

CONSULTATION FOR THE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE ATTACHED REPORT FROM THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following report was commissioned from the Office of Public Management (OPM). OPM worked with officers from the Council, the Primary Care Group and the two Social Councils to undertake a process of consultation to help inform the development of the Community Strategy.
- 1.2 The consultation aimed to gain an understanding of local residents vision for life in the Borough over the next 10 years, to discuss what might help or hinder the achievement of this vision (including the structure and role of the LSP), and to engage stakeholders in a debate about their roles in this process.
- 1.3 The Social Council's involvement, through funding from the Community Empowerment Fund, enabled some voluntary and community groups, traditionally hard to reach, to participate in this process.
- 1.4 The consultation process had three stages:
 - Stage 1 **Establishing the vision** - A series of workshops and focus groups with voluntary/community groups, residents associations, interest groups etc.
 - Stage 2 **Testing the vision and exploring what might help or hinder its achievement** - An evening consultation event hosted by the Mayor with a sample of people from the Councils Residents' Panel and community/voluntary group members
 - Stage 3 **A response from stakeholders** - A Borough Conference that aimed to include agencies, organisations and community groups working in the Borough as well as local residents who had participated in the previous consultation stages.

2. THE VISION

- 2.1 Appendix One of the OPM report details the nine vision statements distilled from the 21 workshops held in September. Although many individual ideas, specific to each workshop, arose for improving life in the Borough there was reasonable consensus regarding the main thrusts of the vision in the areas of the economy, the environment and Social and Community Life. These were:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 2.2 Social and Community Life | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Good quality affordable housingSocially mixed and balanced communitiesLocal people able to have a say in local servicesEasy access to servicesServices providing choice, diversity and cultural sensitivityPeople respecting and understanding one another |
|--------------------------------------|---|

2.3 The Environment

Clean air
Uncongested streets
Good quality public transport
Quiet places to live, walk and work
Safe and clean streets

2.4 The Economy

A mix of local shops and leisure facilities
Local businesses employing local people
Tourism managed
Support for business start ups and a positive attitude to wealth creation
Effective use of space and development of affordable options
Business investing in the local community

2.5 Ideas and suggestions. Throughout each stage of the consultation process numerous specific ideas and suggestions were made for how, in the view of respondents, life in the Borough could be improved. Some diverse examples of these are:

- to establish a local tourist board
- provide some women only sports sessions to enable Muslim women to participate
- develop a local residents discount card for sports and other facilities
- establish a 'safe place' for graffiti in Chelsea
- develop more tree planting programmes
- impose financial penalties on people who do not recycle
- develop a local bicycle rickshaw scheme for short hop journeys
- impose road tax on cyclists

3. ACHIEVING THE VISION - WHAT WILL HELP OR HINDER

3.1 Although the consultation process asked people to think about what actions or behaviours might help or hinder the achievement of their vision this was something that participants did not find easy to do. Despite this a number of key issues emerged. Some examples of these are:

What will help

- Consultation opportunities for residents of all ages to engage at an early stage with planning and decision making
- Active citizenship education
- Opportunities for local people and groups to take action and improve their own neighbourhoods
- Cross generational work
- Specific support and services targeted at vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community
- Better and more imaginative use made of existing buildings, schools etc.
- Encourage small local businesses
- Intervene in new property and business developments to ensure promotion of community spirit and sustainability
- A greater focus on customer satisfaction

What will hinder

- Not everything is within local control
- Too much focus on individual 'rights' rather than the common good.
- Poor communication and lack of information from service providers
- The high transient population
- Closure and loss of local independent shops
- Apathy and cynicism
- Under occupancy of residential homes (eg. second homes, poor use of redundant space)
- A lack of long term funding for community groups and projects
- Lack of co-ordination and communication between different agencies in forward planning.

4. THE BOROUGH CONFERENCE

4.1 The Borough Conference aimed to include agencies, organisations and community groups working in the Borough as well as local residents who had participated in the previous consultation stages. Participants were asked to respond to the nine vision statements and begin to identify actions that would help achieve the visions.

4.2 Participants elected to attend one of six workshops. Although each workshop looked at the complete vision, the workshops were themed around the following areas:

- Feeling safe in our communities
- Living, working and travelling – a good environment for all
- Being healthy, being cared for
- Housing – more than a roof over our heads
- Work and business – developing the economy, regenerating deprived areas
- Learning and Leisure – education, sports, libraries, arts...

4.3 Key actions identified at the conference included:

- Developing a shared community development focus
- Create a community spirit and a sense of belonging, understanding and responsibility
- Promoting participation
- Creating neighbourhood strategies and policies
- A focus on long term objectives
- Providing information and support to increase access to services
- Service providers taking an holistic view to both individual and community need

4.4 More detailed and specific actions were also identified for each of the workshop areas.

4.5 The afternoon conference session focused on the development of the Local Strategic Partnership. Participants focused on how the LSP could be open, transparent, inclusive and accountable. Broadly, six areas were felt to be of particular importance:

- a. **Communication** – ensuring people know what is going on, information being provided in a way that is clear and accessible and having meetings open to the public
- b. **Set aims and objectives** – establish clear, concise aims and objectives

- c. **Engagement** – develop a strategic approach to engaging people in the LSP’s work that would identify gaps in participation, commit to involving residents at a local level and set standards for involving residents in all areas of work.
- d. **Representation** – the need to have a balance of sectors to ensure that the LSP is not dominated by statutory agencies.
- e. **Decision making** – being clear about how decisions are made and the possibilities for influence or change.
- f. **Evaluation** – establish an evaluation framework that links to the outcomes of decisions, provides clear feedback on results and is honest about failure as well success.

4.6 In looking at the proposed structure of the LSP Steering Group participants noted the following issues:

- That the links and relationship between the LSP steering group and work clusters and between work clusters needs to be clearly thought through.
- The structure should encourage and reflect greater sharing of resources.
- Aim for a 50/50 split between voluntary and community groups, and the statutory sector on the LSP Steering Group.
- A ‘youth parliament’ could encourage young people’s involvement.
- That the LSP would need resources to function effectively.

5. NEXT STAGES - RESPONDING TO THE CONSULTATION

5.1 Responding to the vision and to the specific issues and ideas raised in the consultation will be important. Many issues are currently being addressed within existing strategies, others may be new or will prompt a new way of addressing existing and known issues.

5.2 The LSP working group is currently preparing a response that will form the basis of the feedback to participants in the consultation process (and the public generally), as well as forming the basis of the draft Community Strategy for consideration by the LSP Steering Group.

6. REFLECTING ON THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

6.1 Some aspects of the consultation process worked well. The workshops provided valuable information, and feedback from participants has been positive regarding the opportunity to express their concerns and aspirations for the life in the Borough. The framework used for the workshops also provided a useful prompt to encourage all groups to think holistically (about the economy, the environment and social and community life) rather than about only single issues.

6.2 The tight timescale for completing the consultation has been a limiting factor. The Social Councils plan to recruit and train workshop facilitators from among members or workers of voluntary and community groups proved difficult to achieve in this time. Also having the opportunity to reflect more on the outcome of each stage of the consultation before embarking on the next would have been valuable and would have provided greater clarity and direction to, for example, the Borough conference.

6.3 The Borough conference would have benefited from a clearer purpose and more targeted audience. As it was, it fell somewhere between a conference for agencies and organisations and a conference for the public with neither audience being fully satisfied with the process. Attendance at the conference was lower than expected and this in part

was due to the lack of lead in time and the need for wider publicity for the event. Feedback from participants was, however, mostly positive, with the quality of debate and discussion in the conference workshops being particularly noted as having been good and worthwhile.

Mark Beauchamp
Research and Consultation Manager
November 2001