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To: Corporate Services Policy Overview Committee

Date: 12 November 2010

Subject: Connecting with Communities – 2009/10 Annual Report on
Engagement Activity to Policy Overview Committee.

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: The purpose of this report is to update Members with
developments regarding consultation, engagement and
involvement within the authority from 1 April 2009 – 31 March
2010

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the Council's second Annual Report on consultation, engagement and involvement. The purpose of this report is to provide information on the main aspects of consultation, engagement and involvement across the authority from 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010, and highlights how we are further embedding the engagement processes within our services.

The information is presented in the following three sections:

- Consultation, engagement and involvement activity continuing from 2008/09
- New consultation, engagement and involvement activity in 2009/10
- Consultation, engagement and involvement activity continuing into 2010/11.

and supplemented with two appendices:

- Appendix 1 – List of consultation, engagement and involvement activities 2009/10
- Appendix 2 - Forward plan of consultation, engagement and involvement activities for 2010/11.

2. CONSULTATION, ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITY CONTINUING FROM 2008/09

2(1) Customer Insight

It is important that we target our information and use our resources in the most cost efficient way. KCC has used customer insight to ensure that we provide information in a way that suits people best.

This area of work is driven by the information and data we hold about residents of Kent, including the feedback we get from customer comments and complaints. KCC also makes use of a number of data and information sources for example 'MOSAIC' to provide insight into the background and lifestyles of residents across the whole of Kent.

Getting an insight into how customers are interacting with KCC, what they want and who they are is crucial to improving access to services. This insight can help KCC to predict what people will want and need in future. We can also find out who is or isn't interacting with the Council as well as over/under provision and over/under utilisation

In 2008/09, Kent Gateway successfully bid for European funding to develop customer insight. Experian with their MOSAIC software tool were chosen as the geodemographic solution provider. Five district/boroughs (Canterbury, Gravesend, Kent, Swale, Thanet and Tunbridge Wells) and KCC worked with Experian to tailor the off the shelf public sector MOSAIC product to reflect the Kent population. The project is rolling forward in phases and all Kent authorities now have licenses and tools. Strong links are also being established with Kent Police, Fire and Rescue, and the NHS health observatory.

2(2) Hard to reach groups

A Black and Minority Ethnic summit was held in Gravesend in March 2010. The summit was a joint event with the Primary Care Trust and was attended by 129 people including people from minority communities, KASS staff, the PCT and other organisations. The Summit was part of the ongoing dialogue with minority communities and the event was the next step in the process, listening to all service users is a customer care issue, developing approaches that meets their needs is the way that we are moving forward in line with the personalisation agenda. The learning from this event informed the planning and structure of the follow up workshops held in June 2010 as part of the Safeguarding and Carers awareness week.

2(3) SILK

Kent's Social Innovation Lab (SILK) was set up in 2007 to test the effectiveness of gathering in-depth insight into customers. The best solutions come from the people who are closest to the problem, be that service users, residents or staff. This goes much further than community consultation and involves people being actively engaged in the design of services that they are going to use or deliver. SILK focuses on connecting the right people with the right projects to ensure that the correct people are in place to create services that are useful for the people who will be using them. Further information on their projects can be found in Appendix 1.

2(4) House

The Kent Youth Service working with the Public Health team and other partners have continued to develop the successful and innovative 'House' model which went live in December 2008. 'House' is a space aimed at young people aged 13 to 19 years old, giving them somewhere to 'chill out', where they can get informal lifestyle information to suit them in a relaxed and unthreatening environment.

The results have been phenomenal. By January 2010, 'House' had visited all districts across Kent and had been very well received by young people. By the end of February 2010 the project had made contact with more than 11,000 young people, including many young people who are currently unknown to and do not access existing services.

'House' is now continuing and engagement with young people produced the design brief for a mobile facility that is able to reach into local communities themselves, rather than town centres. 'House' activities can therefore be taken directly into the estates and communities that can most benefit. The new facility launched in March 2010.

2(5) Information Delivery

The way we communicate is changing, fast. Some people now prefer to use the internet as their main source of information and all KCC information is available on kent.gov.uk but we also use all the communication channels. Examples of how we "inform representatives of local persons" using channels other than websites are:

2(5)(a) Face to Face

- Community Wardens talk to and engage local residents, often informing them about services available (signposting)
- Wedding Fairs and related events to promote Kent as a venue for wedding ceremonies
- Summits and conferences (such as the Cultural Summit, and the Community Safety conference)
- Festivals and events (such as the Kent Theatre Festival, the Kent Show and Alcohol Awareness Week).

2(5)(b) Email

- Alerts service (Trading Standards email alerts, giving alerts about scams and rogue trader activities)
- Subscriptions services (such as the newsletters that Libraries and Sports Development operate).

2(5)(c) Print / on-site

- Posters (such as Children's centres and Libraries giving information about local events and feedback on consultation)
- Cards and flyers (such as Country Parks comment cards, library bookmarks, Active Lives postcards, and Alcohol Awareness Week "scratchcards")
- Leaflets and brochures
- Special info signage (such as information boards on the fence around the Kent and Library History Centre to inform local residents about what is being built on the site).

2(5)(d) Media

- Around Kent is a magazine distributed to over 610,000 homes across the county. With two editions a year, it is devoted to keeping the public informed about our services
- local media: e.g. Kent Messenger, Kent on Sunday, We also seek to contribute to other people's publications e.g. The Orchid, Kent Life, EK One, BR One, Kent Profile, Inside Kent, where it fits with the needs of our work and the audience preferences
- Radio programmes (for example the regular slots that Trading Standards officers have on Radio Kent to inform people about consumer safety issues).

2(5)(e) Social media

- Facebook - Libraries, Adult Education, Youth Service and Sports Development are all in early stages of setting up a Facebook group / page to engage new audiences, especially younger ones
- Twitter - We can use the corporate account to tweet messages and some units are looking at creating their own dedicated feed
- Podcast
- We are also currently looking at ways we can use texting / SMS to get mass messages out to groups of young people (KYCC initially).

3. NEW CONSULTATION, ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITY IN 2009/10

3(1) The duty to involve

The duty to involve was introduced from April 2009 and intended to embed a culture of engagement. This means that the Council considers, as a matter of course, the possibilities for provision of information to, consultation with and involvement of local people across all authority functions. This principle should be central to service delivery, policy development and decision making.

Engagement involves a continuous dialogue and a two-way flow of information and views, together with opportunities to get involved. By giving local people the information they need to make informed choices and then consulting and engaging with them effectively we will:

- Better understand and respond to the needs of 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 –help people to understand and share their views and expectations
- Test out ideas and explore emerging issues
- Measure the performance of the Council in delivering services.

and the local community will:

- Become better informed about the Council's work
- Become better informed about the way their money is being spent
- Have a greater say and informed choice in the design and delivery of future local services.

3(2) Equalities and Diversity

During 2009/10 the Research & Intelligence Team has used Mosaic Origins to provide local data for five of the seven equality characteristics currently protected by discrimination law. Currently there is no data set on transgender or sexual orientation at a local level and for this reason information on these two characteristics is not presented. Mosaic Origins has been used in the following in 2009/10:

- Assisting the Kent Wide Strategic Network on Migration in understanding non-British communities and their location
- Customer profiling of KASS Direct Payment and Domiciliary Care clients.

3(3) Consultation, Engagement and Involvement opportunities

In 2009/10 KCC has provided a number of different opportunities for residents, service users and other interested groups to influence decision making and service delivery. The main ones used and examples of activities during the year are:

- Surveys and questionnaires (e.g. The Highways Tracker Survey, the Children & Young People of Kent survey and the Country Parks Visitor survey)
- User groups and forums (e.g. East Kent Adult Social Care Focus Group)
- Special interest networks, groups and forums (e.g. The Kent Reference Panel and the Kent Countryside Access Forum)
- Workshops and focus groups (e.g. Annual Budget & Council Tax Consultation, The Coastal Action Network workshop)
- Feedback cards (e.g. comment cards in country parks and Libraries)
- Complaints, Compliments and Comments (all units)
- Formal consultation documents (e.g. Learning Disabilities Day Opportunities_Consultation)
- Stakeholder events (e.g. 'Growth without Gridlock')
- Collaborative working and partnerships (e.g. Kent Children's Trust)
- Participation (e.g. youth service interview panel)
- Civic engagement (e.g. Neighbourhood Forums and Kent Youth County Council)
- Delegated decision making (e.g. Youth Opportunities / Capital Funds)
- The use of online social media (e.g. Explore Kent's use of Twitter and Facebook)
- Market research (e.g. Libraries).

3(4) KCC has used several groups to consult and engage in 2009/10:

3(4)(a) Kent Youth County Council (KYCC)

The county has a very active Kent Youth County Council which debates issues that are important to young people. Close links are maintained with the KYCC including regular meetings between the Children, Families and Education Senior Management Team and the KYCC Education Group.

3(4)(b) Kent Primary Children School Council

Earlier this year members of the KYCC assisted with an event for younger children with 60 primary age children and help set up a council for primary age children.

3(4)(c) Kent Children in Care Council

A further development is the Kent 'Children in Care Council'. This is a recent initiative; an event took place in April 2009 with approximately 40 young people in care who have expressed a desire to help form a Kent Children in Care council. The Council will be the main forum by which children and young people in, and leaving care, in Kent will express their views to Kent's corporate parenting forum.

3(4)(d) Liaison with Age Concern

There has been a significant amount of work done recently with the 30 Age Concerns across Kent in 2009/10 with the aim of working in a more joined up way and this is ongoing at present.

3(4)(e) Carer Groups

The membership of this group is open and it is made up of Carers from across Kent. The role of carers is beginning to get the recognition it deserves. During the last couple of years there have been a series of developments in ensuring the carers views are fully heard and reflected in the development of services. In recognition of this the Kent Carers' Strategy, written with carers, and based on the key aims of the National Carers' Strategy, was launched in July 2009. The overwhelming feedback from those who use services and the public at large is that, carers views need to feed into the design of new services. Kent Carers Annual Report 2009/10 at <http://democracy.kent.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=11907>

3(4)(f) Focus groups

Focus groups took place in 2009/10 with children and young people who are seldom heard /hard to reach (the groups included disabled children, children with English as an Additional Language, children with health problems and children excluded from mainstream school) and with vulnerable young people and the parents of young people involved in risk taking behaviour. The findings from these focus groups will inform the Needs Assessment and the next children and young people's plan.

This information will be used extensively across KCC and with our partners to ensure the voices of children and young people are heard in assessment of need, consideration of options for improvement, and how we evaluate if we are making a difference.

3(4)(g) Kent & Medway Citizens' Panel

The Kent and Medway Citizens' Panel (KMCP) was established in February 2008 as a joint initiative between the Kent Messenger (KM) and KCC. The KMCP was designed with Medway Council as the third partner but it was unable to commit financially to the initiative and has not engaged in any research using the Panel. The KMCP gives residents of Kent the opportunity to give feedback on ideas, services and products, by responding to three or four questionnaire based surveys each year. The KMCP marked a first in that it was the only citizens' panel in the country to be run jointly by a local newspaper and a local authority. As a result of the economic climate, however, KM has withdrawn from funding any further research using the KMCP.

One survey was conducted by telephone by KMCP contractor Ipsos MORI in July 2009, covering:

- Satisfaction with Kent as a place to live
- Optimism for British economy
- Priorities for local area
- Satisfaction with KCC
- Use and rating of KCC services
- Operation Stack lorry park proposal
- Further education, career guidance, apprenticeships and post-16 education funding proposal.

The results concerning Operation Stack together with those on further education, career guidance, apprenticeships and post-16 education informed and supported KCC's bid in August 2009 under the Sustainable Communities Act 2007, for which the KMCP is the reference panel.

The KMCP has its own website www.kmcp.co.uk where new panellists can join and existing panellists can see the results from the surveys they responded to.

We are currently reviewing the cost effectiveness of the panel arrangements with particular reference to the number of active panellists and research partners.

3(5) Partnership working

The Council has been actively working with partners on consultation and engagement to improve the ways in which activities are joined up for the benefit of local people and communities.

3(5)(a) The Voluntary Sector

There are over 4,500 voluntary and community groups in Kent and within each district there is a Local Infrastructure Organisation which is used to consult and engage.

3(5)(b) Neighbourhood Forums

Working closely with our partners over the past four years KCC has been piloting a range of models of community engagement bringing together the

three tiers of local government - County, District and Parish Councils - and in some models the Police, Primary Care Trusts and voluntary sector.

There has been neighbourhood forums embracing all three tiers of local government since 2006 in Dover and 2008 in Gravesham. Although joint neighbourhood forums and KCC local boards have existed for a number of years now, the Gravesham neighbourhood forums are looking at new ways to engage with local residents and arrangements are being made to establish neighbourhood forums in Shepway.

Meetings of the Gravesham Neighbourhood Forums have been webcast between January – June 2010. This has enabled local residents who are unable to attend the meetings to be involved by providing not only the facility to watch online but also ask questions and get answers during the meetings.

In Swale, local engagement forums have been established which include the PCT and Police. Canterbury City Council has Area Member Panels and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council has a Tonbridge Forum and Parish Partnership Panel in which County Council members are participating.

Partners continue to work together to develop a range of models of community engagement and Maidstone will soon see four new Neighbourhood Forums across the borough starting in October 2010. Meanwhile, agreement has been reached in 2010 with partners to refine the arrangements for the operation of the Dover Neighbourhood Forums so that it is more responsive to a “community of interest” need. Other models which are at an early stage of development include the use of technology to develop an electronic civic space online where communities of interest express their views. The first meeting in Deal which was webcast in January 2010 was well attended with in excess of 100 people present and over 50 people watching online.

3(5)(c) Kent Partnership

Several consultations have taken place on behalf of the Kent Partnership including the Integrated Transport Strategy Consultation: ‘Growth without Gridlock’ in November 2009. Further details are included in Appendix 1.

3(5)(d) Kent Children’s Trust

The Kent Children’s Trust is a partnership of key agencies who are committed to improving the lives of children, young people and families in Kent.

The Kent Children’s Trust agreed a Participation Framework in 2007 which promotes good practice and a coherent approach to participation across children’s services in the county.

There is a County Board which provides strategic direction by agreeing the Kent Children and Young People’s Plan. Each district has a local Children’s Trust Board who make sure that services respond to local needs. Our ambition is that children and young people are listened to and are able to influence decisions made about them. Early involvement and dialogue means that parents, children and young people are already engaged with services which will result in their being active partners in commissioning, delivery and the de-commissioning of services rather than just recipients.

3(5)(e) Kent Local Involvement Network (LINK)

A Local Involvement Network (LINK) has been set up in Kent in 2008 to give people a stronger voice in how their health and social care services are delivered. It is made of individuals and community groups, who work together, to find out what people want from their local services, investigate issues and use their powers to hold services to account.

In 2009 the Kent LINK was asked to carry out a project involving Age Concern Day Care Services commissioned by Kent Adult Social Services. The aim of the project was to identify the views and experiences of current and potential service users.

<http://www.thekentlink.co.uk/>

3(5)(f) Engaging local citizens and service users in transforming local services

Held on 29 April 2010 at Oakwood House this was an event attended by representatives from Kent County Council, District and Borough Councils, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, NHS PCT's and Jobcentre Plus. The day looked at how we could use customer insight and profiling as the basis for a shared approach to shaping future service delivery, if customer insight and segmentation has a practical role in engaging citizens and service users and how to use the duty to involve as a real opportunity to work together and engage.

3(5)(g) Consultation Institute Special Interest Group for Local Government:

The Council is also involved in the Consultation Institute Special Interest Group for Local Government. The network has been established to share best practice and to discuss current developments nationally. This will help us to improve what we do further and to promote the good initiatives being undertaken in Kent.

3(6) Improving access and awareness in 2009/10

Throughout 2009/10 we have continued to develop the access to and awareness of our consultation and engagement activity. Some services are now using sophisticated segmentation and profiling tools, especially MOSIAC to increase their understanding of customers, and how they can adapt services to better meet the needs of those who could be benefiting from them.

The **Have Your Say** area of the Council website has continued to develop as a key way of improving the awareness of the wide range of consultations and engagement activity carried out by the Council and making it easier to take part in them. The site now includes:

3(6)(a) The Consultation Register

A new online register showing the Council's current, past and future consultations is available. Relevant officers have undertaken training in how to use the register, and all services are required to update their entries in the database regularly to ensure that the public are accessing the most up to date and complete record of information on our consultations. Local people and community groups can sign up to be automatically notified by email when a new consultation is added to the register.

3(6)(b) Links to other local and national consultations This allows people to access as many consultations affecting the local area as possible from one place.

3(6)(c) Petitions

The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. A scheme for e-petitions was agreed by the County Council in July 2010 which now allows the community to petition KCC on-line on issues of concern.

3(6)(d) Get involved – join us at a local community meeting

KCC's team of Community Engagement Managers provides a key link between local people, local organisations and decision makers in Kent. One of the roles of the team is working with elected members to arrange public meetings in each of the districts in Kent. The meetings are an opportunity for the Council to engage with the local community and understand their views. The form of these meetings varies from district to district, and can be varied to suite the issues being raised. These meetings are an opportunity for local leaders to listen to the views of their communities and for local people to have their say. What's going on and the feedback from these meetings can be found here.

3(6)(e) Complaints, Comments and Compliments

The KCC website been revised to make it easier to make an online compliment and comment as well as a complaint.

3(6)(f) Community and Seldom Heard Groups

Community and Seldom Heard Groups can sign up to be involved in our engagement activities.

3(6)(g) Kent Health Watch

Kent Health Watch is a 24 hour helpline for people to call about any worries they have about health or social care. Any time of the day or night, 365 days a year, there is a real person ready to listen and respond to any concerns, complaints or compliments patients or their families have.

4. CONSULTATION, ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITY CONTINUING INTO 2010/11

Though good progress has been made there is still scope for further improvement and consistency in consultation and engagement practice across the Council. We need to make it easier still for local people to have their say and we also need to use their views and suggestions more effectively and, crucially, ensure we publicise what difference those views made when a final decision was taken. We will continue to explore how digital technologies could be better deployed to make engagement work, cheaper, quicker, more responsive, more relevant and more convenient for residents and businesses.

An overarching corporate involvement strategy is currently being developed and will link with each directorate's own strategy. Specific work has been commissioned around "seldom heard" or "hard to reach" groups. Adult Social Services has reviewed its existing Public Involvement Strategy in October 2009 with two events held in the county to gather feedback from the public. Further

meetings were held between November 2009 and April 2010 to gather views from various groups across the county – both known and previously unknown to the Directorate. Over 30 groups were visited and have contributed to the new strategy. The core objectives within the existing document remain relevant and this was reinforced from the feedback received during the review. Specific work has been commissioned around “seldom heard” or “hard to reach” groups.

Adult Social Services introduced ***Roles and Relationships*** for the public in July 2010. This operates on a similar basis as ***Roles and Relationships*** with staff, whereby the Managing Director and key Strategic Management Team Members meet with members of the public at arranged events twice a year. The events will enable people to have access to senior staff, which is something they have requested, to feed their views directly to the “decision makers”. The format for the events is likely to focus on specific topics that either the public or the Directorate put forward. The agenda will be planned in advance to ensure that people benefit from the discussions.

The development of the new Children and Young Peoples’ plan will require significant engagement both in relation to agreeing the priorities in the plan and its delivery. The view of Children young people, their parents and carers, key stakeholders and partners will be sought in 2010/11 in order to decide what the major priorities are for children and young people in Kent over the next few years.

The establishment of a disabled children’s council is planned in 2011 in order to ensure that young people with disabilities are not marginalised and are able to actively participate in the decision that affect the services they need and to influence the broader policy. This will also equip them with key skills which will enable them to fully participate in civic society as they grow into adulthood.

Consultations across all directorates will feedback 12 weeks after completion. This will meet the need to give timely and appropriate feedback, which is often a criticism when people have been consulted and do not receive details of the outcome of that involvement.

4 (1) Employee Engagement

KCC has introduced an employee engagement strategy in September 2010. Employee Engagement aims to provide the optimal conditions for staff commitment, motivation and satisfaction - and in doing so produce improved organisational performance. Ensuring that we have the understanding, involvement and commitment of our retained staff will be essential in maintaining our high levels of achievement.

<http://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=129&MIId=3059&Ver=4>

A full list of planned engagement activity in 2010/11 is included in Appendix 2 available

[http://democracy.kent.gov.uk/Published/StdDataDocs/2/7/0/1/SD00001072/\\$20102011CONSULTATIONS.doc.pdf](http://democracy.kent.gov.uk/Published/StdDataDocs/2/7/0/1/SD00001072/$20102011CONSULTATIONS.doc.pdf)

5. CONCLUSION

This report highlights how we have informed, consulted and involved and how we have used this information to take decisions and improve the services we provide. There continues to be a need for setting and supporting coherent standards, challenging under-performance and creating the framework for work with partners on this agenda and it forms an integral part of planning, procurement and performance review activity.

During 2010/11 we aim to:

(a) Resources

Add to our consultation and engagement resources by refreshing our residents panel approach and building on our e-consultation tools

(b) Awareness

Raise awareness of the opportunities to get involved and increase participation amongst local people, through our service led engagement activity and increased working with representative organisations such as parish councils, residents and tenants associations, voluntary and community groups

(c) Efficiency

Identify and further reduce any remaining duplication on consultation and engagement within the Council and increase joint working with partners

(d) Inclusivity

Improve the inclusivity of our activities by continuing to make sure we do even better at consulting in ways that make it easier for all sections of the community to have their say.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Corporate Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee is asked to **NOTE** and **COMMENT** on the contents of this report.

Background Documents:

Kent Adult Social Services Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Public involvement and consultations report 21 September 2010

Communities Directorate Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee - Consultation, Involvement and Complaints report 2009/10, 16 September 2010

Environment, Highways & Waste Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee Connecting with Communities – Annual report on EHW engagement activities, 14 September 2010

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