

Consultation Survey Results & Community Engagement Best Practice

Background

This purpose of this discussion paper is to update the committee on the results of consultation exercises. Additionally, it raises awareness of the government white paper, recognises the relationship that exists between consultation and community engagement and outlines examples of local best practice.

Strong & Prosperous Communities

In October 2006, the Government published the Strong & Prosperous Communities White Paper, which aims to give local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives. Its key theme is the idea of reshaping public services around the citizens and communities who use them – consulting, involving and encouraging them to have a say. Focus should be on improving whole areas rather than just individual services, with greater emphasis on working together across service boundaries.

Best Practice In Consultation

The Social Inclusion & Housing Select Committee agreed to consultation to take place in Own Your Streets areas to identify ways in which we could consult better with communities. The Consultation Survey results indicate similar methods of interactive consultation as priorities. (See appendix) The Council's main methods of consultation, The Citizens' Panel & Community Forums appear on both sets of priorities for each area. Street Meetings were a popular choice, run by Staffordshire Police to identify top 3 priorities within Neighbourhood Policing Areas.

Increasing Community Engagement

The Improvement Network provides a useful model to understand how community engagement can be increased. It illustrates how consultation is the mid-process in achieving empowered communities that are involved and participate in decision-making and service delivery. There is an increasing need to inform and communicate both prior to and after consultation takes place. The Consultation Survey is a good example of how residents were informed about different consultation techniques prior to making a decision about preferences.



Taken from www.improvementnetwork.gov.uk

Geographic Community Engagement - Bevan Lee

Catering Angels

In terms of projects that seek to consult, engage and empower, partnership work on the Bevan Lee Estate is a positive example. The partners on Bevan Lee Estate, including Beth Johnson, Cannock Chase Council, J&S Sneddon and Business Enterprise Support, have supported residents to become more actively engaged and shape delivery and services within their community. A mother and daughter team with the help of Business Enterprise Support have set up their own on-site catering firm to feed hungry staff while the estate transforms. Catering Angels was created in response to a leaflet pushed through the door asking if residents would be interested in setting up a small business.

Magical Lantern Trail

Beth Johnson approached the Council's Arts Development team to discuss ways to raise Community participation on the Bevan Lee Estate. Elected members, Council employees, Moorhill Primary School, Cannock Chase High School, gathered together to walk the Bevan Lee Estate carrying a variety of lanterns created by local residents. The project had a quick development time and in a matter of days the estate was rich in Christmas spirit. Each household received a handmade Christmas card informing them of how to get involved in future public art projects that will take place in the coming years. The cards & lantern procession encouraged future community participation and partnership work. Sports & Arts Development activities in Bevan Lee appear in future business plans to sustain interest.

Communities of Interest Engagement - Disability Equality Scheme

Cannock Chase Council is represented at the Staffordshire Equality Network and in partnership with Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service, Staffordshire County Council, Stafford Borough Council, Keele University, South Staffordshire Council, Newcastle Under Lyme, East Staffordshire Borough Council and Lichfield District Council helped create a Staffordshire Disability Equality Scheme. Together partners consulted on a wide range of access topics including: leisure, employment and transport. Cannock Chase Council published its own Disability Equality Scheme on 4th December 2006, but prior to the scheme held a workshop to actively consult representatives from disability organisations. In January 2007, we are hosting a follow up workshop, which will consult disability participants on developing a possible countywide Disability Equality Network and how local participants can shape the delivery of a scheme.

Items for consideration

- The committee notes the consultants report and agrees to implement its recommendations
- The committee considers how we support the development of consultation and engagement activities across the district and discusses how a partnership approach to community engagement might be achieved
- What recommendations can the committee make for the allocations of funds to enable engagement & consultation activities to continue?