

Corporate Improvement Priority (CIP) 2: Inform and involve residents

Support Services Overview & Scrutiny Panel

29th October 2009

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The overall purpose of CIP2 is to improve how local people are informed, consulted and involved in the design and delivery of services and functions joining up with partners organisations where appropriate.

2. Background

- 2.1 The content of CIP2 is based on a combination of national policy, inspection findings specific to Plymouth and what local people have to say about their feelings of involvement and influence over local decision-making.
- 2.2 In terms of national policy the key guidance (now legislation) is the 'Duty to Involve'¹ which came into force in April this year, the requirements of which are at the core of CIP2.
- 2.3 In terms of feedback from residents, our main information is taken from the results of the 2008 Place Survey which tells us that 22% of residents say that they feel like they have influence over decisions made in their local area.
- 2.3 Findings from last year's Access to Services inspection and Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) Peer Assessment whilst – in terms of overall score – were both good for the council, also contained some challenges for us. These include: do more to involve residents (including vulnerable and disabled people) in service design as well as delivery; co-ordinate our engagement and consultation processes better; join up better with our partners; allow more time and provide more support to enable people to take part and have their say.
- 2.4 In summary, examples of good quality information, consultation and involvement exist within the Council, but there is room for improvement, and CIP2 aims to provide a focus for this.

3. Key improvement areas

- 3.1 Drawing on the requirements of the Duty to Involve, the key improvement areas included in CIP2 are:
- To improve the information we give to people about opportunities to have a say and get involved in service design and delivery
 - To improve how we consult people about the services and functions we perform
 - To improve how we involve people in service design and delivery
 - To improve how we act on information from engagement and consultation to support service design and delivery

4. Key performance measures

- 4.1 The main measure for CIP2 is National Indicator (NI) 4 – the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality. This is measured through the Place Survey, which all authorities are required to run every two years. The first Place Survey took place in 2008 and provided us with a score of 22% for NI4. Our current target for the next Place Survey is 23.44%, but our aim would to exceed this.

¹ See Appendix 1 for more information about the Duty to Involve

- 4.2 A further measure for CIP2 is National Indicator (NI) 3 – the level of civic participation in the local area. This is also measured through the Place Survey. The score from the 2008 survey was 13.8%, and our target for the 2010 survey is 15.24%.

5. CIP 2 Milestones – overview

- 5.1 The following table provides an update on the current set of milestones (i.e. work streams) included in CIP2 (2009-10).

●	1. Set targets based on Place Survey 08 results and assess our position in relation to other authorities.	The Place Survey report for Plymouth was published in September, providing information to help service managers establish baseline results and set targets in relation to key indicators for future years.
●	2. Use Place Survey findings to update Communications Strategy targets for improving the number of residents who feel well informed about local public services.	This relates to the comment for 1 above – with publication of the Place Survey report, information became available to update targets in the Communication Strategy. This is just one example of how information from the Place Survey is used to inform service planning and refine targets.
●	3. Run a corporate ‘You said, we did’ campaign.	A pilot ‘You Said, We Did’ campaign took place along side a scheduled phase of consultation activity associated with the City Centre Area Action Plan (part of the Local Development Framework). Building on this pilot, the ‘You Said, We Did’ campaign will be rolled out over coming months.
●	4. Run and publish results of an interim Place Survey.	We are required to run the Place Survey every two years, but locally will be ensuring an annual supply of information in relation to the 18 National Indicators (NIs) measured through the survey. This work is under way to inform target-setting in relation to Council services including those supporting the Local Area Agreement.
●	5. Adopt the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)/ Compact Code for Consultation and develop an action plan to promote its use across the partnership.	The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and Compact Code for Consultation is one and same thing and was launched as part of the Compact in May this year. The SCI is guide for engagement and consultation based on a set of 8 commitments. We and our partners are in the processing of embedding these commitments as standard practice.
●	6. Working with partners, develop actions (including development of associated ‘tools’) to ensure a consistent approach to engaging and consulting with diverse communities (reflecting all equalities strands, and including vulnerable and disabled people).	Through this work stream we aim to increase the amount of joined up activity we do with partners in relation to engagement and consultation. This links with improved governance arrangements described in 16 below. Additional external resources will be sought to support this activity where identified.

●	7. Review Plymouth Points of View (residents panel) (Dec 09), and depending on what the findings say, re-issue the contract.	The panel will be reviewed in the run up to Christmas, and new requirements tendered for before March, the aim being to continue to run this important means of consulting with local residents.
●	8. Identify ways to improve the use of ICT and web-based systems to inform and consult people.	IT-based and on-line departmental consultation requirements are being looked into with the aim of improving how we communicate with the public through our website and other on-line channels (links with milestone 17).
●	9. Build engagement and consultation values into the corporate competency framework.	With publication of the competency framework (which contains competencies referring to engagement and consultation skills), this work stream is now complete.
●	10. Run the statutory (2010) Place Survey	This is a 2010 milestone – related work is scheduled but yet to start.
●	11. Agree our approach to involving local people in decisions about service provision in their local areas (includes work with Area Committees)	This activity recognises the important links between CIP2 and on-going work in relation to delivering services through 'Localities'. Departmental consultation leads across the Council have already supported the recent phase of localities consultation and will (along with other stakeholders) continue to be involved in identifying how the public should be involved in the delivery of services on a localities basis.
●	12. Commence 2009/10 Member Development Programme - include training about the 'Duty to Involve'	An initial 'Duty to Involve' briefing was provided to Member Support Group in June 09. This will be followed up with further Member briefings as part of an on-going programme for staff and Members. (See Appendix 1 for more information about the Duty to Involve).
●	13. Develop actions to improve involvement of local people in decisions about how money is spent.)	Through the CIP2 programme manager, PCC is supporting 'participatory budgeting' activity in Devonport (through Devonport Regeneration & Community Partnership) with the aim of learning how this might inform similar activity elsewhere in the city. We also continue to allocate funds to communities through Area Committees (Local Environment Fund).
●	14. Working with partner organisations, implement a full programme of activity to involve local people in decisions about how money is spent.	This 2010 milestone will be informed by an assessment of activity described in 13 above.
●	15. Run induction for newly elected members.	This is a 2010 milestone – related work is scheduled but yet to start
●	16. Develop corporate and partnership-based engagement	Agreement of new LSP governance structures (now scheduled for December) will inform how governance in

	and consultation governance structures to improve understanding of roles and responsibilities.	relation to engagement activity is developed across the partnership and corporately.
●	17. Work with partner organisations to develop a pilot project to improve the use of available information to inform business planning and target setting through development of the 'Data Hub'.	A research proposal has been drafted to examine information needs using a series of focus groups made up of Plymouth Points of View (Plymouth's residents panel) participants. This work will be carried out in Oct/Nov, and its findings will inform future CIP2 work streams.
●	18. Run a project to develop guidance about combining findings from statutory surveys (e.g. the Place Survey) and customer profiling information to support service design and delivery.	Work will be starting soon on this work stream, the results of which will add to the set of analytical tools available to support managers plan services and set associated targets.

Key:

- - progressing as planned
- - work stream complete

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Policy and Performance Officer
20 October 2009*



Duty to Involve - Advice Note

Introduction

From April 2009, we will be required to take appropriate steps to ensure that local people² are informed, consulted or involved in what we do.

Whilst this doesn't mean that we need to invent completely new ways of doing things, we do need to understand better what we're already doing to inform, consult and involve people and make any necessary improvements. In general, local people need to feel that they have more opportunities to have their say and be involved.

What does it mean?

The new duty will impact on all our services and functions, meaning that we need to think about how local people need to be informed, consulted or involved in all aspects of our work.

In thinking about 'representatives of local people', we need to think about people who work or study locally, visitors; businesses and anyone else likely to have interest in what it is we are doing. We shouldn't just be thinking about people who live in Plymouth.

We also need to think about the different communities in Plymouth, for example using established tools like Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to assess who the most relevant people might be to involve in the development of different aspects of our work.

The new duty challenges us to think about how we can do things better; including joining up better with other services and partner organisations. We will also need to think about how we reflect the requirements of the new duty in contracts with organisations delivering services on our behalf.

The three ways of involving people better that we are advised to consider are:

INFORM	Giving people information so that they understand the services we provide and also understand how they can have a say and get involved. In doing so, we need to think about different needs, and provide information in different languages and formats as appropriate.
CONSULT	Consultation means giving people a restricted choice and role in solutions. You may start a conversation about a problem, offer some options, allow comment, take account and then proceed – perhaps after negotiation. Consultation can be formal (e.g. on things like the Local Development Framework); satisfaction surveys (e.g. The Place Survey), or informal (e.g. attending an event such as the Respect festival and asking people to express a preference using sticky labels.)
INVOLVE	We also need to consider other ways that enable people to get involved in what we do over and above informing and consulting them, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing opportunities for people to influence decisions • Enabling people to provide feedback on decisions, services and policies (e.g.

² Guidance refers to 'representatives of local persons', but for simplicity, this briefing note will use the term 'local people'.

	<p>Have Your Say)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with service users on the design of policies and services (e.g. through commissioning processes) • Enabling people to carry out /co-produce some services for themselves (e.g. managing a community resource, litter picking and street clean-up; managing assets) • Enabling people to work with us to assess our services (e.g. mystery shopping)
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Depending on the issue, we may need to consider one, two or all three of the above methods. There is much good practice that we can draw on locally and from further afield to help determine what approach we should use – case studies will be developed to help illustrate the options we should consider, and further guidance will be available from the government in due course.

What doesn't it mean?

It doesn't mean that we're doing it all wrong and need to start again! The new duty doesn't replace existing statutory requirements to involve local people in decision-making (e.g. in relation to the Local Development Framework). It doesn't replace existing non-statutory agreements (e.g. the Compact Plymouth 2020 has with the third sector). Neither does it bring with it any new powers. It challenges us to think whether we can do more, and whether we can do things together with partners.

In the context of the new duty, the term 'representative' doesn't mean elected members. The duty recognises the vital role Councillors have as advocates for local people and extends the range of opportunities for people to have their say and get involved.

Applying the duty successfully

The government does not lay down firm guidance about applying the duty, but if we're doing it well engagement and consultation standards should be embedded in service delivery, policy and decision-making, and we should be achieving the following:

- Understanding when we should be using 1, 2 or all 3 of the suggested involvement techniques, and applying a corporate approach
- Clearly communicating the purpose and level of all involvement activity: being clear about whether we are e.g. consulting on a topic or providing a direct opportunity to participate in a decision. The ladder of participation is a useful tool for understanding and explaining these differences (ref).
- Targeting information, consultation and involvement opportunities at the right people
- Understanding the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups, and reflecting this in our engagement and consultation activity
- Effectively co-ordinating our engagement and consultation activity between departments and (working with the Local Strategic Partnership) with partner organisations
- Providing good quality information to people about our services and opportunities to provide feedback and get involved
- Consistently keeping people 'in the loop' – in other words telling them what we've done as a result of their comments and feedback
- Routinely involving people in assessing the effectiveness of our services
- Sharing information resulting from engagement and consultation activity across departments and with partners in order to maximise its impact
- Running timely, cost effective engagement and consultation activity that is proportional to the issue in question
- Monitoring the effectiveness, impact and inclusivity of involvement activity

Ultimately, if we're applying the duty effectively, feedback from local people will be that they feel engaged and involved in local decision-making.

Who should be informed, consulted and/or involved

Different service areas need to understand for themselves who to involve and how that involvement can best be achieved. In addition, much information is now available to us about diverse communities in the city and the groups that seek to represent them. Contact details are available from the Social Inclusion Unit and the Corporate Performance Unit.

Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) can also be used to determine who should be involved in developing and reviewing policies, strategies and functions.

When thinking about who to inform, consult or involve, we also need to think about the role of the third sector³. In some cases, third sector organisations will be affected by, or interested in a particular service or function in which case we will need to inform, consult or involve them in some way. In other cases, they may have a role as an advocate for local people, in which case we may choose to involve them as well as local people. In other cases, because of the expertise and knowledge they have, we may need to work with them to engage with marginalised and seldom heard people. The Compact supports our work with the third sector, and helps us determine our relationship with them in different scenarios.

It is important that information provision, consultation and involvement opportunities are not limited to those with the 'loudest voice'. Following the good practice guidelines above will help to ensure that everyone in Plymouth not only has the *opportunity* to become involved, but can do so with confidence that their involvement will be valued and their voice heard.

Meeting the new duty

The following section provides some examples of what we're already doing to meet the requirements of the new duty. It also suggests what we could do to further improve how we are delivering the new duty. Neither list is exhaustive.

What we've already done to meet the new duty

- Informing, consulting and involving people across a range of different services – including the provision of a large range of information about the services we provide; running statutory (e.g. Local Development Framework, The Place Survey) and non-statutory consultation activity, and involving service users in commissioning some key services
- Revised our Statement of Community Involvement and linked it to the Compact
- Producing reports of consultation activity
- We have a residents panel (Plymouth Points of View) which has been in operation since 2002
- Run Neighbourhood Management pilots in Stonehouse and North Prospect which have empowered people to become involved in their local communities
- Through Area Committees, we involve local people in discussions about a full range of topics including setting budgets
- Established 'Have Your Say', our Corporate compliments, complaints and feedback system
- In some cases, we have handed over assets (e.g. buildings and land) to community groups for them to run and manage themselves
- We involve representatives of local people and groups on most of our Area Committees and Overview & Scrutiny Panels
- Established contracts to support the establishment of Plymouth Local Involvement Network (LINK) to enable people to have their say about health and social care; and which help the over-50s to have their say about issues that matter most to them (Plymouth Advisory Partnership for Older People)
- We have an established Youth Parliament

³ Defined by the government as 'non-governmental organisations that are value driven and which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental and cultural objectives. It includes voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, co-operatives and mutuals.'

- We've published our integrated Equality Scheme (2009-2011) which has consultation with diverse communities at its core
- Translate Plymouth – well established and providing translation and interpretation in a range of languages and different formats (e.g. Braille)
- Support for the Respect Festival and Plymouth Pride Event, both of which are key events at which we engage and have the opportunity to consult with diverse communities

What else we could do or do better:

- Promote the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) as the basis for effective and consistent engagement and consultation
- Learn and share good practice about engagement and consultation between departments and with partner organisations
- Join up with others more – departments and partner organisations - to avoid over-consultation
- Make better use of the results from consultation, inspections and feedback from other sources – in other words, use what information we have as widely as possible
- Regularly provide feedback to people about the things we've consulted them about – so that people feel their views have genuinely been taken into account
- As a matter of course, provide clear and up-to-date information about our services and opportunities to get involved – in doing so take into account the needs of diverse communities (e.g. provide information in different languages; formats etc.)
- Develop and use tools to help design consultation and involvement activity
- Set up service specific advisory panels where appropriate to do so
- Do more to enable people to take part in decisions about setting corporate and service-specific budgets
- Promote the use of petitions to inform and influence local debate
- Use Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) more as a means of involving diverse communities in the development and review of services and policies
- Work with Members to continue to improve scrutiny processes to ensure scrutiny is as effective as possible as a consultation mechanism
- Use existing resources (e.g. staff, software) more efficiently to maximise use of what we already have and avoid duplication

Policy context

Local Government Act 1999

Local Government White Paper, October 2006 '*Strong and Prosperous Communities*'

Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, November 2007

'Communities in Control: real people, real power' White Paper – extending the duty to a wide range of agencies, July 2008

Statutory Guidance: '*Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities*', July 2008

Other useful reading

[The Duty to Involve: Making it Work](#) - Community Development Foundation

This briefing note has been produced in conjunction with the Zebra Collective

