

Targeted Support Fund.
Engagement in Hertfordshire.
For Presentation on 24th March 2010 at the Fielder Centre.

DRAFT.

Summary.

Across the County and across Authorities, Agencies, communities and the Third Sector there is substantial commitment and resource dedicated to inform, consult and involve people in the decisions that affect their lives. There is much good practice on the ground and many examples of good partnership working between departments within organisations, and between organisations in the different sectors.

However, Hertfordshire's NI 4 score puts it in the lowest third of LSPs in the Country. The County overall and some Districts/Boroughs score lower than expected.

This is disappointing given so much good work.

For those working on engagement there is much to learn from each other. This includes;

- Ways of collecting, managing, and understanding the deluge of data that results from consultations, surveys, focus groups, Forums and the many other interactions with residents. This data needs to be analysed and made useful for practitioners.
- Ways of engaging with residents, (and especially those communities that are harder to reach,) that generate listening, trust and genuine communications and cover the different tasks from informing, listening and discussing to joint decision making.
- Completing their systems of engagement (that is regular and structured engagement with the range of communities of interest and place) to ensure that all individuals and communities are included in the ways and to the extent that suits them. The Third Sector has an important role in this.
- Within organisations, integrating and prioritising engagement activities. This involves the coordination of communications, consultation, public relations, performance and data management, community relations, equalities, member engagement, democratic services and third sector engagement. In addition, there needs to be straightforward and practical ways to coordinate engagement activities between organisations at County and District and Borough levels (and at Parish and Town levels.) A multi tier structure makes this more complex.
- Defining a clear engagement vision for the County and supporting elected and other leaders to generate the changes needed in and between their organisations and communities to ensure that vision is implemented.

Introduction.

Over the past two months, discussions have taken place with engagement practitioners in organisations across the County. Appendix One outlines the range of conversations and interviews that have taken place. Definitions of the terms empowerment and engagement have been part of those discussions. Appendix one includes some insights into debates around definitions.

The summaries of the workshops, interviews, documents and discussions with officers, members and Third Sector representatives across the Boroughs, Districts and County Wide Authorities are attached at Appendix Two. The material is rich and varied and shows the range of different approaches adopted by different organisations in confronting the different challenges they face.

Everyone is aware of the NI 4 scores, scores for other national indicators in the Places Survey and scores in other surveys including the Citizenship Survey. (Some details of such scores are shown in Appendix Three.) In each locality and across the County there is a narrative which confronts the questions;

- What do we understand from the survey results for our locality?
- How well do we think we are doing?
- How can we improve what we are doing?

These narratives talk of what engagement work is going well, what challenges are being confronted and what needs to be done to improve performance. Having listened to those narratives, we have synthesised what we heard and derived the following headings to help us understand the different conversations. The headings are a way of presenting in a systematic format, the range of activities that practitioners define as leading to good engagement.

A Framework for Understanding Engagement in Hertfordshire.

1. Information. In order to come to an understanding of the needs of the communities we serve, referring to the geographic, demographic, socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the locality or area, practitioners need to collect, store, analyse, integrate and understand a range of data from a range of sources.

2. Trust. We need to understand and practice what works best in face to face community engagement exchanges. Building trust starts with using best practice ways of undertaking face to face and local engagement work.

3. Comprehensive Engagement. But good quality engagement interactions are not enough. Best practice engagement builds on these with structures, processes, forums (and more recent electronic and internet tools) to create an infrastructure via which messages pass systematically and continually from

communities to decision makers and back again. The Third Sector has an important role in this.

4. Integration. Within each organisation the community engagement process is an intrinsic and embedded part of communications, consultation, public relations, performance and data management, community relations, cohesion, equalities, member engagement, democratic services and third sector engagement. Between organisations and across the County, engagement needs to be integrated and prioritised to the degree needed to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of public services.

5. Vision and leadership. Leaders locally and at County level need to present a coherent vision of engagement based on the principles of customer focus and a clear business case that will support and drive the implementation of the framework.

The Framework follows a logical and systematic route from an assessment of needs on the ground, to best face to face engagement practice, to best practice structures, to best practice strategies to a comprehensive vision and leadership of the engagement processes. In this way it;

- follows a bottom up approach driven by needs as analysed locally and as expressed by residents
- it defines best practices as those that work in practice on the ground based on the empirical evidence of practitioners
- it builds on the emerging comprehensive vision of engagement and the leadership that is being provided within and across organisations

The framework is presented as the collective wisdom of engagement practitioners from across the County. Its value lies in the empirical evidence that practitioners and decision makers use as they plan and implement their engagement strategies.

1. Information. In order to come to an understanding of the needs of the communities we serve, referring to the geographic, demographic, socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the locality or area, practitioners need to collect, store, analyse, integrate and understand a range of data from a range of sources.

What does this mean?

There is a wealth of data available to Authorities from consultations, focus groups, opinion polls and surveys. This data is generated Nationally, Regionally, and at the County and locality level. The data gives information about the challenges that each Authority confronts in providing services to their residents.

What did we learn from talking to you?

The results of national surveys, of which there are many, were a disappointment for some people. There is a commitment to understand the many data streams that exist and to ensure that they inform practice. This is not an easy task as it is not clear what factors directly impact on the engagement scores. People are working on this in many organisations across the County and there is a willingness to work together and understand together. This has already happened in the case of contracting market research service (from Opinion Research Services) and in undertaking places survey and other work together. Some practitioners are using Mosaic and Output Area Classification tools. The Hertfordshire Local Information System offers potential and will be best received if it is seen as a collective tool.

The Hertfordshire Local Information System website, formerly known as the Hertfordshire Observatory, enables access to a wide range of data, information and intelligence. Content includes economic development, community safety strategies, community and corporate plans, area profiles, socio-economic data, demographic data, crime and policing statistics and much more

Various Authorities (among them the Police, Hertfordshire County Council, Watford and Three Rivers) use Mosaic to understand who is making what transactions with the Council. It uses 63 customer profiles. Other similar systems in use include the Output Area Classification software being used in Dacorum.

The recently published "Feeling you can influence decisions affecting your local area – what do the statistics tell us" from Inspire East,

Spring 2010 provides useful analysis. A short summary appears in the Appendices to this report. (See Appendix Four.)

Analysis and challenges?

The data being collected illustrates many challenges that engagement practitioners must address. These include;

- Some districts do not feel like coherent social or economic units. They are made up of different areas that have little in common with each other.
- In some Districts, one or two towns dominate. In others there are a series of smaller settlements each with their own identity.
- Different wards or communities within wards have very different challenges. One size approaches do not fit all. Policies and programmes must be adapted to the local reality on the ground.
- Many localities have different daytime and night time populations. Transport links can often divide communities.
- It is a challenge to target and shape engagement activities to reflect the interests and needs of different groups within the population.
- There are local perceptions generated by plans and activities over which Districts/Boroughs or County wide Agencies have little control.

Actually collecting the data, integrating different data streams, analysing, understanding and using it presents many challenges. Understanding the way different people perceive different issues is a social scientific challenge. As the task is to provide information and engagement opportunities to influence those perceptions, practitioners need clear and useful guidance from data analysts.

Recommendations.

1. There is a community of data collectors, managers and analysts in the Districts and across the County. They are an important sub-set of the overall comprehensive engagement effort. We recommend that they are identified and convened (electronically or physically) in order to share practice, to learn from each other, to problem solve for each other and over time to develop shared approaches that will underpin a Hertfordshire collective approach to the collection and management of data.
2. That the use of Mosaic be the subject of initial discussions of the data community to identify how it can be useful without being oversold.

3. That, in conjunction with ORS, the data community review the different tools and methods being used across the County. This could then inform work to understand and support each other and over time to converge different approaches.
4. That a shared approach is taken to the development of the Hertfordshire Local Information System website (formerly the Hertfordshire Observatory.) New functions could be developed to meet the needs of practitioners across the County. For example, a Consultation Calendar would usefully enable practitioners to know about and coordinate with the consultation efforts of others and avoid duplication.
<http://www.hertfordshireobservatory.org/keyresources/15615388/>

2. Trust. We need to understand and practice what works best in face to face community engagement exchanges. Building trust starts with using best practice ways of undertaking face to face and local engagement work.

What does this mean?

The practice (and some would say art) of real engagement and empowerment of residents rests at its most basic in the hundreds of daily interactions between public service providers and the residents or customers they serve. Doing this with a clear focus on the needs, aspirations and interests of residents lies at the heart of all those interactions and is the building block of successful community engagement.

What did we learn from talking to you?

Neighbourhood policing is well established and working well. There are a range of Forums and other structures that work well; e.g. Faith Forums, Neighbourhood Action Groups etc that provide a space in which people can feel confident and comfortable and therefore able to express their views. There are many sources of best practice available in handbooks and toolkits. Elected members are key practitioners of engagement skills as they spend much time engaging with their constituents. We learned that there are many spaces in which these quality engagements do not take place, being too formal, bureaucratic, alienating, culturally inappropriate or lacking in trust.

The Take Part programme in Cowley Hill, delivered by Community Action Hertsmere is helping people become more involved in influencing decisions by organising training, visits to Council Offices and Parliament and meetings with Council Leaders and senior officers

In Watford the LSP has invested some of its Performance Reward Grant into the One Watford Community Assembly Project, coordinated by the CVS and the Community Assembly, to increase the influence of the Third Sector with decision makers.

In Welwyn Hatfield, the Kaleidoscope Annual Festival celebrates cultural diversity under the heading “shared communities, shared values.” It brings together upwards of 12,000 people and provides an opportunity for the Council to inform and promote its services.

In Three Rivers, the consultation process on a new play area included Watford Mencap (which covers this area) consulting young people with learning difficulties on what features they would like to see included.

Broxbourne Housing Association carried out a Tenants Survey which used a combination of postal, phone and face to face contact- this has resulted in an 80% response, with up to date information and allowing targeting of particular groups.

NHS Hertfordshire understands the interests and concerns of the local population via patient surveys, discussions at road-shows, regular and adhoc meetings, the Patient Advice and Liaison Service, media enquiries and formal complaints.

Hertfordshire County Council commissioned the Green Hearts Partnership to understand community needs to inform the preparation of the draft Hertfordshire Forward Cohesion Strategy.

In Broxbourne a Transport Forum involved consulting older people. This took views and ideas and if there no financial costs resulting change can be made; e.g. a bus route has been altered as a result.

Analysis and challenges?

- There are hundreds of such interactions taking place every day and a great deal of good practice. Ways of actively listening, the use of paraphrasing to ensure understanding, pacing, speaking to people’s concerns, avoiding jargon, simplifying complex arguments without making them simplistic and the use of non written and non verbal forms of communications are all techniques that engagers use and which we can continue to improve.

- Empowering people to feel engaged and to have the trust and confidence to have their say requires us to create engagement opportunities that are designed with their needs in mind. Where engagement events are held and how they are run are important aspects of the trust building process.
- Improving our engagement skills and making residents the focus of our efforts is a job for everyone at whatever level they work or whatever their responsibilities.
- The degree to which a “customer focus” permeates an organisation is often reflected in how people feel about that organisation. Some authorities do it very well, being described as open, lively and approachable. Others have been described as stuffy, suits and aloof.
- Different approaches to the engagement interaction are required by different communities, different age groups and different cultures.

Recommendations.

5. We recommend that, where they have not already done so, public authorities consider the benefits that they might derive from following the Cabinet Office’s Customer Service Excellence standard for all their services.
6. We recommend that the various Engagement Toolkits that exist across the County be given high priority for all elected members and staff who engage with residents. We recommend that those tool kits be shared, adapted and used as learning tools. (e.g. “Community Empowerment Discussion Toolkit;” Inspire East; http://www.inspire-east.org.uk/discussiontoolkit_1.aspx?Area=NETWORK6) “Engage” a guide that looks at practical ways of engaging the community; www.hertslink.org/engage
7. We recommend a process of joint learning between practitioners and decision makers, to understand the factors that influence NI 4 (and other assessments) scores, in high and low scoring areas. This could give greater understanding of the engagement practices that might influence those scores.
8. We recommend that Authorities look at tools that will help them to judge the degree to which they are a listening and engaging organisation. (For example Changes UK’s Voice and Echo tools <http://changesuk.net/>)

3. Comprehensive Engagement. But good quality engagement interactions are not enough. Best practice engagement builds on these with structures, processes, forums (and more recent electronic and internet tools) to create an infrastructure via which messages pass systematically and continually from communities to decision makers and back again. The Third Sector has an important role in this.

What does this mean?

While one-off engagement events (e.g. consultations, specific focus groups etc) are useful and important, there needs to be a systematic infrastructure in place that empowers communities to regularly and effectively feed into discussions and hear feedback from previous discussions. It is an infrastructure that allows the communications loop to be completed. Voluntary and community sector groups and infrastructure have an important role to play in this. A positive relationship with the Third Sector is one indication that public bodies are fulfilling their Duty to Involve.

What did we learn from talking with you?

The community of people involved in engagement activities is wide, geographically, professionally and by sector. Some do not identify their role as relating to engagement. There is no uniquely correct system of engagement infrastructure. In some localities the system is very well defined, regular and formal in its structures. In others it is more informal, networked and uses many different types of engagement interface. Engagement is fragmented in some areas and for some communities. Working in a multi-tiered structure is challenging for everyone. In some localities, the voluntary and community sector feels undervalued.

The Dacorum Citizens Panel consists of over one thousand residents, and is representative of the profile of the Borough in terms of gender, age, ethnic origin and geographic location. Panel members are asked to complete around four surveys a year on a wide variety of topics, for example, parks and open spaces, refuse and recycling, or the Council's budget.

Watford Together is a sub-group of the LSP, established to take a strategic oversight of the third sector, cohesion and empowerment, to monitor Compact and improve volunteering.

In the Holbrook area of Broxbourne, Aldwyck and Broxbourne Housing Associations employ a worker to help build community involvement. A very

active residents association has regular meetings and has discussed local issues such as the impact of the Olympics.

Hertsmere have a system of groups, forums and networks that make up a clear pyramid structure via which messages and consultation move from communities to decision makers and back again. One such Forum is the regular Faith Leaders Forum.

The Welwyn Hatfield Community Chest scheme, begun in 2008, provides a budget for each Councillor to work with local residents to agree on schemes to improve their local area.

In East Hertfordshire regular 'Community Voice' meetings are held in the five main towns. In Stevenage monthly Councillor surgeries are held in 6 areas.

In Three Rivers the Equality Forum brings together officers, members and community representatives to discuss policy and services related to all strands of the equalities agenda.

Neighbourhood Policing is a priority and operates via 94 Police neighbourhoods. It is supported by a very active Neighbourhood Watch, and the online Watch Link

Several organisations have face-book and twitter feeds that provide new ways for engaging with residents.

NHS Hertfordshire has established patient groups for each GP Practice to provide accountability for Practice based commissioning. There are also patient groups for specific conditions, e.g. diabetes.

In East Hertfordshire residents act as 'expert witnesses' in the scrutiny function of the Council, for example in a Task and Finish group looking at markets.

Hertfordshire Council of Voluntary Services and Hertfordshire Assembly are permanent structures that give voice to the voluntary and community organisations as a sector. They are part of the engagement infrastructure and important in channelling information to and from Herts. Forward

Analysis and challenges?

- Engagement infrastructure needs to ensure that the right exchanges occur with the right groups at the right time. It needs to be focused on informing and engaging in ways that are appropriate to different communities and different groups in different communities. It needs to provide information and the opportunity to engage when and if required.

- Engagement infrastructure includes all communications mechanisms that move messages from communities to decision makers and from decision makers back to communities
- In some localities there are neighbourhood structures that bring residents together regularly to feed into discussions and to hear feedback.
- Some localities have Forums for different issues or different communities. These bring together representatives from communities of interest or communities of place and form an important link in the communications loop.
- Residents and communities are represented on LSPs and Thematic Partnerships across the County. It is important to ensuring that those representatives are able to fulfil their role of bringing the views of communities to LSP discussions and feeding back.
- The Third Sector is an important player in the communications loop. All Authorities provide support to the Third Sector in order to fulfil their representation role. The quality of the relations with the Third Sector varies across the County.
- Investment in third sector infrastructure can make good financial sense as many CVSs are able to bring in resources from outside their locality or outside the County.
- While work to promote volunteering across the County is developing, some feel that the overall potential contribution of the Third Sector is undervalued.
- Elected members operate structures that are part of this engagement infrastructure. It is important that their engagement work is planned as an integral part of the overall engagement effort.

Recommendations.

9. In most localities there are Forums, Third Sector structures, Neighbourhood arrangements and regular consultation arrangements in place. In some localities these should be reviewed to ensure that they are comprehensive and that they are reaching all communities, especially priority community.
10. Different public sector service providers have different engagement structures in place. It is recommended that, where it is sensible and possible, Hertfordshire County Council, the Police, the PCT, Districts and Boroughs and other organisations, coordinate and where appropriate combine their engagement activities so that residents are not confronted by multiple and confusing structures.
11. That each Authority develops its Consultation Calendar, that is a programme that enables all consultation exercises across

a locality to be planned and coordinated. This can ensure that consultations from different bodies can be coordinated and where appropriate joined up. That Hertfordshire County Council supports this by developing a County wide calendar useful and usable by all.

12. Recognising these times of financial constraint and that external financing is often available for engagement activities, it is recommended that the voluntary and community sector is supported to seek appropriate external funding.

4. Integration. Within each organisation the community engagement process is an intrinsic and embedded part of communications, consultation, public relations, performance and data management, community relations, cohesion, equalities, member engagement, democratic services and third sector engagement. Between organisations and across the County, engagement needs to be integrated and prioritised to the degree needed to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of public services.

What does this mean?

Community engagement, defined in a customer focused and comprehensive way to include all those interactions that take place with the different communities in a locality, should be at the heart of any service providers' agenda. It is a priority to ensure that engagement systems, and by that we mean the comprehensive set of activities contained within the headings of communications, consultation, public relations, performance and data management, community relations, equalities, member engagement, democratic services and third sector engagement are all coordinated into a coherent engagement system. This is a task for the senior teams in all organisations.

In addition, providing learning and where appropriate coordinating those activities across the County adds a further challenge that is complicated by the multi tiered structures of public service providers.

What did we learn from talking to you?

There is a great deal of successful, coordinated, inter organisational engagement work underway in localities and across the County. Many people described their successful and challenging efforts to join up their engagement work with the work of colleagues in other departments and other organisations. Challenges can stem from the many and different performance evaluation systems in place. Organisational structures can be flexible and encourage a joined up approach. Some people find silos and rigidity a challenge to comprehensive engagement. The business case for joined up engagement work is a matter of debate.

In Three Rivers, the Communications Officers Group meets to coordinate consultations and share results. A consultation calendar is in place and Facebook and twitter are used as part of the communications strategy.

In Watford, the Managing Director (working with the elected Mayor) is committed to generating the complete loop of consultation, joining up consultation, engagement, third sector and empowerment activities into a coherent system.

In Stevenage Neighbourhood Action Teams/forums allow residents opportunities to raise issues and meet councillors, officers, police, schools, voluntary groups. These forums feed into the LSP, local teams try to address issues and they have budgets.

The Public Engagement Partnership, now split into operational and strategic elements, has successfully coordinated research and information sharing across the County and now has a remit in relation to the responsibilities of the Duty to Involve.

NI 21, dealing with issues of anti-social behaviour and crime is now part of the LAA for Hertfordshire. This helps to bring together the different monitoring and evaluation regimes faced by different service providers across the County.

In Stevenage a Night Time Economy Group (which includes businesses) feeds into So Safe (the Safety Partnership) and then into LSP.

The PCT coordinates its work with partners via regular briefings with District Councils and Public Scrutiny Committees, a County Stakeholders Forum linking executive members and senior officers of Local Authorities and the Third Sector and the Public Engagement Partnership.

Analysis and challenges?

- There are many examples of good practice, where senior teams have made such joined up engagement work a priority. Also, between organisations, there are also many examples of good coordination; e.g. the work of the Public Engagement Partnership in managing relations with ORS, work around the Places Survey and the recent LGBT survey.
- For some people however, engagement work feels fragmented and disjointed.
- The business case for a comprehensive approach to engagement work was not made strongly in the workshops. Some would argue that a comprehensive approach to engagement makes good financial sense as it reduces duplication and focuses those involved in engagement on specific and coordinated tasks. Others would challenge that.
- In some organisations, the priority for achieving this integrated approach is only one priority among many others. It does not therefore drive service delivery and loses its potential.
- Research shows that residents do not know which part of what organisation provides them with each of their different services. Nor are they much interested in the complexities of inter organisational partnership working.
- Thus, providing a comprehensive engagement system across service providers (be they locality based or County wide) that appears joined up and easy to understand for residents is a priority.
- Seeing the communications function as part of the engagement function, and the use of newer communications tools, such as Facebook, twitter, blogs and interactive web-site, can add new dimensions to the engagement process.
- Joining up the different strands of the system, either within an organisation or across organisations requires a commitment to partnership working and the confidence of knowing that partners will not act unilaterally.
- Many practitioners feel that the engagement collaboration and mutual support across the County is weak. The County is sometimes seen as following its own agenda rather than building a shared agenda with partners.
- Prioritising learning and coordinating the engagement agenda across the County requires clarity of roles and responsibilities and agreed ways of working between County wide organisations and the Districts and Boroughs (and indeed with Town and Parish Councils.) A multi tiered structure makes this complex. There is work to be done building trust between organisations and between sectors based on a shared and agreed agenda.

Recommendations.

13. That the Strategic Public Engagement Partnership, building on the good work of coordinating the places survey and relations with ORS, provides the forum for developing the practice of the coordinated and comprehensive approach to community engagement as modelled by practitioners across the County.
14. That the S.PEP models best practice by building the structures of mutual support, shared learning and partnership improvement. This can be checked regularly by tracking the growth in trust and confidence among the community of engagement practitioners across the County.
15. That bringing together the community of people working on engagement could be achieved by established an electronic Community of Practice on which learning is shared, information is exchanged and further collaborations are discussed and planned.
16. Consultation around refreshing the Hertfordshire County Council Sustainable Community Strategy provides an opportunity to plan a consultation process that involves all partners and their communities. It is an opportunity to mirror best engagement practice. This would ensure that the resulting Strategy would be owned by all partners and would drive their own local work.

5. Leaders locally and at County level present a coherent vision of engagement based on the principles of customer focus and a clear business case, that will support and drive the implementation of the framework.

What does this mean?

Community engagement is a legal requirement. Some argue however, that putting residents (or customers or clients) at the heart of the business model for public service providers is more important than fulfilling a legal obligation. Some see it as essential to ensure that public services are provided efficiently and effectively, without duplication, or poor coordination between providers. There is a sense in some of the conversations that comprehensive community engagement is seen as something of an add-on, a nice-to-have but not essential requirement of the business model.

What did we learn from talking with you?

There is a great deal of energy in the engagement community. It is innovative, learning and prepared to work in new ways. The community engagement vision outlined in this report is derived from within Hertfordshire and there are many approaches to its implementing. Most people agree however, that the multi-tiered structure of public services in the County is a learning and coordination challenge. The new approaches and flexibility needed to meet these challenges need leadership to define the vision and ensure its implementation.

In Three Rivers all services have won the Cabinet Office Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Award, for which customer insight as an intrinsic part.

<http://www.cse.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/homeCSE.do>

The Strategic Leadership Contract between Hertfordshire County Council and Third Sector infrastructure organisations provides resources to facilitate Third Sector involvement and to enable Third Sector people to participate in the work of strategic partnerships.

The development of the Hertfordshire Cohesion Strategy provides the opportunity to align engagement strategies around common themes and shared resources. The upcoming refresh of the Sustainable Community Strategy provides a similar opportunity.

Hertfordshire County Council have prepared an outline action plan for the preparation and establishment of an Equality Council for Hertfordshire. Hertfordshire Constabulary, East, North and West Primary Care Trusts and the County Council have all identified and earmarked funding to support this project. They are recruiting staff to take it forward.

Analysis and challenges.

- A comprehensive residents focused approach to engagement is not a vision that is shared by all those working on community engagement
- There is concern that the economic situation will make the work of those involved in comprehensive community engagement more difficult, both by reducing the funds available for the work and increasing the tension in some communities as a result of unemployment.
- There is disappointment in the relatively low scores obtained in national surveys. Practitioners want to be known for their success.

- There is a feeling that the poor showing is despite the investment of money and resources in good quality work across the County. Some people feel that greater success would be achieved by joining up the different strands of work, locally and at a County level, into a coherent whole.
- However, this is a task that cannot be achieved by engagement practitioners. Rather it needs elected and appointed leaders, from across partnerships, to build and promote a vision that will maximise the impact of all the existing work.

Recommendations.

17. That the S.PEP, works with elected members and other leaders to understand ways of developing this comprehensive vision for engagement for Hertfordshire.
18. That a business case is developed to illustrate the costs and benefits of adopting a more comprehensive approach to engagement. This might use the work of the Network of Empowering Authorities and the ideas of Social Return on Investment.
19. That Hertfordshire Forward, working closely with all District LSPs might map all the resources currently being invested in comprehensive engagement and generate some alternative business models that might improve the efficient and effective use of those resources.

Some Definitions.

There is much discussion about the meaning of the terms community engagement and community empowerment. Relevant definitions for this work are;

NI 4

The proportion of the adult population who agree that they feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area

The Duty to Involve

- “information, consultation and involvement opportunities provided on the right issues, targeted at the right people, and accessible to those the authority is trying to reach”
- “citizens believe the authority provides relevant and accessible engagement opportunities and know how to get involved, either directly or through their elected representative...will recognise that authority’s priorities and policies reflect this involvement and services are tailored to local needs, even though difficult choices in service provision need to be made”

Community Empowerment.

Community Empowerment is about people and government, working together to make life better. It involves more people being able to influence decisions about their communities, and more people taking responsibility for tackling local problems, rather than expecting others to. The idea is that government can't solve everything by itself, and nor can the community: it's better when we work together.'

Community empowerment is the outcome of effective **community engagement**. It's about "...shifting power, influence and responsibility away from existing centres of power and into the hands of communities and individual citizens.

Communities and Local Government.

APPENDIX ONE.

A Summary of the work undertaken to consult the views of engagement practitioners across the County.

“The Place Survey told us a lot about people’s perceptions of life in Hertfordshire, including the extent to which people feel able to affect decisions affecting their local area. This measure is otherwise known as National Indicator 4 (NI4) and is of particular importance to Hertfordshire having selected it in the county’s Local Area Agreement (LAA). The LAA sets the challenge of improving the percentage of people who feel they can affect decisions in their locality from 26.8% in 2008/09 to 30.8% in 2010/11. Project Initiation Document, 20 January 2010.

In order to understand how that improvement might be achieved, workshops and interviews were planned to address the following questions;

- *“What is being done in some areas to generate good results?”*
- *Are there common barriers or success factors across the County that we can confront together?*
- *Are there common barriers or success factors across some Districts or Wards that we might confront together?*
- *How can we effectively learn from each other and from best practice elsewhere, to ensure that people feel better able to influence decisions that affect their lives?”*
Project Initiation Document.

Workshops were planned in all ten District/Borough Council areas. These workshops were convened locally, (via the locality members of the Public Engagement Partnership or others nominated by them,) and localities were able to extend the invitation to members of elected members, officers and voluntary and community organisations.

A total of nine locality workshops have taken place, ranging in size from six to 35 people. The size and composition of each workshop related to other work that was taking place locally, timings and the different ways that community engagement is implemented in each locality. Discussions with one locality are still outstanding.

In addition, workshops or interviews were held with those dealing with engagement issues in Hertfordshire County Council, the two Hertfordshire PCTs, the Police Authority, the Hertfordshire Constabulary and the Fire and Rescue Service.

We estimate that we will have had discussions with over 120 people during the course of this project. There are many other people who we did not manage to contact and given the timescales, were not able to attend the workshops. However, the range of people who participated means that its outcome has been informed from a variety of perspectives. Of those who attended the workshops, 96% found them to be useful or very useful.

APPENDIX TWO.

Notes from workshops and interviews.

Report From: Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City

Date: 2 March 2010

1. What community empowerment activities are currently underway and are any of these examples of successful or good practice?

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Panel are consulted throughout the year on a variety of issues. (evidence, see website)

People feel safe in Welwyn Hatfield. Evidenced from a street interview project last October and feedback from Community Involvement Days (for evidence see Annual Report 2008-09). Low crime and a perception of safety improving. As a result of street wardens, PCSOs and the work of the WH Community Safety Partnership (for evidence, see website).

Life Magazine, the council's community magazine is published quarterly and the Council's Annual Report both go to every household. Good communications medium and a method of "informing".

Community Chest scheme began in 2008. It is a councillor-led initiative enabling Ward councillors and residents to work together to agree on and develop local improvement ideas. This gives everyone a greater role in enhancing local quality of life and is supported by both capital and revenue funding.

The Civic Awards is an award scheme from Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council. They are presented annually to people who live or work in the borough for extraordinary commitment, dedication, energy and effort in their field or towards achieving a particular goal.

Voluntary Organisations that operate in Welwyn Hatfield recruit most of their members from the borough and those who can show a need for financial assistance are eligible to apply for a grant from the Council. Total spend on third sector is about £300,000, being about two thirds on annual grants to vol. orgs (e.g. CAB, Relate, Women's Refuge, CVS etc.) and one-third being community grants, smaller one-off grants.

The CVS is funded £27,000 by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council. For that they provide a volunteer service and 9 to 5 presence in office.

Good financial support from Hertfordshire Community Foundation for local third sector organisations.

The Council will be recruiting an Equalities & Diversity Officer for delivering the actions within the Council's Equality & Diversity scheme and related Improvement Plan. This will involve working with the third sector.

Clean and well maintained environment in WGC. Good support for elderly and disabled.

Large stock of council houses (approx 9,400 tenancies), well managed and tenants voted to keep them in Council management as service was good. Now moving over to a Community Housing Trust from April, and will be managed with tenant participation. The council is in the process of recruiting Community Engagement Officers who will work for the Trust.

Kaleidoscope Annual Festival. One day per year, up to 12,000 people. Some Council grant to support it and opportunity for Council to inform and promote services. Run and organised by volunteers (up to 60 of them.) Has large untapped potential. BME population 11.2% of 97,600 (2001 Census.)

Public consultation on budget for 2010/11 resulted in 0% increase in Borough Council Tax precept. Good example of listening and responding.

The cycle of Council elections is seen as generating participation, with elections for one-third of Councillors every year and elections for County Councillors on the fourth year.

The Council's "Open Door to Democracy" policy makes it as easy as possible for local residents to participate in decision-making by public speaking at meetings, asking questions and presenting petitions.

“Meet Your Councillor” sessions are held on most Saturday mornings of the year in locations throughout the Borough for local residents to raise or discuss issues with their Ward Members. Residents do not need to make an appointment and can just turn up.

2. What are the main challenges to improving community empowerment across Hertfordshire/District?

Many people identify with living in either Welwyn or Hatfield (as separate and distinct entities.) There is less identity with Welwyn Hatfield. Both are new towns, but Hatfield had a large aerospace industry which is now gone. Hatfield Town centre is outdated and there has been some local dissatisfaction around its regeneration (initially delayed due to the recession but a revised scheme is now progressing)

The CVS was consulted over town centre redevelopment but did not secure an alternative town centre location in the plans. Consultation is ongoing.

There is one Ward of high deprivation in each town and engagement with BME community is seen as very important. Used to have relatively high numbers of NEETs and, as reported in last Joint Inspection, BME groups not performing well at school (compared both to other groups locally and BME groups in other Districts.)

Introducing structures with the third sector, and BME communities to engage with Council and the LSP, will be within the remit of the new E&D Officer. The Council has an Equality & Diversity Steering Group. Its membership is currently made up of Officers and Members. The Borough Council does not have an Equalities Council but will be represented on the Herts. Equalities Council when it is formed later in 2010.

WH has a range of sports facilities, parks and open spaces, although Gosling perceived as expensive by some. This is run by a Leisure Trust on behalf of the Council.

The Welwyn Hatfield Alliance (the LSP) recently had a workshop to discuss the results of the Place Survey. There are very different scores for Hatfield and Welwyn GC. People in Hatfield saw it as a less desirable place to live, a lower sense of belonging, a lower perception that public bodies acted on their concerns, felt less well informed, wanted to be more involved in decisions that affected them, felt less safe than people in the Garden City. That meeting analysed the reasons for the results as follows:

- The need to improve the visibility of the Alliance brand.
- The need to communicate about services. The public lack clear information about some services (and research shows that lack of information is correlated with not feeling engaged (and poor NI4 scores.)
- The need to prioritise services and to constantly feed information to the public about those services.
- Improve services and celebrate successes. Build on outcomes and enhance people’s perceptions of success.

The LSP has been seen to be a useful way of sharing information and seeks to drive a community partnership agenda.

The two-tier structure requires a great deal of work and relations with the County although friendly are not always as productive as they could be.

There is not a strong sense of place in some parts of the borough. It is very strong in rural communities as evidenced in the Place Survey. Is there sufficient continuous communications with residents? How strong is the civic leadership perceived to be?

3. What work is being done or plans developed to confront these challenges?

Community Lead Planning at Parish level would improve second and third tier working relations. (There are 5 Parish Councils, 1 Town Council and 2 Parish Meetings in the borough).

Work in hand to do a customer survey of people who attend Council Meetings, perhaps to review the format of Meetings and thus to increase participation.

There will be a Planning Advisory Service workshop on effective community engagement in planning.

Council and Alliance to consider raising their profile by going to where people congregate, taking the message to them. More effective communications needed to increase the profile.

Need engagement with young people outside of the Youth Council.

The Council can feel formal, people in shirts, careful. Is there a need for a cultural shift in the Council to make it more accessible?

The Council is seeking to achieve a workforce more reflective of the local community.

Summary of Targeted Support work Broxbourne:

Description:

A half day workshop was held in which 18 people from different organisations participated. Nearly 90% of participants completed evaluation forms, and all but one of these reported the event as 'useful' or 'very useful' in enabling them to share understandings of community empowerment. 81% of those responding said they would be taking action after the event.

Respondents felt the following matters should be followed up by the Targeted Support project:

- Ways of generating local involvement, identifying local representatives and improving communications
- Strengthening volunteering and voluntary sector and helping smaller groups to secure funding
- Partnership working, esp. HCC and Borough/ district working and finding the right balance with parish/ town councils

The following matters were identified as things on which respondents would like specific support:

- Ways of generating more local involvement of the community and identifying community representatives, especially in disadvantaged areas
- Reviewing the idea of budgets for members/ local neighbourhoods and neighbourhood meetings
- Shared access points and communications with local partners

Main themes:

Three groups discussed the current position on empowerment locally, key challenges to improvement and priorities for improvement. The main themes to emerge were:

- **Identifying communities better** and doing this 'from the bottom up', and with information from a more coordinated information system. Considering the mix of properties in an area to achieve a stronger community.
- **Providing effective mechanisms for local engagement;** the possibility of town/parish community councils was discussed.
- **Funding to promote community empowerment** at very local levels to be allocated to meet locally determined priorities.
- **Developing a more effective range of communication channels** between partners and the communities identified

Summary of Targeted Support work

Stevenage:

Description:

A half day workshop was held in which 20 people from different organisations (10 from the Borough Council) participated. Around two thirds of participants completed evaluation forms, and all of these reported the event as 'useful' or 'very useful' in enabling them to share understandings of community empowerment. 85% of those responding said they would be taking action after the event.

Comments made by respondents on what the Targeted Support project should look at included:

- Examining different opportunities and approaches to engagement
- Ways in which information is communicated
- Ways of coordinating communications between agencies and coordinating community feedback
- Exploring ways of embedding children and young people's views in service planning and delivery

The following matters were identified as things on which respondents would like specific support:

- Developing different engagement opportunities
- Ways of engaging children and young people
- Sharing good practice and understanding better why areas vary on their NI4 scores (especially the 'top performers')

Main themes:

Four groups discussed the current position on empowerment locally, key challenges to improvement and priorities for improvement. The main themes to emerge were:

- Agencies working in a more coordinated fashion sharing information, developing joint approaches to consultation, considering the outcomes of engagement together and feeding back the outcomes etc.
- Developing better information about which community interest groups are interested in which issues (and with a particular interest in young people).
- Developing tailored communication 'platforms' for engagement which reflect these differences (and perhaps including new media channels).
- Developing the role and capacity of local councillors.
- Increasing positive media coverage of the area.

Summary of Targeted Support work

East Hertfordshire:

Description:

A half day workshop was held in which 17 people from different organisations (10 from the District Council), participated. Around a third of participants completed evaluation forms, and all of these reported the event as 'useful' or 'very useful' in enabling them to share understandings of community empowerment. 75 % of those responding said they would be taking action after the event.

Respondents felt the following matters should be followed up by the Targeted Support project:

- Overall engagement of voluntary sector across Hertfordshire

The following matters were identified as things on which respondents would like specific support:

- Marketing of community engagement initiatives

Main themes:

The event was focused on three topics, and groups discussed the current position, challenges to improvement and priorities for improvement (summarised):

Scrutiny function (EHDC)- Fixing database; Go to community; Real engagement

'Community Voice' (EHDC community meetings in its five towns)- Need overarching Communications Strategy; Ownership; Develop process; marketing; support the integrity of all partners (pr and reputation).

Community leadership and empowerment- Promote the concept of partnership working; Effective communication; Identify community leaders

The following more general themes emerged:

- The diversity of geographical and other communities across the District and the recognition of the need to tailor communications and engagement activity to their different needs, concerns and interests (including the use of new media where appropriate).
- The acknowledgement that some specific mechanisms for consultation and involvement can become routinised and lack real value in terms of a two way dialogue between local people and the agencies serving them and how others by virtue of their location, structure, procedures and language can be alienating to the public.
- How consultative mechanisms developed by one agency might be more effective if they were owned and organised by partners (perhaps under the aegis of the LSP), so encouraging proper accountability for specific issues/ actions, the presentation of public agencies in a unified and coordinated way and so offering scope for the development of richer and more effective responses to a particular issue or problems. This might extend to the development of a joint Communications Strategy across the different partners.
- The importance of feeding back the outcomes of particular consultations or engagement activity.

Report From; Watford Borough Council. Workshop held at the Cassio Centre, Watford.

Date: 22 February 2010.

1. What community empowerment activities are currently underway and are any of these examples of successful or good practice?

The LSP has invested a proportion of its Performance Reward Grant into what is known as the One Watford Community Assembly project. This project comprises a Resource Centre for the Voluntary Sector (hosted by CVS and Community Assembly to increase the influence of sector over decision makers. It is a new project, with a joint steering group that has yet to be widely publicised.

Strong Third Sector, Council has a commissioning fund of £1.2m (which has remained static since 2003-04) to support the work of the third sector infrastructure and service provision. Also, good on Social Enterprise.

Sports and Leisure facilities rated best in whole Country through the Place Survey. . This is a big turnaround on a few years ago, when they were judged by local people to be poor. Two new leisure centres built and good sports facilities.

Also lots going on. Thriving shopping and night time economy, theatre, professional football and rugby, vibrant third sector.

Town has an identity (unlike some Council Districts); it is compact, densely populated, strong history, (has Royal Charter from 12th Century, market goes back to same date,) good location, good transport, overall it is affluent (in top quartile in Country,) good for young people, easy access to London for jobs and entertainment. But identity issues complicated by nearness to London. Dormitory town issues.

Watford (and Stevenage and Three Rivers) have highest levels of people feeling informed and that adds to perception of empowerment.

Has lost some industry (print) but low unemployment overall.

It is diverse, non-white British population 21%, BME 14%. Council is reviewing its Single Equality Strategy, it has a One Watford Scrutiny Panel to provide challenge to its work on equalities. Largest BME community is from Pakistan, a significant proportion from Kashmir. Many are third generation. Good communications with Muslim leaders, they meet regularly with Mayor.

Very positive about elected Mayor. Does elected Mayor correlate with good NI4 scores (e.g. Watford, Newham, Hackney?)

The consultation over the Council housing stock transfer used consultation method and the model adopted for the new housing trust is known as the Gateway model, which is tenant led. They voted for tenant led organisation to take over stock. Very positive.

Watford election cycle, election each year for Borough Councillors and fourth year for County. Borough Council has positive image. Managing Director keen on generating a complete loop of consultation, third sector, communications, engagement. Join up all these activities so that they are part of a complete system. (Important to engage with local paper Watford Observer. It defines much of the local agenda) Some people perceive that relations can be strained, but the council's Communications Manager believes this may have been true a number of years ago, but the paper is broadly supportive now.

High levels of third stage education but more of a mixed picture at second stage.

3. What are the main challenges to improving community empowerment across Hertfordshire/District?

Can investment in third sector be sustained? Economic downturn is going to be difficult.

There must be innovation and efficiency to constantly improve what is already going well.

Three year funding being negotiated (with the council) due for renewal in April 2010.

There need to be clear ways of how we measure value added by investment in third sector.

It is getting harder to find people to be actively involved. Issues of the same faces doing much of the grass roots work. Some long term people holding on to positions giving younger people less opportunities to express and lead. This also true in BME community.

Some groups have fewer opportunities, less empowered, e.g. communities not motivated by religion (humanists) compared with religious communities.

There is a perception of Watford being over-developed yet there is need for more housing. This will be greater challenge in the future.

Unemployment, highest in County (but still low on National scale.)

Perception that elected people are not listening, poor reputation of politicians following national issues e.g. expenses.

Some indicators of community safety are below average. Large night time economy creates perception that there are issues of poor safety.

Road congestion is a challenge.

Hard to recruit people to the council's Citizens Panel.

The language of "empowerment" puts lots of people off. Sometimes seems like a closed shop. And will the language and approach change after the next election?

Watford has highest incidence of acute mental health issues in the County. There are Community Mental Health services challenges. The local mental health hospital is not well regarded by some.

High levels of teenage pregnancy.

Issues of two tier Council structure. Referendum 15 years ago did not approve unitary status.

There exists some dissatisfaction with County Council over education, roads. There is a feeling that they are isolated, far away, not sure what they do (70% of Council tax goes to County.) Services seem to be centralised, local offices closed, things are drawing in. e.g. Conference on partnership with Districts had all HCC speakers didn't feel like partnership in practice.

Perception that officers in HCC don't understand empowerment issues; they can seem defensive.

4. What work is being done or plans developed to confront these challenges?

Network of Community Development workers established Watford wide.

Watford Together is a sub group of One Watford (the LSP) and will lead on community issues taking strategic oversight of third sector and empowerment issues. Its priorities are to strengthen community cohesion, increase engagement, monitor the Watford Compact, strengthen the voluntary sector, champion volunteering and champion equalities and inclusion.

Developing Watford for You, building the reputation and identity of the Town. Need to develop relations with the business sector and all communities.

Developing on-line networking, Watford has second largest Facebook following of any Council in Country. (But it is time-consuming to service.) Issue how to engage with those not on-line, older people. Need to balance on-line with face to face.

Promotion of volunteering. Lower perceptions of people getting on with each other and low levels of volunteering (harder to promote in urban areas) than elsewhere in county. Issue of blurring between volunteers and paid staff and valuing volunteers.

Use of the Experian Mosaic Public Sector system to better analyse the needs of customers by post codes.

Ensuring that the consultation loop is complete. Sometimes we are poor at feeding back the results of consultation and what is happening as a result. It is part of programmes, best practice means seeing all communications function, consultation, feedback by all communications means (internal, external, electronic, etc.) community development and all empowerment activities as part of one system. Recognise that politicians themselves are essential part of communications system.

Better partnership working with other service providers, PCT, Police, HCC. People don't care who provides services. All service providers need to work better together. Need joint engagement programmes with PCT, Police and HCC.

Need to counter the feeling that strategic decision making seems to be getting further away, to HCC and to East of England Region. Watford does not feel like East of England.

The two tier issue needs some innovative thinking.

Promotion of volunteering and Time Bank (system of bartering services within a community using time as a medium of exchange.) The CVS is talking about establishing a Volunteering Unit.

The Community Assembly (brings representatives from all accredited community groups or networks together twice a year) is working to give people different options on how to get involved. Will provide training to both community representatives and statutory employees.

Need to work on changing people's perceptions of themselves and encourage investment in self. The high levels of mental health problems require innovation and new thinking.
Need to engage with politicians on communications efforts. They are key in empowerment and communications efforts. We need to prioritise feedback information.

Report From; Three Rivers Workshop

Date: 4 March 2010

1. What community empowerment activities are currently underway and are any of these examples of successful or good practice?

All 3R services have been accredited with the Cabinet Office Customer Service Excellence Standard, which is based on customer insight tools. First Authority in the country to get it for all services. Had charter mark before that. This provides an external quality check. Customer insight is an essential element in building each service plan. (Not a bolt on extra.) This has increased the volume of engagement across the Council.

(All staff given a days holiday when the standard was achieved.)

Police have just published their National Perceptions Study. In 3R 72% said they agreed that Police are doing effective job tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. This is highest result for County. 3R has low crime rate and low fear of crime.

Use of Mosaic (Experian.) Used to profile customer transactions (i.e. to understand who is making those transactions based on 63 customer profiles.) Used as a comparator for consultation results. Is essential part of CSE Standard. Its use is driven by the Management Board. Used also by the Police and Hertfordshire CC.

Good place survey results and those results used in communications with residents.

Equalities Forum brings together members and representatives for community groups to discuss policy and other matters. (Ethnic breakdown in 3R; 13% BME. BME community is mixed and spread across social economic categories.)

Democratic services, Democracy Pack sent to all on their 18th birthday (some 500 per year.)

LSP Board makes quick decisions. Community Safety Partnership recognised as good practice by Home Office. Recently started sub-groups Poverty Action Group and Prosperity and Employment Group.

Engagement of the third sector (2 LSP seats out of 15 members) recognises that they do not have endless time to spend in meetings but rather involve specific third sector organisations in the specific operational decisions that concern their specific area of interest.

LSP has £800k of reward grant. This has raised its profile. LSP has not oversold itself or over promised what it can achieve.

Elected members good at grass roots communications. Communications department sends out e-news letters to members and they forward them to constituents. (E-Newsletters using Mail Chimp gives feed back on who is opening and reading e-mail newsletters.) There is a cross party Editorial Working Party. Communications is customer focused, i.e. speaking to their agenda not just saying what Council is doing well.

The work of elected members is generally respected and valued. Officers speak well of the work of members.

Members hold Local Area Forums 2/3 times per year and for special occasions (e.g. a planning application.) (The District has 5 Parish Councils. Rickmansworth not parished.)

Consultation events around planning applications are well promoted and well attended.

Thrive Housing involves tenants and works to include those who often do not or are not able to respond to initiatives.

The engagement process for a new play area worked with Watford Mencap to consult young people with learning difficulties. The use of the Widgit Symbols on letters (drawing attention to key facts for those with learning difficulties) is being piloted.

75% increase in use of Council website this year. Focus group evaluation gave the website a B. (People given incentives to attend Focus Groups to ensure that Groups are representative of population as a whole.)

There is work with Facebook and a twitter feed.

Pensioners Forum is good. Council Leader bakes cakes for their recent meeting.

Communications Officers Group (meets three times per year and meets virtually) brings together those responsible for communications in all services, to coordinate consultation efforts, to piggy back questions, to share consultation results on Intranet. There is a consultation calendar to ensure no duplication and to coordinate.

All six Children's Centres are operational. Two fully operational and 4 others on the way to being fully operational.

2. What is the current state of community empowerment in x in terms of areas of strength and areas needing further development? (use a combination of the presented and additional statistical information plus qualitative evidence)

3. What are the main challenges to improving community empowerment across Hertfordshire/District?

Some specific target groups are harder to reach and consult with. Some sections of BME community. There is no voluntary sector organisation representing BME community in 3Rs. There are in Watford and they work with BME community in 3Rs. Is a dedicated 3Rs BME organisation the best way to engage the BME community? Is there a community development need with BME community? How is it best to create and sustain an on-going dialogue with BME community?

Hard to reach young adults (18 to 30/35.) Hard to reach low income households. (Low income is biggest indicator of low satisfaction with public services.) Lower income groups engage less with engagement initiatives.

Poor consultation response rates for young people (18 to 34) in poor areas. Also poor response rate from children under 16 in those areas.

Some area based initiatives are not always well coordinated.

Partnership work around disability (especially with young people in transition and BME communities) could be opened and broadened.

Work with long term workless and low income households which are differently affected by economic downturn than more recently workless effected households. Work with long term unemployed.

Work with rural areas. People living and working in such can perceive that they get less good public services. E.g. Police reaction to thefts from farms, rural dumping can be perceived as less of a priority than urban calls on police time.

Work with the LGBT community. There is no local community infrastructure via which to relate to this community. (Also lots of such infrastructure in London.)

Deepening engagement work often leads to more issues to address which leads to increased costs in the first instance. There may be delays to achieving potential cost savings.

There is a lack of seamless relations with Hertfordshire CC. The two tier structure presents challenges. There is good District /County engagement around children's services. Another good example is the Emergency Planning Officer who hot desks in the Districts. Not so good around other areas. Residents are confused and care little about which organisation is responsible for what service. It is often hard to engage with local work done by County Council.

E.G. Developing engagement strategies and practices in partnership with HCC is a challenge. The Public Engagement Partnership (PEP) did well in achieving joint purchasing of market research data services. Is good at sharing good practice. Successful at bringing all Districts (except one) into the LGBT survey.) But still to deliver on work of aligning engagement strategies between HCC and Districts. Engagement on developing good engagement strategies between HCC and Districts should model good engagement strategy. This is a challenge especially recognising the big differences between Districts and their approaches to engagement and empowerment.

HCC seems to have its own agenda, feels top down not partnership. HCC consultation with Districts is a challenge, i.e. having one District representative to represent all Districts on a Partnership Body is not satisfactory e.g. Hertfordshire Forward. "We feel like a resource through which they achieve their ends."

Sometimes feels like there is poor engagement between HCC departments. Some feel HCS is loosing grass roots contacts and that there are poorer contacts with local organisations as services are centralised. Some feel that there is not good engagement between HCC strategy and operational service deliverers.

4. What work is being done or plans developed to confront these challenges?

Suggested that HCC might work towards Customer Service Excellence Standard.

Could members who are both HCC and District Councillors play a role in enhancing two tier working?

PEP to work on aligning empowerment and engagement strategies across County and Districts.

In coordinating empowerment and engagement activities across the county we might model the place survey language in our empowerment language.

County agencies might consult and share their engagement plans with all Districts.

It would be useful to consult on the present empowerment and engagement structures and processes across County and Districts and to work to build alignment between them.

All theme groups of Herts. Forward should have clear engagement strategies.

HCC and other county wide bodies to share the results of their consultations with Districts and vice versa. Also, share plans to hold consultations so that Districts know when County is going to consult. Maybe need a Joint Consultation Calendar across the County.

County Communications Team brings together all Communications managers from Districts four times a year. Good at sharing good practice, sharing training. Maybe could work on an integrated Communications Strategy.

Report From; Hertsmere Workshop

Date: 9 March 2010

1. What community empowerment activities are currently underway and are any of these examples of successful or good practice?

Refreshing the Sustainable Community Strategy is underway and is using feedback from the Making Your Voice Heard consultation sessions.

Take Part programme in Cowleyhill Ward, to helping people become more involved in influencing decisions, building confidence. Focused on the community as a whole (no exclusions.) Is an income deprived area. Bid developed in conjunction with HCC. (Another local Take Part pilot in Stevenage.)

Take Part delivered via Community Action Herts. (the CVS) which was already known in the area and trusted from previous work. This added to good perceptions about the work. Work involves visits to Council Offices, Parliament, workshops, training etc. Project seen as powerful by Council.

Community Shop, providing point of access, a range of services and seen as important by community and service providers. E.g. used for a week for crime reduction work and neighbourhood crime watch. PCSOs are seen as very important and good at engaging with young people.

Make your voice heard events (2.) Aimed at hard to reach groups (e.g. people with learning difficulties, mental health issues, faith groups, BME communities, homeless.) 75 and 50 people attended. Will hold more of them.

Support for third sector. Grant funds and support to infrastructure organisations. Also, volunteering promotion. E.g. Home Start, recruits volunteers from one area to work with families in another area. Good to learn about the lives of others.

Recent Take Part event included meeting HCC leaders, market place for all HCC departments. 46 people attended.

There is a twitter feed with 110 followers. (No Facebook as it was decided this was too resource hungry to keep up to date.)

Two voluntary sector reps on the LSP and invitations to sector to be involved in all LSP sub-groups. One of the reps is the Empowerment and Engagement Champion keeping a watching brief on everything that comes out of LSP.

Some good extensions of services underway following consultations; e.g. collection of glass. The Waste Forum brings community representatives together quarterly to discuss waste and recycling.

Lots of community Forums supported across the Borough, to encourage people to get involved. We work to make sure what comes out of Forums is fed back to service providers and not lost. Important then to feedback to those consulted. Lots of networking to achieve this, networking within Council and across communities.

Lots of community activity in place, 50+ activities, clubs run through Borough, University of Third Age.

Good events in the Parks in the summer. Also Town Council Festival Fortnight.

All faith leaders meet every two months for coordination and have a seat on LSP. Successful Interfaith Week.

Councils do far more re. engagement than they probably realise. Most staff and Councillors live in Hertsmere and are constantly engaging, consulting and listening.

There is a clear pyramid of groups, forums, communities, organisations feeding messages up and down again. The structure works organically and consultations and feedback move up and down the pyramid.

2. What are the main challenges to improving community empowerment across Hertfordshire/District?

Some agency officials have lots to learn about how to engage different groups of people. The language used can exclude some, and the form of presentation, use of jargon or patronising language etc can turn some people off.

Some feel that the voluntary sector and volunteering is not well supported by the Council.

Challenge to find out information to inform and feed back to residents. Not much coordination of information across the Council in order to feed back efficiently. Whole communications effort using all the media, print, web site etc could be better coordinated across all services. Shortage of resources. E.g. Take Part could use funds for admin support to make it more effective.

There is a lack of confidence in communities and individuals to get involved, to ask questions. Levels of awareness increasing but lots to do. We need to be aware and to build confidence on both sides (communities and service providers.) Trust and Confidence are very important issues. Many people take Council for granted. Things work OK so why should I bother?

Lots of local attitudes are formed by national events rather than what we do locally.

Challenge of getting people involved and sustaining projects (e.g. Take Part) over time. It feels like we are skating over the surface, opening up good opportunities but needing more resources and time to maximise their impact.

We need more mentoring in schools. Parents sometimes reluctant to go to Head if there is an issue. Some things need to support of mentor, friend (a smile.) Local leaders need support. Voluntary sector spends much time going to meetings as well as working to deliver whatever services they provide. It can be a strain. People can burn out. Networking is effective but time consuming.

Funding for the voluntary sector is probably in the bottom third compared with other Councils in the County. Some feel that the sector is undervalued by the Council. But the sector raises lots of funding from outside.

The Borough is long and diverse. Not a coherent geographic entity. It is a challenge to make what we do Borough wide. There are very different communities and towns in the Borough with different challenges and opportunities.

The perception is that the HCC and its work has become increasingly remote and insignificant over time. Most residents do not know what authority delivers what services (and care less as long as services are delivered well.)

The third sector (especially the CVSSs) works well across the County. It feels like the HCC does not appreciate the work being done by the third sector.

Merged Connections and Youth service (provided by County.) Not sure what they do. Not much seen here. The services they provide could have been contracted to local voluntary sector to provide. Used to be an integrated publication for young people "Be There Do It." Now County does their own.

Local third sector knows its area and its people. Other service providing organisations are more remote. Sometimes services tendered out and outside organisations helicopter-ed in. They often don't know the local area or use local people to provide services.

Do County value local service providers and local customers? I have seen projects I do reported on as if they were County projects.

HCC can seem very official, scary.

HCC is on a hiding to nothing. They have saved costs by concentrating staff in fewer locations in order to provide more local services. But this can make them feel more remote. Some people feel there is a golden circle of people in the loop and involved. If you not in that circle you don't get invited etc.

3. What work is being done or plans developed to confront these challenges?

What about outsourcing youth services to be provided by local third sector.

Allow third sector a level playing field when services are commissioned. E.g. Hertsmere Leisure Trust manages children's centres and leisure facilities. It is a charity set up by Council when these services moved out of Council.

Districts and Boroughs have important role to play in ensuring democratic control and being accountable for services. As to who should provide services that depends on who can best fulfil needs of end user.

Would be good to have a total place approach to empowerment across the County.

Important to develop good links with local business and promote their role in the local community.

How do we work when so much of what we do is driven by external forces and dictated by above; e.g. Central Government, Europe, the County.

There seems to be lots of bureaucracy, it is time consuming and wasteful.

Report From; Dacorum Borough Council

Date: 17 February 2010

1. What community empowerment activities are currently underway and are any of these examples of successful or good practice?

- Decorum Website
- Effective Partnership Working
- Community Safety Partnership – Crime Figures going down, detection rate figures rising
- Community Involvement
- Neighbourhood Action Groups – increased membership, 2 new youth clubs
- Local Development Framework
- Consultations
- Extreme Connexions
- Extended Schools / Children's Centres
- Regeneration Plan
- Engagement Tool Kit
- Dacorum Economic Situation Group
- Swan Youth Project
- Tring Youth Centre (Temperance Hall)
- Residents Survey – NI4 = 38%
- Low rate of young people Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) rate
- Supportive & active business community – Maylands Partnership, Dacorum Green Business Partnership
- Thriving volunteer community – 60% increase in volunteers this year
- Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) invest more money in the voluntary sector than any other district council
- Seen as 'lead' in Hertfordshire in how DBC work with voluntary sector
- Tring Together
- Berkhamsted Community Partnership
- Improving communications between DBC & Town & Parish Councils (T&PC)
Canal & Riverside Partnership award winning
- Attract outside investments – Big Lottery, Heritage Lottery fund.

2. What are the main challenges to improving community empowerment across Hertfordshire/District?

- Shrinking public funds. Money, resources – people, places, right skills
- Disparity between have / have nots. Wealthiest and most deprived
- Link between consultation and action
- Expectations from consultation – Managing expectations, DBC perceived as fail to deliver
- Geography - shape of Borough, divided by canal and by-pass. Mix of urban & rural, East / West split
- 'Dacorum' is not a recognised area / place
- 'Dacorum' means the Council too many people
- History - urban & district councils merged and evolved into New Town Commission
- Internal communication between DBC departments
- Funding of Tring & Berkhamsted Partnerships
- Some feel lack of communication / good relationship between DBC & T&PC
- Lack of community cohesion in Dacorum
- Sense of 3 different communities
- Commuters / lack of links with their communities
- Business community not involved in Place Survey
- Public apathy
- Perception that DBC officers will do what they want to do
Feedback to communities – win / win

- Drip in the positives
- Manage people's expectations
- Involving the right people
- Engagement needs to be relevant to local people
- Breaking the silos

3. What work is being done or plans developed to confront these challenges?	
Challenges	Gaps
Neighbourhood Action groups and relationships with Business Community – good because continuity – regular meetings, same attendees, newsletters, feedback building trust and credibility Less money overall – redundancies and cuts to services How are these decided, are there business cases put forward. Look at what they contribute. Need to understand why cuts made in the way they are Getting the information out in clear language Communication with population is not effective People not wanting to be involved Dacorum – re-name / re- brand Working together with more trust Investment in the future Inform, consult, Involve – Monitor & Deliver YP's prioritising Managing expectations Action Plans Evidence based Sharing information Different / appropriate types of consultation Funding / Resources Locality Forums – Bid writing, participatory budgets	Co-ordination of information between DBC & T&PC Communications department at DBC can't always get press releases published so need to use external agencies Social media networking Specific area focussed / targeted Re-brand Dacorum Digest Joined up consultations Setting boundaries Profiling tool

4. How should your priority topic be progressed in the coming year and could your proposals be taken forward in partnership with other districts or across the County?

Consultation Calendar

- Identifying departments and agencies
- Target audience methods etc
- CTP & LSP to co-ordinate

Customer Insight

- Knowing our customers
- Local issues
- Sharing & analysing information
- Ward profiling

Localised Digest – non jargon / council speak

Opinion Formers Database – use to input / check accuracy of Digest

Interactive Website?

Report From; Workshop with Police Authority and Constabulary

Date: 5 March 2010

1. What community empowerment activities are currently underway and are any of these examples of successful or good practice?

Neighbourhood Policing. Provides and is based on very good local knowledge and commitment of local staff. There are 94 police neighbourhoods in Herts. The service is well structured and all have clear priorities (three priorities agreed locally.) This makes police service well positioned and better prioritised than many other services.

Neighbourhood Policing is a priority throughout the Force, and is aimed at closing reassurance gaps.

Promoted in Hertfordshire for many years, it is now backed up with the Policing Pledge, locally responsive teams.

Part of the localisation agenda and begs questions of the role of the different tiers of authorities in the delivery of services. County level agencies are key to local service delivery. Interesting to see results of Place I survey 2008 and other evaluations. NI 21 (seen as police confidence measure) now part of LAA for Herts. This is a step towards a more coherent set of evaluation procedures but still some way to go. (So do HCC and DCs see NI 21 as a key indicator?)

Herts. scores in the top 5 in country on NI 21 (based on British Crime Survey results). Low crime levels. High levels of confidence. But similar patterns of good and poor performance across County in NI survey and Safer and Stronger Community Survey.

County wide coordination structures exist (to coordinate all service providers and engagement activities.) County wide LSP and Community Safety Partnership. Public Engagement Partnership in place. But sometimes they depend on one or two key people.

Very active Neighbourhood Watch, supported by online Watch Link. Lots of activity, lots of people involved.

Some work with Facebook and Twitter, but tend to be projects promoted by one or two enthusiasts.

Safer Herts. Campaign. Joint reassurance programme. Pulled together communications, consultation and community safety staff from all service delivery agencies in order to provide coherent positive messages to the public. It got lots of coverage and won a Chartered Institute of PR award. Example of positive coordinated working.

Good partnership working around undertaking the Place survey 2008. Worked well and well coordinated.

PEP also led on the NI 21 survey, 'Safer and Stronger Communities' survey 2009-10. Also, establishing partnership with ORS and its contract with most agencies across the County.

Another example of positive coordination working.

2. What are the main challenges to improving community empowerment across Hertfordshire/District?

The setting of local policing priorities by local people is not yet embedded. Perhaps only a dozen localities where this happens effectively.

According to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), police managed public meetings around the Police Pledge were poorly managed. Is the process too much a professional's process rather than a public process? Could this sort of priority setting work be best done collectively in coordination with other agencies? Not consistently done across the County.

There is inconsistency in local areas and boundaries, police neighbourhood, council wards, health regions. Makes joint locality working more difficult. Needs better coordination.

Many authorities do not have management and decisions-making structures that can work quickly and flexibly. The Police can move more quickly at the local / neighbourhood level.

There is a challenge re. the changing expectations of county level organisations providing services locally. The localisation agenda provides a massive challenge in defining the roles and relationships between Districts (and Town and Parish Councils) and County level agencies in providing services. Challenge compounded by budget cuts. Leading this change and bringing everyone along is not easy. Very different perspectives at County and District levels. The two tier structure is a complexity and a challenge. Tension exists between levels.

We need to work out what works well re. engagement practice for Police. Police initiated public meetings are not always the most effective means of identifying local priorities for policing and promoting public reassurance.

Challenges re vertical and horizontal coordination and integration within very large organisations. Does the left hand always know what the right hand is doing?

Tension between professionals commitment to engagement and leaders willingness or space to let public set the agenda.

Feedback to public from Police is poor. Only 50% of people feel confident about contacting Neighbourhood Team in non emergency. Need to improve public access to information. We need to be more ambitious about opportunities for engagement. Police enquiry offices need to be more user friendly.

Some disappointment with CAA process. Lots of work done by agencies to get data in to Audit Commission. What came back was not recognised as valid. Lots of corrections were needed. So some enthusiasm for CAA lost.

Red Flag for lack of commitment to East Of England development plans. (But as County opposes them this is not surprising.)

High and growing proportion of residents with legally recognised disabilities. They will be more important service users in the future. All agencies need to work together to seek to meet the growing challenges that will be presented to local health and Adult Care Services as the resident population ages. Attitudes to health and health services expected to become a key element of the 'world view' of many adults and will affect their attitude to local services from all agencies. Failure to address the demands presented by health and adult care is expected to impact on community cohesion.

Neighbourhood Policing Priorities is not a performance priority for the work of the CSP. Setting such priorities could be part of remit of CSP and then monitoring performance against them. At present not well coordinated. There is organisational complexity that hinders this.

3. What work is being done or plans developed to confront these challenges?

One success of neighbourhood policing is the role and work of PCSOs. Funding of this part of the work is still complex and reliant on many sources. This needs to be clarified and regularised. Still some work to do to help everyone understand their role.

Would be good to achieve better integration of local Cllrs in local priority setting. Very positive that each Cllr has £10k to spend on local priorities in their constituency.

Do we share aims and visions of empowerment and engagement across the county and across all agencies? With whom do we want to engage and about what and how? Do we all agree? Are we all working to same agenda? Are we using similar methods and practices? Are we sure what works? Are we appealing to activists? Are we using a common language?

Build on Herts. Sustainable Community Strategy and Herts. Cohesion Strategy and County Theme Strategies. Do they provide enough clarity to direct and guide empowerment and engagement work?

We need clear and agreed division of labour in empowerment and engagement between all agencies and all levels. There should be agreement about which agency takes the lead on which parts.

CSP assessments indicated some good cohesion practice, e.g. Green Heart Partnership qualitative research to support Herts. Forward Cohesion Strategy. Emerging themes include people want to be heard, the importance of feeling welcomed and belonging, transport as a barrier to neighbourhood interaction, local friendliness and knowing those around you, people are willing to get involved and contribute but time pressures are real, media tends to propagate negative stereotypes.

Need to bring together different strands and sources of money to make activity more coordinated. One good example of this was the LGBT Survey. Another good example is the HCC and Police Community Safety Unit. Exploring some innovate structures that will help to cross boundaries in complex organisations.

Need a coherent data collection and analysis unit supporting analysis for all agencies in the County. (e.g. A Hertfordshire Observatory.) This enhanced information unit, which would support and coordinate the work already being done in partner agencies and Districts, would link in with consultation, communication, PR and empowerment activities conducted by all agencies at all levels across County. A Pathfinder approach to empowerment and engagement is needed of which MIDAS is a green shoot towards this. Not valued by all as yet.

Report From; Herefordshire County Council. (Workshop of Officers with responsibility for engagement for the different services.)

Date: 5 February 2010

1. What is the current state of community empowerment in Hertfordshire/District?

Outline both hard data and qualitative data.

Analysis. Perceptions of being able to influence decisions correlate with perceptions of good communications at District Level.

There are no clear correlations between with cohesion.

No answers yet on NI 21 Survey to questions about ability to influence. Results available before end of this research.

Green Heart Partnership, headlines of items that influence communities; (See notes from Police Workshop for headlines of Green Hearts work.)

Religious Belief Survey.

LGBT Survey.

Other data sources include Herts. Sustainable Community Strategy, Herts. Community Cohesion Strategy.

Hertfordshire is a highly empowered community (well educated, people have resources) but not much engaged politically. But for excluded groups it is hard to live in Herts. Therefore, e.g. use of internet for communications is good for some but not for others.

Herts. is generally a low crime area. There is good engagement around community safety (Crime Reduction and Disorder Partnerships.)

Data from the Quality of Life Report. Shows turnout of 18% at last County elections by elections. This shows a democratic challenge.

Some factors impacting on people's feeling of empowerment. While most people agree that more empowerment is a good thing;

There are problems with the NI4 measure;

It is difficult to relate NI 4 scores to empowerment. What are the drivers of the NI4 score? They are hard to identify.

People's sense of empowerment may not relate only to actions of the County/District Councils. E.g. Scores in Dacorum may have been affected by hospital closures rather than by actions of County or District.

Not everyone wants be engaged in everything.

2. What activities are currently underway and what are the examples of success and good practice?

The **Take Part Pathfinder** in Cowley Park. Working with BME communities identifying barriers to participation. This has completed year one of a 2 year project.

Libraries. 47 across the County, providing a presence, sources of information, access to IT. Increased opening hours and increased numbers of enquiries.

Children's Centres. 82 by 2011. Information, advice, training and support.

County is becoming more **locally sensitive**. Improvements in call centre data usage. Better economic analysis.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Informs policy, planers and cross service agencies.

In **Adult Care Services**; initiatives to act local; i.e. web counselling services; use of community agents for personal visits to elderly; personalisation of care services (including online services,)

Diversity; Herts. Equality Council is being established. There is an Equality Strategy and surveys both of religious beliefs and the LGBT community. Community Cohesion Strategy in place.

People in Partnership Pack, providing help for people who are being bullied.

Support for parents and carers of disabled children; meetings, information about choices and the vulnerable family service.

Making Neighbourhoods Project. Encouraging sense of community and identity, developing personal skills. Is partnership working improving? **Herts. Forward** is working well with good relations with the VCS. E.g. for the first time we have a Community Cohesion Strategy done by Herts. Forward in consultation with many others.

3. What are the main challenges in developing community empowerment in Hertfordshire/District? Please distinguish external challenges (e.g. demographics, historical, geographical etc) and internal organisational challenges (e.g. structures, systems, expectations etc.)

Transport. It is a big County, and travel to and around many rural areas and villages makes face to face consultations harder. Also transport and access issues in urban areas (e.g. Waltham Cross estate is cut off by a main road which gives a sense of isolation.) North South communications better than East West.

Is the **County less visible** and seen to be doing less?

Complex logistics of working with 10 District Councils, sheer numbers of organisations and complexities of the partnerships work needed to plan together; different political leadership across the County.

Herts. is a **large area** with a population of 1.1 m.

Are we working closely enough with the **third tier** (Parish and Town Councils?)

There are **11 LSPs** to coordinate. This is complex.

(Just collecting data in this current diagnostic project is complex having to collect from 15 different organisational sources.)

This makes things **bureaucratic and slow moving**. Often informal Partnership working is the best. Are actions and responses slow due to long decision making chains, the risk of making decisions that will be opposed somewhere. Do we hide behind leaders?

Our organisations have a **self-preservation instinct**, protecting our resources and programmes. Joining things up with Districts is hard. More difficult still joining up with Police, PCT etc. Will it get harder as financial situation gets worse?

Work trying to meet some targets leads us to do things that do not make sense. To engage communities we must ask what they want and build strategy from there. Not impose our agenda. The sort of performance culture we have creates problems and leads us to activities that are "bonkers."

Issues about our **understanding of the concept of community**. And recognition that communities are complex, divided, with their own hierarchies and leadership issues. And different communities have different priorities. How can these be reconciled?

Do people want to be empowered? Is it a patronising approach? Do they see themselves as disempowered? In the Take Part programme we found disagreements with what we think about a community and what it thinks of itself. Also mismatch between what communities think we are managing and what we are managing (resources, time etc.)

How do we **reference our knowledge to community reality**? How do we **feed back** in a way that creates communications? (e.g. In an area of high teenage pregnancies there is good engagement because people feel they live in a supportive community.)

How do we define and understand the **local context**?

Clear leadership at County level. Was a problem but now clearer about localism (note different vocabulary of empowerment.) Better direction and involvement of elected members now. More clarity of role of elected members. Working on alignment of political leadership between County and Districts. This is about elective democracy rather than participative democracy.

The role of **Hertfordshire Local** is important here. How can that be developed? What is the role of e-democracy?

There are challenges about **implementation** whatever plans are agreed. Resources, managing the complexity, will to change etc.

The sheer **complexity of coordinating** empowerment activities, the empowerment aspects of all activities, consultations etc. Sheer volume of data that needs to be coordinated and feed back.

Is the **external image of the County Council** off-putting to people? Do we have an image problem?

4. What work is being done or plans developed to confront these challenges?

Information. Better use of information, more joined up, better feedback to communities, better analysis, better sharing of information between organisations, departments, better use of information in changing services, (e.g. Intelligent Herts. Project.)

Organisation of services using the concept of **Team Hertfordshire**. That is one service function containing many organisations and providers.

Understanding the future and how that will impact on the needs we will have to meet.
Scenario planning; what will we be doing in 5 years? What will we be organisationally in five years? What will be the impact of the recession? What new demands will we need to fulfil? Do we need to develop a better understanding of the future for Hertfordshire rather than just planning to continue providing the services we currently provide?

5. What are your immediate priorities for early action in meeting these challenges? How best can these be taken forward in partnership with other districts or across the County?

Information. Some revision and re-design of the web page underway. Thinking about information as a service in ways we have not done in the past. This could lead to savings which can be re-invested to support those who do not have access to electronic communications.

Information may need to be more personalised to specific needs of users.

Join up information confronting institutional barriers that exist between and within organisations.

What things do we not have to do into the future? What services can be stopped, or provided differently (e.g. smoke alarms, provide info to those who can do it themselves but don't do it for them.)

Develop a collective understanding of issues, across organisations, across communities and across services. Build an understanding using common methods that empower participation and therefore build ownership and responsibility for the outcomes and their implementation. For example in refreshing the Community Strategy and defining together the inequality and sustainability issues that will generate common outcomes for all. This will involve Herts. Forward, all organisations planning and budgeting to shared goals.

Learn to aggregate planning (as above) without losing the actual reality of community needs. May need a non-hierarchical matrix way of working together to replace the up/down bureaucratic style currently in use. (Re-conceptualising our organisations.)

Define a common set of outcomes for the County, across all services and organisations, to which **Team Herefordshire** can be addressed and evaluated.

What do we mean by community? Develop a more sophisticated understanding (e.g. on-line communities; road users as a community.)

We need better processes to map what we are all doing re. empowerment (perhaps having a separate cost code to collect spend data.) Is there too much one-off empowerment work and not enough systematic and structural building of empowerment into everything? Decreasing budgets may encourage this.

Report From; PCT. (NHS Hertfordshire)

Date: 2 February 2010

1. What is the current state of community empowerment in Hertfordshire/District? Outline both hard data and qualitative data.

NHS Herts. Comes into being on 1 April 2010. There used to be 8 PCTs in the County. That was reduced to 2 in 2006 and is now becoming one.

We have undertaken social research together with the County Council, the Police and 8 of the 10 District Councils, using Opinion Research Services (ORS.) We now come together as the PEP, with two groups,. One strategic and one operational. 1

NHS Hertfordshire is assessed as a commissioning organisation, using competencies set in the World Class Commissioning framework. Results against these competencies will be published by the NHS in Summer of 2010.

1. Are recognised as the local leader of the NHS
2. Work collaboratively with community partners to commission services that optimise health gains and reductions in health inequalities
3. Proactively seek and build continuous and meaningful engagement with the public and patients, to shape services and improve health
4. Lead continuous and meaningful engagement with clinicians to inform strategy, and drive quality, service design and resource utilisation
5. Manage knowledge and undertake robust and regular needs assessments that establish a full understanding of current and future local health needs and requirements
6. Prioritise investment according to local needs, service requirements and the values of the NHS
7. Effectively stimulate the market to meet demand and secure required clinical, and health and well-being outcomes
8. Promote and specify continuous improvements in quality and outcomes through clinical and provider innovation and configuration
9. Secure procurement skills that ensure robust and viable contracts
10. Effectively manage systems and work in partnership with providers to ensure contract compliance and continuous improvements in quality and outcomes
11. Make sound financial investments to ensure sustainable development and value for money

Elements of its communications and engagement work include; The PCT Communications and Public Engagement Strategy; regular briefing of District Council Meetings and Health Scrutiny Committees; a County Stakeholder Forum linking executive members and senior officers of local authorities and senior representatives of the voluntary sector; the Public Engagement Partnership, linking Police, County and District Councils and the third sector; work with partners in Hertfordshire Forward on the county Sustainable Community Strategy. We come together across the County in the PEP (both strategic and operational.)

2. What activities are currently underway and what are the examples of success and good practice?

We have ongoing engagement mechanisms but each time a change to service is suggested, we develop an engagement /communication plan.

Following the merger of East and West PCTs, they are looking at what consultation structures would be best to ensure continuation of good community engagement. Stakeholders Forum.

There are Patient Groups for each Practice Based commissioning groups (six to date) to provide accountability for Practice Based Commissioning. Also there are condition specific network groups for feed back to the PCT on services for that condition (diabetes).

3. What are the main challenges in developing community empowerment in Hertfordshire/District? Please distinguish external challenges (e.g. demographics, historical, geographical etc) and internal organisational challenges (e.g. structures, systems, expectations etc.)

Many challenges are local in nature; e.g. Stevenage and Watford have good NI 4 scores being single towns (more concentrated geography areas that have rural and urban features.) They have retained sites for acute hospitals and residents perceive this as a positive.

Welwyn-Hatfield and Dacorum may feel they have lost out in health service reorganisation. Residents perceive their hospital has closed or has been downgraded; or the promise of a hospital has been broken (Hatfield)

East Herts. Is a series of small towns with some competition between them. It is a large geographical area which makes empowerment harder.

Broxbourne. Has a diverse area, with many small towns and London overspill. Many different communities including Turkish. Again a feeling among residents that Broxbourne has lost out as a result of health service reorganisation in North London.

North Herts. Poor NI 4 score not sure why.

Hertsmere. Average score, has probably gained in health service reorganisation.

Three Rivers. Ok re. health services, Mount Vernon (cancer care) and Watford (acute hospital services)

St Albans. Good health services, affluent area.

Would be useful to map the 25 most deprived wards and match those to NI 4 scores. It is important to understand the drivers of NI 4.

4. What work is being done or plans developed to confront these challenges?

The plans to develop work in this area are contained in Communications and Engagement Implementation plan 2010/11, which accompanies the Communications and Engagement strategy 2010-2014 And the Communications and Public Engagement Strategy, NHS Hertfordshire 2009-2014

APPENDIX THREE.

NI 4, NI 7 and NI 21. Comparing Scores.

	NI 4	Rank	NI 7	NI 21 By telephone interview	Rank
England	18.9%		16.2%		
Herts. County	27.0%		14.0%	68.5%	
Broxbourne	24.6%	9		64.3%	10
Dacorum	22.6%	10		65.2%	9
East Herts.	28.1%	4		68.2%	5
Hertsmere	27.6%	5		66.9%	8
North Herts.	24.8%	8		67.8%	6
St. Albans	26.7%	6		67.7%	7
Stevenage	29.7%	3		69.7%	4
Three Rivers	31.6%	1		72.5%	1
Watford	31.6%	1		72.5%	1
Welwyn Hatfield	25.2%	7		69.9%	3

Health Warning.

The absolute measures of NI 4 and NI 21 are not comparable as they were collected using different measures. However, the ranking orders can be compared.

APPENDIX FOUR.

“Feeling you can influence decisions affecting your local area – what do the statistics tell us.” Inspire East, Spring 2010.

This excellent report looks at statistics and analysis from many sources, including from Places Survey, Citizenship Survey, Best Value Survey, Ipsos MORI's Area Challenge Index (a contextual value added measure) and the relationships between them, National Centre for Social Research and CLG.

Places Survey and Citizenship Survey show decline over time.

It analyses;

- the groups more likely to feel able to influence local decisions (e.g. females, some BME communities,)*
- and those who feel less able to influence (people who feel less safe, practising Muslim people and people with no religion, people with lower qualifications.)*
- It lists many variables that were found to have no impact on felt ability to influence local decisions (e.g. socio economic group, employment status, rural/urban, home tenure, sexual identify.)*
- It lists the barriers to influencing local decision making (e.g. lack of time, language, low confidence, lack of information, lack of feedback to community, inaccessibility of decision makers, decisions made centrally (appropriately or appropriately,) cultural issues with some newly arrived or settled communities.)*

Hertfordshire results in the Places Survey 2008.

Hertfordshire is eighth out of 11 areas in the East of England Region with a score of 27% compared with East of England Score of 28.6% and England score of 28.9%. Hertfordshire and two of its Districts (Welwyn Hatfield and Dacorum) have lower scores than their context would predict (using the Area Challenge Index,) Even excluding all statistical complexities, the Hertfordshire score is “noteworthy” for being lower than expected.

Hertfordshire's NI 4 score places it in the worst third of LSPs in the Country. Figures seem to illustrate challenges in certain Districts (e.g. Dacorum.)

Good performers include Norfolk (32.3 %,) which has;

- Intensive locality work,*
- Deepening engagement*
- County-wide work directly addressing information and perceptions,*
- Its index of involvement in local decisions is strong*
- Participatory budgeting project, Your Norfolk,*
- Heavy investment in reputation including through local LSPs*
- Responsibility for NI 4 rest within department that also includes marketing and customer service.*
- Scores for feeling well informed about services and getting involved in local decisions are excellent pointing to “extra special” communications.*

Some points of analysis;

- Trust in the Council is one of the key factors relating to feelings of influence*
- Very difficult to drive up scores acting on policy and service issues singly. Needs a comprehensive approach.*
- Public services need to work on improved communications.*
- Building trust means concentrating on “information, consultation and involvement opportunities provided on right issues, targeted at right people,” and “citizens believe authority provides engagement opportunities and know how and that priorities reflect this involvement.” (These are identified in the Duty to Involve.)*

• *Public services need to focus on the above (Duty to Involve) rather than directly on the NI 4 indicator.*

• *Those in higher socio-economic groups and higher qualifications would like to be more involved, and they say it would be easier to be involved if they know what issues were being considered and if the Council got in touch with them.*

CLG research on barriers, facilitators and strategies that relate to feeling able to influence include;

• *The need to act collectively not individually*
• *Having views heard and having views acted upon*
• *Barriers exist at level of individual, local government, central government and the community.*

• *Improve content and delivery of information, ways in which consultations take place, making meetings more user friendly, improving accessibility and accountability and customer service of local authorities.*

• *Bring communities together to enable them to have more influence.*
• *Ensure local authority staff reflects ethnic diversity in area. Devolve decision making to key groups.*

• *Organise referendums on key issues.*
• *Engage different elements of communities*
• *Ensure sufficient funds and resources for engagement*
• *Build effective partnerships and ensure procedures in place for monitoring and evaluation.*

Ways in which local authorities can help people influence local decisions.

Improve information and decision making (*ensure people understand the roles and remits of different public bodies, publicise what key decisions are being taken, enable people to participate in various ways, use publications for enabling people to influence not for propaganda.*)

Improve mechanisms through which local people can influence, (*improve listening, consider issues on which to consult, ways of consulting, use of small groups and inclusive meeting arrangement.*)

Improve customer service in every interaction with local people, (*customer-focused approach, role of Councillors is vital.*)

Implement other measures to facilitate working together and feeling of influence, (*organise community events, and build capacity of local groups.*)