

CABINET



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| Report subject | Community Engagement Strategy Consultation |
| Meeting date | 20 December 2019 |
| Status | Public Report |
| Executive summary | <p>This report proposes public consultation on the development of a Community Engagement Strategy for BCP Council. The purpose of this strategy is to provide clear principles about how the Council engages and consults with the local community. The report outlines a proposed consultation period and seeks approval from Cabinet to commence this in January 2020.</p> <p>This report also considers the need for the Council to develop clear guidance around how it will prioritise area-based regeneration work in areas of deprivation. It proposes that Cabinet authorises officers to develop a Community Regeneration Strategy in early 2020 which will provide clarity about how we identify and work within these priority areas.</p> <p>This report also details the existing area forums and Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) Panels across BCP which currently provide a platform for community engagement and proposes that these are maintained for the foreseeable future, or until such time alternative arrangements are put in place.</p> |
| Recommendations | <p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) Cabinet approve the draft principles contained within Appendix A, “Community Engagement Strategy Draft Principles”, and;(b) Cabinet approve the implementation of the consultation methodology and timescales included in Appendix B, “Community Engagement Strategy Consultation Plan”, and;(c) Cabinet authorises Officers to develop a Community Regeneration Strategy in due course, and;(d) Cabinet approve the ongoing support of area |

| | forums and SNT panels. |
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| Reason for recommendations | <p>a) Cabinet are recommended to approve the draft principles in order for BCP Council to progress with the development of a Community Engagement Strategy which details the approaches it will use to engaging and consulting with the community. This ensures that the Council is delivering its Corporate Plan priority of Connected Communities. The draft principles will be subject to consultation with the wider community to ensure that they are appropriate and reflect the needs of the local community.</p> <p>b) Cabinet are recommended to approve the implementation of the Community Engagement Strategy Consultation Plan in order for a robust 13-week public consultation to take place. The details within the consultation plan propose far reaching methods to ensure that alongside traditional methods of consultation we are reaching out to seek the views of those who would often not engage in mainstream consultation techniques. A far-reaching consultation with a commitment to targeted consultation in every ward in the Borough will enable BCP Council to understand how to engage and consult with all sectors of society;</p> <p>c) Cabinet are recommended to authorise officers to begin work on a Community Regeneration Strategy in 2020 so that the Council has clear and transparent processes for how it will prioritise areas for regeneration to ensure that they are adequately resourced and supported.</p> <p>d) Cabinet are recommended to approve the continuation of area forums and SNT meetings to ensure that there are recognised platforms for residents to engage with the Council and partners and raise concerns as required.</p> |

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| Portfolio Holder(s): | Cllr Lewis Allison (Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Leisure and Communities) |
| Corporate Director | Kate Ryan, Corporate Director for Environment and Communities |
| Contributors | Kelly Ansell, Director of Communities Cat McMillan, Communities Manager Lisa Stuchberry, Insight Manager |
| Wards | All wards in BCP |
| Classification | For Decision |

Background

1. Ensuring that our diverse communities have the opportunity to shape and influence decision making in their local communities is a fundamental priority of the Council. This has been reflected through the development of the Corporate Plan and Corporate Equality Action Plan which have both recently been approved by the Council.
2. BCP Council's Corporate Plan places "Vibrant Communities with outstanding quality of life where everyone plays an active role" as the central ambition for how it operates. It also commits to a priority to deliver "Connected Communities, empowering our communities so everyone feels safe, engaged and included". In order to achieve this, BCP Council needs to place its communities at the heart of everything it does. This means ensuring that communities have the opportunity to be engaged in consultation and decision-making processes through effective, meaningful engagement and consultation. The purpose of the Community Engagement & Consultation Plan is to ensure that this approach is in place throughout the Council.
3. Unlike usual consultations, we have deliberately not written the Community Engagement & Consultation Strategy in full and then consulted upon the content. Instead, we are choosing to go out to consultation with a set of underlying principles which we would like to seek people's views on, along with gathering further information about the ways in which people prefer to be engaged with. The draft principles of the Community Engagement & Consultation Strategy directly link to the Corporate Plan. The consultation has been designed to ensure that we are reaching as wide an audience as possible in order to inform and shape the strategy. Once we have heard people's views through the consultation, we will consider this feedback and draft the strategy accordingly.
4. The BCP Council Corporate Equality Action Plan identifies an action under "Understanding and working with your communities" to "Develop a Research and

Consultation Governance Framework for BCP that ensures full community engagement”. The development of a Community Engagement & Consultation Strategy will provide the framework for ensuring that there are effective, meaningful two-way processes for the Council to engage with the community and vice-versa.

Community Engagement

5. Community engagement is about giving people the confidence, skills and power so they can get involved, shape and influence the planning, development and delivery of services. Delivering engagement activities can take many different forms and the level of involvement can vary greatly. This can range from providing simple routes for people to raise concerns about issues affecting their neighbourhoods through to consultation on new or changing services.
6. A Community Engagement & Consultation Strategy details the approach to engaging with communities in order to:
 - proactively seek out community values, concerns and aspirations;
 - incorporate those values, concerns and aspirations into a decision-making process or processes; and
 - establish an ongoing partnership with the community to ensure that the community’s priorities and values continue to shape services.
7. It provides a set of principles that the Council upholds in relation to engaging with and listening to community and what the community can do in order to get involved and have their say. It also reflects on engagement being a two-way process and includes the role that our communities can play in making a difference.

Links to the Corporate Plan

8. The Corporate Plan states a priority to deliver “*Connected Communities: empowering our communities so everyone feels safe, engaged and included*”. The Community Engagement Strategy will help the Council to achieve this by providing a framework which will enable the Council to:
 - better understand and respond to the needs of local people;
 - be more accountable to local people;
 - plan and deliver better services;
 - make more efficient use of public resources;
 - take transparent decisions based on strong evidence;
 - build strong and positive relationships within and between local communities;
 - test out ideas and explore emerging issues;
 - measure the performance of the Council in delivering services;

9. The Strategy will also encourage the Council to work collaboratively with the community, where resources and timescales allow, to enable the community to:
 - have a greater say and choice in the design and delivery of local services;
 - develop new skills and expertise;
 - become better informed about the Council's work.
10. This will ensure that communities understand the rationale behind the decisions that need to be made by the Council, are aware of the different options that are available in order to try and address this and can be involved in providing their views about which option is the best for both the Council and the community. This enables open and transparent conversations to take place over potentially difficult decisions in a more meaningful and productive way.

Progress to date

11. A workshop was held in October with Members of the Cabinet to start the work of developing a set of principles for a Community Engagement Strategy. This work has since been further developed to reflect a draft set of principles for BCP Council, which takes account of the Corporate Plan priorities. The draft principles which are proposed are contained within Appendix A

Links to wider community work taking place

12. Alongside the development of the Community Engagement Strategy, there is a need for BCP Council to develop its approach to working with communities in priority areas of deprivation.
13. There are currently two Community Regeneration areas within BCP in Boscombe and West Howe, which are overseen by Regeneration Partnership Boards set up under legacy Bournemouth arrangements. The Health & Wellbeing Board for BCP Council is developing proposals for a Health & Wellbeing Strategy. One of the proposed areas of work for the Health & Wellbeing Strategy is working with communities of highest need collectively to improve healthy life expectancy. A series of workshops are being held in November to identify which communities should be prioritised and what role the Health & Wellbeing Board will play in overseeing this work. This will include reviewing the data, targets and objectives and ensuring the appropriate partners are engaged and committed to delivering the work.
14. The recently released Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019 has identified additional areas across BCP which are within the 20% most deprived nationally and consideration needs to be given to what approaches could or should be taken to address the issues in these areas. With limited resources there is a need to have a clearly defined process which details which areas BCP Council will prioritise for targeted activity. Appendix C, IMD 2019, provides further information about the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and how this impacts upon areas within BCP.

15. The issues facing our areas of deprivation are complex and multi-layered and it is vitally important that we work with partners such as the Police, Public Health, the Voluntary Sector and most importantly the communities themselves in order to fully understand the issues and work together to develop solutions to solve them. It is therefore recommended that we work with our partners and communities to develop a Community Regeneration Strategy which complements the work of the Health & Wellbeing Board and developing Health & Wellbeing Strategy. Development of this strategy requires detailed work with the community and partners to explore what we understand of our deprived communities, which areas we should prioritise and how we can all work better together to improve outcomes for those residents.

16. It is therefore recommended that a Community Regeneration Strategy is developed in early 2020, with due consideration given to the partnership structures and resources required to support it.

Community Governance Review

17. In addition to the need for clarity around regeneration areas, the Community Engagement & Consultation Strategy has clear links to any potential future review of localised governance structures, should the Council be minded to consider these at a later date.

18. For example, if new community structures or parish councils are created with specific powers and responsibilities which are currently delivered by BCP Council, then it is reasonable to assume that the Community Engagement and Consultation around these services will transfer to the Parish Council to undertake.

19. It is intended that, should Cabinet approve the consultation programme recommended in this report, that questions will be included which will help to consider local area identity, existing local area groups, whether these local groups work effectively and what could work better.

Existing Local Area Groups

20. Historically, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole have all had different structures and processes for supporting area meetings within the community and these have been carried over from the legacy councils into BCP Council.

Bournemouth Area Forums

21. In Bournemouth, a small grant is provided to community area forums in order for them to undertake their work. There are currently nine area forums in Bournemouth, all of which are run by dedicated volunteers:

- Boscombe forum;
- Ensbury Park & Wallisdown forum;
- North Bournemouth area forum;

- Pokesdown Community Forum;
- Southbourne Forum;
- Throop, Muscliff, Strouden, Townsend and Holdenhurst forum;
- Westbourne forum;
- Westcliff forum;
- Winton forum.

They are attended by BCP Council staff as appropriate. There are also a number of local residents' meetings, traders associations and homewatch meetings.

Christchurch SNT Panel Meetings

22. In Christchurch, Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) Panel meetings were established by the Police and Council to address neighbourhood issues. A quarterly meeting is held with representatives from each of the four parishes supported by BCP staff, however these are not open to the public. The four parishes are:

- Burton & Winkton SNT;
- Christchurch Town SNT;
- Highcliffe & Walkford SNT;
- Hurn Parish SNT.

Poole SNT Panel Meetings

23. In Poole, area forums ceased to operate a few years ago. There are currently six SNT Panel meetings which are attended by the Police, Council and partners, supported by Council officers and all except one is open to the public:

- Hamworthy SNT;
- Poole Town & Oakdale SNT;
- Canford Health & Creekmoor SNT;
- Newtown & Branksome SNT;
- Rossmore & Alderney SNT;
- Broadstone, Merley & Bearwood SNT;

There are also a number of local neighbourhood meetings, such as Home Watch and resident meetings, which are run independently from the Council and the Council involvement in these will vary from meeting to meeting.

24. It is clear that there are currently different operating models for how the Council and partners engage with communities across BCP. In the main, these models have continued in the format they were in from the preceding Councils. For

example, In Bournemouth a small grant is available to support community led area forums to hold and run their meetings independently. In Poole, the SNT meetings are supported by Council staff. Both models and approaches will have their own merits and it is recommended that as part of the development of a Community Regeneration strategy we consider which platforms would work best for BCP as a whole to ensure there are equitable process in place across the Borough.

25. The Community Engagement Consultation will help to inform this work by seeking people's views on existing area structures and how well they feel these function. It is proposed the existing area forums and SNT meetings will be reviewed and in the whole continue in their current format where resources allow, until such time as the Community Regeneration Strategy is developed and/or alternative arrangements put in place.

Links to other emerging work

26. Within BCP Council there is a range of work taking place which relies on community engagement and consultation with the community. Children's Service are currently planning for the development of a Participation Strategy for Children and Young People and Adult Social Care are due to start work on an engagement strategy. There are also clear links to the development of a Digital Strategy, Smart Cities work and the local government transformation. Additional consultation is also planned over the next few months. There is therefore a need to develop a set of standards which relate to community engagement and consultation for the Council as a matter of urgency to ensure a consistent approach.

Consultation Plan

27. Appendix B, the Community Engagement Strategy Consultation Plan, details the activity proposed consultation activity. We are proposing a 13-week consultation period between January and April 2020 to ensure that we engage as widely as possible with our communities. In addition to consultation with stakeholders through the usual methods (webpage, online survey, information in libraries) we are also proposing more engaging consultation to ensure that we hear the views of people who are often left out of mainstream activity. This will include 'sofas on street corners' and 'coffee and conversation' approaches which have been developed by Community Development Officers through their long-standing work with communities. Our approach includes having a visible presence and programme of events within all of the wards within BCP and ensuring we attend as many community meetings, forums and events as possible.

Summary of financial implications

28. Appendix B, the Consultation Plan, provides the detailed costs relating to the proposed consultation. The total figure, excluding core staff costs is £28,690 and it is proposed that this can be provided from within existing budgets within the Communities Directorate.

Summary of legal implications

29. The Council is required to undertake consultation when there is a statutory duty to consult and for other reasons including having previously consulted about similar decisions, made a promise to consult or if someone is going to lose out on a benefit or a service that they have received for some time. As the Community Engagement Strategy will set out how BCP Council will consult and engage with people in the future, it is appropriate to undertake an extensive consultation programme to ensure that residents and other stakeholders can influence the direction of the strategy. There is no legal requirement to develop a Community Engagement Strategy, however it is considered best practice to have a document which details how the Council will engage with its residents.

Summary of human resources implications

30. There are no human resources implications.

Summary of environmental impact

31. There will be a requirement to produce some hard copies of the consultation material, however these will be kept to a minimum and the preferred method for consultation feedback will be online and through face to face interactions. Any un-used consultation materials will be recycled.

32. Through the development of a robust Community Engagement & Consultation Strategy we will be able to develop networks and routes for ensuring that BCP Council can work with and support the community in its work and commitment to become Carbon Neutral.

Summary of public health implications

33. There are positive public health implications for the development of a robust, comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy. Residents will have clearly defined routes for engaging with the Council in order to raise issues or concerns. Wherever possible, residents will be involved in the shaping of services so that they best meet their needs.

Summary of equality implications

34. Appendix D, the Equalities Screening Tool, has been completed to assess whether a full Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) is required. As the decision being sought is to allow consultation on a set of draft principles, and not a draft strategy, it is proposed that a full EIA would not be completed at this stage. Once the consultation has been completed and a draft strategy has been developed a full EIA will be completed to assess any negative or positive equality impacts.

35. There are positive equality implications which reach beyond ensuring we meet our duty in relation to protected characteristics. The Community Engagement Strategy will seek to ensure that equality and diversity is at the heart of everything we do by ensuring there are appropriate methods for communicating

and engaging with Communities. The development of a Community Regeneration Strategy will ensure that our areas of deprivation also receive the investment and focus that they need in order to ensure equality for all.

36. The Corporate Equalities Action Plan details an action under “Understanding and working with your communities” to “Develop a Research and Consultation Governance Framework for BCP that ensures full community engagement”. The development of a Community Engagement & Consultation Strategy therefore helps the Council to deliver on this action.

Summary of risk assessment

37. Appendix D, Risk Assessment, details the risks associated with undertaking public consultation on a draft set of principles for the Community Engagement Strategy. The consultation is deemed to be low risk and no additional measures are required in order to undertake this consultation.

Appendices

- Appendix A, draft Principles for the Community Engagement & Consultation Strategy
- Appendix B, Consultation Plan
- Appendix C, IMD 2019
- Appendix D, Equalities Screening Tool
- Appendix E, Risk Assessment