provides some ideas about how, in our view, the document might be developed. This is largely a distillation of the comments made above.

1. More detail would be helpful about how community engagement will be done.
2. There should be some recognition of the importance of planning consultations and the development of active communities.
3. Something should be said on how accountability and responsiveness (5.5 and 5.6) will be improved.
4. There should be recognition of the value of communities helping themselves, and how this will be encouraged.
5. Devolution of powers to area / ward level should be considered.
6. There should be a recognition of the relevance of CIL to community engagement.
7. There is scope for developing area structures across the city, building on the Community Partnerships and Neighbourhood Forums already in place. This might enable a greater degree of local collaboration and even empowerment. It would have implications on the workings of the area forums, perhaps replacing them, and the role of councillors as decision makers. (See LGiU paper)
8. The statement on 'next steps' should be clearer and measurable.

Richard Bradley (on behalf of the Oxford Civic Society)
01865 762418 | 07802 215517

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your comments in response to our consultation on the Community Engagement Plan and for the LGiU Policy Briefing. I just wanted to briefly respond to your comments and let you know about changes made to the Plan following consultation. If you have further questions please contact me

Following consultation three main changes have been made to the Community Engagement Plan: it has been restructured and renamed, and the principles have been redefined

1. Restructure

The revised version has been restructured around the principles of engagement. Feedback supported the principles of engagement and highlighted areas for improvement which have been aligned to the principles. This structure will help us to more rigorously apply our principles to community engagement.

The Ladder of Participation helped in the preparation of the draft Plan and it is used to analyse consultations and other community engagement activities on an on-going basis. However, it was not a useful metaphor for the Council's community engagement ambition...we do not aim to be operating on the top 'rung' of the Ladder; rather we aim to utilise the most appropriate method of engagement according to the situation. This is the essence of our new principle of "Flexibility". In support of this, new collaborative engagement techniques (such as co-production, participatory budgeting) are being added to the Consultation Toolkit.

The consultation feedback had many comments related to planning. As the local planning authority Oxford City Council is required to have a Statement of Community Involvement (CSI), which covers the detail of Neighbourhood Planning, CIL and the management of planning applications, to mention a few of your concerns. The CSI is currently being updated and will be out for public feedback later this year. In the meanwhile I have passed all related comments to the officer in charge of the CSI review, and endeavour to ensure that the points raised are covered.

2. Redefinition of the principles

Following the decision to structure the revised Plan around the principles, we made sure that they were "fit for purpose". They have been reduced in number (so that adhering to the principles is more manageable), redefined (there were fuzzy lines between some of them), and new ones added (following national guidelines and in support of the overall plan).

As an example of how the redefined principles are being used, all public involvement activities are being assessed for compliance with the principles. In response to a recurring theme we have introduced a new service area

performance measure - it holds us to account for the timely publication of consultation results and action plans.

3. Re-name

Based upon feedback and the decision to elevate the importance of the principles, the Plan has been re-named the Community Engagement Policy Statement. As you pointed out it does not set out an ambition or direction of travel for community engagement - which might be expected of a plan – rather it sets out our principles of community engagement.

That said, we do recognise the need to make improvements and will use the principles as the driving force – as mentioned briefly above we are now measuring our ability to publish consultation results within two months of the closing date, and I hope that this measure is just the first step on the road to measuring, setting targets and improving.

Where next for neighbourhood planning and management – opportunities and challenges for local government

7 January 2014

Selected extracts:

What is our 'vision and values' for community and neighbourhood planning and management in our area? There are a number of 'models' that might be important in this process – for instance:-

- community and neighbourhood empowerment as democratic and governance-related processes – e.g. through encouraging town and parish councils; or area/local committees and assemblies with a democratic mandate/accountability;
- community and neighbourhood empowerment as a service model – either commissioning and/or providing some specific local services;
- community and neighbourhood empowerment as an influencing model – through advocacy, mobilisation, processes like neighbourhood planning, but with other bodies beyond the council;
- mixed models of the above plus other roles and functions

How do local solutions and initiatives fit in with wider council and partner structures and processes – and are there any knock-on consequences of adopting different solutions in different local areas (e.g. for neighbouring communities)?

Whilst it makes sense for the council to work through these issues/questions, systematically, they can anticipate that there will be bottom-up pressures locally, and some top-down pressures from government, that may determine how any council perspective plays out in practice.

Lessons from NCBs and neighbourhood planning to date have tended to confirm the questions above as relevant and reasonable. More generally, though, neighbourhood planning and management are long-run processes. These processes have been shown to deliver significant benefits in local involvement and ownership, and can often produce valuable ideas for local improvement. However, they require considerable upfront investment (e.g. in evidence gathering, consultation, capacity building, business case formulation, and negotiation).

However, were an integrated approach to be pursued (and if it could be resourced), at one extreme, this most local of devolution might provide a particularly 'close to home' mirror on fundamental issues raised by localism and centralism – postcode lotteries, exclusive and inclusive character of communities, 'NIMBY charters' etc. For instance, it is noteworthy for neighbourhood planning, that only six areas have been designated across the twenty most deprived LA areas, with 15 of the 20 having NO neighbourhood planning activity. For the twenty least deprived LAs, there have been 49 designations, and only six LAs with no activity.

In conclusion, all local authorities are likely to have to engage actively in major neighbourhood planning and management exercises over 2014/15 and beyond.

For full document see <http://www.lgiu.org.uk/briefing/where-next-for-neighbourhood-planning-and-management-opportunities-and-challenges-for-local-government-2/>

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