



Listening to the 'Word on the Street'

A PLAN FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

2011-2014

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Foreword

Listening to ‘the word on the street’ is vital to our work as a Council. As a ward councillor, I talk every day with residents and businesses about the things that concern them and I make sure that we learn from what people tell us, making changes in response to those concerns.

It’s not just listening – it’s by involving local people in making the decisions and shaping the services they care about, that we achieve the best results.

It’s true that we can’t always do everything that people want, but we are committed to being open and honest– when we can’t do something, we’ll say so, and explain why.

We can always learn and improve on what we’re doing – which is why I welcome this strategy. This is an opportunity both to re-state our commitment as a Council to involving local people, and to set out what we’re doing to keep getting better at it.

I look forward to continuing to work hard alongside local residents and businesses to achieve our priority of Building a better life for all.



Cllr Jeanne Alexander

Cabinet Member for Crime, Justice and Communities

Introduction

Community Engagement and Empowerment in 2011

We've worked hard in Barking and Dagenham to enable residents and businesses to have their say in making Barking and Dagenham a better place to live and shaping how public services are delivered.

This isn't a new approach – we've done it for years. The previous Government placed great emphasis on helping citizens to get involved when they want to, on their own terms, with the aim of generating vibrant local democracy in every part of the country, and giving real control over local decisions and services to a wider pool of active citizens.

As the council and its partners move into tight financial times along with the rest of the country, the need for the local community to have a voice in how services are delivered and run, which services are reduced or expanded, will be more important than ever before. There is also scope for residents to play a greater part in the management of some services and in decisions about their local communities.

We will support local councillors to build on their role as community leaders to work with service providers and residents to address local issues and make decisions about local priorities.

There are other good reasons to ensure that we work closely with our communities. The Council has for some time encouraged greater volunteering and community ownership of community assets, council ownership and service delivery. With more people being actively involved in contributing their own time, effort and expertise, and having greater control over local decisions and resources, there is the potential to achieve greater value for money decisions.

Whilst good work has started to make data more transparent and available to the local community, we recognise the importance of transparent decision making processes for residents and communities in order to build trust. We will do this by having honest conversations with local people from the outset and setting clear objectives for our work to consult, engage and empower local people.

Through the accountability of elected Members, and transparent, honest conversations with our community, residents and businesses will be able to see clearly what we do, how we do it, how much it costs, how effective it is, and how it relates to the views and priorities that local people have expressed.

The Local Context

Barking and Dagenham is on the edge of one of the most prosperous regions in Europe, but contains some of the most deprived communities in the country. Improving opportunities for local residents and businesses to tap into the prosperity on their doorstep by developing the skills of our residents is a top priority.

Our vision for the borough is **building a better life for all** with the key aims of:

- Raising household incomes
- School and post-16 education
- Housing and estate renewal

Increasing household incomes is a key priority for the borough, and involves, among other things, working with schools to increase aspirations in those young people not in formal education, training or employment. To do this, we will build on Barking and Dagenham's excellent record of engaging with young people in innovative ways by opening up communication channels with young people to ensure that services have a sound understanding of young people's views. We will seek to build on this good practice to engage with adults to help them develop their skills and find work.

Affordable housing is a key concern for local residents. The borough has some of the largest undeveloped sites remaining in London and, therefore, the use of these sites to build new sustainable communities is central to the vision of expanding housing supply. It is also essential that an on-going and robust conversation with local residents ensures that measures to regenerate areas of the borough do not result in the feeling that regeneration is 'done to' people in those areas, but rather 'done with'.

Health inequalities are substantial in Barking & Dagenham, with higher levels of obesity, smoking, poor diet and low exercise, which lead to a range of linked health conditions. Changing behaviours relating to poor health can only be achieved through close engagement with local residents.

Residents tell us that crime and the fear of crime are significant concerns, which drive our focus on the most frequent types of crime, anti-social behaviour and their causes. In tackling anti-social behaviour, we use a range of engagement techniques, involving victims, perpetrators and the wider community.

Local residents rightly want a borough they can be proud of, and are vocal about environmental issues, such as littering, graffiti and untidy gardens. By involving people in the solutions to these issues, we can build community pride and ensure that results last for the long term. Neither public nor the Council can 'fix' these things working alone; a solution that is jointly produced is essential.

Barking and Dagenham has low levels of literacy, skills and confidence which makes the task of increasing engagement and empowerment in the borough a challenging one. To add to this, there is a weaker history of participation and community activism than in many other boroughs, which is why it is so important for us to listen to what local people tell us matters most to them and to make them part of the solution. By doing this, we hope develop long term answers and deepen our relationship with the community based on trust.

To achieve the vision of, 'building a better life for all' we will engage in the following ways:

Listen to what our communities are telling us, using the full range of sources at our disposal and not relying on formal engagement exercises only. For example, we will be

running a refresh of the Place Survey in 2011, which will ask residents specific questions about what feels and looks like to live in Barking and Dagenham. We will also use our Facebook page, complaints, and information from frontline staff to take the temperature of what the word on the street is and use this intelligence to inform communication campaigns and service development.

Involve our community in issues that we anticipate may be relevant, such as national policy changes that might affect them locally, or through involving them in local decision making. We will ensure there is an overview of all consultation that happens across the council to avoid duplication and present a coordinated approach where possible to the community. We will seek to achieve this across the Local Strategic Partnership also.

Be responsive and honest. It is important that as a council we show local people that we have heard them through feeding back to people when they tell us something (regardless of the channel they use to do so). We will do this even if we don't have the resources to fulfil specific aspirations, or the answers that people want to hear.

Target specific groups of people through the use of customer insight information where it is appropriate to discuss relevant issues and in doing so make the most effective use of our resources.

Where We Are Now

In March 2010, the IDeA offered London boroughs the opportunity to take part in a self assessment workshop to help identify strengths and areas for improvement in their engagement approaches and partnership working.

The workshop, which involved participants from across the Local Strategic Partnership, identified that there is much engagement work going on in the borough, and there were some good opportunities to be seized, such as a new cohort of Members post-election, and joint working across the Partnership.

Below is a summary of the key areas identified for improvement in Barking and Dagenham:

1. Members need to be supported to take their role as community leaders.
2. The Local Strategic Partnership needs to be able to share information and analysis more openly between organisations than current processes allow in order to increase collaboration. They also need to explore opportunities for greater collaboration between sectors.
3. Current communication and engagement methods need revisiting and need to be more tailored to individual events / issues (e.g. the use of participatory budgeting and co-design approaches).
4. Ensure that the results of each consultation event are communicated across the Council and wider Partnership.
5. There needs to be a more transparent approach to local decision making to foster trust between the community, Council and Partners. The Partnership needs to work

with the voluntary sector better and increase the understanding of what each other's priorities and objectives are.

6. There is a need to increase the Partnership's understanding of what 'empowerment' and 'engagement' mean, so that a collaborative approach to achieving both can be taken forward.
7. There is a need to increase the focus of senior managers on the importance of engaging and empowering communities.
8. There is a need to seek out ways of better engaging harder to reach groups in Barking and Dagenham.
9. The Council and its Partners need to collaborate with the community to enhance the trust that residents have in them.
10. The Partnership needs to set clear objectives from the outset in relation to engagement and empowerment, so it can work together to achieve joint outcomes.

Through the actions set out later in this document, this strategy aims to put mechanisms in place to address the areas above. In addition, new opportunities and challenges have arisen since March 2010 which this strategy aims to address.

Customer Insight data

Engaging with the public directly on questions about local services and issues is only one way in which we understand the types of services that are important to local people. In addition, we also have data based on interactions between customers and our services which come in a number of forms:

- Members Casework and Complaints data, when we haven't got something right and the customer has made a complaint which we have investigated;
- Access data, detailing the numbers of people who have walked through our door, contacted us online or called our Contact Centre;
- Experian MOSAIC, which provides a system of segmentation of our residents, detailing their preferences and the sorts of services that they do – or may be expected to – access.

Ensuring that information from community engagement and empowerment is linked to analysis of customer insight data is critical if we are to build a sophisticated picture of the services that people want, need and value. We can then use this information when we make commissioning decisions – for example, in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and in the Crime and Disorder Assessment.

In 2008, the Council commissioned research to inform the Council's approach to communicating with its residents. This provided a wealth of information about the ways in which people 'hear' and understand messages about the Council and its services. In particular, it highlighted the extent to which people trusted messages from their established social networks, and that they valued face-to-face interaction over printed

media. This research continues to inform the Council's approach and will support the approaches described in this strategy.

What People Have Already Told Us: a Summary

Our last Place Survey carried out in 2009/10 told us that the people of Barking and Dagenham see the following issues of greatest concern to them:

- The level of crime
- Clean streets
- Health services
- Affordable decent housing
- Public transport
- Activities for teenagers
- Road maintenance
- Job prospects
- Not feeling part of a community

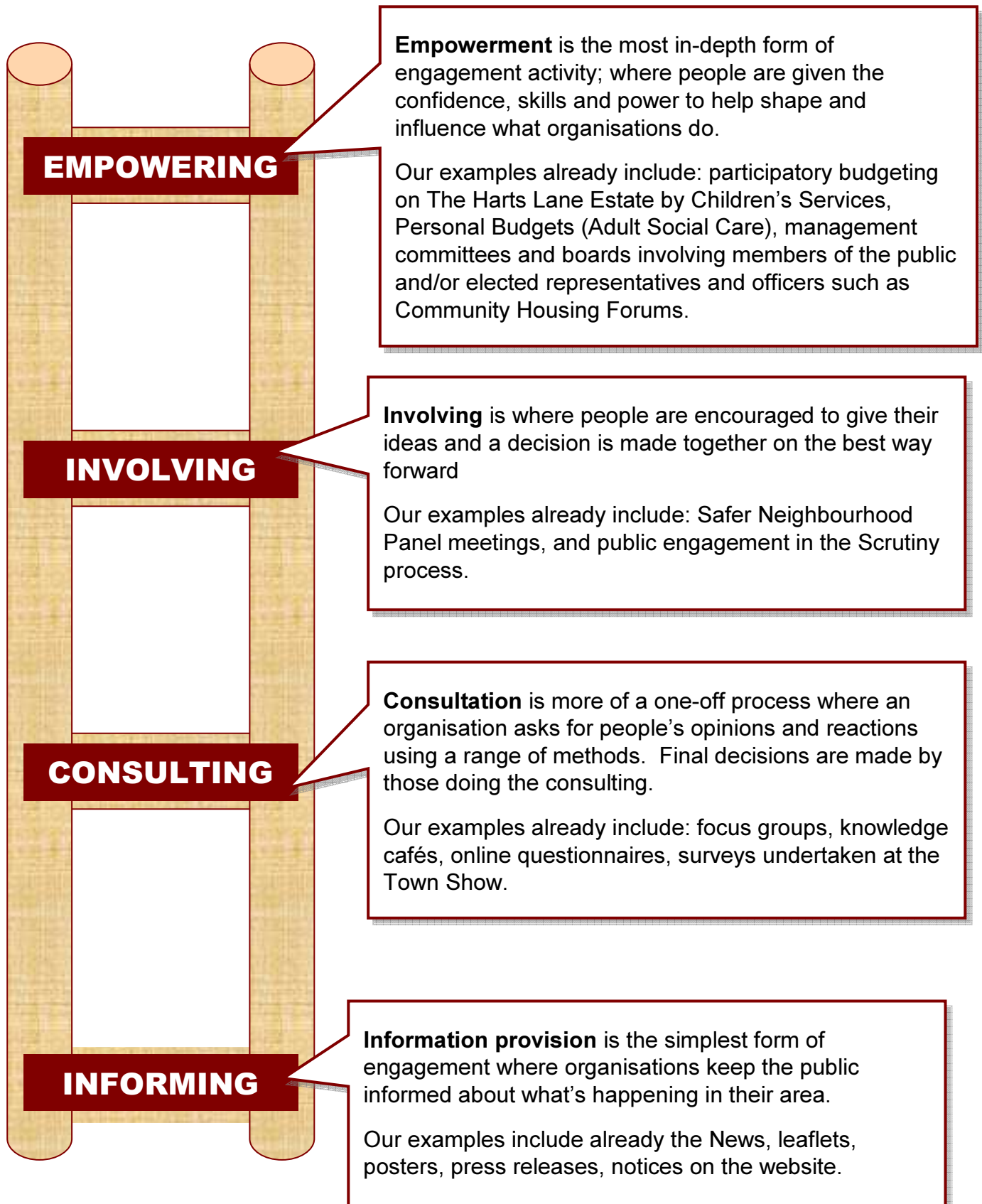
We are also able to measure engagement and empowerment from the Place Survey, which showed that in 2009/10 Barking and Dagenham was above the London and the national average for residents feeling involved in local decision making and services.

Degrees of Engagement

We want to work with local people to create opportunities for deeper involvement: and encourage them to engage at the best level for them of the 'Ladder of Engagement' shown overleaf. There is a range of ways in which communities can become more empowered:

- By being more actively involved in democratic processes and working more collaboratively with elected Members;
- By more effective engagement as service users, and building their level of control over the decisions that affect them, or even setting up the services that they want, jointly with professionals;
- By taking a more active part in the controlling structures of organisations, or delivering services that public sector agencies currently operate;
- By taking direct control of resources – budgets, housing, community buildings, land and so on;
- By campaigning and direct action.

The Ladder of Engagement



Principles for Listening and Engaging

Some local people want to be regularly involved in engagement activity and other residents are less interested in ongoing or regular involvement but feel strongly that they should be given the opportunity to have a say on issues that are of particular importance to them. People are able to choose where on the 'ladder of engagement' they get involved.

Following clear principles for the way we listen to, and engage with our community will help bring about better coordination and consistency, and will let people who get involved know what to expect during and after the engagement activity or event.

The following principles set out what we will do and can also be found described in more detail in Appendix One:

1. Work in partnership with all relevant agencies to join up our engagement activities.
2. Engage to make a difference - by speaking to elected Members, citizens, customers and communities about issues that affect them
3. Be clear about what we're asking
4. Be inclusive and aim to engage with all communities – making sure that the opportunities we provide are accessible to people with different needs and developing trust through listening and doing what we say we are going to.
5. Communicate the results of engagement activities – feed back to communities to make sure people know they have been listened to
6. Build the capacity of communities to take part in engagement activities – by making the most of available communication channels to suit the type of consultation and customer group. Where possible support the community to use newer communication resources such as social media sites.
7. Ensure quality assurance and value for money in engagement

The principles set out above will be embedded within each engagement or empowerment exercise by making sure that all consultation exercises follow the steps set out in the Engagement and Empowerment toolkit.

What Do We Want to Achieve?

Our Vision

Barking and Dagenham Council recognises that we will help to build a better life for all by listening to local people to understand their priorities, and enabling people to get involved in achieving those priorities. We recognise that in challenging financial times we have to find new ways of delivering public services. We will therefore empower local residents and businesses to get involved to the extent that they wish to, and strive always to go beyond statutory requirements for consultation and involvement.

Our Aims

This strategy has three main aims, which have been developed in order to address priorities identified following a self-assessment carried out between October 2009 and February 2010.

Aim 1: Deepening our Relationship with the Public

In looking at the Ladder of Engagement on page 8, we recognise that more of our activity clusters at the lower rungs, and there is scope to increase the extent to which we empower and involve people to consistently high standards across our organisation. We will support elected members in their role as community leaders to lead this approach.

- We will refresh the Citizens' Panel and develop a forward plan for its use, so that it is more actively used and there is a stronger relationship between the Council and members of the Panel. We will then seek to develop this further with the Local Strategic Partnership;
- We have developed good relationships with a range of 'informed' and 'connected' people within our community using a community communicator approach. We will ensure a long-term future for these relationships by building the learning from this approach into other ways of engaging with our public.
- If we are to see a deepening of the relationship between the Council and the public, and greater empowerment of our local communities, then our officers need a sound understanding of the issues around empowerment and co-production and the skills to match. We will provide the competency framework and development opportunities for this.
- We will work with staff who are visible to the community in the work that they do to feedback messages, myths, and concerns that they pick up from local people 'on the street'. This will allow us to respond proactively via the most appropriate communication methods, target areas for further engagement and show local residents that they are listened to.
- We will always look for the best ways to engage with our community, using evidence based reasons and methods for communicating with them.
- We will build honest relationships with the community and partners based on trust by making sure we share information, feedback on engagement activity and be clear where we can make a difference to residents' needs and aspirations. Where we can't meet residents needs we will explain the reasons why.

Aim 2: Developing new ways of engaging and building trust with local people

The world is changing. Whilst some in our community are not regular users of computers, many more are developing their online relationships with friends and organisations through social media. The use of social media is cost-effective, and provides an unparalleled opportunity for two-way engagement on issues that matter to residents. We will develop our use and confidence in interacting in these forums.

- We will develop a presence for the Council on the major social media networks like Facebook and Twitter.
- To ensure confidence amongst officers at all levels in the use of social media, we will develop and agree a simple protocol to govern its use, with guidance on how and when to respond to posts and the best ways to develop an online presence.
- We will review our current Consultation Portal, provided by Limehouse Software, with a view to ensuring that it is either more flexible in its application, or that it is replaced by a more user-friendly and dynamic system.
- We will widen the use of other technologies such as text messaging.
- We will increase the transparency of decision making processes for residents and communities by having honest conversations from the outset and setting clear objectives for engagement activities. We will also follow the Government's guidelines on publishing data online, starting with financial transaction data.
- We will ensure that consideration is given to the cost effectiveness of engagement exercises, with appropriate thought given to the need for it to happen and ways in which residents could be targeted to use the most appropriate channels available.

Aim 3: Working better together

Engaging with the public is of limited value if what they tell us doesn't affect decision-making. We also need to ensure that we do not engage the same people repeatedly on a related set of issues because we have not shared information between directorates and partner organisations. We will get better at using the results of consultation, sharing them, and in planning future activity together.

- We will introduce mechanisms to better inform each other about the ways in which we are planning to consult and engage with people. These mechanisms will include the development of an overarching consultation plan which will be made available on the Partnership website and reported at the Engagement Officers Group.
- We will ensure that summaries and outcomes of consultation conducted by the Council are shared, with headline reports and short summaries for major exercises allowing everyone to access the findings more easily using the partnership website. We will seek to track and monitor how decisions are affected by consultation, and how the consultation we are doing relates to our overall policy framework.
- We will refresh the Community Engagement Officers' Group, with the intention of making it more of a 'living network', rather than being focused around formal meetings and sharing of information. In particular, we will develop the group's capacity to jointly deploy its limited resources in difficult economic times.

- We will continue to promote the basic principles set out in this strategy for sound engagement with the public
- We will ensure that our overarching plans and priorities are based on the views expressed by the community, so that our actions delivers the sort of borough that our residents want to see for now and the long term.

How Will this Strategy Be Monitored?

Ultimate officer responsibility will rest with the Divisional Director of Corporate Policy and Public Affairs.

Practical day-to-day implementation will be reviewed by the Community Engagement Officers' Group which comprises key individuals with engagement responsibility across the Partnership. This group is also tasked with delivering the action plan outlined in the strategy, and to ensure that the partnership reduce duplication, cost and consultation overload.

The Strategy falls within the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Crime, Justice and Communities. Of course, it has wide-ranging implications for all portfolios, but also has particular relevance for the portfolios of the Leader, Deputy Leader and Customer Services and Human Resources.

Whilst being of interest to all select committees, the Strategy will be of greatest relevance to the Safer & Stronger Communities Select Committee to whom reports on progress will be made periodically.

Our Action Plan

Aim 1: Deepening our relationship with the public

Priority	Action	Milestones	Lead
Develop the Citizens' Panel as a mechanism for listening to the community more effectively.	<p>We will do the following with the Citizens' Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify purpose • Refresh its membership • Raise awareness of the panel via Engagement Officers Group so they can use it to form focus groups • Develop a prioritised plan for the use of the Panel and use it to test what the key issues are for the borough on universal and specific levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 2011 • January 2012 • January 2012 • March 2012 	Group Manager Policy & Performance
Make it easy for people to tell us what they think	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote opportunities to discuss concerns with their Ward Members via the News • Mainstream the Community Communicator approach by supporting front line staff to feed back opinions / views they hear from the public when they are at work, and proactively responding to these issues. • Use customer insight information to understand the most effective channels of communication to use to reach and engage with residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing • October 2011 and ongoing • Ongoing 	Group Manager Marketing and Communications Group Manager Policy & Performance

Priority	Action	Milestones	Lead
<p>Be transparent to enable residents, organisations and businesses to review and challenge published information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish payments to suppliers over £500 on the website monthly • Communicate the Council's commitment to transparency and engagement: promote adoption of this strategy • Review other boroughs' activities to look for good and better practice in presentation and distribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 2010 and ongoing • October 2011 • January 2011 	<p>Director Finance & Resources</p> <p>Group Manager Policy & Performance</p>
<p>Work with and involve residents and businesses to develop solutions to issues that are important to them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share learning across the Council from the Locality Project approach to engagement using qualitative research methods like customer journey mapping and resident interviews • Identify pilots to test the use of co-production and empowerment • Undertake another Place Survey to identify what customers feel and think about living in the borough & review outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 2011 • April 2012 • November 2011 	<p>Group Manager Policy & Performance</p>
<p>Support residents to have their voice heard and exercise their democratic rights</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and promote campaigns relevant to local people's concerns and priorities and enable people to get involved- eg campaign for local health services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As appropriate 	<p>Group Manager Marketing & Communications</p>

Priority	Action	Milestones	Lead
Be responsive and honest with the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide feedback to residents on consultation and engagement activity via channels like The News, the council and Partnership website, Facebook etc. • Promote best practice in engagement across the borough: a 'you said we did' approach to engagement feedback so residents can see where their voice has made a difference; if residents needs or issues cannot be met, tell them and explain the reasons why 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing • December 2011 and ongoing 	Engagement Officers Group

Aim 2: Developing new methods for engaging

Priority	Action	Milestones	Lead
<p>Enable residents to communicate and engage using social media channels and text messaging</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a Facebook page for the Council to encourage community conversations between residents, and engagement with council services. • Develop the use of the Council's Twitter account to promote messages and announcements to the local community • Develop the use of text messaging in the council and across the partnership to facilitate community involvement and two way conversations with residents. • Support Members to use social media effectively in their role as community leaders – deliver briefing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing • November 2011 • January 2012 • December 2011 	<p>Group Manager Marketing & Communications</p>
<p>Enable officers at all levels to be confident in the use of social media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a 'Social Media Acceptable Use Policy' and communicate across the council • Work across the Partnership to develop proposals for the increased use of social media for engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 2011 • December 2011 	<p>Group Manager Marketing & Communications</p> <p>Engagement Officers Group</p>

Priority	Action	Milestones	Lead
<p>Ensure that where appropriate all consultations are available for completion online</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current Consultation Portal provided by Limehouse Software and other potential software options. • Investigate the ability of the online consultation portal to be smart phone friendly. • Ensure that Select Committees, directorates and organisations are aware of the consultation portal and use it when they run consultations. • Where customer insight data tells us that residents are likely to respond to consultations online, actively promote as a low cost engagement option for the council and Partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 2011 • January 2011 • December 2011 • December 2011 and ongoing 	<p>Group Manager Policy & Performance</p>

Aim 3: Working better together

Priority	Action	Milestones	Lead
Work with partners to co-ordinate and share consultation and engagement activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly review consultation and engagement plans with lead officers across the Partnership and facilitate co-ordination and joint working (Engagement Officers Group) • Publish and maintain a consultation forward plan on the Partnership Website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 2011 & ongoing • January 2012 	Group Manager Policy & Performance
Ensure appropriate and effective feedback of the results of consultation exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate results of major engagement and consultation activity on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership Website • Facebook Page • e-bulletin • Directly to consultees • Maintain a system for tracking and monitoring how decisions are affected by consultation and how the consultation we are doing relates to our overall Policy Framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2012 & ongoing • January 2012 & ongoing 	Group Manager Policy & Performance

Priority	Action	Milestones	Lead
Refresh the Community Engagement Officers' Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresh terms of reference and membership • Create a Engagement Officers' Forum hosted on the Partnership Website to discuss current issues/ facilitate co-ordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 2011 • February 2012 	Group Manager Policy & Performance
Ensure that the principles for listening and engaging as set out in this document are followed and embedded in every engagement and empowerment activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresh the Engagement and Empowerment 'toolkit' • Brief Engagement Officers' Group on the contents of the toolkit and encourage its usage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 2012 • March 2012 	Group Manager Policy and Performance
Empower staff across the council to feedback messages they hear from the community to relevant colleagues in the Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out through mainstreaming of community communications approach with frontline staff • Continue to deliver relevant training – include in learning & development strategy • Reinforce through internal communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2011 & ongoing • December 2011 & ongoing • Ongoing 	Divisional Director Corporate Policy & Public Affairs

Appendix One: Our Community Engagement Principles

The strategy seeks to develop and extends good practice across organisations in the partnership. We have developed a set of principles to be used in carrying out community engagement activities.

We will:

1. Work in partnership with all relevant agencies to join up our engagement activities

- Support Elected Members, the Partnership and council directorates to have a clear understanding of Barking and Dagenham's communities
- Ensure that voluntary and community organisations are effectively represented across the Partnership
- Work together to co-ordinate engagement activities and resources where possible to avoid duplication and over-engagement, and to make better use of what we already know
- Build trust between our communities and partnership agencies

2. Engage to make a difference

- Engage where there is a real opportunity for people to have an impact and influence decisions on those issues which local people care about and which have direct implications for local people
- Ensure that the outcomes of community engagement are used to plan and deliver services, strategies and policies that reflect the needs and aspirations of local communities
- Promote the principles of effective community engagement within the work of all agencies of the Partnership and ensure that engagement is carried out to a consistently high professional and ethical standard

3. Be clear about what we're asking

- Make the aim of engagement clear
- Provide clarity for local partners and local people about the opportunities there will be to shape services and what the benefits might be

- Be honest about what can and can't be achieved or influenced from the beginning
- Ensure that participants understand what they are taking part in and how their views will be used
- Ensure that there are engagement opportunities from the beginning of any process to develop policies, strategies and services
- Ensure that participants understand when consultation has finished and what will happen next

4. Be inclusive and aim to engage with all communities

- Ensure that individuals have the opportunity to express their views and know that these views will be listened to and respected
- Take into account particular needs of individuals or groups and aim to overcome any difficulties people may have in engaging, for example, following best practice in engaging with people with disabilities
- Research ways of increasing involvement with communities who are not in touch with public agencies
- Ensure that communities who are directly affected by an initiative are aware of opportunities to influence it where appropriate
- Ensure that engagement methods are accessible and appropriate to the communities or individuals who are participating, and ensure that all sections of the community have opportunity to get involved on issues that matter to them
- Liaise at an early stage in each consultation and engagement activity with the equalities fora which exist specifically to support engagement with older, young, disabled, LGBT, Faith and BAME communities
- Engage communities of interest on specific issues relevant to them

5. Communicate the results of engagement activities

- Ensure that communities are aware of the impact of their input by making sure participants receive feedback as soon as possible, and that they are told when this will be
- Ensure that communities who are affected by an initiative receive feedback on engagement activities, through a variety of channels where appropriate within six weeks of the close of the consultation period.
- Give participants the opportunity to feed back to partners on the engagement process
- Review and evaluate the engagement process and learn from it

6. Build the capacity of communities to take part in engagement activities

- Ensure that the statutory and voluntary sectors are supported to develop their skills and capacity in order to facilitate communities to engage effectively
- Establish a coordinated and consistent approach to community engagement including better use of resources and sharing information between partners
- Use engagement to strengthen partnership working to identify and solve community issues
- Recognise and build on the strengths of volunteers to encourage community cohesion, wider participation in local life and the development of new skills.

7. Ensure quality assurance and value for money in engagement.

- Evaluate the quality of community engagement activity; whether it is timely, meaningful, inclusive and accessible, appropriately targeted, relevant and delivered to a high standard.

Appendix Two: Mechanisms for Engaging

Appendix 2: Mechanisms for Engaging

The following describes how the Partnership is working to promote local democracy through its engagement mechanisms. It has focused mainly on engagement with the wider public, rather than with other stakeholders (such as RSLs, voluntary sector organisations, businesses). The majority (but not all) of these mechanisms are wholly or partially driven or maintained by the Council.

Activity	Notes
Ward councillors	All Councillors hold ward surgeries, and some are proactive in arranging ward walkabouts, meeting people where they are to discuss issues of concern.
Scrutiny Select Committees	These are a potential source of engagement, and a number of scrutiny reviews have engaged with stakeholder groups, but there is more work to be done to engage with the wider public - e.g. encouraging the involvement of residents in reviewing the quality of services, developing new policies and setting scrutiny work plans
Citizens Panel	A broadly representative sample of 1,000 residents who can be consulted and involved on strategic as well as service related issues.
Service user forums	Council directorates have all established forums to consult and inform their users, for example the Learning Disability Partnership.

<p>Survey research</p>	<p>Targeted continuous mechanisms for engagement (such as borough-wide surveys measuring and monitoring customer satisfaction with our services) are used to ensure that the views of a representative range of local people are gathered regularly to inform decision-making and to improve our 'corporate knowledge' and evidence base. This is supported by the online 'Consultation Portal', which gives all residents the chance to tell us what they think about local services by taking part online. Work is underway to explore the use of social media to help us better interact with, and respond to, the community. This includes the development of a council Facebook and Twitter page.</p>
<p>Safer Neighbourhood Meetings</p>	<p>Each ward in Barking and Dagenham has a dedicated Safer Neighbourhoods team, and a panel made up of members of the community who live or work within that ward. This panel meets regularly to discuss the concerns facing the local community around crime and anti-social behaviour, and set the priorities the local police team will tackle. Time is set aside at the beginning and end of each meeting to discuss any Council-specific issues that residents have (meetings are attended by ward councillors and 'buddy' Heads of Service). Work is underway to increase the representativeness of ward panels.</p>
<p>Staff engagement and consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trade unions ● BAME Network ● Disability Network ● LGBT Network 	<p>BAME staff have been entitled to attend a Forum network meeting on the first Tuesday of every month in staff time. The LGBT staff network has not been particularly active.</p>
<p>Equalities fora:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● BAME Forum ● Faith Forum ● Disability Equality Forum ● LGBT Forum ● BAD Youth Forum ● Older People's Forum 	<p>The Council commissions these on behalf of the Partnership.</p>
<p>Young People:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children's 'Let our voices be heard' Forum 	<p>The Council has a long history of engaging young people in decision making processes, working alongside other key sector providers in the borough:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Once a term, children of 5-12 who are representatives of their school councils and Youth Groups come and do different activities depending on the theme of the forum.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Young People's Safety Group ● Urban Question Time ● Seen and Heard ● Youth clubs ● BAD Youth Forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● For young people aged between 11-19. The group acts as a young person advisory body to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, who are a panel of professionals from the Police, Local Authority and NHS Barking and Dagenham with the responsibility of keeping children and Young People in Barking and Dagenham safe. ● A question and answers session; an opportunity for children and young people to give their views of key issues in the borough such as crime, careers, and health to a panel of senior professionals. ● Barking and Dagenham's Children's Services annual conference for Children and Young People in the borough aged 12-19. ● Youth services in conjunction with the Police have set up ward based youth clubs working with parents. ● See previous section
<p>Social Housing Residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Housing Forums ● Tenants and Residents Associations ● Tenants Federation 	<p>There is a range of mechanisms available to engage and empower the residents that live in our 23,000 council owned properties. We work with our local communities and their representative groups to provide appropriate opportunities to influence the way in which their homes are managed and to give them skills and training to do this effectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There are two Housing Forums which meet three times a year and consist of councillors, tenants, leaseholders and residents. ● The Tenants Participation team provides support and training to enable the establishment and operation of Tenants and Residents Associations, and funds the Tenants Federation as an umbrella organisation relating to tenants matters. However, coverage is not universal across the borough, and different Associations have varying degrees of coverage of tenant vs resident issues. Associations are to a varying extent independent from Council support.
<p>Parents Forums</p>	<p>These have been established in Children's Centres and offer parents a regular opportunity to influence decisions at the children's centre, for example parents have led the development of the parents and carers website.</p>
<p>Community hubs</p>	<p>The borough has a number of formal and informal local groups and networks of active community members, centred around a variety of themes including neighbourhood issues and shared</p>

interests. Although we are aware of several of the groups, the number and range of community hubs is not fully developed in the borough. These are some examples of the kinds of community hubs which exist in the borough:

- Leases are being signed imminently on 8 community centres. The community associations informally discuss local issues as well as centre issues.
- Independent community hubs e.g. Kingsley Hall and Harmony House
- 'Friends-of' groups; Friends of parks, Churchyards, Parent Teacher Associations. These all discuss local community issues informally.
- Interest groups, for example, Elderberries; A group of people aged 50+ who take part in a number of leisure and social activities.

The Barking and Dagenham Partnership

The Barking and Dagenham Partnership brings together partners from the private, public, voluntary and community sectors into an overarching partnership for the whole borough. It provides a strategic umbrella for policy development, to ensure that all partners and partnerships are working towards the same goals. The partnership wants to be fully informed about the needs of all those who live, work and study in the borough, to ensure that services address these needs.

In order to inform the design and delivery of services across partners, and to avoid duplication, it is essential that partners are aware of and share each other's consultation and engagement outcomes. Any additional engagement carried out by the partnership will be developed together with partners to address particular gaps in consultation and engagement.

Barking & Dagenham Community & Voluntary Sector

Barking & Dagenham Council for Voluntary Service (B&D CVS) is the umbrella organisation for the voluntary and community sector (including social enterprises) in Barking & Dagenham. It promotes and supports the sector, helping it to be effective, influential, flexible, responsive, value based, community led and well resourced. It works at a strategic level to promote and represent the interests of the sector, and provide practical support and direct services to organisations and the people who run them.

Barking & Dagenham CVS does not claim to be "The Voice" of the voluntary and community sector in Barking & Dagenham. It firmly believes that the sector has many voices, all of them legitimate. Instead, the CVS supports communities and the organisations that represent them to make their voices heard in their own way, and provides a platform from which all communities are able to influence local policy makers and service providers.

The Barking and Dagenham Compact builds on the work of the Barking and Dagenham Partnership. It agrees that the Council, the NHS Barking and Dagenham and the voluntary and community organisations will work together for the benefit of local people. This underlines the commitment of the Council and voluntary and community organisations to equality of opportunity and dialogue to develop effective working relationships. The Barking and Dagenham Compact recognises the importance of effective consultation with Barking and Dagenham's diverse communities and includes principles that mirror the ones adopted for this strategy.

Survey research

Targeted continuous mechanisms for engagement - such as borough wide surveys measuring and monitoring customer satisfaction with our services - are used to ensure that the views of a representative range of local people are gathered regularly to inform decision-making and to improve our 'corporate knowledge' and evidence base.

Online Consultation

The online 'Consultation Portal' gives all residents the chance to tell us what they think about local services by taking part online. Large and small, private or public consultation exercises can be carried out, including questionnaires, online discussions and commenting on consultation document sections.

Safer Neighbourhood Meetings

Each ward in Barking and Dagenham has a dedicated Safer Neighbourhoods team. Each ward has a panel made up of members of the community who live or work within that ward. This panel meets regularly to discuss the concerns facing the local community around crime and anti-social behaviour, and sets the priorities the local police team will tackle. They also get involved in working with the police team and local partner agencies such as the council to find lasting solutions to these priorities.

Social Housing Residents

The Council has recently agreed a new framework for housing engagement which meets the standards of the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). Written alongside this strategy, the new framework has been designed to enable tenants to shape and influence their services and to be involved at a local level through two Housing Forums. The Framework will allow influence and scrutiny over the following areas:

- Development of the Council's Housing Strategy,
- • Housing Allocations Policy review,
- • Housing policies and service levels
- • Development and monitoring of the HRA Business Plan
- • Housing Asset Management Strategy (HAMS)

Each Housing Forum will meet three times a year and will be open to all members of the public and councillors to discuss housing related issues that matter most to them in their local area. Housing resident's will also get the opportunity to work on specific focussed tasks to improve areas or issues of concern

There are a range of mechanisms available to engage and empower the residents that live in our 23,000 council owned properties. We work with our local communities and their representative groups to provide appropriate opportunities to influence the way in which their homes are managed and to give them skills and training to do this effectively. There are opportunities to monitor services, influence improvements and service levels and make decisions on local priorities at both a local and borough wide level.

Commissioning

Commissioning works in partnership with local people and organisations to provide a range of high quality, value for money, safe services which meet local residents' social care and housing support needs. The Council develops a strategic understanding of what kind of services people want in order to live independent lives of their choice through consultation with people with social care needs and potential service users, their families, carers and advocates.

Adult Commissioning implements the shared vision through a variety of methods and often in partnership with other local authorities and NHS ONEL. These include stimulating and developing the market as well as formally tendering for externally provided services where a gap is identified . Quality assurance processes such as contract monitoring, spot checks and service user and carer feedback ensure that services continue to be of good quality and what our local residents want. The types of services commissioned include support for carers, home care, residential care and advice and support services.

Personalisation

The Council is responsible for transforming how we deliver social care through the implementation of Personalisation. Personalisation (sometimes known as self-directed support) is a national approach underpinned by the principle that the individual is the best person to decide how their needs are best met. When someone is eligible for social care services they receive a personal budget to buy services of their choice rather than being allocated a service.

Personalisation increases peoples' choice and control over how they live their lives. The implementation of Personalisation has resulted in radical changes in how our services are organised, what we do, when we work with social care users, what services are delivered and how we commission and monitor services.