

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

	<u>Recommendation :</u>	<u>Comments and context</u>	<u>Desired outcomes</u>
	<p>NOTE: ALL THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED WITHIN THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP'S FINDINGS ARE SUBJECT TO THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE WITHIN THE COUNCIL'S NEW MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN</p>		
1.	<p>Who should the council engage with?</p> <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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. There is Public Sector Duty to inform, consult and involve (informing, listening and discussing to joint decision making) ii. There is a new compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty for all 'protected groups' iii. The purpose is to facilitate greater awareness and stronger affiliation between the council and the communities iv. This will enable the council to attract private sector resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The council complies with the Public Sector Duty ii. 'Fit for Purpose' & better /appropriate services delivered iii. Stronger partnerships between private and public sector iv. Stronger communities v. Vibrant democracy

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		v. This will ensure 'protected groups' are an essential element of the framework/strategy vi. The group considered evidence/feedback from Youth Conference held in October 2010 and Youth Shadowing Programme in February 2011 to make their recommendations vii. The group used information obtained through responses from the civic and residents' association questionnaire for the review	
2.	Community Voice(CV) a) CV should not continue in its current format b) The new proposals for replacing CV should concentrate on what the District Council's responsibilities and priorities are 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 : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one-off engagement • repeated engagement over a longer period of time • it may be formal 	i. There is a need to show Value For Money ii. CV needs to be purposeful, timely, issue specific and focussed iii. There is evidence of successful issue/location (where they worked well) specific meetings e.g. ARC, planning issues regarding Bishop's Stortford iv. The purpose is to ensure	i. Greater listening, trust and genuine communications are generated (2 way movement of messages – communities to decision makers) ii. Evidence base for decision making and reviewing progress is gathered iii. Services are reflective of customer insight and need

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • informal through partners, town & parish council meetings & other forums 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 e) The engagement needs to focus on a specific issue or on service delivery f) Public meetings be renamed and be clearly branded as East Herts. g) Any changes recommended should be incorporated with the CV section of the council constitution h) Develop a joint yearly calendar of meetings & other forums within departments and external agencies for members and officers 	<p>community participation is connected to decision making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> v. It is important for the council to give feedback vi. The purpose is to ensure right exchange at the right time with the right people/ groups happens vii. Intelligence gathered should be used to deliver better decision making in policy and service development and in setting priorities for action (Meeting 4) viii. This will enable the council to provide better services ix. This will encourage to 'put something back in 'my place' which is at the heart of Localism Bill x. Leader of Breckland Council provided useful exemplar information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iv. Value added to communities and to the quality of services they receive and any savings through a coordinated approach
2a	<p>Hosting partner topics</p> <p>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</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The purpose of this is to emphasis on partnership working ii. This will encourage citizen led decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Services reflect local priorities

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3.	<p>Role of Councillors</p> <p>a) Councillors should be expected and supported to play a very active role in their ward and local area as community leaders</p> <p>b) It is recommended that appropriate training for Members be provided to 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"> • Continue with Business cards • Clear lapel badges • Laminated A4 ward information sheets for display 	<p>i. This will enable more involvement of councillors linking it to the Big Society agenda</p> <p>ii. It is important to recognise that they are the gateway to local political representation and accountability</p> <p>iii. The purpose is to plan councillor 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>i. Enable more meaningful local engagement which will drive the Big Society agenda for East Herts</p> <p>ii. Raise profile and Inspire local community action and volunteering linking in with the 'Big Society' and Localism Bill</p> <p>iii. Identify East Herts role in and at event(s)</p> <p>iv. Encourage public to approach/contact councillors</p>

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4	<p>Partnership with CVS</p> <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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. This will enthuse, educate & enable local involvement ii. This will enable commissioning rather than grants giving iii. Evidence gathered through discussion at T&F group (Meeting 5) has provided valuable insight into the current good working relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Better connection through informal and formal meetings
5.	<p>Publicity /Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Council be proactive in presenting itself at community and public events (as appropriate & within available resources) 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 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. There is a need to be open to public view ii. There is a need to handle negative media (members' questionnaire) iii. This will help promote the council especially at community events using Market Place format and Council 'stall' if appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. People know what they have contributed to and what the council has done with the information ii. Good news stories are publicised iii. Targeted messages to specific communities or interest groups
5a	<p>Publicising the engagement event</p> <p>A robust framework be produced for publicising all events and a process be put in place for giving feedback involving ward members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The challenge for the council is to market effectively ii. The evidence has been gathered from responses from both Members and civic/residents' association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Attracting a diverse range of audience

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		questionnaires	
6.	<p>Use of New Media including the use of Face Book and Twitter</p> <p>a) The Council explores & 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 area of website to ensure usability by non-specialists</p> <p>c) 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</p>	<p>i. 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 appropriate tool for general/continuous dialogue with the public (Meeting 3)</p> <p>iv. This will enable Members' desire to put more emphasis /focus on making use of opportunities that are available through the use of modern technology</p>	<p>i. Adds new dimension to the engagement process</p> <p>ii. Encourage community and public to engage by making it easy and attractive</p> <p>iii. Support Youth Engagement</p>
7.	<p>Link Magazine</p> <p>a. Link should be reviewed in respect of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penetration (including considering alternative methods of distribution and giving all ward Members a number of copies to put in 	<p>i. LGA recent publication/guidelines on written publication has confirmed this</p> <p>ii. Current presentation,</p>	<p>i. People know what they contributed to and what came of it.</p> <p>ii. People remember the</p>

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	<p>appropriate community locations in their wards as relevant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and readability (background, use of colours) • Frequency of publication be reduced to 3 issues a year (as a pilot for a year) • Rebranded as 'Your Council Matters' 	<p>readership and readability is anecdotally not at a desirable standard (will be guided by the awaited new Code of Local Government Publicity)</p> <p>iii. Anecdotal evidence gathered suggests that it needs to be reviewed and the viability of its production less frequently should be considered</p> <p>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</p>	<p>magazine and look forward to receiving it</p>
8.	<p>Surveys</p> <p>The council should give more prominence to publishing the results and outcomes from all surveys in Link or on line (Meeting 3)</p>	<p>i. There is a need to recognise the Public Sector Duty to consult and inform</p> <p>ii. Leader of exemplar council (Breckland) provided evidence of good practice</p> <p>iii. Views expressed in civic and residents' association questionnaire confirms this</p> <p>iv. The mechanism for doing this currently exists but the council</p>	<p>i. People know what they have contributed to and what the council has done following the consultation result</p>

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		needs to do more	
9.	Resourcing Implement what recommendations are possible within the cost and resources envelopes (budgets) agreed as part of the MTFP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. 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) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Achieve Value for Money outcomes
10.	Toolkit for East Herts 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