

**Key recommendations for a Community and Public Engagement Framework and a Strategy for East Herts Council**

|   | Recommendation:  | Comments and context   | Desired outcomes   | Executive Response  | Action/Activities  |
|---|--|--|--|---|--|
| 1 | <b><i>Who should the council engage with?</i></b>  |  |  |   |  |
|   | <p>The council should engage with the diverse range of people living, working and visiting East Herts as well as community led organisations and local businesses.</p> | <p>i. There is Public Sector Duty to inform, consult and involve (informing, listening and discussing to joint decision making)<br/>                     ii. There is a new compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty for all 'protected groups'<br/>                     iii. The purpose is to facilitate greater awareness and stronger affiliation between the council and the communities<br/>                     iv. This will enable the council to attract private sector resources v. This will ensure 'protected groups' are an essential element of the framework/strategy<br/>                     vi. The group considered evidence/ feedback from Youth Conference held in October 2010 and Youth Shadowing Programme in February 2011 to make their recommendations<br/>                     vii. The group used information obtained through responses from the civic and residents' association questionnaire for the review</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The council complies with the Public Sector Duty • 'Fit for Purpose' &amp; better/appropriate services delivered</li> <li>• Stronger partnerships between private and public sector</li> <li>• Stronger communities</li> <li>• Vibrant democracy</li> </ul> | <p>The Council ensures that its arrangements for consultation and engagement are inclusive. We will continue to employ the good links which we have with a wide range of business, statutory and voluntary sector partners.</p> | <p><b>Existing strategy and arrangements for consultation are set out in the Council's 'A Public Engagement Strategy for East Herts Council 2010-2013'. This will be reviewed and updated in the next financial year to ensure it is relevant and topical.</b></p> |

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| 2 | <b>Community Voice (CV)</b>  |  |  |   |   |
|   | <p>a) CV should not continue in its current format</p> <p>b) The new proposals for replacing CV should concentrate on what the District Council's responsibilities and priorities are</p> <p>c) CV should be replaced by issues and location specific meetings when needed with full involvement and contributions from relevant ward councillor(s). This could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one-off engagement</li> <li>• repeated engagement over a longer period of time</li> <li>• it may be formal</li> <li>• informal through partners, town &amp; parish council meetings &amp; other forums</li> </ul> <p>d) It should not be a presentation arena for other partners without their contribution. Their contribution needs to add to the cost of such things</p> <p>e) The engagement needs to focus on a specific issue or on service delivery)</p> <p>Public meetings be</p> | <p>i. There is a need to show Value For Money</p> <p>ii. CV needs to be purposeful, timely, issue specific and focussed</p> <p>iii. There is evidence of successful issue/location (where they worked well) specific meetings e.g. ARC, planning issues regarding Bishop's Stortford</p> <p>iv. The purpose is to ensure community participation is connected to decision making</p> <p>v. It is important for the council to give feedback</p> <p>vi. The purpose is to ensure right exchange at the right time with the right people/groups happens</p> <p>vii. Intelligence gathered should be used to deliver better decision making in policy and service development and in setting priorities for action</p> <p>viii. This will enable the council to provide better services</p> <p>ix. This will encourage to 'put something back in 'my place' which is at the heart of Localism Bill</p> <p>x. Leader of Breckland Council provided useful exemplar information</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater listening, trust and genuine communications are generated (2 way movement of messages – communities to decision makers)</li> <li>• Evidence base for decision making and reviewing progress is gathered</li> <li>• Services are reflective of customer insight and need</li> <li>• Value added to communities and to the quality of services they receive and any savings through a coordinated approach</li> </ul> | <p>Engagement events around specific issues will be considered where they provide a proportionate and cost effective model for engagement e.g A rural parish conference is scheduled for September 2011</p> | <p><b>It is proposed that each councillor is allocated up to £150 (annually) from the CV budget for local engagement meetings. Each councillor will have the opportunity to request funding using a standard form with evidence of clear purpose of a meeting in line with Council priorities.</b></p> <p><b>It is recommended by the T&amp;F group to put an item in LINK on the positive consultation activities and opportunities that are being put in place.</b></p> |

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|           | renamed and be clearly branded as East Herts.<br>g) Any changes recommended should be incorporated with the CV section of the council constitution<br>h) Develop a joint yearly calendar of meetings & other forums within departments and external agencies for members and officers |   |  |  |  |
| <b>2a</b> | <b><i>Hosting partner topics</i></b>  |   |  |  |  |
|           | East Herts Council should work with Communication team of external partner agency as appropriate to share/take on the publicity of partner agendas and partners should share/take the cost of the event   | i. The purpose of this is to emphasise partnership working ii. This will encourage citizen led decision making  | • Services reflect local priorities  | The council will continue to work with partners to identify opportunities for joint communications/ engagement on a cost share basis | <b>No additional actions required at this time.</b>  |
| <b>3</b>  | <b><i>Role of Councillors</i></b>   |   |  |  |  |
|           | a) Councillors should be expected and supported to play a very active role in their ward and local area as community leaders<br>b) It is recommended that appropriate training for Members be provided to   | i. This will enable more involvement of councillors linking it to the Big Society agenda<br>ii. It is important to recognise that they are the gateway to local political representation and accountability<br>iii. The purpose is to plan councillor | Enable more meaningful local engagement which will drive the Big Society agenda for East Herts • Raise profile and inspire | Councillors will be encouraged to work closely within their communities  | <b>The recommendations are being pursued as follows:</b><br><br><b>1. a) &amp;b) are being developed during consultation with Members on their training/development needs and overseen by the Member Development Charter</b> |

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|          | <p>enable them to positively and confidently engage in this process</p> <p>c) locality meetings should be encouraged and financial support be provided as appropriate and within available financial resources to discuss local issues (if CV meetings are restricted as in (2), then any savings could be used as a funding pot which ward councillors could apply to enable locality meetings).</p> <p>d) 'Branding' councillors out in community to raise profile of East Herts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue with Business cards</li> <li>• Clear lapel badges</li> <li>• Laminated A4 ward information sheets for display</li> </ul> | <p>engagement work as an integral part of the overall engagement effort</p> <p>iv. This will help develop an agreed vision and set of values for jointly working with the councillors and the community/public</p> <p>v. The intention is to build on Town and Parish meetings</p> <p>vi. Members have requested for badges/cards. It is important for them to be identified in their community and at public events who they represent. (examples from exemplar authority/ leader of the council (Breckland Council) confirms this)</p> | <p>local community action and volunteering linking in with the 'Big Society' and Localism Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify East Herts role in and at event(s)</li> <li>• Encourage public to approach/contact</li> </ul> |   | <p><b>Group. A training event on an "Introduction to Community Leadership" was held for Members on 8 September 2011. Others will be scheduled over the coming months as deemed necessary by the Group.</b></p> <p><b>c) See action in 2 above.</b></p> <p><b>d) i. New lapel badges have been provided to all councillors.</b></p> <p><b>ii. A4 information sheet is being progressed by Democratic Services</b></p> <p><b>iii. New Business cards are available on request from Facilities team.</b></p> |
| <b>4</b> | <b><i>Partnership with CVS</i></b>   |  |  |   |   |
|          | <p>That the Council continues with the dialogue and current working relationship linking into Big Society agenda and especially around accessing 'protected and specialist' groups</p>   | <p>i. This will enthuse, educate &amp; enable local involvement</p> <p>ii. This will enable commissioning rather than grants giving through discussion at T&amp;F group (Meeting 5) has provided valuable insight into the current good working relationship</p>   | <p>Better connection through informal and formal meetings</p>  | <p>The Council values the CVS as an important and active partner for many matters. Their links with a wide range of community groups will often be considered as an avenue to</p> | <p><b>The Council will continue with the current good working relationship with CVS for Broxbourne and East Herts.</b></p>  |

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|          |  |  |  | engage with some hard to reach sectors.   |  |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Publicity/Media</b>   |  |  |   |  |
|          | <p>a) The Council be proactive in presenting itself to the community and public events (as appropriate &amp; within available resources)</p> <p>b) Much more use to be made of local third party publication to get specific messages across to communities: Town/Parish magazines, Civic Society magazines, and Residents Newsletter</p> <p>c) A process for on-going feedback on the outcomes from schemes supported by East Herts Community Grants should be put in place for local information and wider publicity</p> | <p>There is a need to be open to public view</p> <p>ii. There is a need to handle negative media (members' questionnaire)</p> <p>iii. This will help promote the council especially at community events using Market Place format and Council 'stall' if appropriate</p>                     | <p>People know what they have contributed to and what the council has done with the information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good news stories are publicised</li> <li>• Targeted messages to specific communities or interest groups</li> </ul> | <p>The Council is proactive in presenting itself to the community through a wide variety of mediums and events, and delivers against a communications action plan. Planned improvements include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• include parish and town clerks on all press release issues</li> <li>• encourage parish and town clerks, partners, business community and residents to sign up to the council's e-bulletin (Network)</li> </ul> | <p><b>All town councils receive East Herts Council's press releases by email. An email will be sent to all parish councils inviting them to sign up to press releases or to Network e-bulletin. They will then be able to use any information supplied in their own publications (with appropriate 'info supplied by East Herts Council' tag).</b></p> <p><b>All district councillors to receive 12 copies of Link each quarter for onward distribution to focal points in their ward e.g. health centres, parish halls.</b></p> |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Use of New Media including the use of Face Book and Twitter</b>   |  |  |   |  |
|          | <p>a) The Council explores &amp; considers this further and a policy be drawn up for the use of New Media by the council across all services.</p> <p>b) Officers and Members should work with a focus group of residents to develop the public facing</p>  | <p>There is a danger that some new media forums will create non web user/hard to reach group</p> <p>ii. This could be dominated by a few users</p> <p>iii. The group agreed that the new media opportunities should focus on single issue debates and then be shut down. They are not an</p> | <p>Adds new dimension to the engagement process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage community and public to engage by making it easy and attractive</li> </ul>  | <p>Work with officers to look at opportunities to develop a range of appropriate methods of communication with our residents.</p>   | <p><b>It is proposed that a simple set of corporate guidelines be published to assist members and officers with the use of new and social media tools.</b></p>   |

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|          | area of website to ensure usability by non-specialists<br>Consideration should be given to the use of Automatic Text responses to residents who have logged their interest in topics and there is new information for them   | appropriate tool for general/continuous dialogue with the public desire to put more iv. This will enable Members' emphasis/focus on making use of opportunities that use of opportunities that are available through the use of modern technology  | • Support Youth Engagement   |  |  |
| <b>7</b> | <b>Link Magazine</b>   |  |  |  |  |
|          | Link should be reviewed in respect of :<br>• Penetration (including considering alternative methods of distribution) and giving all ward Members a number of copies to put in appropriate community locations in their wards as relevant<br>• Design and readability (background, use of colours)<br>• Frequency of publication be reduced to 3 issues a year (as a pilot for a year)<br>• Rebranded as 'Your Council Matters' | LGA recent publication/guidelines on written publication has confirmed this ii. Current presentation, readership and readability is anecdotally not at a desirable standard (will be guided by the awaited new Code of Local Government Publicity) iii. Anecdotal evidence gathered suggests that it needs to be reviewed and the viability of its production less frequently should be considered iv. The proposal is to use it to feedback – get better at telling people what the council has done, actions the council has taken and how the council has responded to their comments | People know what they contributed to and what came of it.<br>• People remember the magazine and look forward to receiving it | Officers have been requested to review the Council's Link magazine during 2011/12. A piloted A5 version of the publication has received positive feedback from the residents | <b>It is proposed to retain four editions of LINK a year in line with IDeA recommendations but that the size will reduce to A5 following a successful trial.</b> |
| <b>8</b> | <b>Surveys</b>   |  |  |  |  |
|          | The council should give more prominence to publishing the results and outcomes from all surveys  | There is a need to recognise the Public Sector Duty to consult and inform ii. Leader of exemplar council (Breckland) provided  | People know what they have contributed to and what the   | When surveys are planned the feedback processes are included as part of the  | <b>A feedback stage is incorporated into all survey project plans.</b>   |

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|           | in Link or on line   | evidence of good practice iii. Views expressed in civic and residents' association questionnaire confirms this iv. The mechanism for doing this currently exists but the council needs to do more  | council has done following the consultation result | project plan   |  |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>Resourcing</b>  |  |  |  |  |
|           | Implement what recommendations are possible within the cost and resources envelopes (budgets) agreed as part of the MTFP.  | This could be achieved within the current Staffing ii. There is a need to consider cost for publicity/venue hire, and meeting expenses incurred by attendees at consultation events (e.g. for carers, child care, travel for younger people or older/disabled residents) | Achieve Value for Money outcomes                   | All the recommendations will be delivered within the resources available for 2011/12 and reflective of the Council's 2011/12 – 2014/14 Medium Term Financial Plan. | <b>No further actions are needed at this time.</b>             |
| <b>10</b> | <b>Toolkit for East Herts</b>  |  |  |  |  |
|           | Community and Public Engagement for East Herts staff and Councillors A Toolkit be produced for East Herts staff and Councillors incorporating current thinking and recommendations | It is suggested that a new/updated toolkit is produced using good practice examples from other authorities such as 'West Devon'  | Coordinated and consistent approach to engagement  | The existing consultation and engagement toolkit will be reviewed and promoted among staff.  | <b>A review of the toolkit will be undertaken during 2012.</b> |