

ACCESSING DEMOCRACY:- REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN MARCH 2009

No	Recommendation	Lead Officer	Comments/ Proposed Actions	Timeframe
1.	Raise profile of elected members and use other strategies to change public perception.	All officers and elected Members	<p>This overarching recommendation depends on the delivery of all the other recommendations. It involves the use of technology, development of a Members portal, potential development of Members' blogs, and Members websites, shadowing opportunities for elected Members and officers, roadshows, the emerging localism agenda etc, etc.</p> <p>Members are welcome and encouraged to use Gateways to hold "surgeries" or as a facility for reaching their local constituents.</p>	Ongoing
2.	<p>A 'menu of options' of how local people can get involved in local democracy in Kent should be promoted.</p> <p>(a) All proposals taken through County Council or Overview and Scrutiny should be required to state the degree of public involvement to date. This would improve accountability and demonstrate how information from consultations is used (especially the effect on decision making).</p> <p>(b) Existing good practice should be advertised and promoted, identifying future priority issues for local action/campaign with elected</p>	Robert Hardy/Peter Sass	<p>Report to Chief Officer Group, Cabinet, Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee and Policy Overview Committees to ensure that the model report enshrines the degree of public involvement to date and how the duty to involve and to promote democracy is being delivered.</p> <p>Gateways are available to promote democracy more generally where this is appropriate.</p>	Ongoing

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	members and/or highlight possible areas for review.		<p>Kent TV is an excellent medium to facilitate democracy and reach younger people in particular. The use of Kent TV during elections is currently being explored by the editor who will be approaching the three political group leaders.</p> <p>The County Council is exploring the various mechanisms available to it to allow the public to express their views which might highlight areas for possible review. This could be piloted through a mechanism to be developed to understand the views which might lead to a Topic Review for the Select Committee Topic Review Programme.</p>	
3.	The Member Charter, and programme of member development to help ensure Kent has high calibre effective community leaders, should incorporate media training and public speaking skills.	Coral Ingleton/Mary Cooper/Jane Clarke	As part of the County Council's preparation for the South East Employers Member Development Charter all Members were invited to identify those skills on which they would welcome development. Media training was a high priority and this is being built into the ongoing programme of development for all Members. The IMG Member Development and the IMG Member Information will be undertaking a survey of all prospective candidates and interviewing all elected Members on their needs following the County Council elections.	July-September
4.	As part of the Communications	Jane	The Media and Communications Centre	

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	Strategy KCC should actively promote the role of elected members as community leaders and advocates within their community using a range of communication tools.	Clarke/Peter Sass	can advise but do not have the resources to promote each Member. It would be possible to run a publicity campaign to promote KCC Members and what they do.	
5.	<p>Embrace democracy in secondary schools and school councils should be encouraged to operate through age range - advocate school councils in primary school.</p> <p>(a) All elected members should be involved in schools democracy week.</p> <p>(b) Ensure all teaching staff are firmly encouraged to undertake Continuous Professional Development on democracy.</p> <p>(c) Linkage between School Councils, Kent County Council and District, Town and Parish Councils should be promoted.</p>	Robert Hardy/Coral Ingleton/Peter Sass/Jane Clarke/Rosalind Turner/Allan Foster	<p>Opportunity to embrace democracy in secondary schools through the Personal, Social and Health Education curriculum on School and Councillor Wellbeing, extend the Kent County Council where Year 6 children will join together to form the Kent Primary School Children's Council and discuss the big issues of the day.</p> <p>Explore and develop the Councillors in Schools project which the County Council undertook in early 2006.</p> <p>Explore and shadow Hampshire County Council's involvement in the national programme called "Take Part" and learn from best practice which could be developed into a model for Kent.</p>	September 2009
6.	Citizenship pack should include information on how to register to vote, the role of local elected members and how to contact local members at District, County and National level.	Martin Alford/Giles Adey/Peter Sass	The Citizenship pack already includes the Electoral Commission leaflet "Register to Vote" which includes an electoral registration form. The leaflet is a generic one. Also enclosed in the pack is a list of the addresses of the 12 district council electoral registration sections in Kent. Many new citizens will have registered to	

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	should include note on method of engagement to be used.		Strategy offers the opportunity to explore a range of tools depending on the consultation being conducted to reach the audience using in the most appropriate method(s).	
10.	<p>Facilities for video conferencing should be utilized, maximizing opportunities in Kent with KCC and partners.</p> <p>Elected members should be supported in using this service through current resources, training and support mechanisms.</p>	<p>Mike Austerberry, Facilities & Property Management</p> <p>Peter Sass/ Coral Ingleton</p>	<p>To ensure that when opportunities present themselves for installing video conferencing facilities this should happen.</p> <p>For example, 'Gateway's' have video conferencing facilities.</p> <p>Through the decision making and democratic processes of the County Council all opportunities should be taken to explore the use of video conferencing</p> <p>This will be built into the Training and Development module for elected Members</p>	
11.	<p>Need effective promotion of E-consultation and decision making to raise profile and encourage local people to have their say and voices heard.</p> <p>(a) All engagement activities and weblinks should be brought under</p>	Tanya Oliver/Peter	<p>E-consultations represent only one engagement tool. The Consultation and Engagement Strategy offers the opportunity to explore a range of tools depending on the consultation being conducted to reach the audience in the most appropriate method(s).</p> <p>"Access Kent" is one of the key themes being supported by the Kent Partnership</p>	

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	<p>easily recognisable umbrella and portal e.g. 'Ask Kent', to ensure two way interactive communication.</p> <p>(b) Facilities for blogs, emails, online surgeries, plus training and support should be available for elected members.</p>	<p>Bole/Tracey Gleeson/Robert Hardy</p> <p>Jane Clarke/Coral Ingleton</p>	<p>and will contribute a lot on streamlining engagement as well as access. A Member seminar was held before Christmas and there is a paper included on the agenda for today's meeting.</p> <p>Consideration is being given to revamping Member blogs. There is an issue here about developing a policy on the use of blogs.</p>	
12.	<p>In promoting the role of elected members and interaction with communities KCC should embrace e-democracy/ technological solutions to make elected members activities more visible and to open up dialogue and debate, for example e-petition, e-campaigns generated by Local Boards and local people, and e-debate.</p>	<p>Robert Hardy/Peter Sass/Paul Wickenden</p>	<p>The emerging localism agenda and the duty to involve and to promote democracy opens up a whole range of ways in which the Council will engage with its local people which will promote the role of elected Members. The Gravesham Neighbourhood Foras recently submitted a bid looking at the feasibility to webcast meetings and provide the opportunity to interact with the meeting by e-mail.</p> <p>Kent TV can potentially offer a range of initiatives on this recommendation.</p>	June 2009
13.	<p>Raising interest in both the opportunity and how to become an elected member needs to be clear and transparent. Agree more diversity in elected members is seen to be beneficial but is complex and worthy of separate study.</p>	<p>Political Groups</p>	<p>Help KCC embrace the duty to promote democracy when the duty exists and the statutory guidance for this duty needs to be taken into account.</p>	Ongoing
14.	<p>'Top tips' and contact details on making contact with seldom heard/</p>	<p>Robert Hardy</p>	<p>To raise awareness and use of the Social Innovation Laboratory for Kent "method</p>	Ongoing

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	perceived hard to reach communities should be included in all new ward packs.		deck”. Ofcom published a report that highlighted minority ethnic groups as having more likely to access information by broadband than other Britons. Kent TV can therefore help to reach minority ethnic groups.	
15.	<p>(a) The introduction of role descriptions for all elected members needs to be supported.</p> <p>(b) The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) Councillors guide should be actively promoted and need to ensure all elected members have a copy.</p> <p>(c) Training for elected members in ways of local government and ongoing training to help elected members carry out their role effectively should be actively supported.</p>	Coral Ingleton/Peter Sass	<p>(a) All this work is being picked up in the work that is being undertaken in the County Council’s bid to achieve the Member Development Charter. Work is also being undertaken to identify the support councillors need to carry out their role and the County Council will be invited to sign up to the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) declaration of giving councillors the support they need.</p> <p>(b) All County Council Councillors will be issued with a copy of the Councillors Guide.</p> <p>(c) An ongoing and full training and development programme has been prepared and in consultation with the IMG. Member developed and is being delivered.</p>	<p>September 2009</p> <p>June 2009</p>
16.	To effectively strengthen local structures for community engagement	Peter Sass/Paul Wickenden	Ongoing discussions are taking place with partner organisations to develop a range	Ongoing

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	<p>and encourage involvement in local decision making need</p> <p>(a) Localism to be more outcome focussed.</p> <p>(b) mechanism for prompt feedback to the public on specific issues.</p> <p>(c) to explore further with District, Town and Parish Councils and other local partners what they believe would improve community engagement.</p> <p>(d) to devolve power and resources to support local priorities and action, from discretionary funds being delegated to local forums for decision making.</p> <p>(e) Chief Officers and Cabinet should identify which services can be delegated to local level and be influenced by members in their representative capacity based on views of community priorities and preferences.</p>	<p>Peter Sass/Paul Wickenden/Mike Austerberry</p>	<p>of pilot models for localism across the county and for ensuring that the localism agenda is more outcome focussed with appropriate feedback mechanisms for the public on specific issues, ongoing.</p> <p>Several Members as well as local fora have expressed a wish to pursue the model of participatory budgeting when allocating its grants which will allow the communities to set its priorities, ongoing.</p> <p>In the County Council Budget for 2009/2010 £25,000 has been set aside for each Member top sliced from the Highways Budget for Members to spend on highways issues and other service areas and budgets are being explored by Cabinet and Chief Officers.</p> <p>“Gateways” and Kent TV are ideal facilities to access communities and effectively engage.</p>	
17.	<p>The opportunity for participatory budgeting from devolved discretionary funds should be provided within the next budget year, with delivery mechanism to be determined, and a sum of underpinning monies to enable</p>		<p>Participatory Budgeting was one of the workshops featured at the Community Engagement Conference at Oakwood on 28 November 2008. A workshop has been prepared for inclusion in the Member Development programme and several</p>	Ongoing

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	local people to determine how the resource should be spent.		Members have already expressed a wish to try a method of Participatory Budgeting in terms of Member Grants.	