Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy, Planning and Improvement)

Corporate Governance & Audit Committee

Date: 15 June 2011

Subject: Annual Report on Community Engagement

Electoral Wards Affected:	Specific Implications For:	
	Equality and Diversity	x
Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)	Community Cohesion	x
	Narrowing the Gap	

Executive Summary

1. The council carries out a great deal of community engagement work aimed at increasing the involvement of local people in decision making. Most is owned at service level, usually part of service development, or performance monitoring.

2. The council's engagement arrangements meet Section 6 of the Code of Corporate Governance. However, other assurance criteria proved useful when considering issues such as the quality of work, and the expectations of our communities.

3. In practice, the potential for a good level of assurance is limited by the need to improve consistency and coordination of community engagement across the council.

4. There is a renewed improvement focus on community engagement as a key way of working for locally managed and/or delivered services

5. The comprehensive spending review changes the way we need to deliver engagement work, and also the use we make of engagement's benefits, such as targeted services, public understanding of service provision and trust in decision-making

6. A Way Forward improvement plan for engagement activity is in draft. It has the potential to make community engagement excellent within the council

7. That the Committee notes the planned improvements to the way we manage community engagement.

8. That the Committee receives regular updates on improvement activity throughout 2011/12

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 This report on community engagement informs the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee of the council's ability to support residents' involvement in decision making and the development of services.

1.2 The report considers the effectiveness of governance controls currently in place for these arrangements.

1.3 The report describes key improvement activities planned for this year (2011/12)

2.0 Background Information

2.1 Defining community engagement

2.1.1 The council's community engagement policy states 'community engagement…is a broad term used to describe the different ways we communicate, consult, involve and encourage participation from communities.'

2.1.2 The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) sets out the different types of community engagement, their benefits and methods that can be used.

IAP2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT →

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Public Participation Goal:	**Public Participation Goal:**	**Public Participation Goal:**	**Public Participation Goal:**	**Public Participation Goal:**
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public:	**Promise to the Public:**	**Promise to the Public:**	**Promise to the Public:**	**Promise to the Public:**
We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example Tools:	**Example Tools:**	**Example Tools:**	**Example Tools:**	**Example Tools:**
• fact sheets • web sites • open houses.	• public comment • focus groups • surveys • public meetings.	• workshops • deliberate polling.	• citizen advisory committees • consensus-building • participatory decision-making.	• citizen juries • ballots • delegated decisions.

2.1.3 The council's Code of Corporate Governance states (in Section 6) that we will form, encourage and maintain effective relationships with local people and other stakeholders.

2.2 Statutory requirements for community engagement.

2.2.1 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 imposes a duty on all local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way".

2.2.2 The 2010 Equality Act requires us to 'encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public…' and to engage with people on 'the effect that its policies and practices have…on people who share a…protected characteristic'.

2.2.3 Equality Impact Assessments require evidence of involvement of relevant communities.

2.2.4 Section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000 requires us to consult when we create or amend a sustainable community strategy. Locally this is the Vision for Leeds.

2.2.5 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires us to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This sets out how communities will be engaged in the preparation and revision of Local Development Framework and consideration of planning applications.

3.0 Main Issues

3.1 Community engagement in 2010/11

3.1.1 **Overview.** The council carries out a great deal of community engagement work aimed at increasing the involvement of local people in decision making. Over the last 12 months this has included the recent Spending Challenge consultation, the future of adult social care provision, consultation on the Arena, the future of libraries and sports provision, 'crime and grime' consultation in WNW Leeds, the Equality Hubs and Assembly and the work of the children's participation network

New arrangements have been established to support improvements in the way we manage consultation activity - the council consultation group (with representatives from every directorate), and the partner-wide Strategic Involvement Group are developing new training, guidance and ways to make best use of shared tools such as the Talking Point coordination system and a citizens' panel. The appointment of new Area Leaders and the development of delegations for area committees is an opportunity to review and improve how engagement is delivered on a local geographic basis.

3.1.2 **Governance.** The council value 'working with communities' links to the improvement priority 'we will consult with local people on changes that may affect their lives'. Performance will be measured by the percentage of key and major decision reports that evidence community engagement. This measure is owned by the Assistant Chief Executive (PPI) but is also the responsibility of all Directors.

A gap analysis exercise in 2010 showed that the council's engagement arrangements meet the elements of the Code of Corporate Governance. However, the analysis also considered a range of other assessment criteria beyond the code, and raised concerns over the consistency and coordination of community engagement across the council.

Most community engagement work is owned at service level. It is usually part of a service development project, or to inform performance monitoring. Engagement projects (stand alone or as part of wider projects/programmes) are approved by a range of sources; chief officers, project boards, Executive Board and CLT all being noted.

Other engagement activity is owned corporately, such as the Residents Survey, managed by the Corporate Consultation Manager on behalf of a council-wide steering group.

Area Management teams also deliver programmes of local engagement for Area Committees, in particular to inform Area Delivery Plans.

Each directorate has one or more officer representative on the Corporate Consultation Group, chaired by the Corporate Consultation Manager. This group reports to Strategic Planning and Policy Board, and is tasked with improving coordination of consultation activity through the online Talking Point database, developing training and guidance and consultation mechanisms such as the Citizens Panel. The group also links to the city partnership-wide Strategic Involvement Group.

The Corporate consultation group is not responsible for assuring the quality or efficiency of engagement activity, rather it fosters good practice through advice and support to services.

The council can show examples of good practice but also areas for improvement from recent engagement work:

3.1.3   **Good practice**

Spending Challenge November 2010 – January 2011. This consultation offered residents the opportunity to give their views on the council's approach to the current financial challenges. The results informed the budget setting process for 2011/12, more deeply than past budget consultation did.

The consultation went much further than past budget consultation in involving different groups in different ways, including the Citizens' Panel, face to face discussion and outreach work with key communities as well as a number of survey options made available city-wide. As a result five times more people (over 2000) took part than the last (2009) budget consultation exercise.

The project drew together officers from across the council, working outside their services to design, distribute, capture responses, analyse and report to a tight timescale. While a more permanent allocation of resources would be needed to do this regularly, it showed that the council has the skills and capacity to deliver major consultation exercises

Tenants Surveys 2010. The ALMOs, BITMO and the council used to run separate tenants satisfaction surveys. Apart from the duplication of effort and cost involved, every tenant could potentially receive two questionnaires in a year, from their ALMO and the council. Every survey was slightly different so the data couldn't be used to compare issues between ALMO areas.

In 2010 the ALMOs, BITMO and the council agreed a single joint survey for the city. The partners worked together to resolve barriers to cooperation. By procuring jointly, the single survey cost less than just one of the five parallel surveys. Other benefits include the ability to use the results across the whole city.

Equality Hubs and Assembly. The first Equality Assembly conference took place in November 2010, bringing together representatives from the six equality hubs with senior officers and the Leader of the Council. All the hubs meet regularly and were one of the ways communities contributed to the Spending Challenge consultation (see above).

Draft findings of an evaluation of the Assembly are that hub members feel the approach is an improvement on the previous forums, which many felt were too 'top down' and can ensure the views of diverse communities affect council decision-making.

The performance of these hubs contributed to our recent evaluation of 'excellent' against the Equality Framework for Local Government.

3.1.4   Areas for improvement

Public challenges to decisions. Since the need to make major cost savings became clear, there have been a small volume of enquiries about decisions based on the way consultation has been used to inform Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) or a decision. There has been a renewed focus on ensuring EIAs are produced where significant service/policy change is being proposed.

In the current climate it is inevitable that decisions will be closely scrutinised, and any perceived weakness in the process will be targeted. We need to be confident that evidence from consultation is timely and relevant to the current situation.

We also need to communicate regularly with service users and communities to inform them how we are using results of consultation. This is very important if time has passed since they gave their views, as not everyone will remember or recognise the link between a past consultation and a decision we make later on.

Coordination. As noted at 3.1.2 the corporate consultation group is working to improve compliance with use of the Talking Point consultation coordination database. However, there are still relatively few examples of services taking opportunities to join up engagement work, and save money, share skills and reduce repeat engagement of communities.

Historically council services have run a number of large-scale surveys that deal with single issues: the Fuelsavers Survey, Parks and Countryside Survey, Tenants Surveys have all been sent to significant numbers of residents by post. There has been inconsistent use of branding, different contractors or in house arrangements used and little or no sharing of the engagement opportunity with other services.

This is inefficient practice at any time, but the financial problems we face make it vitally important that we consult far more efficiently. Section 3.2.2 describes planned improvements to the Leeds Citizens' Panel that offer great potential to efficiently coordinate consultation.

3.2   Challenges for engagement

3.2.1   Area working in Leeds. New arrangements for area management in Leeds place emphasis on community engagement. Area Leads have highlighted the following issues and actions:

<u>A broad programme of engagement</u>: Leeds City Council will engage with local communities through a range of methods that will span the breadth of the Public Participation Spectrum (see section 2.1.1). A calendar of local consultation, including the use of the Citizens Panel, will enable the public to give their views on the issues that matter to them most. A programme of engagement will seek out the views of the public as well by targeting those that are the hardest to reach.

<u>A central role for Area Committees</u>: With their delegated responsibility for community engagement and the upcoming delegation of Environmental Services, Area Committees will be at the centre of ensuring the public has its say in the delivery of local services. Each of the ten Area Committees will draw design principles from the council's community engagement strategy to develop and approve their own community engagement programme. Area Management within PPI (or its successor) will play a lead role in supporting Area Committees to co-ordinate and deliver a programme of engagement; however the full involvement of services will be critical for this to work effectively.

<u>Public involvement through Integrated Neighbourhood Planning</u>: A detailed programme of Integrated Neighbourhood Planning has yet to be developed but it will draw from the valuable experienced gained from working in places like Gipton, Hyde Park and Middleton where measurable success has been achieved in tackling a range of challenging neighbourhood issues. In Leed's most deprived communities or those with greatest service challenges, the Council will take extra measures to support the community to get involved local decision making, involving them as Community Champions or members on a Regeneration Board.

<u>Gaps in Empowerment Capacity</u>: The government is challenging communities to take up the task of doing more things for themselves. However, our experience in Leeds is that communities sometimes need help to make a difference locally. A programme of capacity building is needed to help communities to meet their own aspirations to deliver community projects or run services. More work is needed to identify how Leeds City Council working with its partners in the voluntary, community and faith sector can support groups and individuals who want to give something back to their community.

3.2.2 **Spending reductions**. Having less funding changes the way we deliver engagement. It also changes the use we make of engagement.

Section 3.1.4 looks at the need to deliver engagement work more efficiently to reduce spend, and the impact the quality of consultation evidence can have on public challenges to spending decisions we have to make after the Comprehensive Spending review.

Making difficult decisions on services will always lead to challenge. The role of engagement is to minimize this and to manage the long-term reputation of the council. We are not looking to stop people disagreeing with a decision. However, we can help them trust the decision-making process, by providing timely, open and honest ways for them to have their say, be involved in decision-making processes and give honest feedback on the way their views have, or have not, impacted on the final decision.

We also need to make sure this applies to every decision we make about a service people use, so the council acts consistently.

3.2.3 **Localism**. The draft Localism Bill presents the government's proposals on where power should sit in society; 'passing power to a local level…giving people the opportunity to take control of decisions that matter to them'.

The draft Bill includes non-binding local referendums on issues proposed by communities, the right for people to challenge to run local services or to buy local community assets. The exact working of these plans is evolving.

What is clear is the potential for the Bill to change how engagement works. If an authority is not in a position to work in partnership with communities when they identify needs or problems, and to do so early in that process, the risk of confrontation through referenda or challenge may be increased.

Councils will need to engage with community-generated issues as meaningfully as they do for council-led priorities and plans.

Where more traditional or 'top-down' consultations take place, they will need to be delivered to the highest standards to minimize the risk of misunderstanding or later challenge from communities.

3.3 **Improvement work for 2011/12**
A 'Way Forward' plan to help us be excellent at community engagement is in draft. It looks at improvements in a context of limited resources, localism and the need to work in partnership. Systems and governance are important in the way forward. Key elements of the plan include:

3.3.1 **Improving the citizens' panel**
A citizens' panel is a database of randomly recruited residents willing to take part in regular consultation activity over a period of time. The panel reflects the wider population profile. Panel members respond to surveys, take part in small discussion groups and workshops, as part of a planned calendar of engagement activity.

Currently a draft business case proposes expanding the Leeds citizens' panel to c6000 residents, with c600 in each area committee. Each 600 would reflect the make-up of the local population as best it can. The panel would be used by the council and partners such as NHS Leeds who have agreed in principle to jointly fund the panel.

This approach was piloted with a 'crime and grime' survey' carried out by West North West area management officers, with the current panel members in that wedge of the city. Using online surveys for most people, with postal ones for those that couldn't get online, a 73% response rate was achieved, with very low spend (c£100 plus officer time). This was followed with a set of small discussion groups in the local area. The results gave detailed insight into localised issues, and was shared with relevant colleagues in Safer Leeds and Environmental Services.

3.3.2 **Improving coordination of engagement activity**
Talking Point is an online database that allows us to share planned consultation activity between services and with residents, and give feedback when completed. Some services use Talking Point well, posting their plans to engage well in advance, and putting results up at the end. This means other services can decide whether to save resources by joining up with the planned work, or find information that informs their own plans without commissioning more engagement.

The Corporate consultation group is working in each directorate to help all services make the most of the system, so we can consistently coordinate our work.
Report templates now ask for evidence of consultation via Talking Point. This highlights the need to record consultation work on Talking Point, and improves our ability to monitor compliance.

3.3.3 **Making it easier for services to consult properly**
While the council does have an Engagement Toolkit it needs simplifying, updating and promoting. It also needs to be better supported by a training and development plan for those delivering engagement work.

The city partnership-wide Strategic Involvement Group (SIG) is currently addressing these issues, working on a set of core standards for engagement work, and a training plan. This builds on work started by the council's Corporate consultation group.

It is important that services are aware of the range of methods that can be used to engage, and how to decide what is appropriate for their specific need. Therefore SIG is exploring ways SharePoint software can be used to create a library of links to useful guidance and other specialist information on ways to engage different communities.

3.3.4 **Working in partnership**
The city-wide Strategic Involvement Group has representatives from health, fire and rescue, police and the third sector as well as the council. Reduced budgets and the impact of localism have accelerated partnership working on community engagement. Since early 2011, Talking Point and the Citizens' Panel are being developed as partnership tools rather than just council ones, to share resources, expertise and opportunities to engage.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

4.1.1 Community engagement underpins or is recognised as important by council policies and priorities. While this paper in itself has no direct impact on policies and priorities, it describes improvement activities that will have impact. Each improvement will have its own, separate reporting.

4.1.2 The Equality Assembly and Hubs help the Council meet the legal duty to pay 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality for communities with 'protected characteristics. The community engagement Toolkit advises officers how to design engagement that is accessible to all relevant communities, and stresses the importance of equality monitoring.

4.1.3 For risk assessments relating to community engagement arrangements in the council, please see the Corporate Risk Register for: Risk LCC 20: Community engagement, Risk Description: Leeds does not engage effectively with its diverse communities.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

5.1.1 If approved, the expansion of the citizens' panel will be delivered from existing budgets, and will cost less overall than surveys it aims to replace, such as the Residents Survey.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The council carries out a great deal of community engagement work aimed at increasing the involvement of local people in decision making. Most community engagement work is owned at service level. It is usually part of a service development project, or to inform performance monitoring.

6.2 The council has governance arrangements in place for managing community engagement, which meet the current relevant elements of the Code of Corporate Governance. These were evaluated in a gap analysis in 2010, although there is no regular cycle of monitoring and the gap analysis was labour-intensive to do.

6.3 The potential of our arrangements to give a good level of assurance is limited by the need to improve consistency and coordination of community engagement across the council.

6.4 Section 6 of the Code of Corporate Governance covers a number of aspects of managing engagement work. However, during gap analysis, other assurance criteria, such as those in the Compact for Leeds, proved useful when considering issues such as the quality of work, of advice and support to those delivering engagement and the expectations of those taking part.

6.5 The council's community engagement strategy sets out principles that remain fit-for-purpose, although detail and references needs updating.

6.6 There is a renewed improvement focus on making sure community engagement is an integral way of working for locally managed and/or delivered services

6.7 The comprehensive spending review changes the way we need to deliver engagement work, and also the use we make of engagement's benefits, such as targeted services, public understanding of service provision and trust in decision-making

6.8 A Way Forward improvement plan for engagement activity is in draft. It has the potential to make community engagement excellent within the council by addressing

coordination, training and guidance, partnership working and development of the Citizens' Panel.

7.0   Recommendations

7.1   That the Committee considers and comments on the information presented in this report.

7.2   That the Committee notes that while the council's engagement arrangements meet the relevant elements of the Code of Corporate Governance, consistency and coordination of community engagement across the council should be improved.

7.3   That the Code of Corporate Governance section 6 should be revised to include criteria that address compliance and quality of engagement work

7.4   That the Committee notes the planned improvements to the way we manage community engagement.

7.5   That the Committee receives regular updates on improvement activity throughout 2011/12

Appendices

Appendix One – sources of criteria used in gap analysis

- CIPFA accountability criteria
- Equality Framework
- Compact for Leeds
- Children and Young People's Participation Plan for Leeds

- Ex-CAA Key Lines of Enquiry
- Ideal empowering authority - IDeA

Appendix Two - background documents used

Gap analysis of engagement arrangements 2010/11

Research into effective communications and consultation, Leeds City Council and NHS Leeds, 2010. For details visit Talking Point, click on 'consultations' and type 'effectiveness' in the keyword search box.

Community Engagement Policy and Guide (Toolkit) http://intranet.leeds.gov.uk/Interest_Areas/Corporate_communications/Community_Engagement/Statement_of_community_involvement.aspx

Leeds City Council Code of Corporate Governance: http://www.leeds.gov.uk/files/Internet2007/2008/week14/inter__00A68160CB555B9080256E160038957A_757e0c11-a432-4fdd-b12e-e9c9e612eaf2.pdf

Statement of Community Involvement http://intranet.leeds.gov.uk/Interest_Areas/Corporate_communications/Community_Engagement.aspx

SCI Annual Monitoring report 2009 http://www.leeds.gov.uk/page.aspx?pageidentifier=4eb04e9f-c2cd-4439-a913-d8094871ca66

Adult Social Care Involvement Framework

Leeds Children and Young People Participation Strategy 2007

Compact for Leeds