

To: City Executive Board

Date: 12 March 2014

Report of: The Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Community Engagement Plan - Consultation

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To report the comments and recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee on the Draft Community Engagement Plan.

Key decision: No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Mills

Executive Lead Member: Councillor Curran

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan, Strong Active Communities

Recommendation(s): For the City Executive Board to say if it agrees or disagrees with the following recommendation.

Recommendation 1

To provide a clear statement in the Plan, supported by guidance to services, of the need for all engagement to link in order to deliver the overall aims of the Community Engagement Plan.

Recommendation 2

To ensure that the guidance and Tool Kit are fit for purpose for the many diverse groups the Council is seeking to engage with.

Recommendation 3

To consider in the Community Engagement Plan the role played by councillors, how this is supported through advice and training and is linked into democratic processes.

Recommendation 4

In order to improve engagement in the consultation process of this document to include:

- A simple questionnaire built around the main areas of consideration.
- Examples of good and poor engagement activities.

Recommendation 5

To emphasis and give more weight in the Plan to looking for and encouraging engagement at a very local level to ensure communities can help shape decisions and issues that matter to them.

Recommendation 6

To recognise within the Plan and Tool Kit the importance of defining what might constitute a Hard to Reach Group as broadly as possible and on a case by case basis.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee considered the draft proposals for the Community Engagement Plan. They were supported in their debate by Peter McQuitty, Angela Cristofoli and Councillor Curran the Committee would like to thank them for their time and advice.
2. The Committee also considered the Council's use of Social Media, supported by Councillor Brett, and decided to take further more focused advice on this at a later stage. The Committee agreed that the Plan was well drafted and made a number of comments and recommendations for the City Executive Board to consider as part of the consultation process.

Conclusions and Recommendation

3. The Committee discussed the exclusions from the Plan outlined in the introduction. Whilst accepting that the Plan cannot include all specific models it is important that all actions we take are linked in an effort to deliver on the key aims of the Plan. This is particularly important for those groups that are hard to reach or marginalised in order to improve channels of communication and engagement and share knowledge. More specifically the Committee believe that all "Groups" in Oxford need to see in this document a place for themselves so the "Tool Kit" for delivery needs to be fit for purpose for all.

Recommendation 1

To provide a clear statement in the Plan, supported by guidance to services, of the need for all engagement to link in order to deliver the overall aims of the Community Engagement Plan.

Recommendation 2

To ensure that the guidance and Tool Kit are fit for purpose for the many diverse groups the Council is seeking to engage with.

4. Committee raised the agreed recommendations within the Scrutiny Area Forum report of 2012. Two of the recommendations agreed

related to community engagement and the councillor's role in this. In particular the report argued 2 issues of relevance:

- The need for a discussion with councillors on the role they play in community engagement and development and the support, training and guidance that might be needed for success.
 - The importance of linking Area Forum Structures into the democratic/decision making structures of the Council.
5. The Committee felt that this important role played by Councillors and the communities they represent is not represented in the Plan or accompanying documents and should be.

Recommendation 3

To consider in the Community Engagement Plan the role played by councillors, how this is supported through advice and training and is linked into democratic processes.

6. The consultation process for the Community Engagement Plan is important given the nature of its aims. The Committee wanted to see additions to content to make the document more accessible.

Recommendation 4

In order to improve engagement in the consultation process of this document to include:

- **A simple questionnaire built around the main areas of consideration.**
 - **Examples of good and poor engagement activities.**
7. The importance of engaging at a very local level was discussed in particular the need to be sure that out-reach and community capacity building work captures and provides for as wide a range of influence as possible. This needs to be given more weight in this Plan.

Recommendation 5

To emphasis and give more weight in the Plan to looking for and encouraging engagement at a very local level to ensure communities can help shape decisions and issues that matter to them.

8. Throughout the discussion the term "hard to reach groups" was used. The Committee wanted to be sure that this term was considered as widely as possible within the planning for engagement exercises and captured those groups who found it difficult to engage for reasons other than their age or ethnicity.

Recommendation 6

To recognise within the Plan and Tool Kit the importance of defining what might constitute a Hard to Reach Group as broadly as possible and on a case by case basis.

Comments from the Director and Board Member

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List of background papers: None