

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

## Agenda Item 19

Brighton & Hove City Council

**Subject:** Community Engagement Framework Progress Report  
**Date of Meeting:** 19 July 2011  
**Report of:** Strategic Director for Communities  
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**Wards Affected:** All

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE/ EXEMPTIONS

#### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Community Engagement Framework (CEF) underpins efforts to improve public sector relationships with the communities they serve by establishing a common understanding of and commitment to community engagement across members of the Brighton and Hove Strategic Partnership (BHSP).
- 1.2 The CEF has three key aims which are about improving engagement activity that:
  - a) enhances the lives of people and their communities;
  - b) ensures opportunity for all; and
  - c) drives up the quality of services and makes better use of resources.
- 1.3 The Framework sets clear standards that BHSP members are signed up to and identifies priority actions to support delivery of its aims. It provides the policy framework to support delivery of the Duty to Involve and engagement in Intelligent Commissioning, and forms a critical approach to achieving the Sustainable Community Strategy in the priority area of Strengthening Communities and Involving people and therefore helps to achieve the City's Performance Plan outcomes. It also provides an important framework to help in the key area of community empowerment and planning approaches that are within the Localism Bill.
- 1.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission (OSC) agreed in October 2008 to play a role in monitoring public sector adherence to the CEF and hence a report is scheduled annually to update members of this commission on progress and achievements.
- 1.5 OSC on 5 April 2011 heard Secretary and Founder Member of Brighton Society, Selma Montford speak on behalf of the signatories of a letter dated 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011, requesting scrutiny regarding public consultation. The letter appears as Appendix 4 to this report.

- 1.6 The members of the OSC resolved that as part of this scheduled update report to OSC on the Community Engagement Framework, officers be asked to include a section addressing the concerns raised in minutes of the aforesaid meeting at Section 72 1- 9.
- 1.7 Section 2,3,4,5,7,8,9 and 10 cover the aspects as laid out in section 1.4 and provides an update on progress of the implementation of the CEF and associated actions and makes recommendations to support the practical role of OSC in monitoring. The report relates specifically to activity designed to improve the coordination and quality of engagement practice. It flags up some of the learning resulting from this implementation, as well as highlighting some emerging positive activity.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- (1) OSC considers ongoing support of the learning and direction of travel of the implementation of the Community Engagement Framework (CEF) and associated actions.
- (2) OSC continues to take a proactive role in receiving progress reports and addressing poor practice.
- (3) OSC supports the proposal for the Community Engagement Framework to be embedded as part of commissioning processes and for scoping of its appropriate use within the localism agenda.

## **3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The CEF was developed in 2008 in direct response to research, which highlighted the need for a better understanding of different types of engagement, better coordination of activity on the ground, and skills development to improve the quality of engagement practice.
- 3.2 It recognises that improving this area of work will impact on our ability to intelligently inform service improvements, achieve value for money and improve relationships and reputation with communities and partners.
- 3.3 The CEF was adopted by all members of the Brighton and Hove Strategic Partnership (BHSP) in November 2008. BHSP has delegated responsibility for overseeing the CEF to the Stronger Communities Partnership (SCP), which has responsibility to lead, develop and support active community engagement in strategic planning and decision making processes across all partners in the city.

- 3.4 In 2010-11, a Strengthening Communities Review of engagement activity in the city was undertaken. The Review was undertaken to lead efforts to improve engagement practice within BHCC in line with the Community Engagement Framework and to support the work of the Intelligent Commissioning processes and was linked with the Stronger Communities Partnership to ensure that all activity is complementary.
- 3.5 There are 29 actions set out in the Community Engagement Framework action plan and the CEF sub group has prioritised activities. *A summary of the priorities is available in appendix 1. A short update on progress of actions not referenced in this report is available in appendix 2.*

#### **4. FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.1 Following the success of activities and a restructure of the community and equalities team, the role of the Community Engagement Improvement Officer was mainstreamed into the core work of the Communities and Equalities Team. Key responsibility lies with the Community Engagement Co-ordinator and other key aspects of the work are embedded across all members of the team which shows the commitment to the role of engagement within the city council.
- 4.2 The continuation of the implementation of the CEF is linked across a number of engagement activities some which sit within the City Council and others that sit within the remit of the SCP and the other public and voluntary sector partners. These areas of development are laid out in more detail below:
- 4.3 Continuing to develop key quality approaches to Community Engagement**
- 4.3.1 As part of the SCP's commitment to the ongoing development of quality control checklists and guidance based on the CEF, this year saw the research and consultation on the now published Reward and Recognition Guidance. This guidance ensures that when workers are planning the most appropriate engagement activities, they also plan recognition at an appropriate level to the people who have undertaken the particular engagement approach/es that they have taken.
- 4.3.2 In line with the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment a small scale project was funded to ensure that the CEF also has an Easy Read Document and this work was undertaken by SpeakOut. The document is currently being checked via the CEF Sub group and will be signed off by the SCP and then published as part of the CEF Guidance and Toolkit.

#### **4.4 Embedding knowledge and skills through learning and development to be able to use the Community Engagement Framework in practice**

- 4.4.1 Improving the quality of engagement practice was a major theme identified during consultation on the Community Engagement Framework and continues to be a focus.
- 4.4.2 Historically, issues about poor practice in engagement are brought to the SCP via community representatives on that Partnership. The Partnership has attempted to address issues either through dialogue at Partnership meetings or by following up with appropriate officers or representatives, but this is dependent on a willingness of teams or organisations to respond.
- 4.4.3 A key action therefore over the last two years has been the development of cross sector training and learning opportunities.
- 4.4.4 A pilot learning programme of six courses was developed and delivered between April 2010 and March 2011. Over ninety cross sector workers from the city council, other statutory bodies and the community and voluntary sector have been trained and are using their skills in community engagement projects that they are working on.
- 4.4.5 Given the success of this work, the Community Engagement training has been mainstreamed into the core corporate learning and development programme of the City Council and is the first cross sector learning and training programme to be part of the corporate training offer. The training has been procured and has been awarded to a local community development organisation – The Trust for Developing Communities.
- 4.4.6 In addition the core corporate learning and development team are piloting a series of action learning sets to support continued learning and increase impact on resident and customer experience.
- 4.4.7 The e-learning community engagement module has been trialled and reviewed by community groups who gave some key feedback and the changes were incorporated into the e-learning module. This is an important approach to enabling all staff in the city council to have access to a simple introduction to community engagement. This e-learning is part of a new foundation learning programme that is aligned to all new City Council workers in their probationary period.
- 4.4.8 The learning programmes will be further supported by the City Council Communities and Equalities Team who are able to offer ongoing and individual support and advice to city council staff and external partners.

4.4.9 On the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2011, the first wave of participants from the community engagement training celebrated their achievements of how they have been using their training within projects they have developed since the training. The Chief Executive – John Barradell and two strategic directors – David Murray and Charlie Stewart attended the event to both award and highlight the achievements and successes of how participants are embedding their learning in their day to day practice and are actively using the standards and approaches of community engagement. Senior managers across the statutory agencies and voluntary and community sector were also in attendance to enhance their engagement with the learning in supporting their staff to embed community engagement practice.

4.5.1 In terms of measuring impact, a series of twelve case studies have been drawn together showing the range of activities learners undertook following their participation in the community engagement training in 2010-11. This is available at [http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/bhcc/communitygrants/CET\\_Event\\_Report\\_Final\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/bhcc/communitygrants/CET_Event_Report_Final_pdf.pdf)

4.5.2 To illustrate some of the successes the case study of Democratic Services is at *Appendix 3* of this report.

#### **4.6 Dealing with poor practice outcomes that have been highlighted where improvements can be made**

4.6.1 As stated in 4.4.2 poor practice in engagement are brought to the SCP via community representatives on that Partnership.

4.6.2 Some of the issues for poor practice that have arisen are related to officers being bound by statutory requirements and procedures as well as pressure from internal council processes and external bodies such as funders, national consultation time frames which in some cases do not give the necessary time scales that would ideally be suitable for engagement processes. For example the co-locations project in Whitehawk which had a very short timescale in which to turn around a bid for over £5 million. This meant that at bid stage there was very limited consultation with local residents and community organisations. What this points to is that managers and officers should, even if limited should attempt to use the existing community infrastructure and use the standards as laid out in the CEF.

4.6.3 What is clear is that where issues of poor practice have been highlighted, that in line with the CEF, we should ensure processes are reviewed and that we learn from our work and improve practice wherever we can. Furthermore we need to learn how best to mitigate against such situations and be open and honest about the restrictions

that sometimes surround the work that officers are doing and choose the most appropriate levels of engagement.

#### **4.7 The Use of Community Engagement in Commissioning**

4.7.1 As part of the work on Intelligent Commissioning some of the pilots worked through the CEF standards at the scoping of the needs analysis phase and approached the needs analysis through an equalities framework. Within the area of commissioning we are therefore working to embed the CEF standards in the Needs Assessment guidance and citizen 'voice' forms a key element in all needs assessment work. The CEF and Equalities Impact Assessments are being embedded into the Intelligent Commissioning process so that good quality engagement and consultation during all commissioning cycles will be used as we move forward.

#### **4.8 The Use of the Community Engagement Framework in Brighton & Hove City Council achieving the highest level of 'Excellent' within the Equality Framework for Local Government.**

4.8.1 The CEF has been a key part of the recent council's equality assessment. The use of the framework and ability to explain the underpinning standards by so many of the city council teams has been a significant contribution to Brighton & Hove City Council achieving the highest level of 'Excellent' within the Equality Framework for Local Government.

### **5. INTEREST IN OUR WORK FROM OTHER AREAS**

5.1 As was evidenced last year many areas and people working in the statutory and voluntary sector are looking to Brighton and Hove as leaders in the field of engagement and empowerment and there continues to be a great deal of interest in the Community Engagement Framework and associated activity:

- Invitation to speak to a network of Engagement Officers from East Sussex on the Community Engagement Framework
- A presentation as part of the Sussex University Course on community development
- Local invitations to speak to groups and networks on the Framework and / or Get Involved related activities, such as democratic engagement or how the council works e.g. Brighton University.

### **6. Planning Response to Request for Scrutiny**

6.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is part of the Local Development Framework which was introduced by the new Planning Act in 2004. It sets out how people will be given the opportunity to influence future development in Brighton & Hove. In particular, how

and when people will be consulted on planning matters ranging from new planning policy documents to individual planning applications.

- 6.2** The current SCI, which was adopted in 2006, sets out policy for engagement with the community and stakeholders. It went beyond the minimum standards in the Planning Regulations by reflecting the aims of the Council's consultation strategy at that time. Section 8 of the document deals with minimum standards for consultation on planning applications. It includes a section on what is expected from developers of major sites stating that they will be expected to engage with residents and stakeholders. At the present time this is best practice rather than a legislative requirement.
- 6.3** There have been a number of significant changes since the SCI was published in 2006. These include publication of:
- Revised planning regulations in 2008 (the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (amended) Regulations 2008)
  - Community Engagement Framework (CEF) in 2009
  - Proposals in the Localism Bill 2010 that introduce Neighbourhood Planning and a duty on developers of larger schemes to consult on development proposals.
- 6.4** Updating the SCI has been a priority but it is considered better that it reflects the regulations arising from the Localism Bill which is due to be enacted later this year. It will be an opportunity to consult residents and stakeholder groups, to include the standards set out in the CEF, address the concerns raised by local amenity groups and consider the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Commission. A timetable for producing the updated SCI, known as the Local Development Scheme, will be published in September.

## **7. Response on equalities monitoring**

- 7.1** Council services collect monitoring information about people in order to ensure that it is providing fair and accessible services, which meet the needs of people from all the diverse communities in the city. In regard to community engagement, we ask questions about the people taking part in the process to identify whether we have engaged a representative and diverse sample of the population. We can then use this information to identify whether we need additional focused activities to enable specific groups to give their views and to make sure that our engagement has been fair.
- 7.2** We have statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 in relation to 'protected characteristics' defined in the Act as: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Monitoring by the council (and other statutory bodies) asks questions about these groups so that we can meet these legal duties and evidence that we have given 'due regard' to the needs of different groups when making decisions. It is good practice when

asking monitoring questions to explain why we are asking, so that people understand the purpose, and to explain the fact that monitoring is anonymous and confidential.

## **8. Conclusions and Next Steps**

- 8.1 A great deal of ground has been covered since the adoption of the Community Engagement Framework and feedback has been extremely positive.
- 8.2 The mainstreaming of the Community Engagement Training through the learning and development team with support from the Communities and Equality Team has raised the importance of this approach and prioritised it into the work of officers of the City Council.
- 8.3 There has been a positive willingness from teams across the authority and partners to work towards improving practice and coordination, and an encouraging take up of the support and advice being offered.
- 8.4 This focus on providing support, advice and guidance and a willingness to develop learning opportunities in response to the issues being raised is one we are keen to continue.
- 8.5 Update the Statement of Community Involvement ensuring that CEF and OSC recommendations inform the revised document.
- 8.6 There is a need to address poor practice where it is persistent and has an adverse affect on the reputation of the council or wider public sector. We have drafted a table and are in the process of developing a process for dealing with issues of poor practice and are therefore also keen to employ constructively the Scrutiny Function role to monitor adherence to the Community Engagement Framework (as set out in the section of the Framework on implementation and monitoring).
- 8.7 The central recommendation is that OSC receives annual updates on progress on the implementation of the Framework, which can highlight areas of concern, or flag up specific poor practice.

## **9. CONSULTATION**

- 9.1 Extensive consultation was undertaken to support development of the Community Engagement Framework during 2008. The Brighton and Hove Strategic Partnership drove the development of the Framework and delegated responsibility for the day to day process to a cross sector steering group comprised of representatives from each



organisation on the LSP plus representatives from each of the BHCC Directorates.

- 9.2 A copy of the consultation report can be accessed via <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1218794>

## **10. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

- 10.1 Costs will be met from the mainstream budgets.

The restructure of the Communities and Equality team has resulted in some costs savings and enabled the mainstreaming of two Brighton and Hove City Council Community Engagement Co-ordinator posts and a Community Engagement Officer.

### Legal Implications:

- 10.2 The recommendations in section 2 of this report fall within the powers of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission.

### Equalities Implications:

- 10.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken on the Community Engagement Framework and associated activities. A basic principle of the CEF is to reduce or remove barriers to engagement and to increase opportunities to enable engagement. The CEF aims to reduce / minimise the negative impacts or results of community engagement activity, by seeking to improve co-ordination of activity; develop the skills, knowledge and experience of engagement workers; and implement actions to encourage 'deeper and wider' engagement within the city.

### Sustainability Implications:

- 10.4 The Community Engagement Framework aims and standards encourage good practice to support the building of sustainable communities. Good community engagement contributes to effective, sustainable use of land and resources and supports principles of social justice and equity. Individual projects supported through engagement processes will frequently have a direct impact on the environment and will encourage access to services and support.

### Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 10.5 Not applicable

### Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 10.6 The central risk to The Community Engagement Framework is that the aims and standards are not embedded within organisation practice and that the resources and activities that support such work are not resourced.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 10.7 The Community Engagement supports many aspects of corporate and citywide strategies including the Sustainable Community Strategy, council's corporate plan and more recent developments around 'A council the city deserves'. Stronger community engagement helps build trust and relationships with communities, involves more people in decision making, improves quality of life and will help build the reputation of the council and wider public sector.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Stronger Communities Partnership Prioritisation of Community Engagement Framework Actions
2. Progress on Other Actions
3. An Example of How Democratic Services have used the Community Engagement Framework and Learning to Develop Engagement Practices 2010/11
4. Letter requesting scrutiny

### **Documents In Members' Rooms:**

1. Community Engagement Framework Reward and Recognition Guidance

### **Background Documents**

1. Community Engagement Framework which can be found at [http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/bhcc/BH\\_CEF\\_Community\\_Engagement\\_Framework.pdf](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/bhcc/BH_CEF_Community_Engagement_Framework.pdf).

## APPENDIX 1

### Stronger Communities Partnership Prioritisation of Community Engagement Framework Actions

#### PRIORITY Area 1

<p>Develop a partnership funding strategy that recognises the role of community and voluntary sector in enabling engagement (relates to Stronger Communities Review and long term funding for CD and SCP)</p>	<p>As part of the Communications Plan for the SCP and CEF produce an Easy Read Version of the Community Engagement Framework</p>	<p>Communications Task Group established</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>NI 4</b></p>
<p>NEW Develop Reward and Recognition guidance to underpin standard and best practice in community engagement processes</p>		

#### PRIORITY Area 2

<p>Training and development programme – ongoing development</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>NI 4/6/7</b></p>	<p>NEW!</p> <p>Get Involved! campaign – exit strategy</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>NI 4/6/7</b></p>	<p>Build better understanding about representation</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>NI 4/6/7</b></p>
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#### PRIORITY Area 3

<p>Develop Community Workers Network to share information and learning</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>NI 4</b></p>	<p>Community Engagement champions identified within BHCC (&amp; other public sector)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>NI 4/7</b></p>	<p>Asset Transfer Strategy – strategy development for management of assets inc. transfer</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>NI 6/7</b></p>
<p>Support awareness raising within public bodies around engagement and equalities issues</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>NI 4</b></p>		

**PRIORITY Area 4**

<p>Common policy for supporting community representatives working collaboratively with service providers</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>NI 4/6/7</b></p>	<p>Recognise and resource new or alternative engagement approaches and support representation of new communities</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>NI 4/6/7</b></p>	<p>Establish review and evaluation process that all partners are signed up to that allows all partners to learn from good practice</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>NI 4</b></p>
<p>Explore potential for communications hub for public bodies through which they coordinate communication with residents</p>	<p>Searchable database of consultations (Consultation portal is live but promotion, training and development needed to ensure it is used effectively)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>NI 4</b></p>	

NB – There are 29 actions in the Framework, but some have been grouped where they addressed related themes

# Community Engagement Framework Actions Update

The Stronger Communities Partnership (SCP) has established a sub group, the Community Engagement Framework (CEF) Group to undertake detailed work to plan activity and oversee delivery of the CEF and associated actions.

The main report addresses in detail the following areas of work which reflect actions in the Framework:

- Learning, Training and Development
- Reward and Recognition and Easy Read
- Embedding the standards and Good Practice across all service
- Use of the CEF in Intelligent Commissioning processes

In addition, the following activity is underway:

### **Strengthening Communities Review**

- ❖ This was an action in the Framework and was led by the Communities and Equality Team. The Review mapped engagement activity and made recommendations for the commissioning of future Stronger Communities activity. This includes community development and activity to support community and voluntary sector involvement, representation and influence in strategic decision-making processes
- ❖ As part of the review, an independent evaluation was conducted by NewmanFrancis Ltd which assessed the value and impact of discrete aspects of Stronger Communities activities.
- ❖ Recommendations have been agreed in relation to the commissioning of activity to deliver on identified priority findings (and ensure their influence on longer term commissioning priorities), specifically support for: engagement with COI groups; representation of COI groups; DV intelligent commissioning pilot and support use of innovative engagement practice

### **Asset Transfer Policy Development**

- ❖ Building on learning from a workshop to discuss issues around the management of assets in the city and potential for asset transfer, a set of 'Policy Principles' have been developed to help guide BHCC through applications for transfer
- ❖ Work is also underway to clarify roles and support available for organisations responsible for managing buildings and community spaces

### **Network for Community Workers**

- ❖ Two Community Workers Networking events have been held over the course of the year with the aim of bringing front line community workers together to share information and encourage greater collaborative working. One is to be held on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2011 and this will highlight both the CEF and the City Volunteering Strategy with practical techniques and applications for workers to use in embedding good practice in their work.

### **Good practice case studies**

- ❖ A number of case studies have been written, summaries of which have been used on the e-learning programme and which are available from the Communities and Equality Team

### **Communications Plan**

- ❖ The SCP has through a Communications Sub Group developed a communications plan to promote the SCP, The Community Engagement Framework and opportunities to get involved, in support of the Get Involved campaign.

### **Community Engagement Refresh**

- ❖ The CEF is being refreshed to include better on-line access and increased publicity distribution of the framework across the city. The Reward and Recognition and Easy Read versions will be incorporated into this refresh.

**An Example of How Democratic Services have used the Community Engagement Framework and Learning to Develop Engagement Practices 2010/11**

The Democratic Services Team received training from the Trust for Developing Communities (as a result of the ongoing community engagement work of the Stronger Communities Partnership and B&H City Council's training programme) in September 2010. As a result of this training, Democratic services set up a programme of ten Local Democracy Workshops for community groups, universities and schools across Brighton and Hove for the period to 31 March 2011. Our audiences have been diverse and they have included:

- BME communities and Black History Society;
- Terence Higgins Trust;
- University of Brighton;
- Woodingdean tenant reps and residents and
- Youth Council.

As part of the programme we have produced information packs for delegates with a range of information including a small library of booklets on subjects such as "Councillor Information", "Making Brighton & Hove City Council work for you" and "How your Brighton & Hove City Councillor can help you". We have provided feedback forms in our packs as we see audience comment as paramount to the future direction of the programme and this also demonstrates we are listening and acting on what people are telling us.

We have given people an opportunity to tell the council anything they feel they would like to that is not covered by the workshop, and we have acted as the conduit between members of the public and the appropriate officers, to ensure they get an answer to their question.

We have tapped into local knowledge and experience and worked with those with the relevant expertise in what is a new area of work for us. As part of that process we have attended community events, network meetings and AGMs and run stalls at various venues across the city.

The Take Part Pathfinder (this was a pilot on engaging communities in local decision making) has been invaluable in providing the funding for this work and enabling us to provide such a wide range of printed materials throughout the programme as well as to produce two DVDs, one an overview of the work and the challenges we faced, the other a training DVD broken down into bite-size sections for ease of reference which outlines the five different ways to influence.

We have given presentations to the Regional Empowerment Network Meeting in London and at the Take Part Evaluation Conference in the city and Take Part have used our experience as one of their case studies and published it in their Spring 2011 newspaper and included an interview in their DVD.

## **The Future**

The future looks exciting and we are keen to expand on last year's work but at the same time, we are very conscious that we need to provide tangible evidence of the difference we are making and to use this basis as something on which we can build for the future. A short break around the time of the local elections in May has given us an opportunity to look back on previous progress and to firm up the expressions of interest we have received from ten groups across the city. We are currently uploading our films onto the Get Involved website and reaching out to wider and more diverse audiences.

Before all that kicks off, we have committed to run a stall in the Discovery Zone at People's Day on 18 June and we are enthusiastic at the opportunities this will offer. People will be able to watch our DVD, to meet a number of local councillors face-to-face and to learn how to set up an e-petition. It will be a hands-on opportunity for the city's residents and fits in very well with our wish to run the story of the life and progress of an e-petition in the coming months.

Working with the new Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities & Public Protection, we anticipate rolling out a fresh programme of community engagement work for 2011/12 and including some new and exciting ideas. We are keen to make a real difference.