



Brighton and Hove

**Consultation Document
on a
Community Engagement
Framework
for
Brighton & Hove**

June 2008

What is this document about?

This document is asking for your views on a Community Engagement Framework for the city.

We are happy to translate or send it in other formats and languages.

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Typetalk calls welcome

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Introduction

Welcome to our consultation document that we are using to develop a community engagement framework for the city. The framework will be the key reference for community engagement by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and all its members. It will set out the strategic vision and guiding principles for community engagement within Brighton and Hove and the priority actions to improve engagement activity in the City. We are genuinely open to hearing from people about what the framework should say and what we should be doing to improve engagement practices in the City.

Below is our explanation of why developing the framework is important and therefore why we think people should engage in its development.

Why are we developing a Community Engagement Framework?

There are many reasons for us developing a framework, the key ones are:

- To help achieve the vision set out in the 2020 Sustainable Community Strategy of a dynamic city that improves and protects the environment, meets social needs and promotes sustainable economic success in an inclusive, just and harmonious way.
- To provide clear guidance on how people can be involved in decision-making
- To improve the ways in which citizens and communities can influence and shape services which will help create better quality services that better meet their needs
- To recognise the value of providing support to enable citizens and communities to increase their skills and knowledge and take control over the issues that affect their lives.
- To set a common standard for all engagement activity in the city that all service providers are signed up to
- To improve joint planning and co-ordination of activity in the city between different agencies and sectors, avoiding duplication of activity, especially consultation
- To add value beyond the statutory duties on the Council, the Police and the Primary Care Trust to engage and involve people in the design, delivery and review of services

- To demonstrate that community engagement is not just a buzz word in Brighton & Hove and that there is collective ownership and recognition of its importance.

Who is developing the Community Engagement Framework?

The framework is being developed by Brighton and Hove Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) – the 2020 Community Partnership. The 2020 Community Partnership has established a sub-group to oversee and guide the development of the framework.

The Brighton and Hove Local Strategic Partnership includes, amongst others, representatives from:

- Advice Services Strategy Group
- Brighton & Hove Arts Commission
- Brighton & Hove City Council
- Brighton & Hove City Teaching Primary Care Trust
- Brighton and Hove Children & Young Persons Trust
- City Inclusion Partnership
- Community & Voluntary Sector Forum
- Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership
- East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service
- Economic Partnership
- JobCentre Plus
- Learning & Skills Council Sussex
- Strategic Housing Partnership
- Stronger Communities Partnership
- Sustainability Partnership
- Sussex Police

The outcome of this consultation will lead to the production of the 2020 Community Partnership Community Engagement Framework. Copies of the final framework will be made available either as a hard copy from the 2020 Community Partnership Office or as a download from the 2020 Community Partnership website www.2020community.org/cef

We hope that you find this document useful and look forward to hearing from and working with you to develop and deliver the framework.

We are grateful for your time and interest.

Roger French

Dee Sumson

Roger French
Chair of the 2020 Community
Partnership

Cllr. Dee Simson, Vice-Chair of 2020
Community Partnership/Cabinet
Member
For Community Affairs, Inclusion &
Internal Relations (BHCC)

What are we asking you to do?

Please read this consultation document and give your views by completing the accompanying questionnaire.

We must stress that the information presented in the document is for consultation and has been put together based on the wealth of information and views already given by a wide range of groups, organisations and communities through recent consultation activity, for example, the Primary Care Trust Big Conversation November 2007, Stronger Communities Programme Conference March 2008, City Inclusion Partnership consultation May 2008.

Our aim with the document is to facilitate debate that leads to recommendations about the content of the framework. These may differ from those proposed in this document. **No commitment has been made to any of the proposals in this consultation document,**

Please feel free to return your comments either as a hard copy via our free post address (no stamp required) or electronically via the email address below.

The consultation document and the questionnaire are also available on line at www.2020community.org/cef

We would be grateful if you could return your views by **5th September 2008** either to:

FAO Emma McDermott
FREEPOST RRLX-UJYA XLJK
Brighton & Hove City Council
Research & Consultation Team
Room 220
Kings House
Grand Avenue
Hove
BN3 2LS

No stamp required

Or email: emma.mcdermott@brighton-hove.gov.uk

We would be grateful if you would provide us with your contact details in order that we send you the feedback report on this consultation.

What do we mean by Engagement?

There are many different words used to describe community engagement – ‘participation’, ‘involvement’, ‘consultation’ and ‘participatory research’ are just a few. All are types of engagement but which you use will depend on the context, or the aim, of the particular piece of work for which ‘engagement’ is required. Equally, the community you are seeking to engage with will have a bearing on the methods used. Any activity will require careful planning.

To help resolve the confusion about the language of engagement, it is important that we can identify the different types of engagement being undertaken and have a common spectrum of community engagement in the city. In agreeing what that spectrum is, the Framework will help service providers and communities choose the most appropriate engagement activity for the issue in hand.

For example, when planning changes to a service it might be inadvisable to simply make a general press release stating that changes will be taking place. In this context, the service provider would be expected at the very least to inform service users of the reasons why change is necessary and to consult with users as to the best way forward.

Equally, when agreeing significant changes to local health services, it would be unrealistic and inappropriate to suggest that the ‘community’ will have the final say, although you would expect there to be mechanisms through which they can be involved or collaborate in aspects of the decision-making process.

The following five terms come from a publication called ‘People & Participation: How to put citizens at the heart of decision-making’, published by Involve and Together We Can, London: 2005. The document is based on research funded by the Home Office Civil Renewal Unit carried out in 2004-05.

Under each of the activities in the range we have provided an example of the type of work this reflects. This list is not exhaustive, but provides a flavour of the types of activity.

The range is not hierarchical. In our view the provision of good quality information is as important as providing empowerment opportunities. The most important thing is that there is a range of activity in the city that is agreed and recognised.

Our Proposed Range of Engagement

Informing

To provide the community with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.

- For example, websites, newsletters and press releases

Consulting

To obtain community feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.

- For example, surveys, door-knocking, focus groups, citizen's panels.

Involving

To work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

- For example, providing communities with the opportunity to communicate and influence service providers through structures such as representative forums, service user panels and steering groups. This is often underpinned by community development and / or community participation activity.

Collaborating

To partner with the community in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.

- For example, a neighbourhood partnership where all stakeholders have an equal voice and ownership of decision-making. This is underpinned by community development or participation activity

Empowering

To place decision-making in the hands of the community.

- For example, community kitties, where the final decision on how a budget is spent is in the hands of a community led forum / structure. This is underpinned by community development activity.
- Another example is voting as part of the democratic process, such as in local or national elections

1a) Question: Is this the right range of community engagement for Brighton and Hove?

1b) Are there any other overarching terms that should be included in the range?

1c) What other examples of activities might you include under each term in the range of engagement?

What do we mean by Community?

It is important to recognise that 'community' can be defined in different ways.

Community of place

A community linked to a particular geographical location such as a ward, neighbourhood or a housing estate. This location will usually have physical boundaries.

Community of interest

A group of people with a shared interest or experience. A community of interest includes service users (for example, people interested in climate change, patients registered with a particular GP, library users, pupils of a school, people who work in Brighton but live elsewhere).

Community of identity

A community that is defined by how people identify themselves or how they are identified by society, usually by demographic characteristics (for example, young people, religious groups, older people, Black and Minority Ethnic, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people).

People usually see themselves as belonging to one community of place but more than one community of interest or identity. This means that communities can be very diverse and we must give due consideration to this when we approach different communities to plan, deliver and review services.

We should also remember that people from a defined community may not consider themselves to be a member of that community. For example, a resident of Brighton and Hove may not view the area as their community of place. Similarly, some individuals may not consider themselves to be a member of a community of interest or identity despite sharing similar characteristics with other members of that community.

We should remember that we are seeking to improve our engagement not only with defined communities but with individual citizens in the city.

2a) Question: Do these adequately reflect appropriate definitions of communities in Brighton and Hove?

What should our Vision be?

Our suggested Vision is

Of strong, active and inclusive communities who

- are empowered to act collaboratively with services or on their own to meet their needs and
- have the information and opportunities they need to be able to choose if, and how they engage with statutory services.

Of a city that has a range of high quality, co-ordinated engagement opportunities for all its citizens and communities which

- recognises that one size does not fit all
- drive up the quality of services
- improve quality of life

3a) Question: Do you think this is the right vision for the community engagement framework?

3b) Is there anything that should be included or removed?

What should our Objectives be?

To meet our vision we propose the following objectives for the framework

- There is a clear understanding of and a commitment to community engagement across LSP partners
- There are clear standards for community engagement in the city that LSP partners are signed up to
- There is a co-ordinated approach to community engagement that helps make best use of public resources and avoids duplication
- Community engagement skills and knowledge are developed and shared across agencies and sectors
- There is a wide range of different community engagement activity in the city that provides citizens and communities with a choice of how to influence and effect change in their community
- These choices are well-communicated

4a) Question: Are these the right objectives for the framework?

4b) Are there any that should be included or removed?

What should our Standards for Community Engagement be?

To ensure that a high and consistent standard of engagement activity is happening in the city, we think it would be beneficial to set out our standards for community engagement in the city. These build upon the work around developing a consultation framework, and will reinforce the codes of practice established in the Brighton and Hove Compact¹.

These are listed in no particular order.

We would like to know:

5a) Question: Are these the right standards?

5b) Are there any other standards that should be included?

Our Proposed Standards

Clarity of Purpose

Before beginning any engagement activity, we will be clear about why it is happening, what we want to achieve, which engagement activity we will use, what the community can and cannot influence, and how we will use the information gathered through the engagement activity.

Evidence Base

We will use all available research, knowledge and community intelligence to help us plan engagement activities. We will not carry out engagement activities if the information we need is already available.

Timing

We will allow sufficient time to design and carry out engagement activities that are inclusive and encourage participation from all affected communities. We will also allow sufficient time to ensure that the results of engagement activities can shape our policies, plans and services to meet the needs of our communities.

Quality

We will work to ensure that staff responsible for engagement have the skills and capacity to achieve high quality engagement. Equally, we will work to ensure that communities have the opportunity to develop their skills and capacity to engage if they wish.

¹ Brighton and Hove Compact provides a set of codes for practice work for partnership working between the public, private and community and voluntary sector

Partnership

We will identify the appropriate partners, with particular recognition of the knowledge and expertise of the voluntary and community sector, and carry out engagement activities in partnership where appropriate. This will allow us to appropriately target engagement activities and to avoid duplication of effort (this will help us to avoid 'consultation fatigue' in our communities).

Communication

We will always be open, honest, and accountable when sharing information and responding to contributions from all participants. We will also communicate between partners to create joined-up engagement activities and avoid duplication of effort.

Flexibility

We will support a variety of engagement activities to reflect the diversity of our communities and will be responsive to the ways that the community wants to engage with us. We will recognise the complexity of engaging with seldom heard groups, and people who face additional barriers to engagement.

Feedback

We will provide feedback to the community about the engagement activities we carry out and will explain how the community's input contributed to the decision-making process. We will explain how and when we will provide feedback to the community at the same time as we carry out the community engagement exercise. We will also make the feedback as widely available as possible.

Monitoring & Review

In partnership with stakeholders, we will monitor and review the engagement activities we carry out to ensure that all sections of the community have the opportunity to engage should they choose to, particularly those whose voices are often not heard, and change our practices accordingly.

Resources

We will plan engagement activity carefully in the light of what that activity seeks to achieve and in the context of available resources and will communicate any constraints clearly.

What Priority Actions do we need to take?

Having considered our proposed vision and objectives we need to agree the priority actions for 2009-2010 which will help us achieve them. Through a range of previous consultations, events and discussions the following actions have already been suggested.. As we all know with limited resources we will only be able to focus on the priority actions. Therefore we are asking you to tell us:

6a) Question: What would your top five priority actions be? These could be from the suggestions below or any news ones you would like to suggest.

These are presented in no particular order.

Our Possible Actions

- A. Publish and maintain a webpage on the 2020 Community Partnership that provides details of engagement opportunities across the city and across the different statutory agencies
- B. Publish and maintain a database of recent, current and future consultations on the 2020 Community Partnership website which is searchable by ward, post code and topic.
- C. Investigate the potential for a common research governance protocol
- D. Partnership funding and support for a citywide service to facilitate co-ordination of engagement activity and to provide and facilitate sharing of best practice
- E. Investigate a possible model for improving co-ordination of work on the ground across agencies
- F. Refresh of the Sustainable Community Strategy in 2009 to reflect the commitments made in the community engagement framework
- G. Support the development of facilities to enable the delivery of services from community venues where this is appropriate and desirable to all relevant stakeholders.
- H. Brighton and Hove City Council to scope the development of a policy on

community asset transfer² as part of its asset management plan

- I. Develop a partnership strategy which recognises the role of and invests in the voluntary and community sector to enable community engagement
- J. Agree joint statutory agency funding for organisations that can help engage with seldom heard communities and for neighbourhood community development
- K. Brighton and Hove City Council to investigate developing a Ward Councillor Compact which is a two-way agreement between the council and councillors about each others expectations of the other, roles and responsibilities and support.
- L. Develop a cross sector training and development programme for engagement targeted at communities, 'front line' workers, managers, policy makers and members.
- M. Community engagement training part of new staff induction in all statutory agencies
- N. Include engagement skills, knowledge and experience in job descriptions / person specifications as a matter of course
- O. Develop forums for workers with a remit around 'engagement' to share information/methods
- P. Establish a review process for engagement initiatives: learn from mistakes and celebrate the best examples
- Q. Annual conference for engagement workers
- R. Agree a common policy for supporting community representatives working in collaborative forums with service providers
- S. Develop a best practice toolkit to support quality engagement
- T. Undertake evaluation of engagement to prove the benefits of engagement and impact with regard to improved services and quality of life
- U. Develop initiatives to explore best practice, for example participatory budgeting³ and neighbourhood charters⁴

² Community Asset Transfer is a government policy aimed at supporting the transfer of management or ownership of community spaces from local authorities to communities, where this is supported and sustainable.

³ Participatory budgeting is a mechanism of local government, which brings local

- V. Explore the potential for a scheme to support volunteering opportunities in the voluntary and community sector, for staff employed by public agencies.

communities closer to the decision-making process around the public budget (source Participatory Budgeting Unit, 2008, UK)

⁴ Neighbourhood charters are local voluntary partnership agreements between a community, the local authority and other service providers. It describes the service standards which local people expect from the local authority and other agencies, as well as commitments from service providers, local groups and residents themselves to help meet local community priorities (How to develop a local charter- a guide for local authorities, 2008, CLG)

Next Steps

This document is an important part of the process for developing the 2020 Community Partnership Community Engagement Framework. We hope that by indicating a vision, articulating possible objectives and actions we have facilitated discussion and the opportunity for comment.

A feedback report of all the responses will be produced to accompany the framework in order that you can see how your input has been used. This will be sent to all respondents.

Also, a one off event will be held for those who respond, to view consultation feedback and input to the prioritisation of actions.

The Community Engagement Framework Working Group will recommend the final framework, including the priority actions, to the 2020 Community Partnership.

We are aiming for the Framework to be adopted by the 2020 Community Partnership in December 2008.

The Framework and the feedback report will be available in hard copy from the 2020 Community Partnership Office and downloadable from the 2020 Community Partnership website.

Please return your views either hard copy to:

FAO Emma McDermott
FREEPOST RRLX-UJYA XLJK
Brighton & Hove City Council
Research and Consultation Team
Room 220
Kings House
Grand Avenue
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BN3 2LS

No stamp required

Or electronically by email to: emma.mcdermott@brighton-hove.gov.uk

IMPORTANT If you wish to receive the feedback report please remember to give us your contact details in the questionnaire.

Our final question

7a) Question: Do you have any other comments to make about the

framework?