

Report to: All Area Committees

Report of: Leader of the Council; Portfolio Holder for Reform and Governance;  
Portfolio Holder for Economy and Regeneration

Title: Area Committee Community Engagement Programme

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> July

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## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to outline emerging community engagement and conversation activity taking place throughout the course of this year and to consider opportunities for Area Committee led engagement during this period.

## **2.0 Background and Context**

- 2.1 The Cabinet is committed to supporting and enabling broad community engagement within the shaping of its plans and priorities for Stockport and sees Area Committees as key to facilitating and enabling area based discussion. As such the Cabinet has actively sought ways to engage broadly with Area Committees, such as 2016's budget engagement. This paper builds on this commitment.
- 2.2 Stockport Council is now in the process of preparing its medium term Growth and Reform plans. These plans will direct the work needed to support growth and reform services ahead of the Council becoming locally self-financing from 2020 and are structured around an adopted local growth and reform framework. Changing how we work with communities such as through the services we provide and how they're accessed, to creating the space and conditions for resilient communities to grow and build stronger local relationships and connections, is a key component of our growth and reform framework. As such as part of this process the Council with its Partners will be speaking with people and communities to understand their views on changes and what their local priorities are. This will range from thematic conversations related to new ways of working, to specific services or to Place based conversations such as those taking place within our two early adopter sites (Brinnington and Heatons).
- 2.3 Stockport is also keen to engage widely into shaping its longer term delivery plans. An opportunity for this emerged in the wake of the preparation of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework, following which the Council agreed to progress with preparation of a new Stockport Local Plan. A commitment has been made by the Cabinet to undertake a robust and transparent public debate that will inform the delivering of local plans. The Local Development Framework (LDF) Working Party have identified Area Committees as an important forum for shaping and leading area based local plan conversations.

- 2.4 As such, conversations with the community are going to be key to shaping Stockport's future priorities and direction, particularly as we are increasingly working with complex and critical issues which will impact on communities. This presents an opportunity to engage broadly and differently with communities. Area Committees play a key role in understanding the local perspectives on all these issues and we are keen to explore options complementing the existing Area Committee framework to support broad and inclusive Area Committee led conversations.

### **3.0 Area Committee Led Community Engagement**

- 3.1 Within Stockport our understanding and approach to working with communities has continually developed and evolved. In recent years, under both the current and previous Administrations, the Council has worked with partners and Elected Councillors to explore new and broader approaches to engaging with local communities. We are keen to support the share the further development of this learning across all Area Committees to ensure that these long-standing structures continue to have a positive, inclusive approach to engaging local people and leading change in their Area.
- 3.2 We have considered various approaches to Area Committee engagement and have incorporated broader community engagement into the work of the Area Committee at various points such as through annual State of the Area meetings to ward committees. Further to this during 2016 consideration was given by Area Committees on the opportunities to review and improve area governance arrangements and increase participation by the public, a number of useful suggestions and comments came out of that meeting which the Cabinet have explored further through a series of pilots. Learning during this process identified the importance of maintaining time to address core area committee responsibilities but also the value of open forum community discussions (such as those trailed in Marple) in attracting a broader representation of the local community in focused topic/theme based discussions.
- 3.3 In terms of community conversations and discussions beyond Area Committees we have explored new approaches to working with and engaging communities, both in terms of new models of service delivery (such as adopting the Restorative Practice approach across Stockport Family), to trialling and developing community specific discussions (such as a series of 'Community Conversations' undertaken in three communities; Marple, Cheadle and Reddish), to borough wide place shaping engagement on the Local Plan.

### **4.0 Proposal**

- 4.1 Key to Area Committee led engagement is the recognition that community focussed conversations will vary between different communities and different areas and as such flexibility for Area Committees to agree on the relevant

mechanism, focus and timing is important in ensuring meaningful local engagement.

- 4.2 Therefore it is proposed that Area Committees develop an event for each committee on a theme or subject matter of their choosing relevant to that locality – taking into consideration the areas identified within appendix.1. It is envisaged that if useful this may be an approach which could be utilised again in future.
- 4.3 It is envisaged that this would complement the existing Area Committee framework and provide an opportunity for community conversations within a different format on a specific theme or issue.

#### *Subject and Timing*

- 4.4 To support this consideration within Area Committees a summary of key engagement issues and timings associated with any borough-wide engagement is appended to this report. Whilst the Committee isn't confined to this list and may wish to consider local priorities for conversations, it is envisaged that local conversations will join or link into broader discussions (where these are taking place) and communication about changes in Stockport.
- 4.5 A further consideration here is also the planned Area Committee engagement on the budget. In line with last year the Cabinet are proposing to engage with Area Committees upon Growth and Reform programme proposals during the autumn, with a view to understanding any local considerations or implications resulting from these.
- 4.6 Area Committee leadership is also critical to the success of the face-to-face public consultation activity for the Local Plan and in ensuring that a full and proper consultation is carried out. At its May 2017 meeting, the Local Development Framework Working Party agreed that as Area Committee meetings fall in August and then in late September, additional consultation events across each of the seven committee areas should be convened in the first half of September, with Ward Councillors playing a leading role.

#### *Mechanism*

- 4.7 With regards to mechanisms for engagement. Locally within Stockport we have a broad range of experience in engaging in varying different ways with communities. From area forums (such as in Marple) to building engagement into planned community events or fun days, to research based surveys or focus groups. In addition to this, as part of our Place Based working early adopter within the Heatons Stockport is exploring and learning about different ways of engaging with local communities. Suggested options for different engagement mechanisms are outlined below but could be explored further or

as a combination depending on local preferences and opportunities are outlined:

#### 4.6.1 Option.1: Open Forum Debates

This approach has been trialled in Marple during 2016 and built upon in 2017 to better utilise the Community Engagement opportunities provided for by the Council Constitution. The Area Committee focused on better use of the Open Forum which was an agenda item programmed for each Area Committee Meeting but which was historically not always utilised in any programmed way. Topics for discussion were determined at an extra-ordinary meeting which was attended by 60-70 residents and local groups who collectively identified six key issues to be explored and debated further. These were subsequently programmed and discussed with local people.

*Resource considerations:* Officer support may be required to facilitate local area forums, communication materials (this should be minimal).

#### 4.6.2 Option.2: Utilising existing community events

This approach has been adopted on various different occasions where Elected Members or officers have mapped existing community events such as fun days, fairs etc... and attended informally or held a stall to host a discussion throughout the day on a 1-2-1 or small group basis.

*Resource considerations:* Communication or marketing material may be required. Likely to require minimal additional staffing resource other than support to ensure necessary materials in place.

#### 4.6.3 Option.3: Community Conversation

Community conversations (through mechanisms such as door step or street conversations or targeted discussions with a range of community representatives about local priorities) can provide an opportunity for organisations to learn how communities see themselves and is an approach which has been in developed in Stockport in areas such as Offerton and more recently the Heatons. This approach seeks to

- Enable people to describe the change they want to see in their own terms, deepening understanding of how people talk and think about issues.
- Create space for people to speak freely and honestly, building positive community energy around solutions.
- Build relationships and networks to enable local responsibility and resilience to do the things that communities do best.

In the Heatons Place Based Early Adopter the Council with Partners have been undertaking community conversations which in this initial phase has

included targeted open discussions about Health, Wellbeing and Social Isolation with key community representatives.

*Resource considerations:* Member and/or officer time required to facilitate conversations.

#### Option.4: Research / Survey / Focus Groups

The Council has a range of tools and experience to support surveys or focus groups such as facilitation experience, consultation expertise and online survey tools. This could be used to support a gathering of information and views on a specific theme or series of questions.

*Resource considerations:* Officer support may be required to undertake research or facilitate focus groups. Further resource may be needed if independent research is required.

- 4.8 Depending upon the route adopted by Area Committees it is anticipated that there may be some resourcing implications, be it officer time, to cover materials or other practicalities. In terms of officer capacity this will need to be considered collectively to ensure that officer time can be managed effectively across all Area Committees' engagement proposals. In addition Members may wish to consider broader resourcing of engagement and where appropriate the use of ward flexibility fund or other resourcing routes.
- 4.9 Across all discussions it is intended that there will need to be high level consistent messaging about the changes being undertaken within Stockport (our Growth and Reform vision and move towards being self-sufficient) and high level communication material will be produced to support this.

#### **5.0 Next Steps and Recommendations**

- 5.1 Area Committees are asked to consider options for local engagement and identify any preferred approach(es) they may wish to explore further.

## Appendix.1: Key Engagement Issues

Issue	Summary	Timeframe
Growth and Reform	A programme of social media conversations will be taking place throughout the year which includes a monthly focus on different topics such as town centre regeneration, devolution.	July onwards
Place Marketing	<p>Creative Concern, working on behalf of Stockport Council and its partners, is planning a major campaign to highlight new investment, transport improvements, leisure opportunities, better spaces and places, cultural programmes and a host of big brand names and independent businesses that are moving to Stockport.</p> <p>In June they are recruiting a selection of community volunteers to take part in a small and informal group workshops. As well as this there is an ongoing online survey seeking feedback from stakeholders on their perceptions of the Town Centre.</p>	June onwards
Reform Proposals	Specific consultation on service changes will be undertaken from August where required. This may include consulting on changes to how people access services or changes to the way services are delivered	August - November
Local Plan	<p>The Council is committed to a robust and transparent public debate that will inform the delivering of local plans. As such throughout 2017/18 a series of consultation and engagement activity will be undertaken to inform this, as well as partnership priorities more widely.</p> <p>Locally, positive place shaping has been define as characterising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Local Plan that enables delivery of the Council plan;</li> <li>• Joining up across organisational and partnership priorities;</li> <li>• Balancing conflicting needs and wants;</li> <li>• A locality or neighbourhood approach;</li> <li>• Working with communities rather than top down;</li> <li>• Enabling a wider public voice to be heard – beyond those arising from self-interest or organisation aim or interest groups.</li> </ul> <p>This learning and approach will form a central component to a series of design conversations which whilst commencing in spring, will be replicated throughout the year will also seek to explore how learning emerging from these sites, and others, are applicable more broadly across service redesign within Stockport.</p>	<p>May – Dec 2017</p> <p><i>Area Committee based events in first half of September</i></p>
Stockport Together	An issues document will describe the benefits to Stockport from the Greater Manchester Health & Social Care transformation fund and highlight some of the services that	June - July

Issue	Summary	Timeframe
	<p>have already been implemented. The issues paper will outline the wider context, tell a broader story, invite participation and promote transparency.</p> <p>A listening period will be undertaken, this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 public events. These events will offer the opportunity for wider dialogue between individuals or groups.</li> <li>• The listening period and events will invite ideas from the public, explore the possibilities for change and tease out the impacts on people which may not have already been considered.</li> <li>• In addition there will be some more targeted sessions with equality groups, telephone interviews and street activity.</li> <li>• There will also be a double page spread in the summer edition of the Stockport Review.</li> </ul>	