

REPORT TO: CABINET OVERVIEW WORKING GROUP

DATE: 14 MARCH 2019

TITLE: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY – FINAL REPORT

LEAD OFFICER: JANE GREER, HEAD OF COMMUNITY WELLBEING (01279) 446406

CONTRIBUTING OFFICER: CHRISTINE HOWARD, YOUTH AND CITIZENSHIP MANAGER (01279) 446192

RECOMMENDED that the Working Group:

- A** Notes the work of the Community Engagement Focus Group
- B** Recommends the draft Community Engagement Strategy (attached as Appendix A to the report) be approved

BACKGROUND

1. An interim report was submitted to Overview Working Group on 29 November 2018 to provide an update on the wide range of community engagement work that had taken place over the previous 18 months.
2. A copy of the draft Community Engagement Strategy for 2018/19 – 2020/21 (the Strategy) was presented to the Working Group at the meeting on 29 November 2018 along with the interim report and, whilst they felt it was fit for purpose, Councillors requested that it should be reviewed again before being presented to Cabinet for approval.
3. It was agreed that a Focus Group, including Councillors and Officers, should be set up to discuss and have input to the final draft of new Strategy and agree the future approach to community engagement activity across all Council services.
4. The Focus Group met on 18 January 2019 for an initial discussion about the draft Strategy and to consider how it will be delivered going forward.
5. At the meeting on 18 January 2019 it was agreed that a Community Engagement Mission Statement would be developed and a final review of the Strategy would be undertaken. To support delivery of the Strategy, a Community Engagement Toolkit and Action Plan would be developed following approval of the Strategy by Cabinet.
6. A Mission Statement has been developed and approved by all Councillors on the Focus Group. The Mission Statement is included in the Strategy.

7. A further meeting of the Focus Group took place on 22 February 2019 when the Focus Group Members agreed final changes to the Strategy.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

8. At the meeting on 22 February 2019 it was proposed that the Focus Group continues to meet over coming months to ensure Councillor involvement in the development of a Community Engagement Toolkit and Action Plan. The aim of the Toolkit will be to support Officers and Councillors to ensure good practice and consistency across all Council services when planning and delivering community engagement activity. The Action Plan will be used to demonstrate key tasks around development of the Council's approach to community engagement and to evidence outcomes of these tasks.
9. A lead officer for Community Engagement has now been identified. This will ensure timely publication of the Strategy once approved by Cabinet as well as timely development and implementation of a Toolkit and Action Plan to support delivery of the Strategy.

IMPLICATIONS

Place (Includes Sustainability)

The development of the Community Engagement Strategy will assist the Council in the implementation of robust consultation processes for future planning policy proposals

Author: Andrew Bramidge, Project Director – Enterprise Zone and Interim Head of Planning

Finance (Includes ICT)

None specific.

Author: Simon Freeman, Head of Finance and Deputy to the Managing Director

Housing

The Community Engagement Strategy will need to align with Housing's Tenant and Leaseholder Strategy to ensure alignment of the Council's future engagement commitments and to ensure a holistic approach is achieved in terms of promoting and encouraging engagement within the Town.

Author: Andrew Murray, Head of Housing

Community Wellbeing (Includes Equalities and Social Inclusion)

As contained within the report.

Author: Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing

Governance (Includes HR)

Effective community engagement on both a statutory and discretionary basis underpins well informed decision making across the Council and encourages greater involvement in democracy. The proposed strategy sets out the Council's commitment to clear and open engagement practices across the Harlow Community.

Author: Simon Hill, Head of Governance

Appendices

Appendix A – Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2018/19 – 2020/21

Background Papers

None.

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

None.