

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL (BMBC)

This matter is not a Key Decision within the council's definition and has not been included in the relevant Forward Plan.

Joint Report of the Executive Director Core Services and the Executive Director Communities

Response to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Task and Finish Group (TFG) Report on the work of the Community Engagement Steering Group

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To report to Cabinet the proposed actions as well as actions taken in response to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Task and Finish Group report on the work of the Community Engagement Steering Group

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 As outlined in the TFG's report, during the investigation the TFG members made a range of suggestions and recommendations which were able to be considered on an ongoing basis. In addition, the TFG made five specific recommendations in their report which were welcomed; the response to each is outlined below:

2.2 Recommendation 1: In developing the web portal we use this opportunity to highlight what the role of an Elected Member is

In addition to helping communities to understand what the Council does, Elected Members feel it is important to provide information on the role of a local councillor. This includes advising how they support their local community and local residents.

Response: This information will be agreed and included in the new web portal.

2.3 Recommendation 2: Ensure appropriate governance is in place regarding consultation activities to ensure that they are only undertaken when our communities can influence the outcome

The TFG highlighted the importance of genuine community consultation so that people will continue to engage with the Council. Appropriately skilled officers and governance should be in place for consultation activity to be challenged before it is undertaken to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

Response: An engagement and consultation toolkit has been launched. Training for employees involved in developing and delivering consultation activity is in development.

2.4 Recommendation 3: Ensure Ward Members are made aware of consultation/engagement activity in their local area

The TFG were keen to ensure that local ward members and not just Cabinet Spokespersons are made aware of consultation/engagement activity so that they are able to answer queries and provide support to their local residents. A prompt for this was

recommended for inclusion in the officer consultation tick list and therefore the TFG are keen to highlight that this documentation is utilised by officers.

Response: The guide to engagement and consultation has been updated with advice to employees undertaking engagement activity to liaise with area members at the early stages of development.

2.5 Recommendation 4: A report is brought to the OSC on the consultation activity undertaken during the first 12 months of the new consultation system being in place

The report should outline how the new system is being utilised, including the consultation activity undertaken, the response received and how this has influenced service planning/delivery. This will enable the OSC to monitor the implementation of this work and make further recommendations as appropriate.

Response: A report is being developed analysing consultation activity in 2017/18. It will show consultation activity, responses received, what people told us and what decision was made as a result.

2.6 Recommendation 5: OSC Members are increasingly involved in the development stages of key pieces of work

The TFG's involvement in the development of this project has been invaluable. Officers leading on the work have valued the opportunity to consult with Elected Members representing the public voice and a different perspective on this work in order to ensure the end product is fit for purpose. Our Elected Members have vast knowledge of our local communities and key local networks. They are able to provide a community viewpoint on how work/projects/information may be received by a local area and advise on considerations officers may need to be aware of which will help to improve service delivery.

Response: Officers have found the involvement of the TFG very helpful. Involvement of the TFG during the development stage of projects is now recommended to managers.

3. Implications for local people / service users

- 3.1 Our community engagement work aims to strengthen community involvement and encourage innovation and change through community action. This has implications for every person living and working in Barnsley, because we are asking them to work together with us to help make Barnsley a better place to live and work. Additionally, by encouraging wider participation in consultation activity will enable the Council to be better aware of the impact decisions may have on people living and working in Barnsley.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1 There are no specific financial implications, although in responding to the recommendations in the report, the financial implications of these would need to be fully assessed by the appropriate services responding.

5. Employee implications

- 5.1 There are no specific employee implications, although in responding to the recommendations in the report, the employee implications of these would need to be fully assessed by the appropriate services responding.

6. Communications implications

- 6.1 Communication is critical to this piece of work and will require effective plans to be in place to both launch the work as well as ensure its continued use throughout all of the Council's work streams. Prior to launch the Council will need to ensure that both Members and officers are aware of this work so they can spread the word out in communities and utilise it in everything they do.

7. Consultations

- 7.1 Consultations have taken place with the Community Engagement TFG, Councillor Jenny Platts, Councillor Alan Gardiner, Council Officers Phil Hollingsworth, Michael Potter, Rachel King and the Senior Management Team.

8. The Corporate Plan and the Council's Performance Management Framework

- 8.1 As outlined in the Corporate Plan, the three priorities for Barnsley are: a thriving and vibrant economy, strong and resilient communities; and citizens achieving their potential. Ensuring people in our communities are aware of what the Council does and encouraging them to engage with services and participate in volunteering activities contributes to achieving all of these.

9. Promoting equality & diversity and social inclusion

- 9.1 The TFG is keen to ensure that all Council activities are accessible to all its communities. Throughout the TFG's involvement in the development of this work they have specifically referred to making sure that materials are accessible to those who may have physical impairments as well as those where English may be an additional language. Also, by enabling better consultation facilities will support the voice of all our communities to be heard.

10. Tackling the impact of poverty

- 10.1 By encouraging people to take responsibility for their local community we can help people build confidence, skills and capability. This can lead to people having confidence to find work or find a way out of poverty. Additionally, by making communities better aware of what help and support is available can enable them to access appropriate services.

11. Tackling Health Inequalities

- 11.1 By encouraging people to become more active in their local community, we can have a direct impact on health and wellbeing. By helping people to take responsibility for their local community, we can encourage them to be accountable for their own health and wellbeing. Enabling communities to be better aware of the support services available will help them to access appropriate services. Additionally, by encouraging wider participation in consultation activity will enable the Council to be better aware of the impact decisions may have on communities.

12. Reduction of crime and disorder

- 12.1 Community engagement has been shown to improve community resilience and discourage people from causing damage in their local area. By encouraging people to be more active in their local community, we can encourage them to take responsibility for their local area.

13. Risk management issues

- 13.1 This issue relates to the following risk currently logged on the Council's Strategic Risk Register (SRR), as follows:

- 3023 – 'Failure to engage with stakeholders'

- 13.2 The intended positive benefits of the project are logged as mitigation to this risk and it is envisaged that the recommended activities detailed in this report will contribute further to the effective mitigation of these risks, and it would be appropriate for any follow-up report regarding community engagement to be cognisant of these risks.

14. Glossary

BMBC – Barnsley Metropolitan borough Council
OSC – Overview and Scrutiny Committee
TFG – Task and Finish Group

15. Background papers

- Barnsley Community Engagement Strategy Cabinet Report (Cab.22.3.2017/8):
<http://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s18437/Community%20Engagement%20Strategy.pdf>
- Barnsley Community Engagement Strategy 2017-20:
<http://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s18438/Appendix%201.pdf>
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Task and Finish Group - Report on the Work of the Community Engagement Steering Group (Cab.21.3.2018/8):
<http://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s32295/Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee%20-%20Task%20and%20Finish%20Group%20-%20Report%20on%20the%20Work%20of%20the%20Community%20Engage.pdf>

Date: 16 May 2018