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To: Regeneration & Economy Development Policy Overview Committee
24 September 2009

Subject: Regeneration & Economic Development, Connecting with Communities - Annual Report to Policy Overview Committee.

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: The purpose of this report is to update Members with developments regarding consultation, engagement and involvement within Regeneration & Economy Development. The report provides the national and local policy context and a summary of the key activities undertaken by Regeneration & Economy Development during 2008/09 and the activities planned for 2009/10.

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information on the main aspects of consultation, engagement and involvement within Regeneration & Economic Development over the last 12 months. It also informs Members of key developments at a national and local level, and on both existing and future work.

Effective community engagement helps to make sure that:

- Public services reflect and respond to the views and concerns of local people
- People feel involved in and responsible for improving their quality of life
- Solutions work over the long term.

Engagement is more than consultation; it is a continuous process that requires day to day involvement at an operational level between KCC, its partners and communities, to identify needs, determine priorities, agree actions, deliver responses and assess and review progress and outcomes. Implemented effectively, engagement will also have strong strategic benefits by helping to inform and shape the priorities and needs of the county council and partner organisations without causing consultation fatigue.

2. National Policy Context

2.1 The government has pledged to promote active citizenship and community engagement at all levels and in all policy areas. This has led to community engagement being at the core of the Local Government Modernisation Agenda.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities*), places a duty on Local Authorities to involve local people.

From April 2009 we all have to comply with this new statutory duty to 'inform, consult and involve' people if we plan to make changes to our services (section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act).

It provides that where a best value authority, such as Kent County Council, considers it appropriate for 'representatives of local persons', or of local persons of a particular description, to be involved in the exercise of any of its functions they should be:

- a) **provided with information** about the exercise of the function
- b) **consulted** about the exercise of the function
- c) **involved** in another way.

At the heart of the new 'Duty to Involve' is the aspiration to "ensure that local people have a greater opportunity to have their say about local issues and helping to shape service delivery in their area" and that we "embed a culture of engagement and empowerment", principally across the Council's outward facing functions.

This will mean that we will need to consider **information provision**, **consultation activities** and **involvement opportunities** that are made available to people across the county. The new duty will help shift how the Council 'does business' and support council priorities.

The key changes for us are that we now:

- (1) need to **evidence** why each service has decided either to apply the duty or not and, if so, in which way e.g. by consulting, informing or involving people in another way
- (2) need to take steps **much earlier** in the preparation of service changes or new schemes/initiatives, to ensure it does not delay the decision-making process and takes into account the views of local people before taking any decision.

The good news is that we can use existing mechanisms in many cases – and more importantly we do have a degree of discretion about the level of involvement, meaning that the 'scope' and 'impact' of a proposed change will inform the degree and depth of the 'inform, consult and involve' path that needs to be taken. It is not a case of a one size fits all approach and different approaches will have to be adopted for different functions.

We should be able to demonstrate, through evidence gathered in the normal course of business, that:

- we understand the interests and requirements of the communities we serve
- we use our understanding of the county to ensure information, consultation and involvement opportunities are provided on the right issues, targeted at the right people and accessible to those we are trying to reach
- we have an appropriate corporate approach to providing information, consultation and involving in other ways that flows throughout our organisation, from strategic policies into individual service delivery and our work with partners where appropriate
- people feel that the authority provides relevant and accessible engagement opportunities and they will know how to get involved, either directly or through their elected representative
- people will recognise that the authority's policies reflect this involvement and that services are tailored to local and individual needs, even though difficult choices in service provision need to be made.

2.2 In December 2008, the White Paper '**Communities in Control: real people, real power**' was introduced into Parliament as **the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill 2008**. This builds on the 'duty to involve', and highlights a duty to promote democracy, participatory budgeting, and community led planning. It is aimed at driving power to local communities, with an emphasis on involving local citizens in the decision making process and in their local communities.

The 'bill' proposes a duty on local councils to respond to all petitions, including e-petitions that relate to:

- services they are responsible for
- services where they share delivery responsibility
- an improvement in the economic social or environmental well-being of the authority's area to which any of its partner authorities could contribute (upper tier only).

Every Council must adopt, publish and comply with a Petition Scheme and introduce an e-petition scheme.

2.3 One of the key dimensions of the new **Equality Framework for Local Government** that we are working within (and aiming for 'Excellent' by the end of 2010/11) is the extent of our engagement with local communities from different diversity backgrounds about our priorities and the services we deliver.

2.4 From April 2009, the **Comprehensive Area Assessment** (CAA) replaced the CPA (Comprehensive Performance Assessment). It has a greater focus on citizen experience and perspectives.

2.5 The new **Customer Service Excellence** standard was introduced following a detailed review of the Charter Mark. It includes criteria around developing an in-depth understanding of customers. This includes consulting customers and using the information gained to design and provide services, the importance of monitoring the outcomes of your services and whether customers are satisfied with them.

3. KCC Context

4.1 The expectations of residents and businesses as consumers of public services are changing. KCC is responding to the fact that service users increasingly see themselves as customers, expecting greater choice and services tailored to their needs and those of their families and businesses. Residents want to access services that meet their individual needs at convenient locations and at times that suit them.

In Kent, we now need to bring together all the good practice that currently exists to demonstrate how we already meet the requirements and to identify areas we need to improve. We need to ensure that we are clear about how feedback from, and information about, our various communities is being used to provide added value in our decision making. The emphasis should be not only on the *quantity* of consultations, but on the *quality*, and the *effectiveness* with which consultation results are converted into meaningful actions.

4. Complaints

4.1 This year, following consultation, we have revised our complaints process and leaflet. This revision is one part of the developing strategy to transform customer service by listening to what our customers want and expect. The aim is to reduce the bureaucracy involved. This strategy includes reducing the number of formal stages and changing the culture within the Council by encouraging staff to deal with complaints speedily and sympathetically, apologising when things go wrong and taking action to resolve the source of complaints by learning lessons from what causes them.

4.2 Handling complaints appropriately, and using them as a source of feedback about services, is an important element of engagement and understanding. There were no reported complaints for the Regeneration and Economy Unit.

5. Consultation, Engagement and Involvement for 2008/09

5.1 KCC Regeneration Framework

Consultation on the Framework closed on 30 April 2009. At the close of the consultation period, we had received 46 written responses from external partners. The revised draft and its context was presented to the Kent Partnership on 9 June 2009, with a view to securing the Partnership's endorsement of the

document. In the medium term (between now and December), the supporting strategies highlighted in the Framework will be prepared to both inform KCC's own prioritisation and to establish partnership support for these priorities.

5.2 Empty Properties East Kent Initiative

In April 2008 Kent County Council commissioned BMG to undertake follow-up surveys to two local baseline surveys amongst residents and businesses that were conducted in 2005. The surveys explored awareness and future use of local empty properties, and the effect that these properties have on local communities.

The Residents' Survey highlighted any changes since the baseline survey and covered the following topics:

- Awareness of empty properties locally, and the effect that these have on the local community
- Awareness of empty property locally that has already been put back into use, and the effect that this has had on the local community
- The overall effect of empty properties on the local environment.

A key element of the survey was resident satisfaction with the local environment overall, and the extent to which this has changed since the 2005 survey and will be used by Communities & Local Government (CLG) to gauge the success of KCC's strategies to address empty property in the local area.

The results were as follows:

- Public satisfaction (LPSA 7.2) showed 57% - an increase on baseline of 2004/05 by 13% (44%), but short by 7% of the target for 2007/08 (63%)
- Business confidence (LPSA 7.3) showed 62% - a slight decline of 3% on baseline of 2004/05 (65%). Given the overall economic conditions existing in mid-to-late 2008, this slight decline in business confidence is not surprising, especially given that 80% of local businesses within the sample are small businesses, that are most likely to have been disadvantaged through increasingly restrictive bank borrowing to the small business sector.

5.3 A2 Activity Park- consultation

In February 2008 Jacobs undertook a series of public and stakeholder consultations. The consultations were used to exhibit a conceptual masterplan for an Outdoor Activity and Cycling Centre, which would be located on the redundant section of land left over from the relocation of the A2 between Pepperhill Junction and Marling Cross. Participants were given the opportunity to fill in a questionnaire and give their opinion on the proposed schemes.

The main aims of the consultation were to:

- collect the initial thoughts on the proposed Outdoor Activity Park from the community

- understand local concerns about the proposal and learn what improvements the community would like to see being made to the proposal
- clarify the current status of the Outdoor Activity Park proposal and the extent of the Highways Agency Landscape Scheme
- engage the local community in the design process from the outline design stage
- dispel public misconception raised by a leaflet recently distributed by a third party that an Outdoor Activity Park would include provision for motor sports.

By the end of February, 315 people had returned questionnaires and voted on the following four topics:

- Highways Agency A2 Improvement Scheme
- the proposed Outdoor Activity and Cycling Centre
- a proposed Park & Ride site at Tollgate
- options relating to the proposed reopening of Downs Road.

In summary, of the 549 people that attended the exhibitions, 217 comments sheets were completed, of which 190 (88%) were positive comments and supported the overall objectives of the Activity Park proposal, 22 (10%) were negative comments and against the proposal, 5 (2%) comments were unrelated to the Activity Park proposal.

Results were published on the Green Grid and Gravesham Borough Council web site, at local exhibitions and in the resident's bulletin (circa 4,000 households).

5.4 Kent Film Office

The Kent Film Office is a KCC initiative which promotes the wide diversity of Kent's urban, industrial and countryside locations as major film and television venues. The office helps the film and television industry find locations in which to film in Kent. The Kent Film Office with MediaTree undertakes ongoing informal consultation / feedback within sector.

MediaTree is an initiative supported by Kent County Council and other partners including the Channel Corridor Partnership. It aims to develop and support a cluster of media businesses in the Maidstone area. This builds on the existing media strengths of the area, including the Maidstone Studios. MediaTree seeks to generate growth in local companies, improve education and skills levels in the sector, strengthen supply chain networks, and promote the area as a centre of excellence for broadcasting and creative businesses.

MediaTree runs a variety of seminars and workshops on a regular basis, including networking and educational events, and also operates a business advice system. The [MediaTree website](#) offers a range of information, including

links to training providers, a companies directory, and a job facility where users can advertise or search for vacancies.

5.5 Kent Innovation

KCC with the Kent Economic Board has been developing a Kent Innovation Strategy with consultants engaged to take the lead on this piece of work. We have an interim report which included the consultants contacting a wide range of innovation experts in the county to understand what is being delivered on the innovation agenda in the county, what the gaps are and what more needs to be done. Further work is required to complete the report.

SEEDA are implementing a three year programme of supporting some 250 Kent companies that have the most growth and innovative potential through the Innovation and Growth Team. A bid was made to SEEDA led by Business Support Kent (Business Link) with which KCC was closely engaged. This brought together a wide range of Kent innovation experts within a consultative forum to map out how best to deliver the SEEDA resource to meet local innovation needs and to set this out in the bidding document. The bid has been successful and delivery should start this October.

Kent Innovation Challenge: there is an annual competition to find the most innovative company startup in Kent which KCC sponsors along with others. The awards are presented at the KCC dinner at the annual 2020 Vision business conference and exhibition. There is a meeting of the sponsors after each competition to discuss whether it achieved what we wanted, the scale and quality of applications, and how it could be improved in future years.

5.6 Kent Ambassadors

Kent Ambassadors is a KCC initiative to bring together on a regular basis successful and influential Kent people from a wide range of backgrounds to brief them on a variety of Kent issues, to get their feedback, and have a dialogue around those issues. They meet at least four times a year together with Paul Carter and Alex King. This puts the Kent Ambassadors in an informed position about the key issues facing Kent which can then be used in their own business and personal environments, speaking up for Kent and hopefully influencing the agenda in Kent's favour.

5.7 Dover Port Zone

KCC was consulted on the Dover Port Zone proposals. Dover Harbour Board is currently re-developing the Old Park Barracks site adjacent to White Cliffs Business Park. The park's Port Zone provides 40 hectares of freight handling and storage facilities aimed at removing some of these functions from the port area. Dover District Council and the Harbour Board jointly designed the development site as a freight logistics centre, providing a logistics sector cluster capable of attracting associated businesses to Dover and the White Cliffs Business The facility will eventually employ around 1,300 people with an additional 300 jobs created within construction. The commitment of the Harbour Board and major logistics occupiers to the site will hopefully convey positive signals to new

potential investors. Today, approximately 50% of the Port Zone has been taken and nearly 40% of the remaining land is under offer.

5.8 Graduates survey

Funding used elsewhere in the project so this survey not pursued.

6. Planned Involvement Activity within Chief Executives Department

A list of consultations planned with the public in 2009/10 is included in Appendix 1.

7. Conclusion

This report demonstrates the commitment to effective consultation and involvement, and highlights some of the work already being done. We now need to ensure that we are clear about how feedback from, and information about, our various communities is being used to provide added value in our decision making.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note this year's developments in involvement and participation activity.

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Background Documents: None

Other Useful Information: None

Regeneration & Economy Development 2009/10

Appendix 1

Name	Start Date/ End Date	Feedback Date	Target Group	Target Area	Brief Summary	What we want to find out & how it will be used	Contact Name, email & phone no
Aylesham training centre concept	March 2009		Local community	Former coalfield area	To develop proposals for centre	Determine level of support for a construction training centre proposals (Homes and Communities are lead organisation)	David Hughes david.hughes@kent.gov.uk 01622 221942
Dartford station	Tbc	Tbc	Local community and other stakeholders	Dartford	Refurbishment proposals	Involve and secure support for station refurbishment plans	David Hughes david.hughes@kent.gov.uk 01622 221942
Northfleet station and pedestrian link to Ebbsfleet	Tbc	Tbc	Local community and other stakeholders	Northfleet and Gravesham	Refurbishment proposals	Involve and secure support for station refurbishment plans	David Hughes david.hughes@kent.gov.uk 01622 221942
Sea Change Project	Dec 08 – July 09	On-going	Dover Community, Dover Schools	Dover	Project development and school activity programme	Preparation of cultural strategy and input to cable car and public realm projects	David Hughes david.hughes@kent.gov.uk 01622 221942
Sea Change Communications Strategy	August 08 – March 2010	On-going	Markets in UK and EU		Strategy development	To support capital investment at Dover Castle	David Hughes dave.hughes@kent.gov.uk 01622 221942

Name	Start Date/ End Date	Feedback Date	Target Group	Target Area	Brief Summary	What we want to find out & how it will be used	Contact Name, email & phone no
Dover Castle developments	July 2008 – June 2009	On-going	Dover Community	Dover	Castle development (English Heritage lead organisation)	Involve local residents and other stakeholders in review of plans and to record their comments	David Hughes dave.hughes@kent.gov.uk 01622 221942
Sea Change - Education and Outreach Programme	August 2008 – March 2010	On-going	Groups that traditionally do not have easy access to heritage (e.g. ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, people on lower incomes and young people)	Dover	Project proposals being developed by English Heritage	To increase interest, inspire involvement and create sense of ownership of local historic environment	David Hughes dave.hughes@kent.gov.uk 01622 221942
Rendezvous site	June - Aug 2009	Autumn 2009	Local residents, businesses and stakeholders	Margate	To consult on proposals contained within a planning application for the site	To test the degree of public support for the proposals and to establish the changes that will need to be made.	Keith Mackenney keith.mackenney@kent.gov.uk 01622 221912

Name	Start Date/ End Date	Feedback Date	Target Group	Target Area	Brief Summary	What we want to find out & how it will be used	Contact Name, email & phone no
Margate Old Town Parking Access	March	June	Local residents and traders in Old Town area	Margate	Develop a clearer under-standing of current pressures and develop a scheme to remedy these	Analysis of parking habits and opinions of different groups on current provision to develop a broader action plan to improve provision	George Chandler george.chandler@kent.gov.uk 01622 221946
Natural East Kent Access project	March/ June	September	PROW, KHS, NEK Steering Group, User groups, Local Authorities, Local Organisations	Canterbury , Dover and Thanet districts	Determine views of cycling, walking and horse riding improvements and integrate proposals into project	Introduce changes to improve provision and maintenance of access facilities and integrate with the local tourism offer	George Chandler george.chandler@kent.gov.uk 01622 221946
SNRR Bapchild Link Road	Sept/Nov	January	Local people affected by route	Bapchild. Tonge, Parishes & Eastern Sittingbour ne and Teynham	Determine views about alignment of final section of SNRR	Views reported to Members to inform decisions about detailed alignment of road	George Chandler george.chandler@kent.gov.uk 01622 221946
A2 Cycle Project	Tbc	Tbc	Local residents, local youth community, Specialist user groups	Gravesham	To involve target groups in the design and operation of the park	To develop proposals for the Park	Val Hyland valerie.hyland@kent.gov.uk 01622 221373

Name	Start Date/ End Date	Feedback Date	Target Group	Target Area	Brief Summary	What we want to find out & how it will be used	Contact Name, email & phone no
Greening the Gateway projects	Tbc	Tbc	Local residents	North Kent	Project development	To ensure projects are responding to the needs and aspirations of local people	Val Hyland valerie.hyland@kent.gov.uk 01622 221373
Discovery Park	Tbc	Tbc	Local residents, Specialist user groups	Ashford – Chilmington area	Park development	To ensure that the proposal for the Park responds to the needs and aspirations of local people, potential new residents	Valerie Hyland valerie.hyland@kent.gov.uk 01622 221373
Kent Design	Tbc	Tbc	Users and potential users	Kent-wide	Test how Guide is used	To test how effectively Guide is used, where it is not used and what are the barriers	Katherine Putnam katherine.putnam@kent.gov.uk 01622 691418
Gravesend Old Town Hall	Summer 2008	Summer 2009	Stakeholders and potential building users	Gravesend	To form a management committee	Explore potential uses of building	rob.hancock@kent.gov.uk 01622 221347