



## POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 4TH MARCH 2014

**SUBJECT: CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY AND HOUSEHOLD SURVEY UPDATE**

**REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER**

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update for members on the progress of Council's Citizen Engagement Strategy which was approved in April 2013.
- 1.2 At the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee meeting of 12th November 2013, it was agreed that a report would be presented on 4th March 2014 outlining the following key areas:
  - Actions resulting from the findings of the Household Survey
  - A review of Public Engagement activities over the 2013/14 period

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Engagement means anything that we do that *informs* citizens about what we do or *involves* citizens in the Council's decision making process. A draft citizen engagement strategy was approved in April 2013 to enable Caerphilly County Borough Council to effectively inform, engage and involve our citizens.
- 2.2 The Citizen Engagement Strategy is supported by an action plan to enable the authority to achieve effective engagement. This report provides an update on progress against the action plan and, in particular, notes any actions resulting from the findings of the 2013 Household Survey - one of the key public engagement mechanisms used by the Council.

### 3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 A number of key related strategies are listed below. A comprehensive list of related strategies can be found in the appendices of the strategy document.
- 3.2 The Council's Improvement Plan 2009/2012  
 Caerphilly Local Service Board's Citizen Engagement Strategy (January 2013)  
 50+ Engagement Strategy  
 Participation Strategy for Children and Young People/Local Partnership Action Plan  
 Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014  
 The Council's Constitution  
 Internal Communications Strategy (2012)  
 Strategic Equality Plan (2011) Objective 5

## 4. THE REPORT

### 4.1 Household Survey

- 4.1.1 The results of the Household survey were, on the whole, very positive with satisfaction levels in Council services reaching 82%. However, it was clear that there were lower levels of satisfaction in the Upper Rhymney Valley area. Following the analysis of the results, a detailed report was provided to all Directors and Heads of Service in September 2013.
- 4.1.2 In December 2013 Directors and Heads of Service were asked to provide details of how they have used the findings of the Household Survey to identify perceived areas of strength and weakness in the provision of services; highlight areas of change in the level of service provision and help determine future priorities. The following feedback has been received:
- 4.1.3 **Social Services:** The only real issue for social care was around access to services. Social Services are currently working to develop a new "front door" that will be a consistent point of access for Adults and Children's services. This should lead to an improved response in this area.
- 4.1.4 **Safer Caerphilly:** A press release from the Police and Crime Commissioners Office (issued 13th January 2014) noted the positive results of the Household Survey. The Community Safety Manager is speaking with Gwent Police to determine reasons for the lack of satisfaction in the Upper Rhymney Valley, despite the high visibility of Wardens in the area.
- 4.1.5 **Environment:** Both the Household Survey and the Local Environmental Quality Survey (undertaken Summer 2013) demonstrate that levels of satisfaction with waste and cleansing services are at their highest levels since the inception of these surveys. However, they also highlighted that residents feel the main issues affecting the appearance of their communities are dog fouling and litter (in particular takeaway litter). A **Viewpoint Panel meeting** was held in October 2013 to discuss in further detail and, in particular, to consider a future Partnership Approach between the Council and residents for dealing with these issues. The report was presented to Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny 18th February 2014. An additional issue raised at the Viewpoint Panel meeting was that of fly tipping. This is being looked at as a priority issue for communications and is reflected in recent media activity (e.g. press release (13<sup>th</sup> January 2014) "*Council declares war on fly-tippers*").
- 4.1.6 **Libraries:** The results have been shared among all Library and Community Centre Managers and cascaded to operational sites highlighting the high levels of satisfaction. In terms of planning for the future, the team will be considering how best to maintain or if possible improve upon the performance levels reached. In particular following the opening of the new Library in Caerphilly there is the potential for the Caerphilly basin performance to increase. The 91% satisfaction level for the Upper Rhymney Valley area will be a target for improvement and considered in the Local Library Plans for this area going forward in 2014-15. Additionally, the team will be considering actions to assist in decreasing the percentage of residents who have never used a Library or who have only accessed one over a year ago (46% in the survey) as part of the planned 2014-17 service development plan which is being prepared at present.
- 4.1.7 **Regeneration and Planning:** The Head of Regeneration and Planning has confirmed her team are currently exploring all potential funding options to facilitate further regeneration schemes in the Upper Rhymney Valley, especially a bid to '*Vital and Vibrant Places*' where Welsh Government have identified Rhymney as an eligible area.
- 4.1.8 **Engineering Services Division:** The positive outcomes of the survey have been fed back to staff within the division. The outcomes have been discussed at Divisional Management Team to establish use in service planning, to inform Group Service Delivery Action Plans and the Divisional Service Improvement Plan.

In terms of highways the majority of spend is based on prioritisation related to risk/need along with trying to achieve an even spread around the authority. The survey confirmed that road surfaces were of concern despite the investment into this area though it has positively risen from 28% to 43%). Similarly with footways and drainage which were the other lowest area's.

Satisfaction in winter maintenance has risen from 46% to 69%. This reflects the additional resources spent in this area to keep the highway network open. Officers are keen to maintain this, but with the budget difficulties these are key strategic decisions that will need to be made moving forward.

## 4.2 Progress on Citizen Engagement Action Plan

4.2.1 The full action plan and current status of each action is attached as an appendix to this report. Key achievements are highlighted below:

4.2.2 A cross directorate **Citizen Engagement Strategy Group** was established in 2013 to better co-ordinate engagement activity across the organisation and deliver the outcomes contained in the action plan. The group meets regularly to discuss forthcoming engagement activities, share best practice and review recent engagement activity to ensure agreed standards have been met as outlined in the strategy.

4.2.3 An online consultation database called '**Caerphilly Asks, Caerphilly Listens**' was launched in 2013 to record all engagement activity taking place across the organisation. In total 39 new engagement activities were added to the database between April 2013 and the end of January 2014. A procedure has been put in place for maintaining the system and key administrators have been identified in each Directorate to populate the database and regularly update its content.

4.2.4 Key consultations undertaken in 2013 include:

Date	Topic	Detail
December	Air Quality Action Plan Consultation	An "Air Quality Action Plan" has been developed and the Council is calling on residents to have their say on the document.
December	Council Tax Reduction Scheme Survey	To establish residents' views on the Council's approach to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
November	Secondary School Rationalisation – Islwyn West	To seek residents' views on the proposals for secondary school rationalisation in Islwyn West
November	Budget Consultation	To find out residents' views about how the budget should be spent to help us to identify priority services.
October	Parental Survey on language preference in education	To measure preferences and future demand for Welsh medium education provision
October	Public Services (Viewpoint Panel Meeting)	Key issues of litter and dog fouling were discussed.
October	Caerphilly's New Library opening hours	The library service is proposing to make changes to the opening hours of the new library and invites comments from the community.
October	Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan - First Review	There are two consultation exercises as part of the LDP review: comments on the Draft Delivery Agreement and Call for Candidates Sites
October	Local Housing Survey	The Local Housing Survey will provide information about the housing circumstances and aspirations of local people and feed into the Local Housing Market Assessment
July	Local Environment Quality Survey	Residents asked to comment on services including Refuse Collection, Recycling, Street Cleansing, and Grounds Maintenance.

June	Household Survey	Postal survey to 10,000 residents (plus online) to establish overall perception of a range of council services
June	Childcare sufficiency audit	To measure demand and current provision for child care in the county borough
April	Council Priorities Consultation	Residents' views sought on proposed Council Improvement Objectives for 13/14
January	Single Integrated Plan	Major consultation exercise asking views on the LSB Single Integrated Plan

4.2.5 **Viewpoint Panel** – This is the council's key engagement group currently consisting of over 540 residents of all ages from all sections of the community. Procedures for using the Viewpoint Panel have been reviewed and the first meeting of the new Viewpoint Panel was held in October 2013. A newsletter has been prepared and distributed to all panel members to provide them with feedback from this meeting. A forward work programme for the panel was discussed by CMT on 23rd January 2014.

4.2.6 **Engagement Practitioners Network:** This group has been reinvigorated and receives regular updates and information via e-mail. Four key training courses were organised between April and October 2013 for members of the network (1- Facilitation Training, 2 - Evaluating Engagement, 3 - Making the best use of qualitative data and 4 - SNAP questionnaire design software training). A further SNAP training day and a half day "Equalities in Consultation and Engagement" are planned for late February 2014.

4.2.7 **Step by Step Guides** – Guides for staff entitled "*Getting started with consultation and engagement*" and "*Getting started with surveys*" are being developed to ensure there is a consistent approach to good practice across the authority. These guides will become key toolkits for staff to follow when planning and implementing engagement activity on behalf of the authority.

## 5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Strategy aims to ensure that all citizens of Caerphilly are able to effectively engage with the Council. There is a commitment within the strategy to providing an equal opportunity for all our citizens to be involved and will ensure that we meet the duties of the Council Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no immediate financial implications to the report.

## 7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no personnel implications at present but this will be kept under review.

## 8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 Following agreement of the Citizen Engagement Strategy, led by the Communications Unit, a cross-directorate working group was set up to deliver on the actions within the Strategy. This group has met regularly since its inception in June 2013.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 It is recommended that:

- Members note the content of this report
- The Communications Unit continue to lead on the implementation of the Citizen Engagement Strategy and Action Plan
- The Action Plan to be reviewed and measured in April 2015.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 The strategy needs direction and coordination at a corporate level but this will be ineffective unless directorates take responsibility. Engagement needs to be well supported by the organisation at every level and given the right resources to be effective.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

### 11.1 Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

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Background Papers:

Appendices:  
Appendix 1 Updated Action Plan