

Item No. 14.	Classification: Open	Date: 17 September 2019	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Review of the Council's Approach to Community Engagement	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All Wards	
Cabinet member:		Councillor Rebecca Lury, Culture, Leisure, Equalities and Communities	

FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR REBECCA LURY, DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Earlier this year, we launched our principles for consultation and engagement – setting out a series of ways in which we can deliver exemplary consultation and engagement across the Borough. This Cabinet report today sets out how we will actually deliver on this, embedding our processes within the Council. This will ensure that the principles are applied consistently across all forms of consultation and engagement from local highways changes, to large scale redevelopments. Southwark is committed to ensuring that we place our people at the centre of everything that we do, and that means listening, engaging constructively, and taking comments on board. We hope that this document starts conversations across the Council about the best way in which to conduct consultation and engagement, and that this filters out to provide best practice for other groups and organisations across the borough.

RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet:

1. Adopts the Approach to Community Engagement that sets out the vision and principles that were agreed at the Cabinet meeting 30 April 2019 and describes how we will deliver these and is attached as appendix 1.
2. Agrees that the new approach will inform the way in which the council works with residents throughout the borough on any matters which involve engagement and consultation.
3. Approves the following objectives for our community engagement:
 - a. Create and nurture relationships with people and community organisations and build better connectivity between the council, and voluntary and community organisations and people in Southwark and each other
 - b. Understand people's experiences of services they use and the neighbourhoods they live in, work in, run a business in, visit and move through and better employ this local intelligence and local expertise to improve people's wellbeing, the quality of our places and the quality of our services.
 - c. Enable good governance and fair and informed decision making, through building confident, skilled, active and influential communities and a culture of getting involved.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. In September 2018 Cabinet agreed that we should carry out a review of our engagement approach, which had been adopted in December 2012.
5. In April 2019 the council approved a new vision and set of principles for the council's engagement work, which lays the foundation for how the council will work with residents, businesses, students, volunteers and worshippers across a range of activity. The Cabinet report set out that:
 - a. diversity and capturing the range of voices are key to the new approach, as this is critical to understanding the needs and aspirations of everyone
 - b. Relationship building lies at the core of delivering our vision and the Council will work closely with community organisations to create and nurture these relationships.
6. The three principles adopted were:
 - a. We will put people at the heart of engagement
 - b. We will plan our end to end engagement effectively
 - c. We will deliver meaningful engagement.
7. After the adoption of the vision and principles we worked collaboratively with individuals, community and voluntary organisations and staff to explore how we might deliver these principles and what some of the practices we should embed that will support the whole council meet the expectations set out in our vision and principles. The outcome of this collaboration is captured in the document titled 'Our Approach to Community Engagement'.
8. The approach outlines how the council will engage and consult with people in Southwark. We recognise that through our community sector groups such as faith communities, tenants and residents associations (TRAs), and voluntary sector organisations, considerable engagement takes place from which we benefit through these third parties actively seeking wider view and voice that is shared in our processes to gain insight and intelligence and apply local expertise.
9. In the last report we outlined the benefits of good engagement and these have informed our engagement objectives. However it is not just the council that benefits from good quality engagement individuals, community and voluntary organisations can also grow through the exercise of good practice. Good engagement fosters improved well being and sense of belonging. It builds connections across Southwark's diverse communities, and reduces tensions and conflict, and builds effective and inclusive communities. It supports the creation of confident, skilled, active and influential individuals and communities, and facilitates learning from one another and upskilling of all those involved.

Method and results

10. We held eight workshops in July and August 2019. There were two workshops on each of four different days of the week days, to maximise participation. These were advertised through the existing list of 116 participants, Community Southwark, our TRA network and planning contacts.
11. Each workshops was themed as follows:

- a. Workshop one and two looked at collaboration and building trust and focused on putting people at the heart of our engagement
 - b. Workshop three and four looked at planning our engagement effectively
 - c. Workshop five and six looked at meaningful engagement and inclusion
 - d. Workshop seven and eight looked at the new approach in planning matters.
12. We used a range of tools to develop the discussions. In the first we looked at definitions of co-working and collaboration, explored the ingredients for successful collaboration and what is needed to build trust. In the third and fourth sessions we explored effective planning through case studies of engagement activity to explore what might be appropriate in different circumstances. In workshops six and seven we looked at how we can make engagement meaningful and used personas to take different people on a journey focusing on how we reach and include and feed back to our diverse communities.
 13. The numbers of people who expressed an interest in the workshops increased from 116 in the sessions before April to 258 for the eight held in July and August.
 14. Attendance for each different topic were as follows:
 - a. Workshops one and two 49
 - b. Workshops three and four 25
 - c. Workshops five and six 30
 - d. Workshops seven and eight contributed to the development of the statement of community involvement 85
 15. At each session the majority of people contributing to the discussions were individuals and between 16% and 20% attendees composed of council staff. Community group representation varied considerably across the four sessions as did that of voluntary sector organisations. This made each session a good mix of interests and experience, and brought a range of perspectives to the table to fashion our thoughts on how to best deliver the principles.
 16. In the second and third set of workshops we reflected on the conclusions drawn from the previous set to check back that we had accurately summarised the conclusions and facilitate further refining of the outcome.
 17. Everyone who expressed an interest was sent a copy of the outcomes and notes of what was said at each of the sessions, and invited to send further commentary on the summary of how we would deliver the three core principles. We received one set of comments on the content.
 18. Overall the workshops were well received with one contributor commenting on how we were able to bring the process to life through the personas, and another mentioning how the case studies illustrated well the range of engagement we do.
 19. During the sessions we also talked about improving our digital engagement and how this would support us reach those who may not yet know about opportunities to get involved; this work will be developed over the next few months.
 20. We also paused after each session and discussed how the people around the table could contribute to improving engagement and these discussions will be reflected in the update to the engagement guidance notes.
 21. Community Southwark have been very supportive of our work on developing our approaches providing facilitators for each of our sessions. Their early thoughts are that

the work on vision and principles is very much aligned with their own principles and values and as the work progresses interested in exploring in more detail how they can collaborate more closely and support the delivery of our new approach. In particular their thoughts are that they could support us in a number of ways by doing:

- Research on our behalf
- Research with us
- Supporting people get involved.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

22. In Southwark community engagement covers a range of tasks including statutory consultations, engagement activities, inclusion work, work to build and strengthen communities, service review and developing and maintaining key partnerships with the community and voluntary sector. This means that the way in which we implement the principles will vary engagement to engagement. The approach to community engagement reflects this complexity, and has avoided a set of prescriptive rules as consequence.
23. The council has produced a booklet which brings together the definition of engagement, describes in more detail asset based community development, and the vision and principles that were agreed at the Cabinet in April. It also explains our engagement objectives, how we will deliver the principles and sets out some case studies which illustrate the different ways of working.
24. These case studies look at the ways of working when doing place based engagement, working with communities, when we need to dig deeply on a particular issue, and working on borough wide strategic issues. They demonstrate examples of collaborative working, building trust, and being proportionate, responsive, timely, inclusive, accessible, and evidenced based.
25. This booklet will be used to explain and publicise the new approach internally and externally. It provides the framework for our future engagement and has outlined a number of key commitments against the principles. It is attached as appendix 1.
26. At the end of March 2019 the first stage of this review identified some key challenges. The new approach has sought to address these in the following ways:

Challenge	Response
Resources invested in engagement within the council	A commitment to providing appropriate resources and planning to ensure our engagement is effective.
Resources invested in the community sector to support community capacity building and engagement	We will work with Community Southwark to look at how we can improve our work with community organisations to build capacity, reflecting asset based community development approaches.
Consistency across the council in the quality of its engagement and culture within the Council	The engagement team will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide advice and guidance to teams across the council to support them to develop their engagement plans • Update and publish our engagement toolkit and offer training to Council teams, as well as direct support where engagement is likely to be

Challenge	Response
	<p>more complex</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an engagement advisory panel involving external partners to review our engagement plans for our more complex or strategic engagement activity, before they are finalised.
Lack of forward planning which leads to less engagement, consultation fatigue, and sense of no influence.	We will develop a forward plan process for engagement to promote better co-ordination and make early engagement easier to plan by end of July 2020

- We will encourage our partners to adopt practices that mirror our new approach and promote the document widely as an example of good practice.

Policy implications

- This work should strengthen our ability to deliver a number of policy objectives such as our work with community and voluntary sector through Common Purpose Common Cause framework, and will inform the way in which we work to deliver community engagement across the whole council and develop the architecture we put in place to work with different groups and around different issues, such as those who live in our council homes, faith groups, or on planning matters.
- This will shape both the development and delivery of a number of key council plan objectives such as the developers' consultation charter, Statement of Community Involvement, review of the way we engage with residents who live in our homes, and balloting of tenants.

Community impact statement

- The recommendations in this report are based on our close working with members of the community either through their organisations or individually, and has been supported by our key partners who deliver engagement in the borough such as Community Southwark, health watch and the CCG. 258 people have participated in some way with the process of developing our approach.
- The methodology used has been based around co-production and developing a common understanding of what engagement means and involves. It has been based on methods that support the building of relationships
- The importance of ensuring that diversity of experience informs our decision making has been placed at the heart of our new approach, as well as making sure that those who participate reflect the diversity of those living, working, worshipping, studying and volunteering in the borough. This has been further strengthened as we have developed our guidance on inclusion, accessibility and equalities within the approach.
- This will be reflected not only in how we engage and consult on particular issues and in specific places to ensure that our work reflects the needs of the community affected by any decisions we make, but also the way in which we work with different communities to support our reach, and develop relationships that improves our ability to integrate a range of voices in our day to day business; voices such as the faith

communities, young people, older people, LGBTQ+ community, disabled people, people from different Black Minority and Ethnic backgrounds and men and women.

34. The vision of Southwark as a place incorporates a strong vision about working with all our community partners including faith organisations. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires public bodies to consider the diverse needs of groups and people when carrying out their day to day work, in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. Due regard is about considering the different needs of protected characteristics in relation to the three parts of the duty.
35. This review of our approach to engagement and how we place residents at the heart of our decision making will bring about improvements in our processes to ensure that residents are included in the design of policy, local development and services and the varying needs of our communities and strengthen our capacity to deliver the PSED. This will also include how we will feedback to residents about the outcome of any engagement and how their views have shaped and impacted decisions on what is going to happen as a result.
36. Knowing and understanding our communities is key to effective delivery of council equality and diversity commitments and the PSED. Community engagement and consultation plays an important role in this. An effective equality analysis process starts when scoping a project and engagement plan. A key principle is that both consultation and equality analysis need to be considered at the start of any review, development or project scoping and planning process. Equality analysis informs and is built upon throughout the lifetime of a review/development/project, through to decision making stages and also implementation of decisions.
37. Equality analysis can help to inform an engagement plan so that information about diverse groups and possible questions in the consultation are relevant and appropriate to the area at hand. Information from a consultation exercise can then in turn inform and help build various stages of the equality analysis undertaken.
38. Our approach to engagement will remain one that seeks to widen participation while ensuring that the process is able to adapt to local needs and circumstances. Our approach aims to ensure all diverse groups in our local communities are able to participate and be heard.

Resource implications

39. The work has no resource implications as the new approach will be absorbed into existing work plans.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance

40. The report is requesting that Cabinet agree for adoption the new approach to Community Engagement for Southwark Council.
41. The strategic director of finance and governance notes this new approach.

42. Staffing and any other costs connected with these recommendations will be contained within existing departmental revenue budgets.

Director of Law and Democracy

43. There is no specific duty requiring local authorities to establish a general community engagement strategy, but local government legislation over the years has included a number of measures aimed at promoting the involvement and empowerment of communities served by Councils, including the Local Government Act 1999 and the Localism Act 2011. The report identifies the benefits such a strategy bring to the council in carrying out its full range of statutory functions. In that regard section 111 of the Local Government 1972 gives a local authority powers to do “any thing ...which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions”.
44. The council is frequently required by law to engage in consultation processes, e.g. when formulating new or revised policies. It will be important that where particular legal steps need to be followed in any such processes, they are properly considered and included and legal advice obtained at an early stage to assist. Whenever consultation is undertaken by the council, it will always be necessary to ensure that the basis of the consultation is clear, that it engages with the appropriate audience, at a sufficiently early stage in the process with sufficient time given for responses which are then taken into account in any subsequent decision.
45. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, in making this decision the Cabinet must comply with its public equality duty which requires it to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
46. The community impact statement set out in the report and the Equality Impact Analysis prepared identifies relevant matters to be taken into account in discharging that duty.
47. Whilst there is no duty on the council to consult residents in relation to formulating this approach, the report demonstrates how the council has taken account of the views of relevant groups and individuals in the community.
48. The establishment of this approach is an executive function reserved to Cabinet which includes the “approval of policy and procedures governing the Council’s relationship with the voluntary sector”.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Future Approach to Community Engagement Cabinet paper December 2012	Southwark Council, 160 Tooley Street, SE1 2QH	Jessica.leech@southwark.gov.uk
http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?IId=50001026&PlanId=0&Opt=3		
Review of the Council's Approach to Community Engagement September 2018	Southwark Council, 160 Tooley Street, SE1 2QH	Jessica.leech@southwark.gov.uk
http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=50017721		
Review of the Council's Approach to Community Engagement April 2019 (vision and principles)	Southwark Council, 160 Tooley Street, SE1 2QH	Jessica.leech@southwark.gov.uk
http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s81917/Report%20Review%20of%20the%20Councils%20Approach%20to%20Community%20Engagement.pdf		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Approach to Community Engagement
Appendix 2	Equalities Analysis

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Kevin Fenton, Strategic Director of Place and Wellbeing	
Report Author	Jessica Leech, Community Engagement Manager	
Version	Final	
Dated	05/09/2019	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Law and Democracy	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
Equalities Officer	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		9 September 2019