

Subject:	'Get Involved' Campaign		
Date of Meeting:	22 September 2009		
Report of:	Acting Director of Strategy and Governance		
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Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report summarises proposals for a 9 month Get Involved local democracy and citizenship campaign, beginning with a launch day on Saturday 21st November 2009 at Hove Town Hall.
- 1.2 Two new legal requirements provide a legislative driver to this campaign; the duty to involve (see paragraph 3.6) and the duty to promote local democracy (see paragraph 3.7).
- 1.3 This report has relevance to the Governance Committee report (also on the agenda of the 22 September meeting) on the Strengthening Local Democracy consultation currently being undertaken by the department for Communities and Local Government (CLG).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To endorse the need for a Get Involved campaign and the approach outlined in this report.
- 2.2 To suggest any additional activities that could be explored that are either existing planned events or new activities.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The council has several key drivers for executing this Get Involved campaign which range from changes in national legislation to developments in local policy. A principal local driver is the Community Engagement Framework (CEF) which the city council signed up to as a member of the Local Strategic Partnership in 2008. The CEF establishes three fundamental principles for improving community engagement, these are:

- To enhance the lives of people and their communities
- To ensure opportunity for all
- To drive up the quality of services and make better use of resources.

Underpinning these principles is a range of actions which include running an annual 'Get Involved' campaign culminating in a celebration of active citizenship.

- 3.2 In addition to this local policy driver, the council is also one of 18 local authorities with community empowerment champion status and is participating in a network of empowering authorities. The champions are working with other areas of the country to showcase empowerment in practice, share the lessons they have learned and help others to revive their local democracy through peer learning.
- 3.3 The city has also recently received the findings from the new Place Survey 2008. The survey reported that only 28% of respondents feel that they are able to influence decisions in their local area. However, those wishing to be more involved in local decision making have increased (from 34% in 2006) to 38%, particularly in relation to specific issues. 56% of respondents would like to be involved in local decision making depending upon the issue.
- 3.4 Nevertheless, the city is broadly in line with the national and regional findings regarding the percentage of people who have been involved in decisions that affect the local area in the past 12 months – 14.2% regionally, 14% nationally and 14.5% in the city; and broadly in line with the regional and national findings in terms of the percentage of people who agree that they can influence decisions in their local area which is 28% regionally, 29% nationally and 28% locally.
- 3.5 Community engagement has also risen rapidly up the agenda due to recent changes to national legislation principally the introduction of the duty to involve and the impending duty to promote local democracy.
- 3.6 The duty to involve came into force on 1 April 2009 and is set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The new duty means that local authorities need to consider, as a matter of course, the provision of information, consultation and involvement opportunities they provide across all authority functions.
- 3.7 The duty to promote local democracy derives from the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill currently before Parliament. It sets out requirements for local authorities to promote an understanding of its functions, its democratic arrangements and how to take part in those arrangements. It also sets out requirements for local authorities to promote understanding of public bodies connected with it, such as health bodies.
- 3.8 Local Democracy Week has also become an annual fixture of the Local Government calendar. Democratic Services have successfully run a number of local democracy events over the past three years, particularly aimed at

improving democratic involvement amongst young people, and the Get Involved campaign is an opportunity to expand and build on these.

- 3.9 In addition to legislative changes, the recent change in local government inspection regime from the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) to the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) has also increased the significance of community engagement. The Audit Commission has stated that it, “expects local services to be effective at giving a voice to people who are vulnerable or at greater risk of disadvantage and inequality as well as judging authorities on how well they and their partners know and engage with their communities” (CAA Framework, April 2009).
- 3.10 The campaign will also contribute to the following Local Area Agreement (LAA) indicators:
- NI 4: % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality
 - NI 6: Participation in regular volunteering
- 3.11 The campaign will contribute to the following council priorities:
- Reducing inequality by increasing opportunity: a wider cross section of constituents will be aware of council services available to them, how to vote and how to participate in decision making.
 - Open and effective city leadership: this event provides an ideal opportunity for councillors to explain their roles in an informal setting and for them to listen and respond to their residents’ feedback
- 3.12 The campaign will link to other activity within the city to increase participation, in particular Take Part and the Festival of Learning. However, beyond these, a much wider spectrum of activity exists within the community that the Get Involved campaign is naturally suited to support, such as the Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF) ‘Your Space’ events, a celebration of volunteering proposed by the Volunteer Centre and a separate “Get Involved” project planned by the Federation of Disabled people.

Campaign Objectives

- 3.13 Objectives are being developed that will form the rationale for activity encompassed within the Get Involved campaign and be promoted through a corresponding marketing strategy. These are:
- **Get involved – Let’s talk politics**
Promote opportunities to get involved in local democracy including the role of elected Members, with a view to encouraging more people to come forward to be councillors. Publicise existing e-government facilities at the council and the launch of the e-petitions facility via the council’s website

- **Get involved – Your vote counts**
Electoral campaign to encourage more residents to register to vote and to use their vote in local, national and European elections, specifically targeting message to young voters
- **Get involved – Your opinion counts**
To obtain residents' feedback on issues in the city important to them, combining with (and not duplicating) current consultation exercises or focuses on other areas for feedback
- **Get involved – In your community**
To encourage more people to get involved in neighbourhood and citywide decision making, especially those who currently feel less able to do so

Project Management

- 3.14 An officer working group is meeting regularly to oversee management and delivery of the campaign, including staff from Central Policy Development, Corporate Communications, Communities Team, Democratic Services, Equalities & Inclusion and Scrutiny.
- 3.15 Departmental Management Teams are being consulted as to their involvement in the campaign including activity on the launch day.
- 3.16 A number of third sector organisations within the city have planned activity to increase community engagement and participation within the timeframe of the Get Involved campaign. The campaign presents an excellent opportunity for organisations to work together to maximise resources that exist across the city.
- 3.17 As statutory providers, Sussex Police, East Sussex Fire and Rescue and NHS Brighton and Hove (the PCT) have also been approached and are keen to be involved in the launch day and the wider campaign. Details of their involvement are being worked up.
- 3.18 The existing criteria for Discretionary Grant funding complements the objectives of the Get Involved campaign. Therefore groups will be able to use the campaign as additional evidence of need for their project application where applicable. This opens up the potential for third sector involvement in the Get Involved campaign.
- 3.19 The council is currently waiting to hear whether a bid to the department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) to fund activity that will support delivery of LAA indicator NI 4 (% of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality), which includes a significant amount to support delivery of the Get Involved Campaign, is successful.
- 3.20 All Elected Members will be invited to be in attendance at the Get Involved launch event.

Launch Event

- 3.21 An event to launch the campaign is planned for Saturday 21 November 2009 at Hove Town Hall. This would avoid the need for young people to be released from school and would also maximise access for working as well as non-working adults. The date will avoid back-to-school and half-term periods and is early enough to avoid the Christmas period and does not clash with other religious celebrations. Of the council's two democratic venues Hove Town Hall is more suitable for a large scale event.
- 3.22 A list of proposed activity for the launch event is contained in Appendix One. Exhibition space will be available for all council departments, and involvement is being sought from other public sector bodies in the city and key third sector organisations.

The Campaign

- 3.23 The launch day kick-starts a nine month campaign of activity and events with the aim of generating continued publicity, interest and participation in local democracy, in order to deliver the objectives, set out at paragraph 3.13, throughout the year.
- 3.24 Activity within the city that aims to increase local democracy, whether it is planned by the council or by our partners, will be invited under the umbrella of the Get Involved campaign to ensure that a consistent message is delivered.
- 3.25 Feedback and evaluation of the launch event will be planned to determine both the success of the event and the focus of specific follow-up activities. Some initial ideas for the rest of the campaign are set out in Appendix Two.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The Cabinet Members for Central Services and for Community Affairs, Inclusion & Internal Relations as well as the Chair of the Governance Committee are supportive of the proposal for the campaign and associated activities.
- 4.2 Members of the Get Involved working group are meeting with council Departmental Management Teams to seek further ideas for the campaign and to promote the opportunity for services to take part. The intention is for the campaign to be fully corporate and cross departmental, capturing the good work already undertaken by other directorates.
- 4.3 A special meeting of members of the Stronger Communities Partnership (SCP), the Change Up consortium and the Stronger Neighbourhoods Group (SNG) was held on 21 August to discuss initial ideas for a Get Involved campaign. The meeting demonstrated the enthusiasm that exists for this work among partners and the potential for collaboration to make both the launch event and subsequent activity a success.
- 4.4 A report on the Get Involved campaign was taken to the meeting of Cabinet/TMT on 2 September 2009 who were supportive of the proposals.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The Director of Culture and Enterprise has agreed to make an in-kind contribution to the launch of the Get Involved campaign, by not charging for venue hire on the day. It is also expected that officer time and equipment costs for the launch day and through the subsequent campaign will be met within existing resources or via external funding bids.

Finance Officer Consulted: Peter Francis Date: 26/08/09

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The duty to involve (referred to in 1.2 and 3.6) stems from section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and now appears in statute as section 3A of the Local Government Act 1999.

In deciding how to fulfil its functions under this duty, the council must have regard to guidance issued by the Communities and Local Government Secretary on July 2008.

The duty to promote local democracy features in Part 1 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill, which cleared the House of Commons committee stage shortly before the parliamentary summer recess in July. The Bill is expected to gain royal assent this autumn, with the duty to promote local democracy likely to come into effect in spring 2010.

Lawyer Consulted: Oliver Dixon Date: 26/08/09

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The Get Involved campaign is being planned to ensure that it is inclusive of all residents in Brighton & Hove, particularly those groups who are underrepresented in local democracy issues and people who experience barriers to participation. To ensure that this is the case an Equalities Impact Assessment is being carried out and is a standing item at each meeting of the Get Involved working group.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Environmental sustainability issues will be considered throughout the campaign, in particular with regards to marketing. The project is seeking to maximise channels such as electronic social media and existing communication routes.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 Sussex Police will be directly involved in the Get Involved campaign and seek to raise confidence in community policing and to promote the role of residents in setting local priorities for crime and disorder. There is an opportunity for the Police and the council to work together on this to reflect the shared responsibility for crime and disorder within the city.

Risk & Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The Get Involved campaign presents an opportunity for all council departments, along with partners in the city, to promote services that allow residents to participate in decision making or influence the provision and nature of services.

Hove Town Hall is currently the distribution centre for Swine Flu medication in Brighton & Hove. Whilst this does not pose a direct health risk (those collecting medicine are 'buddies' rather than those who are ill) the centre is currently occupying the Council Chamber, one of the rooms planned to be used for the launch day. This should no longer be the case by 21 November, but the East Wing of the Brighton Centre is held on the same day as a contingency, the fee for which has also been waived.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 As detailed throughout the report the Get Involved campaign offers an opportunity for the entire organisation, with partners, to engage with and involve citizens and communities alike.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Appendix One – Proposed Activities for the Get Involved Launch Event
2. Appendix Two – Proposed Activities for the Get Involved Campaign

Appendix One

Proposed Activities for the Get Involved Launch Event – 21 November 2009

“Your Council, Your Emergency Services, Your Health Service ...”

Interactive displays/activities on different council directorates and other public services and demonstrations of web enabled communication with those services. Launch of e-petitions, webcasts and revamped web pages.

“Have your say” pod / roaming campervan to record views

Prior to the launch event the public are invited to record their own video entry in response to predetermined questions (similar to a Big Brother Diary Room set up) at various locations within the city. A film is screened at the launch event.

Young People’s Question Time (11-18 year olds)

Continuing the success of this event over the last 2 years, a panel of elected Members and representatives from the police and the health service will be chaired by a youth councillor and will take questions from the floor.

Youth Council/Cabinet workshops/event (targets 11-18 year olds)

Space to be given for the youth council to run a workshop of their choice.

“Speed Meet” Your Councillor

Similar to ‘speed dating’ 12 pupils from secondary schools/colleges are invited to meet Cabinet Members, the Chairman of the Governance Committee and representatives from each of the other Groups on a one to one basis, with the Councillors rotating at 3 minute intervals.

Older People’s Council workshop/event

Space to be given for the Older People’s Council to run a workshop of their choice.

Free Learning

Bite sized workshops that support active citizenship by increasing both skills and knowledge (e.g. confident public speaking, confidence online etc) provided by Take Part.

In my Community

Space and time will be provided to show the range of ways in which residents can get involved in their neighbourhood, including engaging directly with the council, statutory and third sector organisations.

Mock Polling Station & Ballot

Electoral services will conduct a mock polling station to enable people to learn how to vote in an informal surrounding, run in a way that will encourage young people in particular to engage with the process.

Appendix Two

Proposed Activities for the Get Involved Campaign – December 2009 to July 2010

Councillor Surgeries

Increase participation by the public in Councillor Surgeries by looking into new ways of promotion and considering the use of alternative venues.

Visits to schools

Workshops facilitated jointly by democratic services and councillors to explain what the council does, how it impacts on young people's lives and how to get involved.

Cabinet bus tour/road show

A Cabinet tour of the city in a distinctive bus, dropping in to visit selected people/places and/or holding cabinet meetings.

Inclusion event

Explore new or alternative engagement approaches where this is better than using the usual or more formal routes.

Volunteering event

Event to showcase opportunities to get involved in a full range of volunteering opportunities, possibly including follow-up training sessions building on the tasters offered at the launch event.

Ask the Executives

Trial holding an annual 'Ask the Executives' meeting where citizens can come and ask the Chief Executives of the Council, Police and Primary Care Trust questions.

