

Appendix 1



Chester-le-Street
District Council

Draft Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy



April 2006

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Foreword

Customer focus has to be at the heart of what we do as a council and it is. This is clear from the first priority in our Corporate Plan to the actions that underpin our Customer Excellence Strategy. As part of our important Community leadership role are working day in day out to improve how we involve the community in what we do. There are some great examples of where success is being achieved.

We want to increase the opportunities for our communities to engage with us. We also want to ensure that these opportunities are grasped by our communities so that as many people as possible can take an active part in improving service delivery and local democracy. The health of our council and our communities depends on the participation of ordinary people both in community and voluntary activity pressing their needs and wishes through our processes. This is in order that they can improve not only their quality of life but the quality of life of others.

We want to have a society where all of our citizens are active in their communities and participate in shaping their future. We mean all. We do not want to exclude anyone as part of our vision. Whether 'hard to reach' or 'hard to hear' we want our communities to have a true voice. We want to ensure that Chester-le Street has an independent, representative and effective council which works alongside strong, self-confident communities. Through strong community leadership we are determined to make this happen.

Building stronger communities is not new to us or to local government generally. It has been a clear council objective in the past and it remains a fundamental aim of Chester-le-Street's Community Strategy – our community's vision of the future. We need to build on community engagement activity not just within the council but by working with our partners to increase opportunities. We have limited resources to do this and we need to work with others to maximise impact.

Our Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy is our plan of action to achieve our vision. We need to first understand our community's needs and aspirations. We then have to let our communities know what we are doing. We can then improve engagement by improving our processes, working with others, co-ordinating activity to allow us to meet national and local aspirations. It will take time for the council and our communities to develop and realise what we are setting out to do. The Strategy is therefore transitional as well as transformational.

While the council can drive the implementation of our strategy we will depend on every member of our community to become interested in our work, our decisions and our actions. This is our first Consultation and Engagement Strategy and is largely about what we feel we need to do. It is a living document and not set in stone. We will now be engaging our partners and community to develop the strategy. We want to know now what you think we should do how we should go about it and do you want to take part with us.

Linda Ebbatson
Leader of the Council

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Our Engagement and involvement Vision

Chester-le Street will work in partnership to ensure that there are increased opportunities for greater participation by people in the decisions that affect them locally, leading to improved services which better match the needs and preferences of communities.

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1 What do we mean by Community Engagement and Involvement?

Introduction

- 1.1 This section provides the 'theory' on what consultation and engagement is. It sets out the breadth of citizen involvement from information to collaboration. It also describes the national desire for civil renewal or 'local vision' and how this fits within the local context.
- 1.2 This section of the Strategy is important in developing an understanding about engagement and how this strategy has come about.

Terms we use

- 1.3 There are many different terms and definitions which describe how people participate with the work of the council and its partner organisations. These cover the whole dimension of traditional and transformation involvement with the council. They include:

Method	Meaning
Information	This is what the council is going to do!
Consultation	What do you think about what the council is going to do or is doing?
Collaboration and Empowerment	Can we decide together what we ought to do Can we deliver jointly what we want to do The council wants to help you achieve what you want

- 1.4 The foundation on which any involvement is built is **information**. It is a basic requirement of democracy that citizens are entitled to know what government is doing in their name. This embraces both giving citizens the opportunity to find out what the council is doing, by holding key meetings in public and providing information on request, and taking more active steps to keep people informed, through newsletters, leaflets, e-documents, exhibitions, seminars or public meetings. There is considerable evidence to show that councils that are effective in communicating with the public are more highly regarded by local people.
- 1.5 **Consultation** means that citizens' views are invited and considered, but the council decides. This is the form of involvement most commonly used by councils. It can be done in a variety of ways. The Improvement and Development Agency's (IDeA) guide to consultation methods lists 35 distinct approaches (www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk). At its best, being consulted can be a positive and rewarding experience, but poorly-run consultation can have the opposite effect, turning people off. Key issues include the timing of consultation, the method chosen and whether people get adequate feedback on the resulting decision and

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- the reasons for it. Consulting too late can give the impression - sometimes correct - that the council has already decided what to do and consultation is empty. Traditional approaches such as public meetings can effectively exclude some sections of the community or turn off others who find the setting alien or intimidating. On feedback, the evidence is that people normally respect the council's right to decide and recognise that their views will not always prevail, but expect to be given reasons for the decision and reassurance that their views have been taken into account.
- 1.6 A recent report of on active citizenship (*Lonely Citizens*, IPPR 2004), suggests that citizens are much more likely to get involved in consultation and other forms of participation if:
- the issue is one they care about or close to their personal experience;
 - they are asked and made to feel that their input is welcomed;
 - the body asking for their views has the power to do something about the issue;
 - their views can be seen to be reflected in the decision that is taken or action agreed on the issue;
 - the form of engagement is fit for purpose and there is a proportionality between what citizens are asked to put in and the social benefits that result;
 - training and support are provided where necessary to carry out their role effectively.
- 1.7 Consultation methods range from questionnaires and surveys, where individuals are asked independently for their views but not involved in public deliberation of the issues, to methods such as citizens' panels and juries, where citizens are more involved in deliberation on the issues even though the council ultimately decides. Councils are making more use of deliberative methods. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister research shows that the proportion of local authorities making use of citizens' panels rose from 18 per cent to 71 per cent between 1997 and 2001. Advances in technology have also enabled greater use of online tools to inform and consult.
- 1.8 **Collaboration** and **empowerment** go beyond consultation by sharing or formally delegating decision-making power from the council to individuals (as user choice in services), communities (through perhaps quality parish and town councils, area and neighbourhood committees) or local organisations (such as housing co-operatives or tenant management organisations). The Local Government Association's manifesto (*Independence, opportunity, trust, a manifesto for local communities*, LGA 2004) calls on councils to commit to giving people more control over their own lives and communities by passing down power wherever appropriate, enabling choice, increasing the number and enhancing the role of parish and town councils, or developing area forums and committees to allow local communities a greater say in what happens in their neighbourhood or area.
- 1.9 The willingness of a council to devolve power is important, but so is the willingness and readiness of communities to have power devolved to them. Participation is time consuming and demands key skills on the part of active citizens; a key element of community capacity building is nurturing potential

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individuals as 'citizen-governors' and providing appropriate training and support. Some communities may prefer just to be consulted, and leave decision-making with the council. There is nothing wrong with this. What is important is not whether powers are formally delegated to community level, but whether all sections of the community have the confidence and capacity to wield influence in governance when they need to. In developing capacity there will be a need for education and training.

- 1.10 In Chester-le-Street there are many examples of how we provide information, some good, some not so good. There are some good examples of consultation. There are fewer sustained examples of collaboration and empowerment. These will be described in the next section of the strategy. This strategy will make it clear that all these aspects of engagement and involvement are important to health of the council and the communities it serves. It does however signal a marked shift towards collaboration and empowerment in the medium to long term.

National Context

- 1.11 In 2004 the Government published a consultation document called '**The future of local government: Developing a 10 year vision**'. This sets out what has become known as 'local vision'. In its document, the government acknowledged that Local government has a crucial role to play in creating sustainable communities. It acknowledged that it :
- can lead the local community, reflecting and responding to the needs and priorities of local people;
 - can bring together a wide range of services to deliver the outcomes that matter to people locally; and
 - is democratically accountable to all citizens, balancing the interests of individuals and groups with those of the wider community.
- 1.12 'Local Vision' is about:
- vibrant local leadership;
 - strong citizen engagement ;
 - service improvement; and,
 - a new deal between central and local government

The development of the 10 year vision was rooted in the four principles of public service reform set out by the Prime Minister in March 2002. These are:

- **national standards** for the things that matter most to people, to ensure that citizens have the right to high quality services wherever they live;
- **devolution and delegation** to the front line, giving local leaders responsibility and accountability and the opportunity to design services around the needs of local people;

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- **flexibility** for public organisations and staff to meet the aspirations of users; and
- **more choice** for service users.

1.13 The Government's aim is to put people at the centre of public services. It feels that local government, at the heart of the community, with knowledge about local needs and in the front line of delivery, is in a pivotal position to ensure that public services are designed around the needs and preferences of local people and communities. The Government point out in their document that the introduction of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2002 has helped deliver a more coherent framework for assessing council performance. It has also demonstrated significant improvement, with over half of the upper tier and unitary councils now rated as Good or Excellent. Local authorities also now routinely consult residents about services. The best performing councils have fundamentally changed how they provide services to users, using feedback to drive improvements in service delivery and to provide greater personalisation and choice. However the government consider that such examples of excellence, and the reforms which have underpinned them, can only increase the sense that much more could be achieved across all local authorities, if the right environment is created. The Government therefore felt that a new approach to local government could improve the local delivery of services, increase public engagement in the decisions that affect them, and lead to better outcomes for people and places. This, the government feels is the big prize, and one that makes 'local vision' worthwhile.

1.14 With particular regard to engagement and involvement the document noted that greater public influence over the delivery of public services will ensure they better reflect the community's needs and preferences – including those of vulnerable or marginalised groups – and increase satisfaction in those services. Greater engagement will also enhance people's sense of pride and involvement in their place. The government is of the view that a high level of citizen participation and engagement is vital to the health of government. It can help to:

- build sustainable and cohesive communities by re-engaging citizens in civic life and building social capital; and
- make the delivery of public services at local level more effective and responsive, increasing the understanding, influence and choices citizens have over them.

1.15 The government take the view that people trust political institutions, local and national, less than many other bodies. A minority of people now vote in local elections. When asked in a recent NOP/Electoral Commission survey why they didn't vote, 45% said they didn't have time to vote, 41% said they didn't think voting made any difference, and 37% said they didn't know what the issues were. However the government knows that people will vote in numbers if there are issues of immediate relevance, as evidenced by the high turnouts for votes on Large Scale Voluntary Housing Stock Transfers (LSVTs). The introduction of postal voting has also shown that more people will vote if it is made more

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convenient. However the government considers that a real shift in participation levels will depend on convincing people that councils and councillors matter and can make a difference to their lives.

1.16 In taking this argument forward the government considers that the health of representative and participative democracy are interrelated. Alongside local elections as well as voter turnouts, there need to be more and better opportunities to participate and exert influence on local issues and decisions. The government is of the view that devolution should not stop at the town hall. Devolving and decentralizing within local areas can maximise the ability of the front line to tailor services to the needs of communities. There are a variety of models for giving local people a stronger voice in smaller areas within local authorities, including:

- council led decentralisation and devolution, such as through area committees, and an enhanced role for non-executive councillors within these arrangements;
- self management arrangements such as tenant management organisations;
- development of neighbourhood management initiatives or arrangements which also exercise some governance functions;
- a bigger role for interested individuals in running services, extending the examples of parent governors in schools to other areas.

1.17 The government do not see this list as exhaustive but note that all will require significant community capacity building in order to increase engagement and give citizens the skills and opportunities to engage in them effectively. However, community capacity building, whilst resource intensive, has direct benefits. It can reduce crime and the fear of crime, anti-social behaviour, vandalism and social inclusion. The government also feels that it can improve health, confidence and the quality of life. The services that have been the major candidates for more decentralised arrangements have in the main been those associated with the liveability agenda and those which most affect how satisfied citizens are with their council – eg street cleaning, waste collection, community safety, management of the environment, youth activities, traffic management and housing management.

1.18 The governments vision for citizen engagement is therefore set out on the document as follows:

***Our vision is:
greater participation by people in the decisions that affect them locally,
leading to services which better match the needs and preferences of
communities.***

***This requires:
building trust that engagement will make a difference, and offering new
opportunities to engage, particularly for those who have not felt
empowered.***

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- 1.19 In early 2005 the ODPM published their document '**Citizen Engagement and Public Services – Why Neighbourhoods Matter**'. This document sets out how opportunities for neighbourhood arrangements might be widened. It offers options for engaging citizens and communities through neighbourhood activities in the democratic process more widely, and help deliver better public services. It shows how neighbourhood arrangements can both harness the interest in and commitment people have to their locality in order to create a cleaner, greener, safer environment for those localities and the communities that live and work in them. It recognises how neighbourhood arrangements can be a seedbed for democracy, giving opportunities for people to participate at the most local level, which can perhaps lead on to their seeking office and involvement more widely in the democratic governance of the country. The council's Democratic services team are frustrated by the fact that they have not the current capacity to carry out pro-active work in schools and communities.
- 1.20 The Local Government Association (LGA) shares the vision of a society whose citizens are active in their communities and participate in shaping their future. Their manifesto, published in December 2005, '**Independence, opportunity, trust**', sets out a vision of self-governing communities that take responsibility for solving their own problems and govern themselves with and through locally-elected representatives, free from outside interference in matters that are best left to local decision. To realise this vision, the Association feel that power has to be devolved to local councils and through them to individuals and communities, to give people more say in the local issues that matter to them most.
- 1.21 In their document '**Towards self governing communities**' the Association talk about 'civil renewal' or the renewal of democracy and civil society supported by a culture of active citizenship. The Association consider the need for community minded individuals and vibrant local institutions to build and maintain the relationships which are essential for a healthy society. Local government has therefore a critical role in developing better engagement between local communities and public policy makers. Delivering services, vital though that is in many policy areas, is not enough by itself. If the people in whose name such services are developed believe their concerns will not be taken into account, they will not come forward to help improve those services, let alone sustain their long-term impact. They may even end up simply taking the benefits for granted and assuming that all problems flow from some faceless bureaucratic machine. Engagement in the early stages and the ability to play a part in implementing and where feasible delivering policy are therefore essential in the LGA's view.. Given the opportunities, most people actually want to make a constructive difference. The Home Office's drive to increase community engagement, for example, has been followed by an increase of over a million people in community activities between 2001 and 2003 (Source: Home Office Citizenship Survey 2003). Citizens will invest their time, resources, and commitment in support of the public good so long as they can experience a tangible stake in the activities of public bodies. They are willing to be more involved where positive outcomes for their communities emerge from their participation. This will not happen by chance. The Association are firmly of the view that priority must be given at every level to the

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promotion and development of effective engagement of citizens in public activities.

1.22 The LGA make nine recommendations which they hope Local Authorities will adopt. These are summarised here and set out in more detail in Annexe1:

- **Investing in young people**
Local authorities should widen opportunities for young people to articulate their needs within their local community. Working with local schools and youth councils to deliver the citizenship curriculum is one way. Linking to the work that local voluntary and community organisations do is another route, particularly as it can be a way to involve hard-to-reach groups of young people.
- **Supporting voluntary and community self organisation**
Councils should continue to support the development of Local Compacts as an important springboard in changing the relationship between the voluntary and community sector. In addition, councils need to take on board recommendations from Change Up (Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector), the Building Civil Renewal final report and the Future builders fund which will help level the playing field between the statutory and non-statutory sector.
- **Building community cohesion**
Council officers and members should use the guidance developed by the LGA and partners to develop a shared vision for community cohesion for their authority..
- **Making better use of the built environment**
Local authorities have a key role to play in the co-ordination of extended schooling. This role is to ensure availability of buildings for extended schools' use but also to strategically manage and co-ordinate building programmes to incorporate opportunities to use school buildings for wider community use. Local authorities in their community leadership capacity also play a central role in future developments relating to physical capital. In addition to planning and investing for new community buildings and space, councils should have systems in place to monitor the condition of their public spaces to assist efforts to preserve them. Communities should be encouraged to participate in these processes.
- **Widening e-participation**
Local authorities should use tools and guidance, developed by the local e-democracy national project, on how to use new technology, to encourage participation, including those in hard-to-reach groups and in more deprived communities.

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- **Encouraging scrutiny and challenge**
Councils should all raise their game on scrutiny. In addition to the four principles identified by CfPS, they should ensure that scrutiny function in their area:
 - provides an effective challenge;
 - involves the lay community not just councillors;
 - extends scrutiny to non-council bodies.

- **Facilitating devolved governance**
Local authorities should extend and enhance arrangements for area-based engagement with communities. Where councils have no area forums in place, they should consider setting them up. Those with area forums should consider whether to establish area committees with devolved powers, or to extend and enhance the role of parish and town councils in their area.

- **Developing the role of councillors**
The LGA will be working with the Local Government Leadership Centre and the IDeA to encourage councils to use the skills framework to identify and meet councillors' needs for development, training and support. We also hope to open up a dialogue with the political parties about incorporating the framework in processes for identifying and selecting candidates for local elections.

- **Supporting citizen governors**
Councils should explore, with local partner organisations, the scope for co-ordinating arrangements for recruitment, training and support of citizen-governors.

Audit Commission Expectations

- 1.23 Sir Peter Gershons's report '**Releasing resources to the front line; Independent review of public sector efficiency**' highlights the role that effective community engagement and involvement can have on public services. Genuine consultation can improve the quality of decision making, help avoid expensive mistakes and help managers to more easily meet national efficiency expectations. Gershon's findings will be reflected in how the government measure councils in the future. While the new approach to District Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) has not yet been announced it is clear that it will be a 'harder test' and user focus will have a significant impact on future outcomes and categorisation. Current single tier corporate assessment methodology has been strengthened to measure how well local councils understand their local communities' and issues of 'diversity, human rights and user focus' are set out as one of three 'imperatives' of how council's work. Community engagement is broken down into three interconnected aspects:
- User focus / citizen involvement
 - Engagement with 'vulnerable, minority and hard-to-reach groups'
 - The role of the voluntary and community sector

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In order to achieve a level which is consistently above minimum requirements or performing well council's will need to show things like;

- Ambitions are well communicated, supported by the community and based on good intelligence;
- There is evidence of changes to priorities as a result of engagement;
- The community has a good picture of how the council is performing;
- There is active communication of services;
- There is clear evidence of effective engagement and understanding of the needs of 'hard to reach groups'
- There is a strong commitment towards collaboration and pooling of resources to deliver services including the VCS; and
- There is an opportunity for the VCS to influence how performance is measured and targets set.

1.24 In addition to this the Audit Commission have developed a User Focus Planning Toolkit to assist councils in improving community engagement. This has recently been revised to include diversity. This poses the following key questions:

- Does the organisation demonstrate a visible **commitment** to ensuring that all its activities are designed to meet the needs and take account of the views of all types of service users and citizens?
- Does this commitment translate into actual processes which are used to ensure that the organisation understands its **diverse community's** needs and is ensuring that service delivery is designed on clear priorities which are based on need and aspirations of all sections of the community?
- Is the organisation clear on what is trying to achieve by **connecting** and engaging with different types of users/patients and citizens and is it clear how the information generated by this engagement will feed into policy formulation?
- Is the organisation clear on the consultation and engagement techniques and **channels** that they are going to use to achieve what they have set out to achieve?
- Does the organisation ensure that these processes are resulting in improved service delivery and demonstrable **change** for users?

Local Context

1.25 It is fair to say that through the council's Improvement programme it has grasped national issues set out above. The council's first **Corporate Plan** published in June 2005 set out seven new priorities. It set Customer Excellence as its first priority and set out a vision to become a council that is customer focussed, pursues customer excellence and is easy to do business with. The vision goes further with the aim of being a council that provides every opportunity to be engaged in local democracy and service delivery. The implementation of the council's **Customer Excellence Strategy** and the development of this

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Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy were principal proposals under this particular priority. There is also a strong relationship between this Strategy and the Council's Corporate Equality Plan (including the Race Equality Scheme and Equality Policy). The plan specifically identifies a requirement for the Strategy.

- 1.26 The corporate plan also includes a separate priority Neighbourhood management. This picks up the national issues in '**The future of local government: Developing a 10 year vision**' and '**Citizen Engagement and Public Services – Why Neighbourhoods Matter**'. In particular the Corporate Plan proposes the development of a Neighbourhood Management Strategy, promotion of active citizenship and evaluation of the introduction of Area Committees or Neighbourhood Management Boards.
- 1.27 Key proposals for improvement in community engagement underpin Corporate Plan proposals and are detailed in the council's **Improvement and Recovery Plan 2** adopted in November 2005. In particular the following are proposed:
- review existing forms of engagement and implement review;
 - develop, adopt and implement a Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy; and
 - consider the implications of the LGA manifesto for Chester-le-Street
- 1.28 To assist the council in considering future working arrangements the councils included in its Constitution Review in May 2005 potential 'triggers' to allow the creation of Area Committees in the future. It also extended public speaking to all committee meetings including 'full council'. Finally the council's Strong Overview and Scrutiny Panel have been undertaking work on member attendance and Community Engagement.
- 1.29 In view of the above it is clear that the council considers improving engagement is firmly on its agenda. As a fundamental part of its Improvement Programme the issue is of prime importance.

Summary

- 1.30 Community engagement comes in many forms but principally it can include the provision of information, consultation, collaboration and empowerment. The government has a ten year vision of local government in which it sees better community engagement as a key feature. This vision includes greater participation by people in the decisions that affect them locally, leading to services which better match the needs and preferences of communities. This requires: building trust that engagement will make a difference, and offering new opportunities to engage, particularly for those who have not felt empowered. The government and the Local Government Association are encouraging local councils to take up the challenge and look at new ways of working to build stronger communities. This includes Neighbourhood Management and Area Committees.

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- 1.31 The council is actively addressing this challenge. This has resulted in firm plans being put in place through its Corporate Plan and its Improvement Programme. This strategy in itself is a clear step forward in community engagement and shows the importance the council places on it. The council needs to address the issues that arise from the national vision and the requirements of Comprehensive Performance Assessment. This includes:
- considering ways to improve engagement through collaboration and empowerment;
 - considering the value of 'citizen governors';
 - addressing the implications of 'local vision';
 - addressing the building of community knowledge of service delivery and trust in engagement value;
 - learning fro Neighbourhood Management;
 - addressing the local Government associations manifesto recommendations; and
 - using the audit commissions toolkit to help meet what will be required of the council in terms of Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

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2. Where are we now?

Introduction

- 2.1 This section set out the scene of current engagement both within the council and with our partners. This is felt necessary to help identify gaps and develop aims and objectives of the Strategy. It uses audit work already undertaken within the council. It builds on the focus given on customers through the Customer Excellence Strategy, current examples of practice and the work of the District Partnership, including its work with young people.
- 2.2 This section has a case study approach to provide examples of the councils existing approach to information, consultation, collaboration and empowerment. The section also looks at the current work of the Strong Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Customer Engagement Audit - September 2005

- 2.3 There is no corporate guidance on consultation and engagement and the Strategy will need to address this together with appropriate awareness raising and training. In addition despite the councils clear community leadership role there is no specific member or officer champion for community engagement outside communications generally. In order to assist in the preparation of this Strategy an audit of existing engagement processes across the council was carried out by the District Partnership Team. The strengths and areas for improvement arising from the results of this audit are summarised as follows and provided in more detail in Annexe 2:

Strengths

- A large number of service areas liaise with stakeholder groups and external agencies.
- The range of techniques and methods of engagement used is high and much of it is pro-active in seeking views.
- Customer and community views are considered in the development of strategies and in the development of service plans by a large number of service areas.

Areas for improvement

- 23% of service areas think that the methods used to feedback to customers are only partially or not effective.
- In some service areas an inclusive approach to engaging with all of our community is seriously lacking, for example in relation to the number of service areas unable to demonstrate engagement with young people, older people, black and minority ethnic groups and with the less able bodied.

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- Provision of information in different formats - such as large print or in languages other than English - is lacking across many service areas, and 42% (13) of service areas hold no information in different formats.
- 65% of service areas do not engage users in service planning despite this being required in corporate guidance..
- There is an inability to manipulate data held on customers indicated by the number of service areas that either do not, or cannot, disaggregate data held (84%).
- 23% of service areas consider that there is insufficient knowledge of, or information held on customers and service users, including non-users.
- Of the community and customer engagement activity undertaken 32% of service areas consider that this is inadequate and unrepresentative.
- Duplication exists in activity of some service areas where similar approaches are being used to engage with similar communities or users – opportunities exist for simplification in approach and potential for resources to be better used. 19% of service areas indicated that duplication may exist - note*.
- 45% of service areas indicated that a mechanism is required to co-ordinate consultation activity or improve cross-team working. The existence of such a mechanism should lead to improved knowledge of engagement methods used, of issues/communities consulted, and lead to better timing of consultation activity, and the potential to share/save resources.
- 26% of service areas suggested that to improve service delivery we should consult on aspects of our services not previously explored e.g. opening times, and 13% suggested that citizen's panels should be considered.

This Strategy will address these issues. In particular it needs to assess how community engagement and involvement can be better co-ordinated and made more consistent within the council.

Current Engagement – Information

2.4 The council has a range of ways to get information across to the community. These include:

- Members hold regular ward surgeries
- The council supporting Residents and Tenants Associations
- Quarterly newspapers, delivered to all households, called District News
- Tenants newsletter, 'Tenants Talk'
- Regular press releases, media coverage and leaflet campaigns on key issues
- A re-launched web-site with improving content
- SMS campaigns e.g. reporting benefit fraud where 18% responses were by text
- On line polls
- On line council documents and agendas and minutes of council meeting
- Day to day Member and Officer contact

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- Public can speak at council meetings but this is not well developed or publicised
- Presentations to local resident and community groups and Community Associations
- Community partnership Forums, the council facilitates 12 forums per year for community involvement with the Local Strategic Partnership (District Partnership)
- Overview and Scrutiny Panel meetings

2.5 There will be need to constantly review whether these are delivering intended outcomes and value for money. In particular there is a need to review how we get information out across the council,. The council needs to improve how it communicate what it does and particular its achievements. Historically we have moved on to the next part of its improvement programme rather than telling people our story in terms of our work, our scuccesse and our achievements. We need to raise our game on promoting our image in what we do, what we say and in the documents we produce. We need to 'Get Our Message Across'. This will not just be a role for the Customer RelationsTeam. It is a role for everyone in the organisation. Everyone must be an ambassador for the council and we need to embed this into the culture of the council. This will need to include guidance and training both in terms of provision of information and providing feedback. We need to develop relationships with the media, including TV and radio to maximise opportunities to sell what we do. The IDeA and the LGA have issued advice to councils on local government reputation and it would be helpful to the council to address the recommendations. We need to build improvements onto our communications plan and develop a timeline approach to prepare us ahead for publicity we need to provide. The council can make better use of its web-site as well as traditional methods of communicating particularly if it takes opportunities to encourage the use of technology even with the most disadvantaged. A style guide would help portray a better image.

2.6 The value of Ward Surgeries, public speaking at council meetings and the future of the Community Partnerships also needs to be considered. In terms of Ward Surgeries it is not clear how the community see the value in these and whether they are effective and consistent across the district. The strategy needs to look at whether these be improved for example could customer service officers help facilitate them and engage with the community better. Public speaking at Planning Committees has been in place for several years. Learning from this the council extended public speaking to other committees in May 2006. this facility has not been fully launched and implemented, largely due to other improvement priorities. As a result the community is not having its say at committees prior to be decisions being made. There is a need for the Strategy to address this and maximise the use of this engagement technique. The Strategy should also consider web-site technology to allow the public to watch committee meetings over the internet. In addition meetings need to be well publicized not just dates but what decisions are likely to be made.

2.7 Community Partnerships are a type of area forum where local residents and community groups can engage in the work of the District Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership – LSP). Community partnerships seek full geographic coverage of the district. There are three distinct partnership groups and. In

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addition, close working with resident associations. Meeting three times a year they aim to capture the views of local communities on topical strategic planning and implementation issues relating to the work of LSP partners. Partnerships have had clear successes but face significant challenges in seeking to sustain healthy levels of engagement with both communities and LSP partners in an inclusive way. There are now two Community Partnerships Representatives on the District Partnerships Steering Group, the decision making arm of the Local Strategic partnership and as a result there is the potential for collaboration. This is identified further in Paragraph 2.15. There is a need for the strategy to address whether this is the best way to engage the community in the work of the District Partnership.

Current Engagement – Consultation

- 2.8 The council has a range of ways to consult the community. Above techniques identified in Paragraph 3.4 these include:
- Consultation events
 - Residents surveys
 - Tenants surveys
 - Business Surveys
 - Key issue questionnaires e.g. consultation on Leisure Services
 - Implementation of the Compliments, comments and complaints policy
 - Formal consultation with partnership bodies e.g. consultation on the Local Area Agreement with the engagement of the CVS
 - Focus groups including the Diverse Users Forum
 - Direct Consultations with Residents and Tenants Associations e.g. Tenants Compact and handbook, Environmental Standards and Corporate Service Standards
 - Overview and Scrutiny Reviews
- 2.9 The council generally has a good range of consultation processes in place and a willingness to engage the community. The council's corporate plan, and council priorities were firmly based on feedback from the community and partners and specifically on the basis of the Residents Survey in 2004 and 2005. There are some weaknesses and in particular the lack of engagement in service planning and providing feedback to those engaged. They remain unco-ordinated either within the council or with partners. There is no corporate toolkit or guidance for undertaking consultation. Consultation is not corporately planned. There is a danger of consultation overload, low levels of participation and engagement if the process is not managed. There are no management arrangements at present.
- 2.10 The council does not have focus groups for all services. The recently developed Diverse Users Forum has been recruited and engaged in consultation on the council's Equality Plan but it has not met yet as a group. The Strategy needs to address these issues. The council has no Citizens Panel or jury and the Strategy needs to address whether there is value in establishing something of this nature within the District. Another issue that needs to be addressed is a corporate approach to continuous customer surveys across all services. Finally there is no form of youth forum within the district. The Strategy ought to consider whether

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this could be sponsored by partners. There may also be scope for youth representation on the LSP or on Scrutiny Panels

- 2.11 it is important to note that the council have recently adopted a **Statement of Community Involvement** for the Planning Service. Indeed it was one of the first councils in the whole of the country to submit it to the Secretary of State for approval. Many people come into contact with the planning system when decisions have to be taken about whether something can be built in their area, for example a new housing estate, telecoms mast or an extension to their neighbour's property. The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how neighbours and other members of the public will be told about these proposals and how they can make their views known. The Statement of Community Involvement also sets out how you can get involved in the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF). The Local Development Framework looks at the longer-term future of an area and will be a folder of documents that sets out how local areas may change over the next few years. It will be prepared by the Council but it is very important that as many people as possible get involved. The Statement of Community Involvement also encourages developers to undertake consultation with communities at the design and planning stages of significant planning applications before they are submitted to the Council. This provides the community with information about a proposed development and provides an opportunity to the developer to inform the community of any benefits their proposal may have. The Council hope that the range of initiatives it is proposing will give everyone sufficient opportunity to become involved in the planning system.

Current Engagement – Collaboration and Empowerment

- 2.12 As indicated earlier there are some but not many examples around the council of real collaboration and empowerment. Those that do exist include:
- The Tenants Panel
 - Support for Residents Associations
 - Community representation on the District Partnership
 - Pilot Neighbourhood Management Work
 - The Streetsafe Initiative
 - ERIC bus
 - Pelton Fell Regeneration Partnership.
- 2.13 The Tenants Participation Team of the District Council supports the work of the Tenants Panel. This Panel is actively engaged in the delivery of the Housing service. In October 2004 the Council approved its first Tenant and Leaseholder Compact since the introduction of the Compact tenants and leaseholders have been involved in consultation, participation and decision making through a range of methods. These have included:
- joint initiatives such as estate walkabouts;
 - engagement in working groups such as the Tenants Handbook Working Group;
 - interview panels for external contractors;

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- internal and external Training events including procurement; and
- consultation on policies and procedures.

Tenants knowledge of the Compact remains limited and the Compact has recently been reviewed and is about to be re-launched as 'Your Home Your Say'. The review of the Compact has been based on feedback from tenants and leaseholders. It includes a new Involvement Framework which offers choice to individuals as to the level of engagement available. It also sets out six promises as follows:

- Standards for providing information;
- Options for Participation and Involvement;
- Support and Resources;
- Standards for meetings;
- Standards for Tenants and Resident Organisations; and
- Monitoring and measuring performance.

2.14 In addition to this the council supports a network of Residents and Tenants Associations. This support is generally provided by one officer in the Communities and Partnership Team. Currently there are 23 supported groups within the District and these are identified in Annexe 3. Support is provided both in terms of staff time and small start up (up to £400) and support grants (up to £300) with a limited maximum budget . The main aim of the support is to get the groups operational and build capacity within communities throughout the District to influence and engage with service providers. The aim has not been to develop a two way flow of information and engagement. The District Council does not lay down specific expectations from the groups although it does not support the groups unless they are properly constituted and comply with criteria such as equalities and minuting of meetings. The network of groups are consulted in terms of key issues affected by the council but there is no general management of exchange of views corporately. Residents groups are supported by a different team than tenants groups there are different approaches in terms of available support both in financial and human resource terms. There remains good working between the teams including the development of Estate Agreements. The possible transfer of the housing stock and the implications to the council and community engagement at a time of change will be a challenge to the council. The Strategy needs to consider address this and review current arrangements to see if they are delivering outcomes and value for money. In particular the strategy ought to look at whether resources generally spent on community engagement both within and outside the council could be utilised better.

2.15 As indicated earlier there are now two Community Partnerships Representatives on the District Partnership Steering Group, the decision making arm of the Local Strategic Partnership and as a result there is the

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potential for collaboration. This is shown graphically on the next page
There is a need for the strategy to address whether this is the best way to engage the community in the work of the District Partnership.

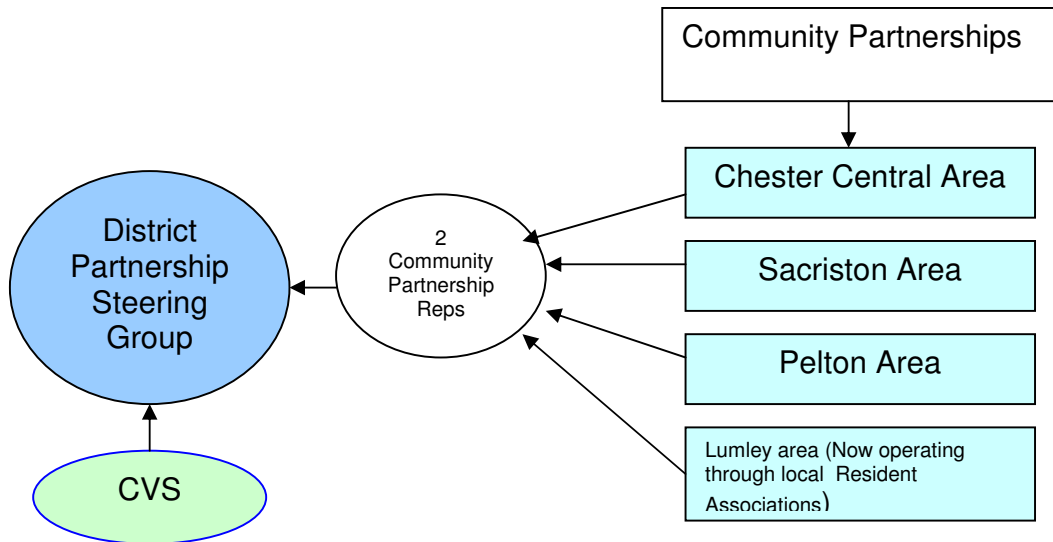


Diagram 1 ; Community Engagement on the Local Strategic Partnership

- 2.16 At the end of 2005 the council and its partners embarked on Neighbourhood Management Pilots in Chester West and North Lodge. The pilot is centered around the delivery of environmental services and engages the council, the Police, the Fire Brigade, the County Council (highways), a Parish Council, and the community in piloting neighbourhood management in two distinct areas. The areas were chose because they face different issues. The Pilot will run until June when an assessment report on learning will be produced. The council has an 'action learning set' looking at lessons that have been learned. The pilots are aimed to make' local vision' real in Chester-le- Street and the intended outcome is to roll the pilots out across the District. The community engagement structure is identified below. The Strategy will need to build on the learning from the pilots to develop proposals for the future.

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Why?

The Pilot arises from the Council's response to the Government's Local Vision proposals. The Council wanted to test out how services could be delivered at a neighbourhood level in a more efficient manner with better community engagement. As a result of feedback from the October 2004 residents opinion survey the council incorporated Neighbourhood Management as one of its seven priorities in the council's first Corporate Plan published in June 2005. This is stated as *Working with our community and partners to deliver action at neighbourhood level, improving the quality of public services, engaging people in local democracy, and, as a result, helping to create an improved environment and sustainable communities*

The pilot emerged from a key task in the plan and was agreed at the Council's Executive in September 2005. A secondment to co-ordinate the Pilot was appointed in November 2005

Who?

The Pilot is principally aimed at Environmental Services but includes

- housing
- Planning
- Leisure, Culture, Arts
- Police and Fire Service
- Lifelong learning
- Economic development

Where?

The pilot has been implemented in two distinct geographical areas in order that the council can understand how different needs can be met:

- North Lodge
- Chester West

How?

A structure has been agreed to implement and review the Pilots. This involves:

A Steering Group

Made up of Senior officers, Local Members Parish and Community Group representatives. The key role of this group is oversee, monitor and review the Pilot

An Implementation Team

Made up of front line multi service and multi agency staff responsible for delivering services Supported by a neighbourhood co-ordinator on secondment

Outcomes?

Improved street care performance as a result of implementing zonal teams & monitored through BVPI99

Residents associations have been engaged in Service Standard development

The council has started to work better with Partners with shared service delivery

30 residents have attended a launch day and has their say

A more knowledgeable community with positive Attitudes about their environments

Bonfire policy has saved the Fire Service approximately £35,000

Diagram 2 ; Neighbourhood Management Pilot Case Study.

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2.17 Streetsafe is a clear example of the council working in partnership others to deliver services while engaging the community as part of the process. The initiative stemmed from the fact that while crime levels in Chester-le-Street were relatively low the fear of crime was disproportionate to the actual likelihood of becoming a victim of crime. Streetsafe became the public reassurance strategy of Durham Constabulary. It had four main themes:

- Presence in the community
- Environmental and physical factors
- Effective response
- Communication and public engagement

The programme has been rolled out in two areas of the District, Sacriston and Pelton. Initially the community were invited to attend public consultation meetings. This was supported by a leaflet drop. To start the initiative village walk throughs were organised involving partners and community agencies. Young people were engaged and shared the views of others in the community who were involved. Pro-active policing took place. The District Council organized fun days including wobble days and firebuster days which engaged the community in clean ups. The District council also took pro-active action on housing estates and youth diversionary activities were undertaken. This included the opening of a community house and the use of the ERIC bus. As a result formal action increased crime and fear of crime decreased and the community were engaged in service delivery. Good customer satisfaction resulted from questionnaires issued to the community at the end of the initiatives in the two villages. The council and the police have since commenced discussion on the development of Neighbourhood Policing. It has been agreed to establish a quarterly Strategic planning Group to take partnership working forward. The Strategy needs to take this into account.

2.18 Funded by the Home Office, Communities Against Drugs Initiative, Educational Resource In Communities (ERIC) provides a stimulating and flexible environment for young people to access a wide range of information. Eric is a mobile facility that travels around the Chester-le-Street district, engaging with young people between the ages of 11 - 25 years. The bus is equipped with televisions, playstations, music centres and computers (with internet access), providing young people with a safe and fun environment to socialise in. A team of youth workers and peer supporters are on board to offer information and support on a range of health and social issues and a wide variety of posters, leaflets and helpline numbers are also available. It is staffed by qualified youth workers and equipped with a range of activities and information that has been developed by and with young people. ERIC has the following to offer

- Leaflets and information on a wide range of subjects.
- Trained peer supporters who give the young people the opportunity to get information and support from trained people of their own age group.
- TV/Video - Many of the best new educational materials are supplied on video for maximum effect.
- Music/Playstation 1 & 2 - If they need an even more relaxed atmosphere, young people can bring their own tapes, CDs or games to play.

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- 2.19 The Pelton Fell Neighbourhood Regeneration Partnership(NRP) was launched on the 27 March, with the signing of an agreement, that will establish this brand new Partnership for Pelton Fell.The NRP will have a crucial role to play in driving forward the regeneration of Pelton Fell village. It is an innovative vehicle for delivering real results that will have a lasting impact on the lives of local residents. The Council has teamed up with Pelton Fell Community Group, Nomad Homes, Durham Aged Mineworkers' Homes Association (DAMHA) and Bellway Homes to establish the NRP. Funded by contributions from all the partners totalling £210,000 over four years, the NRP will take responsibility for the practical implementation of an ambitious Integrated Regeneration Strategy (IRS) for Pelton Fell. The NRP will be led by a local Board which includes strong representation from the community and met for the first time in April 2006. One of the key early priorities for the Board will be to recruit a Project Manager who will run the day-to-day operation of the NRP, provide strategic advice to the NRP Board and coordinate the delivery of the regeneration projects envisaged by the Pelton Fell Integrated Regeneration Strategy. This is a multi million pound social physical and environmental regeneration scheme.
- 2.20 While the council's constitution has been designed to enable the council to introduce Area committees or Neighbourhood Management Boards there are currently none established. This needs to be addressed by the Strategy.

Current Engagement – Asset and Knowledge Management

- 2.21 There are a number of other areas that the Strategy needs to address and in particular asset and knowledge management. The Civic Centre, for example is available for community use both in terms of the conference rooms and the Gloucester Suite. It has other assets which could have better community use either with or without partners. Indeed equally partners own assets could possibly be used better to improve local governance arrangements. The council has access to Box 13, a hospitality room at the Durham County Cricket Club's Riverside ground. The council has identified this as a community resource. At the moment there are no dedicated human or financial resources to maximise the benefits of this facility. It might be possible that proper asset management here could generate income to self finance community engagement support. If this is not possible then the strategy ought to address how the greatest benefit of Box 13 could be gained. Another strong example of engaging with the public in terms of Assets is the work currently being undertaken on Community Hub at Grange Villa. The Grange Villa Community Association have been engaged with the council and its partners to develop a resource which will provide local service delivery including locally available information including possible video conferencing. The Community Association and council representatives are to shortly visit a project in Blythe to assess the possibility of this being established.

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2.22 The Council adopted an Information Management Strategy in March 2006. This sets out how the council is best going to store and retrieve information about its customers and the community. It does not include knowledge management which is about obtaining and using the right information about our customers and the community. A certain amount of, perhaps unco-ordinated, work has been undertaken over the last year. In July 2006 the council produced a District Profile and this needs to be reviewed regularly. A working group has been established to look at aspects of knowledge management and community profiles have recently been produced by the Housing service. As an important part of delivering services and improving engagement is about knowing our customers, this Strategy ought to address this issue.

The work of the Strong Overview and Scrutiny Panel

2.23 The Councils Strong Overview and Scrutiny Panel has been doing a Review of Public and Member attendance. In respect of public attendance the Panel decided to embark upon this review because:

- It is identified within the Improvement & Recovery Plan that arrangements needed to be developed to more effectively engage the public in Executive & Scrutiny meetings and to promote increased attendance at public meetings, which is in line with the Local Government Act 2000. The act introduced changes to the decision making process by placing greater emphasis upon being open and transparent.
- The role of elected members has evolved, through the introduction of the Scrutiny function, which provides non-executive members with a real opportunity to become actively involved in the decision making process. The Government has further placed greater emphasis on councillors to be active within their communities.
- The principles of engagement within the community require stimulating greater public interest and involvement in the council's decision making processes.
- It was important to identify the extent of member involvement in innovations such as Community Partnerships as part of evaluating their effectiveness.

2.24 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel are shortly to endorse their final report. The draft of this includes the following recommendations:

- That street surgeries be held with Durham County Councillors.
- That Panel meetings be publicised in the District News, key information points across the District and on the Council Website.
- That a protocol be devised and implemented for members of the public attending Scrutiny Panels.
- That where appropriate meetings should be held outside of the Civic

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Centre. This could be dependent upon the issue under review.

- That an annual meeting be held to inform the public of the work of the Council and take questions.
- That Scrutiny Panel investigations seek to involve the public i.e. interacting with service users.
- That workplans should focus upon issues perceived to be relevant to the public.
- That the frequency of Panel meetings be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.
- That Chairs of Committees and Panels be provided with training on engaging the public in Panel meetings.
- That the outcome of the Panels work assists the development of the Council's Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy.

2.25 In line with the likely final recommendations of the Panel these issues should be addressed by the Strategy.

Current Engagement – Our work with voluntary and community services

2.26 The council works closely with the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) who are a key partner on the Local Strategic Partnership. A key priority of the councils Corporate Plan is to work with partners to achieve the Community Strategy and it is a specific action of the Plan to develop a coherent medium term strategy for the development of the voluntary sector and to agree longer term goals. Work on this is ongoing and led by the Director of Community Services. Working with the voluntary and community sector enables the council to:

- design services better;
- join up services across service areas
- pilot new approaches and ideas;
- ensure preventative services for vulnerable people
- have more effective engagement of 'hard to reach groups';
- improve community development and build capacity;
- assist regeneration;
- improve community safety;
- improve partnership working;
- achieve health benefits of volunteering;
- achieve targets; and
- learn through partnership.

2.27 The CVS advise that there are some 336 community Groups known to their organisation in Chester-le Street alone. There are 355 jobs relating to the support of such groups across the district and there are 3,097 volunteers contributing to

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an investment of £3.51m. of work each year. There are fewer volunteers in Chester-le-Street than anywhere else in the County. 11% of all voluntary and community organisations in County Durham are located in Chester-le-Street. And 2% of organisations actually cover the district. 39 % of organisations in Chester-le-Street employ staff

2.28 Voluntary and community organizations have long played an important role in shaping and delivering public services. The CVS are looking to establish a framework for working more closely with the local voluntary and community sector to help meet all of our objectives. The sector has clear strengths;

- local user focus;
- trust and accessibility;
- access to funds not available to the District Council;
- knowledge, relationships and networks;
- added value accessible through volunteering; and
- informal contact and consultation with communities.

However the sector is not well resourced and therefore has its own capacity issues. There are clear benefits of working more closely with the sector and the Strategy needs to address this.

The views of residents and the Audit Commission

2.29 In order to complete the picture it is felt important to indicate current available feedback from the Residents survey and current Audit Commission opinion on the councils current performance on community engagement.

2.30 In terms of the Residents Survey the most recent survey has shown that;

- overall satisfaction with council services has risen 3 % per year over the last two years to 58%
- 60% of residents feel that the council keeps residents either very well or fairly well informed and while this has improved over the last couple of years 35% felt that the council provides just a limited amount of information

2.31 The survey is based on the Best value Performance Indicator guidance and therefore there is not a great deal of information of satisfaction with engagement overall. This needs to be addressed.

2.32 The view of the Audit Commission can best be taken from the recent progress Assessment and the currently embargoed Findings from the Environmental Services Inspection. The strategy needs to address the issues that arise. In respect of the former the Audit Commission quote:

'The Council is making progress on new strategies and plans including community engagement, equality and information management.'

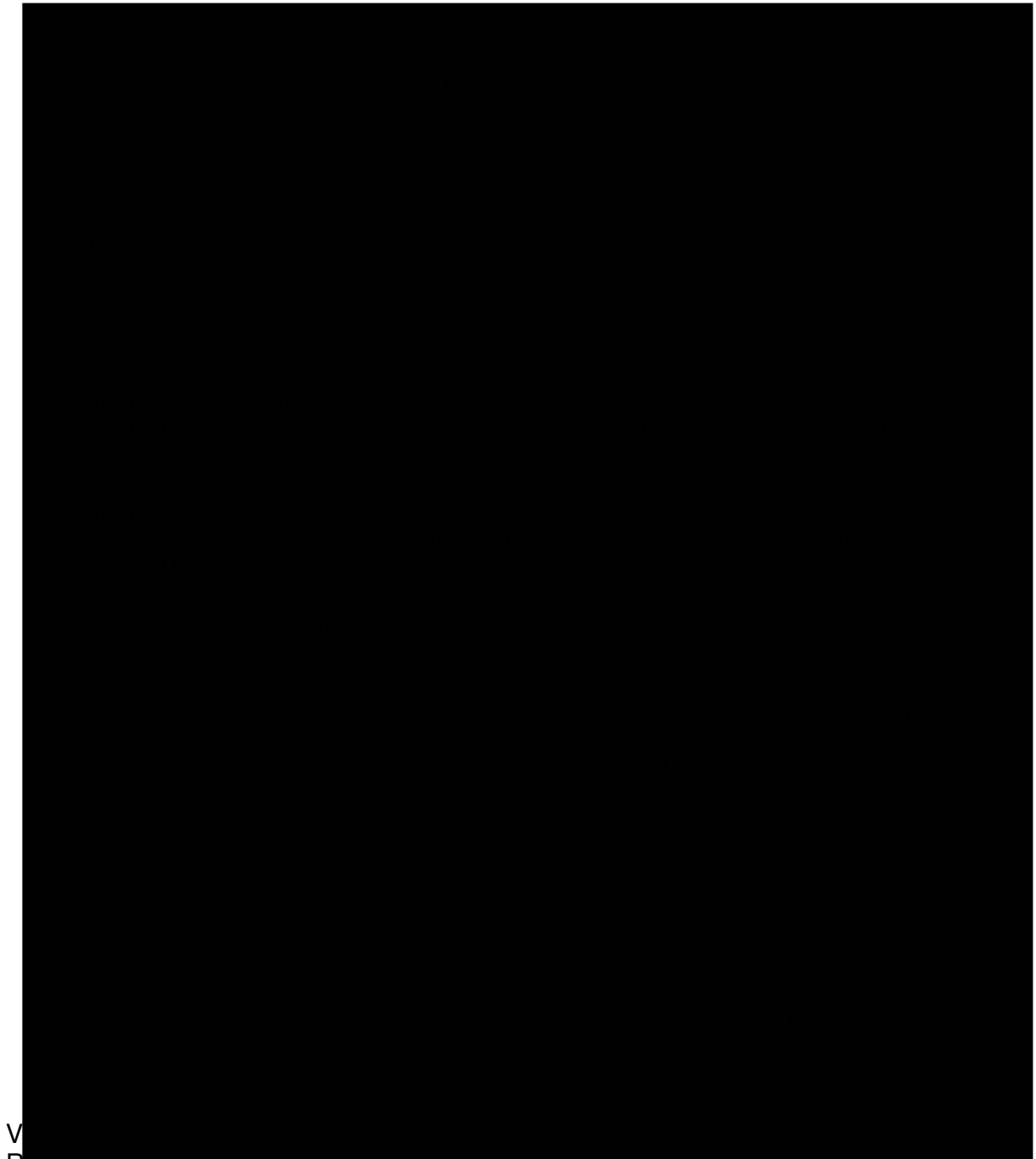
'The vision and priorities were developed in consultation with partners and local people. The Council's approach to consultation is improving. While it does not have a consistent or co-ordinated approach to consultation and engagement and it does not have sufficient

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information to enable it to fully understand the needs of local communities, it is developing a community engagement strategy. It improved its engagement with local communities during 2005 by undertaking a resident's survey, establishing a tenants' panel and compact and carrying out some user focus groups.'

'IRP2 is more externally focussed than IRP1, emphasising community participation and access to services, and a pilot scheme for neighbourhood management is underway. The Council is at an early stage in identifying the aspirations and needs of all local communities for participation and access.'

2.33 Part of the recent Inspection of the council's Environmental Services was significantly around customer focus and engagement. The Audit Commission said:



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Finally the Commission make one recommendation regarding engagement as follows:



Summary

- 2.34 This section of the strategy has provided a stock take of where the council is now in terms of community engagement and involvement. It is important to do this to help develop the Strategy and Action Plan. In general the councils approach to engagement and involvement is improving and there a good examples of best practice. That being said there is clearly room for improvement and the Strategy will make transitional yet transformational change.
- 2.35 In addition to the issues identified in Section 2 the strategy needs to address:
- areas for improvement arising out of the customer engagement audit, and in particular, better co-ordination and engagement in service planning;
 - value for money of providing information to the community;
 - improving Ward Surgeries;
 - getting the best out of public engagement in council meetings;
 - the most effective way of achieving engagement with the LSP;
 - the co-ordination of engagement activity and best use of resources both inside and outside the council;
 - the role of focus groups including the Diverse Users Forum;
 - whether or not there is a role for citizens panels in Chester-le-Street;
 - future support and management of residents associations and the best use of available engagement resources across the council;
 - scope to introduce Area Committees or Neighbourhood Management Boards;
 - improving asset and knowledge management;
 - ensuring that the council works with the voluntary and community sector better
 - the recommendations of Strong Overview and Scrutiny Panel;
 - improving knowledge of residents views on engagement opportunities; and
 - findings of inspections by the Audit Commission.

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3. Where do we want to be?

Introduction

- 3.1 So far the Strategy has set out the national and local context and identified where the council is now. This section is about making it clear the council's vision of community engagement and involvement in the future.
- 3.2 This section identifies this vision and the Strategies aims as well as intended outcomes.

The Strategy's Vision

- 3.3 This Strategy must be primarily about exercising community leadership to assist local people and communities engage with the council to help influence decisions we make. It must also, however be about how we work and how we perform if we are to address what will be expected of us in the future. We have a challenge in raising the reputation of the council and our partners by developing closer and better relationships with our communities and customers. We have limited resources and need to work together to avoid duplication and provide value for money. Paragraph 1.18 set out the Governments vision of community and engagement in the long term. It is considered that this vision is of equal importance to the communities in the District of Chester-le-Street. This vision would underpin the overall mission of the council in '**Working together to fulfil the needs of our communities**'.

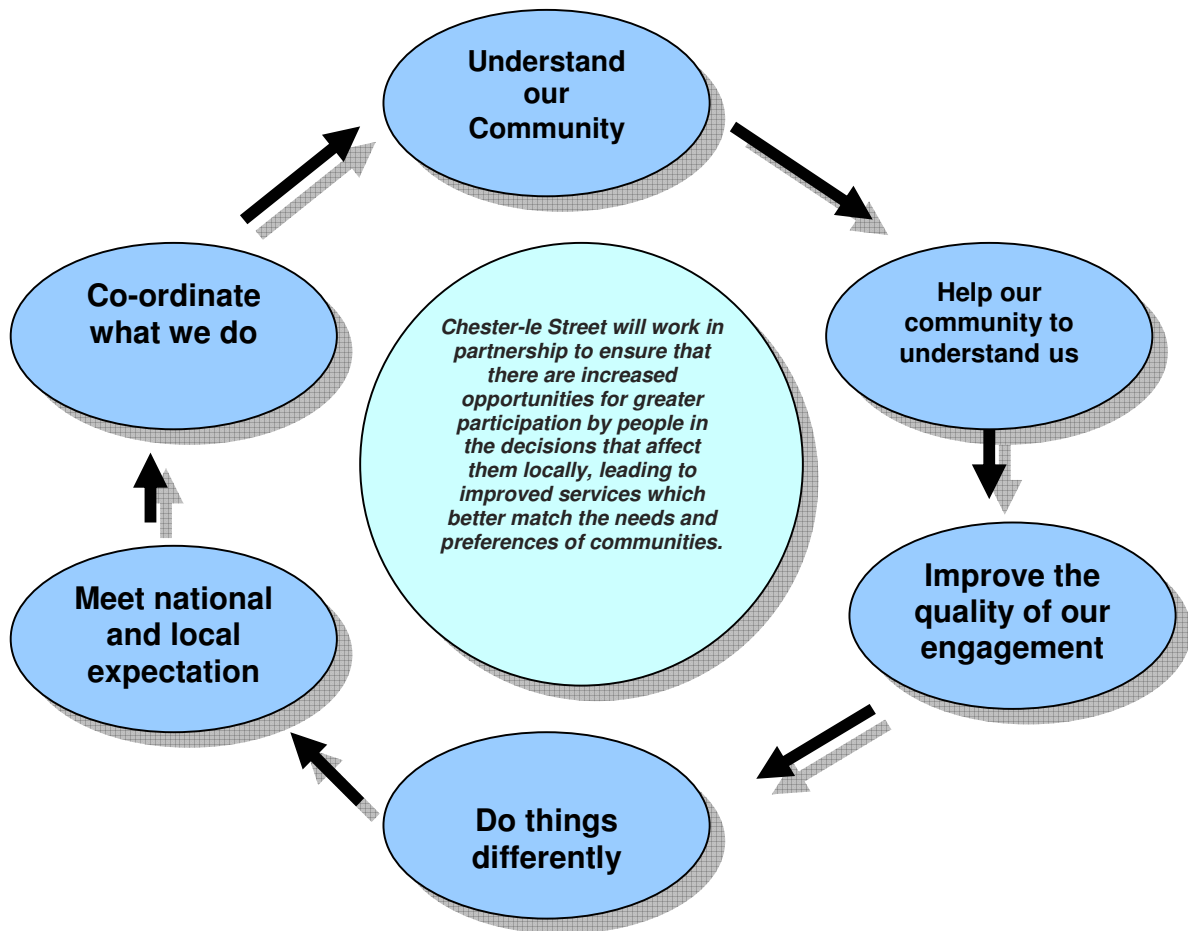
The Strategy vision is therefore:

Chester-le Street will work in partnership to ensure that there are increased opportunities for greater participation by people in the decisions that affect them locally, leading to improved services which better match the needs and preferences of communities.

The Strategies Aims and Desired Outcomes

- 3.4 Having set out the vision we need to set the aims of the Strategy. To achieve our vision what we need to do is;

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3.4 Our aims are therefore :

Aim 1 : Improve the understanding of our communities, their wants, needs and aspirations;

Aim 2 : Improve communications with communities to ensure that they understand the activities of the council and their partners including our achievements and reasons behind our decisions;

Aim 3 : Improve the quality and accessibility of our community engagement and involvement practices and processes;

Aim 4 : Ensure that we work with communities, partners and the voluntary and community sector to maximise resources and develop new ways of working to engage with all communities including those that may 'hard to reach' or 'hard to hear';

Aim 5 : Develop a co-ordinated approach to community engagement and involvement across all council services and with partners wherever possible; and

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Aim 6 : Ensure that the council effectively addresses the national vision to improve community engagement and in doing so meet both national and local expectations

3.5 The intended outcomes of the vision and aims are as follows:

- The council and its partners will be more knowledgeable about our communities and have better understanding to base our decisions upon
- The community will be more knowledgeable about what the council, and its partners do, what they are achieving on their behalf and the standards of service they may expect.
- There will be improved and increased opportunities for people to be engaged in the councils and partners activities including the design and delivery of services
- The council and its partners will listen more to our communities and will show that account has been taken of views when decisions are made
- Trust and understanding between the council, partners and community will be developed
- The community will accept the councils duty to make decisions but will understand the reasons why they have been made in the light of feedback that will be given
- There will be consistency in how the community are consulted and engaged and co-ordination will reduce consultation overload
- Value for money in engaging people will be demonstrated across partner organisations.

Summary

3.6 The council's vision in terms of community engagement and involvement largely follows the governments 10 year vision. In principle this is to work with others to encourage greater community involvement in what we do to help communities influence our decisions are provide improved services.

3.7 By working to achieve this vision the council and its partners will improve relations with the people we serve and meet national and local expectations.

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4. How are we going to get there?

Introduction

- 4.1 This section of the strategy provides a roadmap to improvement in community engagement and involvement.
- 4.2 It sets out a general policy on who we should engage and involve, when we should do it, how we should do it and how we should learn from. It then provides an action plan for improvement.

Who we should engage and involve

- 4.3 We will be engaging the following on a regular basis:
- council tax payers and citizens;
 - residents and tenants associations;
 - local businesses;
 - service users and potential service users
 - the voluntary and community sector, and
 - Partner organisations
- 4.4 When developing a proposal, reviewing a policy or making a decision we will aim to identify and engage those who have an interest or be affected by the options we consider and the decisions we make. We will share knowledge and understanding within the council and with our partners to develop good intelligence of those who need to be involved.
- 4.5 We will work hard to avoid excluding those in our community that are 'hard to reach', 'hard to hear' or have not engaged with the council in the past. In particular this means specifically targeting ethnic minority groups, people at risk of exclusion as a result of their isolated communities, children and young people, older people, travelers and gypsies, people with disabilities, an lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

What we should engage and involve people on and how we should go about it

- 4.6 Engagement and involvement will continue to be a firm part of the Councils Constitution. We will engage and involve communities when we:
- make decisions which have significant impact on communities and individuals;
 - agree our priorities;
 - design our services;
 - plan our services;
 - procure our services
 - measure our performance; and
 - develop our plans, policies and strategies

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- 4.7 We will undertake statutory consultations in a positive spirit .Where there is choice about how we consult and engage we will attempt to do things differently and more effectively through a range of methods. We will ensure that in our project planning we will provide adequate time for people to take part. This will be linked to our decision making processes to ensure that people in communities have a chance to influence outcomes.
- 4.8 We will look to innovate in the methods we use and will consider forms of engagement and involvement we have never used in the past. In doing so we will seek our residents, business's and partner's views on the best methods for individual processes.
- 4.9 We will enhance the ability of our public to participate in council meetings including scrutiny and ensure that the experience is a positive and welcoming one particularly for those not used to public speaking.

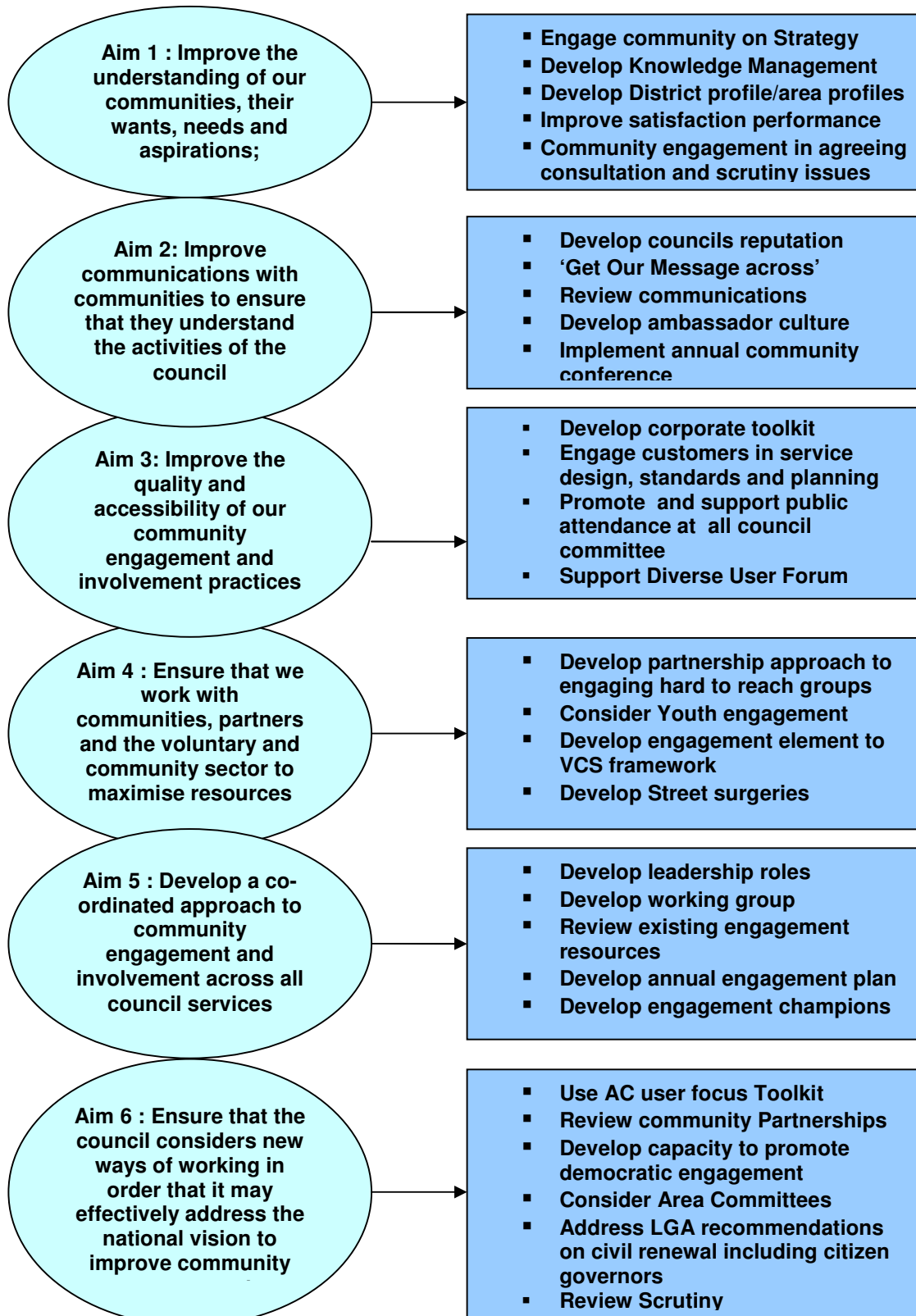
Learning

- 4.10 The council is committed to learning from everything its does. It will evaluate the success or otherwise of the engagement and involvement techniques and the implementation of the action plan. A corporate database could assist this. The council will consult widely on this Strategy and engage groups in its Implementation, Monitoring and review. We will continue our annual Residents Survey to gain regular feedback on whether the council is improving. We will document learning on the implementation of the Strategy and re-consider our approaches as a result.

The Strategy Action Plan

- 4.11 A model action plan is provided in Annexe 4. The action sets out what we are going to do to address the issues set out in the strategy to meet the Strategy vision and aims. More detailed action plans for individual actions will be developed by lead officers during the implementation of the proposals. Diagram 3 summarises the action plan. It is derived from the six key aims of the Strategy and includes key actions and change.

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Key Aims

Key Actions

Diagram 3 ; Summary Model Action Plan

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5 Monitoring and Reviewing the Implementation of the Strategy

- 5.1 Strategies rapidly become obsolete unless constantly reviewed and adjusted as part of a permanent strategic management process. In addition things change and communities will require different things. The strategy may change as a result of engagement with our communities. This document is therefore a living document which will be reviewed on the basis of such change.
- 5.2 It is intended that the implementation of the Strategy will be initially monitored by the council's Project Management Board and will be led by the Assistant Chief Executive. This ought to continue until a more specific project board is developed as part of the Strategy proposals (Community Engagement and Involvement Working Group)
- 5.3 Reports on Progress will be made to Corporate Management Team and the Executive through the Corporate Performance Reporting System. Such reports will also be made available to Scrutiny panels in due course. Where there is any slippage corrective action will be taken. Where there is a need to significantly review the plan this will be by council resolution. Minor changes to the plan will be the responsibility of the Project Management Board.
- 5.4 There are clearly resource issues associated with the implementation of the Strategy. It is anticipated that most of the action plan will be achieved by developing revised more effective practices and new ways of working. Where there are significant resource implications these will be identified and considered in the more detailed project plans that will be developed to achieve the Strategy action plans. A key risk to the delivery of the strategy is the availability of officer time to deliver the action plan. This will need to be managed within the organisation.

Appendix 1

Annexe 1

Local Government Association – Towards Self-Governing Communities - Recommendations.

Investing in young people

Local authorities can help ensure success of citizenship education by:

- supporting schools by brokering relationships with local communities and organisations, for example through extended schools;
- supporting parenting;
- providing wider opportunities for young people to develop and demonstrate their understanding of citizenship, for example through youth councils.

Local authorities should widen opportunities for young people to articulate their needs within their local community. Working with local schools and youth councils to deliver the citizenship curriculum is one way. Linking to the work that local voluntary and community organisations do is another route, particularly as it can be a way to reaching hard-to-reach groups of young people.

Supporting voluntary and community self-organisation

Councils should continue to support the development of local compacts as an important springboard in changing the relationship between the voluntary and community sector. In addition, councils need to take on board recommendations from ChangeUp (Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector), the Building Civil Renewal final report and the Futurebuilders fund which will help level the playing field between the statutory and non-statutory sector.

Building community cohesion

Council officers and members should use the guidance developed by the LGA and partners to develop a shared vision for community cohesion for their authority. A revised community cohesion guide for local authorities and their key partners will be available in early 2005. Councils need to:

- provide the driving force in articulating and embedding community cohesion principles throughout their authority and throughout their local partnerships;
- allow citizens' needs to be encouraged to contribute towards, understand and support this vision;
- identify local champions of community cohesion and ensure these people/groups are in a position to inspire and influence others.

The built environment

Local authorities have a key role to play in the co-ordination of extended schooling. This role is to ensure availability of buildings for extended schools use but also to strategically manage and co-ordinate building programmes to incorporate opportunities to use school buildings for wider community use. Local authorities in their community leadership capacity also play a central role in future developments relating to physical capital. In addition to planning and investing for new community buildings and space,

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councils should have systems in place to monitor the condition of their public spaces to assist efforts to preserve them. Communities should be encouraged to participate in these processes.

E-participation: casting the net wider

Local authorities should use tools and guidance, developed by the local e-democracy national project, on how to use new technology, such as 'Councillor.info', to encourage participation, including those in hard to reach groups and in more deprived communities.

Encouraging scrutiny and challenge

Councils should all raise their game on scrutiny. In addition to the four principles identified by CfPS, they should ensure that scrutiny function in their area:

- provides an effective challenge;
- involves the lay community not just councillors;
- extends scrutiny to non-council bodies.

Devolved governance

Local authorities should extend and enhance arrangements for area-based engagement with communities. Where councils have no area forums in place they should consider setting them up. Those with area forums should consider whether to establish area committees with devolved powers, or to extend and enhance the role of parish and town councils in their area.

The role of councillors

The LGA will be working with the Local Government Leadership Centre and the IDeA to encourage councils to use the skills framework to identify and meet councillors' needs for development, training and support. We also hope to open up a dialogue with the political parties about incorporating the framework in processes for identifying and selecting candidates for local elections.

Supporting citizen-governors

Councils should explore, with local partner organisations, the scope for co-ordinating arrangements for recruitment, training and support of citizen-governors.

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Annexe 2

Chester-le-Street District Council : Customer Engagement Audit – September 2006 Key Findings

Range of community and customer engagement activity taking place

- Almost a half of service areas liaise with, or actively support, stakeholder/user groups, and a third described liaising with other external agencies.
- Over a half of service areas use all of the following to engage with customers and communities: focus groups; tenants/resident groups; questionnaires.
- The rationale for the vast majority of community and customer engagement activity described (75%) is to pro-actively seek customer/community views.

Community and customer engagement informing the design of services

- 68% of service areas indicated that community and customer engagement is influencing service delivery - 52% through the process of service planning or in designing services and 16% through the setting of corporate service standards.
- A third of service areas indicated that community and customer engagement activity influences the development of strategies, plans and initiatives, and the same number indicated that customers and stakeholders are involved in service plan preparation.
- The rationale for community and customer engagement work activities described was, in 55% of cases, to better inform service delivery; focus groups, tenants/resident groups and questionnaires are the most used methods.
- 61% of service areas indicated that community and customer engagement activity takes place either exclusively or partly to meet statutory requirements and 39% described it as is non statutory.
- 65% of service areas described this community/customer contact as ongoing; 37% of service areas indicating it was undertaken to meet government requirements.

Recording the views of customers/users and responding to comments received

- 48% of service areas formally analyse and report the views of customers/users, 65% of service areas keep a written record of discussions or minutes.
- 71% of service areas indicated the Complaints System as a means of recording customers/users views.
- 71% of service areas would normally analyse and investigate responses received.
- 58% of service areas would normally respond in writing, 32% would normally respond verbally and 42% of service areas (13) would use the medium of a publication or newsletter to respond to customer and community comments.
- 77% of service areas think that this is effective and 23% consider that the methods used are only partially or not effective.

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Engaging with those who do not usually, or find it difficult to, access our services

- 42% of service areas either work directly with, or commission specific projects, for work with young people, 45% of service areas (14) have no contact.
- 61% of service areas either work with agencies or organised groups, or have one to one contact, with older people, 45% of service areas (14) have no contact.
- 32% of service areas work with agencies or organised groups, in order to have contact with black and minority ethnic people, 61% of service areas have no contact.
- 13% of service areas have contact with travellers.
- 51% of service areas have either direct contact with the less able bodied or with specialist groups and 42% have no contact.
- Two service areas have contact with refugees and asylum seekers.
- 42% of service areas hold information in large print, 29% in Braille, 19% in audio tape, and 19% in languages other than English. 42% hold no information in alternative formats.

Holding information on our customers/communities

- 74% of service areas hold information on customers on a paper system: 55% hold some/all hold this information indexed, and 26% (8) hold some/all of this information without an index.
- 87% of service areas hold customer information in an electronic format: 58% electronically in separate files and 68% on a system that can be searched in different fields.
- 16% of service areas do disaggregate data held, 84% either do not, or cannot, disaggregate data held.
- Nearly all service areas hold name and address information on customers, over 52% hold age and gender information, far fewer hold information on ethnicity, specific needs or employment information etc.
- 48% of service areas consider they are compliant with the Data Protection Act, and 52% don't know.

Strengths

- A large number of service areas liaise with stakeholder groups and external agencies.
- The range of techniques and methods of engagement used is high and much of it is pro-active in seeking views.
- Customer and community views are considered in the development of strategies and in the development of service plans by a large number of service areas.

Areas for improvement

- 23% of service areas think that the methods used to feedback to customers are only partially or not effective.
- In some service areas an inclusive approach to engaging with all of our community is seriously lacking, for example in relation to the number of service areas unable to

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demonstrate engagement with young people, older people, black and minority ethnic groups and with the less able bodied.

- Provision of information in different formats - such as large print or in languages other than English - is lacking across many service areas, and 42% (13) of service areas hold no information in different formats.
- 65% of service areas do not engage users in service planning despite this being required in corporate guidance.
- There are a significant number of service areas where information is not held electronically and 52% of service areas do not know whether they comply with the Data Protection Act.
- There is an inability to manipulate data held on customers indicated by the number of service areas that either do not, or cannot, disaggregate data held (84%).
- 23% of service areas consider that there is insufficient knowledge of, or information held on customers and service users, including non-users.
- Of the community and customer engagement activity undertaken 32% of service areas consider that this is inadequate and unrepresentative.
- Duplication exists in activity of some service areas where similar approaches are being used to engage with similar communities or users – opportunities exist for simplification in approach and potential for resources to be better used. 19% of service areas indicated that duplication may exist - note*.
- 45% of service areas indicated that a mechanism is required to co-ordinate consultation activity or improve cross-team working. The existence of such a mechanism should lead to improved knowledge of engagement methods used, of issues/communities consulted, and lead to better timing of consultation activity, and the potential to share/save resources.
- 26% of service areas suggested that to improve service delivery we should consult on aspects of our services not previously explored e.g. opening times, and 13% suggested that citizen's panels should be considered.

Note*: The following areas are considered to have overlaps in customer and community engagement activity):

- Public Participation Team (Resident & Tenant Associations) and Tenant Participation Team
- Income Management (Housing) and Estate Services (Housing)
- Payroll and Personnel

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Annexe 3

**Chester-le-Street District Council :
Residents Associations supported by the District Council**

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Mr David Rochfort, Secretary
Bournmoor Villagers Association
12 Alwyn Close
Bournmoor
Houghton-le-Spring
Tyne & Wear

Mr John Byrne, Chair
Pelton Residents Association
20 Constance Street
Pelton
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH2 1DX

Mr Martin Gollan, Secretary
Victoria Residents Group
27 Co-Operative Street
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH3 3EX

Mr John Wears, Chair
North Lodge Residents Association
87 Picktree Lodge
North Lodge
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH3 4DQ

Mr Tom Maddison, Chair
Perkinsville Residents Association
41 Lyne Close
Perkinsville
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH2 1EP

Mrs Karen H Thompson, Treasurer
Fence Houses Residents Association
2 Winchester Close
Great Lumley
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH3 4LF

Mrs Marina Davidson, Chair
Ouston Villagers Association
26 Ardrossan
Ouston
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH2 1RG

Mr Reg Nelson, Chair
Garden Farm & West Lane Community Ass
8 Ullswater Road
Garden Farm Estate
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH2 3HG

Mrs Doreen Birleson, Spokesperson
Sevenacres Tenants and Residents Group
66 Sevenacres
Great Lumley
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH3 4JT

Mrs Pat Tweddle
Bournmoor Tenants Group
10 Lambourne Close
Bournmoor
Houghton-le-Spring
Tyne & Wear
DH4 6EW

Mrs Margaret Maitland, Chair
Lingey Farm Residents & Tenants Association
7 Charlaw Close
Sacriston
Durham
DH7 6AG

Mr. W Dinsdale, Chair
North End Residents Association
4 Atkinson Road
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH3 3RU

Appendix 1

Mr Peter Lawson, Chair
Chester Moor Community Group
22 The Crescent
Chester Moor
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH2 3RT

Mr Angus Graver, Chair
Waldridge Park Residents Association
68 Fenton Close
Waldridge Park
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH2 3SW

Mrs Susan Robson, Chair
Chester-le-Street District Tenants Panel
7 The Green
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH2 2BA

Ms Jen James, Secretary
Great Lumley Resident Association
12 Salisbury Close
Great Lumley
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH3 4LQ

Mrs Yvonne Robinson, Secretary
Riverside Residents Association
22 Bradman Drive
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH3 3QS

Mrs Maureen Wilkinson, Secretary
Urpeth Grange Residents Association
41 Penhill Close
Urpeth Grange
Ouston
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH2 1SF

Ms Janette Loan, Chair
Lilac House Tenants and Residents Association
20 Lilac Avenue
Sacriston
Durham
DH7 6QF

Mr T Culkin, Chair
Central Residents Association
16 Oakdale Terrace
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH3 3DH

Mr Kevin Woods, Chair
South Pelaw Residents Association
1 Pelaw Place
South Pelaw
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH2 2HL

Mr John Digby, Chair
West Pelton & High Hold Residents &
Tenants Ass.
2 Summerfield
West Pelton
Stanley
Co Durham

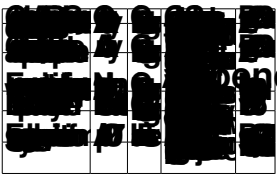
Mrs Heather Rippon, Chair
Newfield & Pelton Lane Ends
Tenants & Residents Ass.
1 Oakdale Terrace
Newfield
Chester-le-Street
Co Durham
DH2 2SU

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Annexe 4

Chester-le-Street District Council : Community and Engagement Strategy Action Plan

Action	By end of	By Who	Milestones/ <i>Outcomes</i> – PI's	Source
Aim 1: Improve the understanding of our communities, their wants, needs and aspirations				
Undertake Community engagement Exercise on the community engagement and Involvement Strategy	August 2006	Ian Forster	Engagement report Strategy Review Document <i>Numbers of individuals participating increase</i> <i>Numbers of individuals/groups responding increase</i>	Inherent in the Strategy Development
Establish Knowledge Management Working Group (KMWG) to lead on the development of improved collation and use of community data	July 2006	Craig Etherington Regeneration plan	Terms of Reference <i>Minutes of Meetings</i> <i>Number of actions undertaken</i>	Para 2.21/2.22
Develop and project manage Knowledge Management Action Plan to deliver a corporate approach to information/date management	December 2006	KMWG	Action plan Document <i>Number of actions undertaken</i>	Para 2.21/2.22
Review District Profile	July 2007	KMWG	Revised District Plan Document <i>Better information on District level</i>	Para 2.22
Develop Area Profiles through the Local Strategic Partnership	July 2007	KMWG	Area profile document production <i>Better information on local level</i>	Para 2.22
Embed customer information into the Customer Relationship Management System	December 2007	Craig Etherington	CRM system goes on line <i>Number of customer profiles recorded on system increases</i>	Para 2.22



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Action		By end of	By Who	Milestones/ <i>Outcomes</i> – PI's	Source
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Action	By end of	By Who	Milestones/ <i>Outcomes</i> – PI's	Source
Aim 2 : Improve communications with communities to ensure that they understand the activities of the council and their partners including our achievements and reasons behind our decisions;				
Improve the councils reputation by reviewing the councils approach to marketing itself against the IdeA and LGA Local Government Reputation guidance	July 2006	Craig Etherington	Plan Document <i>Improved understanding of council activity and improved reputation</i> <i>Satisfaction rates improve</i>	Para 2.5
Build actions into a revised Corporate Communications and Marketing Plan under the banner of 'Getting Our Message Across'	July 2006	Craig Etherington	Plan Document Issue Guidance to staff <i>Improved understanding of council activity and improved reputation</i> <i>Satisfaction rates improve</i>	Para 2.5
Ensure that the Marketing Plan ensures that there are strong proposals for Media engagement and management, including radio and TV in order that the council can make the best of opportunities to inform our communities of what we do and the achievements we	July 2006	Craig Etherington	Develop proposals for media engagement and management Ensure media engagement is built into project management <i>Improved media relationships</i> <i>Increase in positive news stories</i>	Para 2.5
Review current approach and processes for promoting the activities and achievements of the Council including the format and content of District News	October 2006	Craig Etherington	Plan Document <i>Improved understanding of council activity and improved reputation</i> <i>Satisfaction rates improve</i>	Para 2.5
Develop an ambassador approach to promoting the council by raising member, Service Team Manager and employee awareness o the need to promote the	October 2006	Ian Forster	Plan Document <i>Improved understanding of council activity and improved reputation</i>	Para 2.5

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Action	By end of	By Who	Milestones/ <i>Outcomes</i> – PI's	Source
council, activities and achievements in day to day contact with the community			<i>Satisfaction rates improve</i>	
Raise community awareness of the Strategy and the range of opportunities they have for engaging with the council	December 2006	Ian Forster	Press releases and web site content <i>More residents and businesses engaged with the council</i>	Inherent in the Strategy
Implement an Annual Residents Conference with partners where possible to inform of public service activity and encourage debate and views.	April 2007	Ian Forster	Formal event evidence <i>More residents and businesses engaged with the council</i>	Para 2.24 Scrutiny Recommendation
Develop the content of the council's website to ensure up to date information on activity, performance and achievements are available.	December 2006	Modernisation Project team	Improved Inspection assessment <i>Increase web site hits</i>	Para2.4
Develop corporate guidelines for ensuring adequate feedback is provided to the community on our action as and clear reasons are given for the decisions we make (including considerations of reasons for decisions appearing on all council committee minutes).	December 2007	Ian Forster	Corporate guideline document <i>Increase in customer satisfaction with information provided</i>	Para 2.5
Develop and implement a corporate style guide to improve the image of the council	December 2006	Craig Etherington	Style guide document <i>All corporate documents and communications to have consistent image</i>	Para .2.5
Aim 3 : Improve the quality and accessibility of our community engagement and involvement practices and processes				
Develop a Corporate toolkit/guidance for engagement and involvement and link to Corporate Consultation Plan, including minimum standards required.	December 2006	Ian Forster	Toolkit provided to key staff and available on internet	Para 2.3

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Action	By end of	By Who	Milestones/ <i>Outcomes</i> – PI's	Source
Provide training on the toolkit where required	January 2007	Ian Forster	Toolkit provided to key staff and available on internet	Para 2.3
Review the councils project planning toolkit as a result of engagement and involvement guidance	January 2007	Julie Underwood	Toolkit provided to key staff and available on internet	Para 2.3
Raise awareness of the toolkit through Team Talk and the Intranet	January 2007	Ian Forster	Toolkit provided to key staff and available on internet	Para 2.3
Develop clear procedures for engaging customers in service design, service standards and service planning and monitor implementation centrally	April 2007	Ian Forster	Written guidance Is built into service planning guidance	Para 2.3/2.9
Ensure service planning customer engagement is undertaken in accord with corporate guidance linked to co-ordination of consultation and Annual Engagement and Involvement Plan (Page 53)	April 2007	All Service Team Managers	Written guidance Is built into service planning guidance	Para 2.3/2.9
Ensure that the facility of public speaking is re-launched with consistent advice and protocol guidance for speakers, Chairs and Members across all committees and Panels	June 2006	Craig Etherington	Formal launch event and provision of information leaflets and guidance for community, members and officers Increase in numbers attending council	Para 1.28/2.6/2.24 Scrutiny recommendation
Consider introduction of web-based technology to allow residents to view council meetings on the web –site	December 2006	Graeme Clark	Web-site access to council meetings <i>Increase in web –site hits</i>	Para 2.6
Ensure that all meetings of the council including Overview and Scrutiny Panels are well publicised, including District news and the web-site not only in terms of dates but in terms of what will be decided.	June 2006	Chris Potter Craig Etherington	Publicity evidence and improved web-site content <i>Increase in committee attendance</i>	Para 2.6/2.24 Scrutiny recommendation

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Action	By end of	By Who	Milestones/ <i>Outcomes</i> – PI's	Source
To ensure that wherever possible Overview and scrutiny meetings are organised in accessible locations outside the Civic Centre	Ongoing	Chris Potter	Publicity evidence and improved web-site content <i>Increase in committee attendance</i>	Para 2.24 Scrutiny recommendation
Consider the introduction of focus groups in all service areas	April 2007	All Service Team Managers	Focus Group minutes <i>Increase in numbers of the public participating in service improvement</i>	Para 2.10
Accelerate the regular meeting of the Diverse User Forum in accord with the Councils Equality Plan.	August 2006	Julie Underwood	Focus Group minutes <i>Increase in numbers of hard to reach groups participating in service improvement</i>	Para 2.10
Carry out a cost benefit analysis of the value of establishing a citizens panel or citizens jury within Chester-le-Street either with or without partner engagement	December 2006	Ian Forster	Decision made as to value of Citizens Panel <i>Increase in numbers of the public participating in service improvement</i>	Para 2.10
Consider the introduction of continuous customer satisfaction surveys across all service areas (including internally provided services)	December 2006	All Service Team Managers	Questionnaire <i>response evidence</i> <i>Improved corporate knowledge of customer satisfaction</i>	Para 2.10
Improve the councils approach to electronic consultation and e-democracy including the	October 2006	Graeme Clark	Improved web-site content	Par 1.22/2.5

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Action	By end of	By Who	Milestones/Outcomes – PI's	Source
improved use of electronic polls linked to the councils Consultation Plan			<i>Increase web-site hits</i>	
Consider the best use of the councils assets in terms of community use including the Civic Centre	April 2007	Craig Etherington	Better use of existing resources <i>Increase use of community of council buildings</i>	Para 1.22/2.21/2.22
Introduce short term arrangements for managing Box 13 at the Riverside Cricket Group and use for community involvement	April 2006	Ian Forster	<i>Increased us of valuable resources and increased customer satisfaction</i>	Para 2.21
Undertake Cost/ benefit analysis of providing a Box 13 Management service in the Customer Relations Team and implement findings	May 2006	Ian Forster	<i>Increased us of valuable resources and increased customer satisfaction</i>	Para 2.21
Continue to work with Grange Villa Community Centre and partners to assist in the potential establishment of a Community Hub as part of the Grange Villa Regeneration project	December 2006	Craig Etherington	Locally based information facility established <i>Community Association manage facility providing partner service information</i>	Para 2.21
Aim 4 : Ensure that we work with communities, partners and the voluntary and community sector to maximise resources and develop new ways of working to engage with all communities including those that may 'hard to reach' or 'hard to hear';				
Undertake external events with the LSP and other Partners to secure support and joint ownership of the Strategy	September 2006	Ian Forster	District partnership considers Strategy External consultation event to engage other partners <i>Number of partners providing support for the Strategy</i> <i>Number of partners agreeing to adopt similar Strategy</i>	Inherent in strategy Foreword

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Action	By end of	By Who	Milestones/Outcomes – PI's	Source
Engage with the councils partners to consider ways in which organisations can work together and smarter	December 2006	Ian Forster	Agreed partner protocol on engagement <i>Reduced community confusion on consultation</i>	Inherent in strategy
Engage with partners to develop joint databases of 'hard to reach' groups and individuals to ensure they can be easily included in any appropriate engagement processes	December 2006	Julie Underwood	Clear information available to inform consultation and engagement events	Inherent in strategy
Work with partners to develop specific engagement activity for; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ethnic minority communities ▪ People at risk of social exclusion ▪ Children and young people ▪ Older people ▪ Older people ▪ Travellers and gypsies ▪ People with disabilities ▪ Lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender by considering the potential for a Partnership approach to the Diverse Service User Forum	December 2006	Julie Underwood	Clear information available to inform consultation and engagement events	Inherent in strategy
Consider the value of establishing a Youth Forum in the District	December 2006	Simon High	Assessment report and views of Partner organisation Potential for improved youth engagement in local issue	Para 1.22/2.10

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Action	By end of	By Who	Milestones/Outcomes – PI's	Source
Consider Young persons representative on Scrutiny Panels as part of Scrutiny review	December 2006	Ian Forster	Young peoples voice in service delivery challenge <i>Increase in young people engagement in scrutiny meetings</i>	Para 2.10
Consider Young persons representation on the District Partnership Steering Group	April 2007	Jeremy Brock LSP	Young peoples voice in LSP decision making <i>Increase in young people engagement in LSP meetings</i>	Para 2.10
Continue to develop and implement a coherent medium term strategy for the development of the voluntary sector and agree longer term goals and ensure there is a strong partnership approach to engagement and involvement	December 2006	Ian Broughton	Voluntary Sector Framework Agreement	Para 2.26/2.27/2.28
Work with Durham County Councillors to develop street surgeries	December 2006	Chris Potter		Para 2.24 Scrutiny Recommendation
Work with the Police to improve on the community engagement and involvement in the Neighbourhood Management Pilots to support and underpin the approach to Neighbourhood Policing	Ongoing	Ian Forster Paul Anderson	<i>Improved partnership approach to community engagement</i> <i>Improved public re-assurance</i> <i>Reduced fear of crime</i>	Para 2.17
Aim 5 : Develop a co-ordinated and consistent approach to community engagement and involvement across all council services and with partners wherever possible				
Establish Member Champion for Community Engagement and personal work plan	July 2006	Ian Forster	Champion work plan Document Clear leadership role established	Para 2.3

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Action	By end of	By Who	Milestones/ <i>Outcomes</i> – PI's	Source
Establish Officer Champion for community Engagement and personal Work Plan	July 2006	Ian Forster	Champion work plan Document Clear leadership role established	Para 2.3
Consider the value of developing a Community Engagement and Involvement Working Group to assist in implementing the Strategy and developing future change while acting as a project management board for the Strategy delivery and co-ordination activity	April 2007	Ian Forster	Terms of Reference Minutes of meetings	Para 2.3
Develop Annual Engagement and Involvement Plan, including partner engagement to avoid consultation overload and to allow consultation requirements to be adequately resourced	April 2007	Jeremy Brock	Consultation Plan Document Improved consultation co-ordination.	Para 2.3
Publish the Annual Engagement and Involvement plan on the internet and intranet linked to service planning engagement (Page 53)	April 2007	Ian Forster	Consultation Plan Document Improved consultation co-ordination.	Para 2.3
Carry out a review of the resources used	December 2007	Ian Forster	Review Document	Para 2.13/2.14

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Action	By end of	By Who	Milestones/Outcomes – PI's	Source
within the council on engagement including the Tenants Participation Team and the Communities and Partnerships Team to maximise resources available and provide a co-ordinated and consistent approach to both tenant and resident support.			<i>Better use of existing resources and efficiency savings</i>	
Establish a network of officers responsible for engagement across all services to act as service champions	July 2006	Ian Forster	Champion Network Document Clear leadership role at front line service established	Para 2.3
Establish a database of past consultation and engagement events and practices including learning, and in doing so share learning from the council and partners across the organisation.	December 2006	Jeremy Brock	Formal corporate database established	Para 4.10
Aim 6 : Ensure that the council effectively addresses the national vision to improve community engagement and in doing so meets both national and local expectations				
Use the Audit Commissions revised User Focus and Diversity Toolkit to further develop the Strategy action plan and address the issues that the council will be measured against against in the next round of Comprehensive Performance assessment	May 2006	Ian Forster	Improved action plan and contribution to CPA Roadmap to Excellence	Para 1.24
Carry out review of the Community Partnerships and implement Findings	April 2007	Jeremy Brock	Review Document	Para 2.6
Consider with partners the advantages of establishing Area Forums within the District	April 2007	Ian Forster	Review document and Partners views	Para 1.8/1.22

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Action	By end of	By Who	Milestones/Outcomes – PI's	Source
Reflect on the Learning from the neighbourhood management pilots and consider the value of establishing Area Committees or Neighbourhood Management Boards within the District	April 2008	Ian Forster	Review document and Partners views	Para 1.8/1.18/1.19
Consider the development of community engaged Neighbourhood Charters or Estate agreements as part of the Neighbourhood Management Pilot roll out.	April 2008	Tony Galloway	Estate agreements are implemented <i>Improved engagement in service delivery and improved standards of service</i>	Para 2.14
Develop capacity within the Democratic Services Team to allow it to actively promote community engagement in the democratic process and active citizenship in schools	December 2006	Chris Potter	<i>Number of local democracy events carried out in schools.</i>	Para 1.19/1.22
Continue to support the development and implementation of local compacts and improve working with the voluntary and community sector	Ongoing	Ian Broughton	Assessment report <i>LGA Manifesto addressed for Chester-le-Street</i>	Para 1.222.26/2.27/2.28
Consider LGA guidance to develop a shared vision of community cohesion in the district	December 2006	Equality and Diversity Working Group	Assessment and Vision report <i>LGA Manifesto addressed for Chester-le-Street</i>	Para 1.22
Ensure council uses community leadership role to encourage communities to make best use of the built environment	Ongoing	Tony Galloway	Assessment report <i>LGA Manifesto addressed for Chester-le-Street</i>	Para 1.22

Appendix 1

Action	By end of	By Who	Milestones/Outcomes – PI's	Source
Develop action plans as part of the Modernisation Programme to increase take up of e-participation	December 2006	Modernisation Project Team	Communication plan Assessment and Vision report <i>LGA Manifesto addressed for Chester-le-Street</i>	Para 1.22
Investigate the future engagement of community representatives on scrutiny Panels and the involvement of the public in review as part of the review of Scrutiny Panels, including the future number and Panels and frequency.	August 2006	Ian Forster	Assessment Document <i>Improved Member and public attendance at Scrutiny meetings</i> <i>LGA Manifesto addressed for Chester-le-Street</i>	Para1.22/2.24 Linked to Scrutiny Recommendation
That future work plans of Scrutiny panels be devised around issues considered to be relevant to the public	April 2008 and ongoing	Ian Forster	Workplans agreed by OSMB	Para2.24 Linked to Scrutiny Recommendation
Work with partners to consider extend scrutiny to non-council bodies as part of the review of Scrutiny panels	August 2006	Ian Forster	Report of engagement with partners on Scrutiny Arrangements <i>Improved challenge of other public services</i> <i>LGA Manifesto addressed for Chester-le-Street</i>	Para1.22/2.24
Continue with the Members training	Ongoing	Alison	Training programme Delivery and	Para1.22/2.24

Appendix 1

Action	By end of	By Who	Milestones/ <i>Outcomes</i> – PI's	Source
programme and competency frameworks		Swinney	PDP's <i>Improved member capacity and competency</i> <i>LGA Manifesto addressed for Chester-le-Street</i>	
Consider with other partner organisation the scope for co-ordinating arrangements for recruitment, training and support of 'citizen- governors'	April 2007	Ian Forster	Assessment report and views of partners <i>Number of citizen-governors engaged</i> <i>LGA Manifesto addressed for Chester-le-Street</i>	Para1.9/1.22
Ensure that the council and its partners provide training and support to develop skills in the community to maximise the benefits of engagement	June 2009	Ian Forster	Assessment of needs as proposals develop Assess resources required and identify funding Implement Training <i>Increased numbers of citizens provided with engagement training</i>	Para1.9/1.22