

# SAFER PLYMOUTH PARTNERSHIP BOARD



## Plan Priority

*"Find new and meaningful ways to engage and interact with communities /identity groups about crime and disorder and community safety"*

## 1. Introduction

Plymouth City Council has an aspiration to create a fairer city where everyone does their bit. This includes Plymouth being a place where *'people can have a say about what is important to them and where they can change what happens in their area'*.

The Council has formally adopted a new framework for working with our citizens and communities. It makes the distinction between:

1. A single agency role in listening and responding to customers around the provision of services and city wide agendas; and
2. A lead agency role in creating a more sustainable model of engagement so that citizens take control of their own communities.

Plymouth has a track record of working with, and within, communities with some notable successes. However, feedback indicates that engagement is fragmented, partial and community empowerment activity does not address the fundamental issues of enabling citizens to be in control of their own communities.

The framework sets out broad values and principles to guide the development of practical responses to these challenges building on what works currently, but developing a new approach together with citizens, communities and partners to design how this will work in the future.

Our aim is to work with partners to develop a toolkit and policy approach to rolling this out across communities in the City. Intrinsic to this is our understanding of what citizens feel are safe communities. Where there are specific themed consultation/engagement opportunities within the Safer Plymouth partnership across any theme or priority, it could be useful to explore how the framework could be applied to get more traction on engagement.

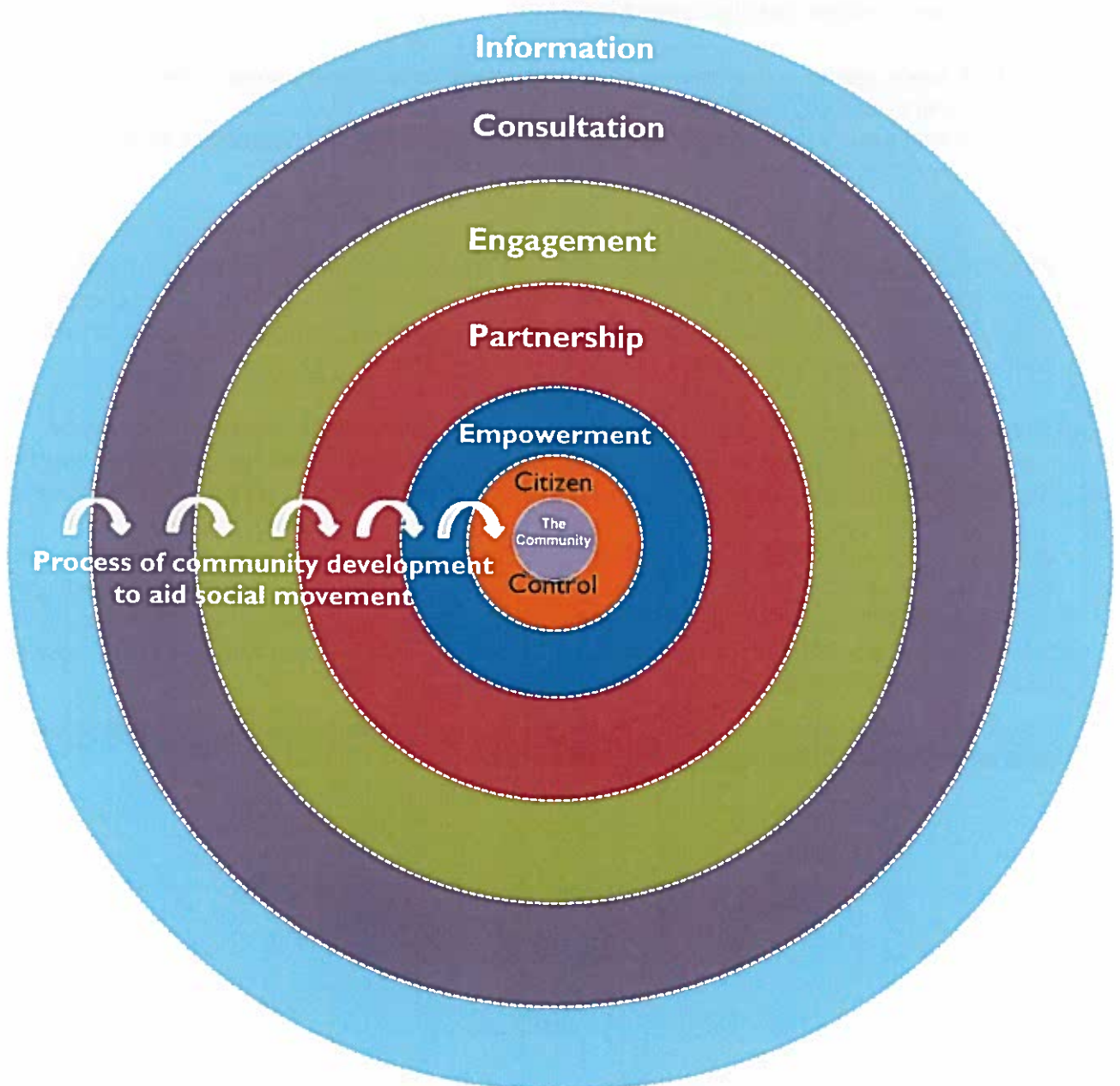
Equally we could reasonably expect that safety and crime issues will be raised in engagement priorities as we work with citizens across the City.

## 2. The framework in theory

### 2.1 A journey to empowered communities

There are many interpretations of participation scales, for example a scale based on Arnstein's 'Ladder of Participation'. Movements up the 'ladder' illustrate the process of community development to aid social movement. We would like to move away from a hierarchical 'ladder' to a model which puts communities and community-led initiatives at the centre and public agencies acting in support of self-selecting citizens who enhance the capacity of their community.

We have acknowledged that we need to create a new relationship with our citizens so that they feel they are encouraged and supported to be less passive customers of services and more active and involved in their communities. It is the process of community development to aid social movement that will support this fundamental change in our relationship with citizens. We must however also acknowledge that individuals will choose to participate at the level they choose to commit themselves. This may not be for themselves to lead the change, but more increased involvement from more community members will undoubtedly support this process.



## 2.2 Co-operative community engagement values and principles

Our proposed co-operative community engagement and empowerment approach is based on the four co-operative values. These values have informed a series of principles to guide the process and programmes of work by which the new framework will be delivered.

### VALUES

#### DEMOCRATIC

Plymouth is a place where people can have their say about what is important to them and where they can change what happens in their area.

#### RESPONSIBLE

We take responsibility for our actions, care about their impact on others and expect others to do the same.

#### FAIR

We will be honest and open in how we act treat everyone with respect, champion fairness and create opportunities.

#### PARTNERS

We will provide strong community leadership and work together to deliver our common ambition

### PRINCIPLES FOR CO-OPERATIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Engagement exemplified by strong community leadership by elected members and local citizens
- Engagement where community leaders are accountable to the citizens they serve
- Engagement based on honest and open sharing of issues and solutions

- Engagement that champions self-help so that communities are self-organised and self-supporting
- Engagement that is outcome focused and considers the impact of citizens and agencies actions on others

- Engagement that is flexible to meet the needs of all citizens so that all are included
- Engagement that considers all interests and respects all voices as equal
- Engagement that spans communities of interest, geography and identity to create a voice for all

- Engagement that is collaboratively resourced and consistently supported by all city partners
- Engagement that is informed by one version of the facts, with shared intelligence to support citizen led decision making

## 2.3 Organisational behaviours

The council and its partners will clearly benefit from citizens being able to 'have their say and do their bit' to inform how we respond to local community priorities, or re-shape our services and priorities. This will require the council and its partners to foster an environment within which citizens can self-select or generate opportunities whereby a community's capacity can be built or released. Equally we need to be aware of how the way we work with citizens could inadvertently prevent self-help and peer-help occurring through our organisational structures, actions and systems. To support the journey to empowered communities it is important that we understand how our behaviours support or inhibit engagement. This applies across communities of identity, interest or geography

<b>BEHAVIOURS</b>	<b>Single Agency</b> Our main concern is around behaviours on how we provide information, consult and engage (as a single agency) with citizens, as our customers.	<b>Lead Agency</b> Our main concern is around behaviours within how we provide multi-agency engagement, partnership arrangements and community empowerment which leads to citizen control.
<b>Flexible</b>	Our own channels must include a mixed market of options to create opportunities for a voice for all. This must include a range of support and methods rather than a one size fits all approach.	Community support provided by the most appropriate agency and at the request of that community, in ways that citizens prefer.
<b>Sustainable</b>	We must promote consistency, efficiency and reliability in how we engage, building self-help rather than reliance on council or agency support.	The support provided must promote self-help which leads to peer-help both within and across our communities, thus reducing the need for 'professional help', so that communities are self-organised and self-supporting.
<b>Open and Transparent</b>	We must actively listen and be honest about the reasons for consulting and engaging with citizens and communities when we approach them. There must be no illusion about the potential outcomes of consulting customers. In this way we will not raise expectations unnecessarily. There must be a clear channel for reporting back the results of any consultation.	Communities must have access to information, advice and support to move towards citizen control. Providing clear, shared evidence to support collaborative decision making between communities and local agencies openly. Deploying support to those most disadvantaged, but our advice and guidance must continue to support all communities in this city who have the desire to self-organise.
<b>Smart and Collaborative</b>	The intelligence that all agencies gain from engaging with customers must be shared. Collectively customer insight must help to inform service provision but also to inform citizens through successful community engagement and empowerment in the future.	We must lead all agencies in the city towards a system that brokers collective support and engagement to serve our citizens from all sectors including support for the voluntary and community sector, working with our citizens collaboratively.

## 2.4 Citizens at the heart of co-operative community engagement

What is the value of increasing engagement with citizens? We would suggest that this is to support social movement, build social value and, in particular, create sustainable social capital.

A recent Council paper - 'Co-operative Commissioning and Market Management – A Framework for Delivering a Brilliant Co-operative Council' provided examples of how citizens should be seen at the centre of the commissioning process. This equally applies to co-operative community engagement:

Citizens as innovators	Citizens may know things that many professionals don't
Citizens as resources	Citizens have time, information and financial resources that they are willing to invest to improve their own quality of life and into helping others
Citizens as asset-holders	Citizens have diverse capabilities and talents which they can share with professionals and other citizens
Citizens as community-developers	Citizens can engage in collaborative rather than paternalistic relationships with service providers, with other service users and with other members of the public

## 3. Conclusion

We have set out a range of values, principles, behaviours and rationale for operating differently both individually as agencies, and collectively where we engage or consult residents/citizens and communities. The Council and key partners across the City are working together to explore how this could practically be piloted across the City in different ways. We would suggest that this framework could be a starting point to support, guide and enhance engagement within and across the partnership.

## 4. Recommendation

**4.1** Safer Plymouth is asked to consider adopting the framework to guide consultation and engagement across the priority areas.

**4.2** Safer Plymouth is asked to consider areas for specific engagement where the framework could help. This could be a theme, community or geographic area.

