

Harrow Speaks

‘Involving our community’

Our community engagement strategy

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Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the following for helping us to develop the Strategy:

Harrow Association of Voluntary Service

Members of the Scrutiny Review Group

Community Consultative Forum members

Harrow Strategic Partnership

Harrow Strategic Partnership Reference Groups

- Community Cohesion
- Older Person's

Glossary

‘Change Up’

This is about building knowledge and skills of the voluntary and community sector. It is supported by the Government Office for London.

Communities

As people choose to identify themselves as part of a range of communities, ‘communities’ could mean any of the following.

- Communities of place (such as Pinner, Harrow or London)
- Communities of interest (based on ethnic background, age, disability, religion and so on)
- Individual residents
- Organised community groups and voluntary-sector groups
- People who are making judgements on their local services
- People who are the customers of particular services

In this document, ‘community’ includes anyone who has an interest in the borough, whether they are individuals or groups representing residents, businesses, retailers or special interests or issues.

Community engagement

This is a broad term referring to how we involve and communicate with local people. It includes informing local people as well as consulting and working with local people. As a result, it includes the process and activities we have designed to give the community the opportunity to be involved in local planning and making decisions.

Community engagement database

This is a co-ordinated programme of involving the community. We will develop it through our community engagement strategy action plan.

Comprehensive performance assessment (CPA)

This the way in which our performance is measured by the Audit Commission.

Harrow compact

This is also known as the local compact and is a written agreement for working relationships between us, the wider statutory sector such as the primary care trust and the police, the private sector and the voluntary and community sector.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are the people who have an interest in a particular decision, either as individuals or as representatives of a group. This includes people (and their representatives) who influence a decision, or **can** influence it, as well as those affected by it.

When working with local people, we need to make sure that the appropriate number and kind of stakeholders are involved.

For each activity, our staff should take account of the following.

Community engagement strategy

- Their knowledge and first-hand experience.
- The larger voluntary sector which represents the interests of smaller groups do not always represent a specific target group nor can all residents be reached through an organisation. Where necessary, staff should consider events and representative panels, with appropriate incentives for people to take part.
- Where voluntary and community groups represent a specific community, it should be clear that they are in communication with their members about particular issues.
- The same groups should not be consulted again and again.
- Taking part in consultation and representation involves a loss of time and resources for voluntary groups.

Executive summary

Introduction

This document is our community engagement strategy. It sets out what we will do to make sure you, the local community, can make informed decisions and have opportunities to shape our services and influence our processes for making decisions.

The strategy aims to improve our activities for involving people and improve the quality of life for everyone who lives in Harrow.

Challenges

Involving the local community is central to delivering our corporate priorities. It is essential to our themes of 'strengthening communities' and 'valuing Harrow's customers'.

We face many challenges in our relationships with residents, many of which we can deal with through this community engagement strategy. This is also reflected in the Government's agenda to improve involvement on a neighbourhood level.

The following challenges and priorities have emerged through the results of a recent 'quality of life' survey and from feedback from our staff and other stakeholders.

a Informing local people

- The public do not feel well informed or involved in making decisions.
- The public's satisfaction with our performance could be improved further.
- People are not aware of improvements we have made.
- Residents' views of the value for money of our services need to improve.

b Consistent delivery

- We need a consistent approach across the council for involving people, with results of the activities influencing services.
- We need to build on current networks (partner agencies, and local voluntary and business sectors) and make sure we do not consult them unnecessarily.
- Current involvement would be more cost-effective if it were better co-ordinated.
- We need to make it clear what the activities are being used for and how we will give feedback on the issues raised.

c Quality of life

- Involving local people can help to build and maintain relationships and unity between Harrow's varied communities (for example, with young people's events and multicultural festivals).
- Involving local people can improve people's quality of life (for example, in recycling, public health and community safety).

d Improving the skills within the council and in the community

- Although we have a good- quality voluntary sector and examples of good practice within the council, we need to develop skills and standards more consistently and improve joint working between the sectors.

e Our priorities

- Building communities so they remain strong over time (known as 'sustainable communities') and improving different communities are at the heart of our priorities. Here are our priorities.
 - Strengthening Harrow's communities.
 - Putting Harrow on the map (making Harrow **the** place to live, work and visit).
 - Valuing Harrow's customers
 - Successful partnership working
 - Making Harrow a true learning community.

Changing the way we work

To achieve these priorities and meet these challenges, we need to change the way we work in the following ways.

- Improve communication with all local people.
- Involve local people on 'quality of life' issues such as public health and the fear of crime.
- Develop consistent standards for involving people and for co-ordination within the council.
- Work with our partners.
- Build and improve the way we work in the voluntary and community sector and in the council.
- Improve targeting so that we can gather and analyse information about individual and group interests. We will do this by consulting people on the strategy and assessing our activities of involving people.
- Improve our monitoring and assessment of what our work achieves.

Community engagement strategy

We developed this strategy from a discussion paper we used to consult our staff and our partners, including those from the community and voluntary sector.

This document is aimed at our staff, councillors, partner organisations and local people.

As we believe that it is essential to involve the community, our overview and scrutiny committee started a review of community involvement in March 2005. This aims to identify best practice and case studies across the council. We will use learning points from the review to shape the strategy while we are putting it into practice, as well as when we look at it every year to make sure that we are doing what we said we would

1 This is the council’s framework for involving people

This community engagement strategy builds on the considerable amount of good practice we are carrying out in parts of the council, and provides standards for consistently involving the community.

It is essential for us to decide what level of involvement we want. The recent decision to carry out an ‘open budget process’ (see appendix 1) represents a significant increase in the level of openness in how we involve people in making decisions.

1.1 Engagement framework

The strategy recognises that there are different levels of involving the community, ranging from simply informing people to helping people to help themselves.

Inform	To give the public balanced and unbiased information to help them understand the problem and solutions.
Consult	To ask for people’s feedback on analysis, alternatives or decisions.
Involve	To work with the public throughout the process to make sure we understand and consider their concerns.
Collaborate	To work with the public in each aspect of the decision, including developing alternatives and identifying the preferred solution.
Empower	To place the final decision-making in the hands of the public.

However, these levels must be used together. The type of involvement will depend on the following.

- Whether we have to provide the service by law or whether we choose to provide it.
- How many residents are affected by the service and which groups are being targeted.
- What effect the services have on equal opportunities.
- The specific purpose of the exercise and what results will be used for.
- The resources available (time, money and skills), including necessary support (such as information in large print, on tape or in other languages).
- What results we can realistically achieve.
- Who has the legal responsibility for taking decisions- for example, in many areas of the council, local councillors have the final responsibility.

1.2 Inclusive and accessible

We are committed to following the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Our commitment to equal opportunities is set out in the following documents.

- Harrow Equal Opportunity Policy
- Harrow Race Equality Scheme 2002-2005

When involving the community, we must include all parts of society and make sure it is easy for them to get involved. To do this, we need to remove barriers to involvement and deal with particular needs of different communities. This means we must target the following.

- Gender
- Age
- Race
- Disability
- Religious beliefs
- Sexual orientation

Also, we need to pay particular attention to people who are 'hard to reach', such as young people excluded from school as well as socially and economically excluded people.

2 Current situation and challenges

We have a programme of projects involving the community currently underway (see appendix 1).

We will measure the success of these projects and build further work into the next corporate plan.

2.1 The young people's participation strategy

We are currently producing the young people's participation strategy. This strategy says that, within our corporate priorities, young people should have a 'strong voice and be heard'. This means making sure young people have a right to take an active part in:

- making decisions;
- planning services that affect their lives; and
- producing improved services.

The young person's participation strategy will be part of our action plan identified in this community engagement strategy.

2.2 Involving the voluntary and community sector

Throughout the development this strategy we have involved the voluntary community sector.

We consulted with a range of groups and individuals by using various methods.

- Presentations and feedback sessions at our councils voluntary and community sector forums and Harrow Strategic Partnership reference group meetings such as Community Cohesion and the Community Consultative Forum
- Presentations and feedback activity with Overview and Scrutiny review on community engagement
- Mail outs of the strategy requesting feedback supported by HAVS (Harrow Association of Voluntary Services and The Older person's Reference Group, Link –Up)
- Consultation event in the Town Centre and at our events such as Black History Month, Under One Sky and Area Services launches in Pinner and Rayners Lane
- Summary of the strategy, easy to read with a questionnaire
- Draft strategy made available by email or by post.

2.3 Harrow strategic partnership

It is now widely acknowledged that local partnerships are able to help achieve a better quality of life for people in a local area. To help deliver this in Harrow, the Harrow Strategic Partnership (HSP) was launched in May 2003 and brings together organisations from the statutory, public, voluntary, community and business sectors in Harrow.

The HSP recognises that everyone has the right to influence the future of their area. Solutions to problems are often dependent on local knowledge. It follows that this knowledge

should influence decisions about local areas. The Harrow Strategic Partnership is committed to securing the involvement of a wide range of partners, including local people. To do this the HSP has developed a structure that seeks to involve the community through the engagement by its Management and Reference Groups and in particular through the Voluntary and Community Sector Forum.

The HSP has undertaken a number of key engagement activities since it has been established. One of these has been the annual HSP Summits. This year (2005) the Summit focused on the development of Harrow's Local Area Agreement.

2.4 Local Area Agreement - What is it?

A Local Area Agreement (LAA) is a three-year agreement between central government and a local area that sets out the priorities for improving the quality of life of people in an area. It offers increased local choice about expenditure and reduced bureaucracy. LAA's are aimed at improving co-ordination and partnership working. Harrow is currently in the process of developing its LAA and, if agreed by central government, it will come into operation on 1 April 2006.

Harrow's agreement will pull together the Council, statutory partners and other key partners – including organisations from the voluntary and community sector. The priorities in the agreement will be grouped around four blocks:

- Children and Young People
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Healthier Communities and Older People
- Economic Development and Enterprise.

A fifth 'cross-cutting' block is also being developed.

2.5 'Area -based' services

We have changed the way we work so that we deliver 'area-based' services. An example of this is the 'small estates improvement budget' such as Warden Housing, where resident committees make decisions on how the estate's budget will be spent.

2.6 Communication

Communication with the community is, of course, fundamental to this strategy.

Our communications unit uses the council's magazine Harrow People, the local press, the council's website and other council publications and marketing techniques to convey information about initiatives and campaigns taking place in Harrow.

This strategy identifies areas where the range and availability of information can be extended to give the opportunity for everyone in the community to get involved.

2.7 Harrow compact

We have drawn up this strategy based on the Harrow compact (see appendix 2).

The Harrow compact sets out a broad agreement between us and the voluntary and community sector, and intends to further develop a strong healthy relationship. We expect the voluntary and community sector to work with us and do the following.

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- Take account of the specific needs, interests and contributions of the parts of the sector that represent women, minority groups and people who find it hard to access opportunities in employment, training, housing and other services.
- Show how they represent local people by being clear about what groups or causes in society they represent, how they involve those interested when developing their policies, and how they respond to the consultation.
- Wherever possible, consult local people, including services, volunteers, members and supporters. If this is not practical or appropriate, they must show they are responding based on their knowledge and experience of working with the groups concerned.

2.8 Current challenges

We face a number of challenges in our relationship with residents who have helped us to develop this community engagement strategy.

2.9 'Quality of life' feedback

In the latest 'quality of life' survey carried out in April 2005, an improved, 54% of residents were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with us and 46% believed that our performance had stayed the same for the last three years.

This was influenced by mixed views of the performance of our services and of the value for money we offer.

Only 46% of residents believed that we kept them very or fairly well informed. Although many residents did not feel well informed about what we do, public policy on issues such as recycling, public health and transport demands an active involvement with the public often in their neighbourhoods.

2.10 Involving people consistently

Our activities for involving people are not adequately co-ordinated. The quality of activities is also varied, reflecting different levels of people's understanding of the purpose of getting involved.

Harrow has an active voluntary sector, but with limited capacity. The sector plays an important role between the community and us.

To serve and meet the needs of a varied and changing population effectively, it is important that local people are allowed to help influence how we develop, manage and deliver services.

We use the term 'community engagement' to refer to how we will involve people and maintain an ongoing relationship with people in Harrow. This is our first formal strategy for involving the community and shows how our approach has changed.

2.11 Improving people's quality of life

Improvements in quality of life should be one of the main results of the new strategy. We aim to take an active role in improving how people use our services and to educate residents to improve their quality of life themselves.

2.12 Meeting national priorities

We must also respond to the need to improve how we involve the community in the light of the Government's priorities in this area.

Involving people is at the heart of the Government's modernisation agenda, as it relates directly to our role as a community leader. With better discussions between us and local people, we can build relationships and trust.

In its new strategy for local government, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister says that "we need to reconnect politics with the things that people really care about in their local community".

This means the role of councillors as community leaders and representatives of local communities is essential to successful communication and involvement with local people. We will give councillors relevant information, training, support and development to support them in carrying out this role.

2.13 'Community cohesion'

We have an ongoing commitment to 'community cohesion'. This is a national initiative which has the following aims.

- A common vision and sense of belonging for all communities.
- People from different backgrounds and circumstances should be appreciated and positively valued.
- People from different backgrounds should have similar opportunities.
- Strong and positive relationships should be developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and in neighbourhoods.

As a result, we take part in the West London Partnership of Community Cohesion, which works to identify ways of achieving these aims in the long term and puts these aims into practice.

The principle behind this is bringing people and communities closer together and tackling discrimination. Involving the community is essential in achieving this, as it can help to unite residents and communities and build community pride.

Some examples of community cohesion activities can range from sporting events for young people and families to a multicultural festival.

2.14 Other government priorities

The Government expects local communities and stakeholders to have the opportunity to influence local services. The following policy areas are relevant.

- Under the Sustainable Communities Plan (2003), the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is developing a strategy for local government called 'local vision'. This aims

to shape a new role for local authorities in the work to create 'sustainable communities' (communities that stay strong over time).

- The Gershon report identifies the need for councils to be more efficient in how they work. The report highlights the need for customers to be more involved and emphasises 'evidence-based' policy-making to increase how efficient local government is.
- The Audit Commission uses comprehensive performance assessments (CPAs) to assess how councils across the country perform. Successfully involving the community is an important part of this.

The Audit Commission will measure our achievements in the following areas.

- Sustainable communities (building communities to stay strong over time)
 - Transport
 - Safer and stronger communities
 - Healthier communities
 - Older people
 - Children and young people
-
- The national agenda for local government aims to make services more accessible, convenient, responsive and cost-effective. It also aims to make councils more open, accountable and inclusive and better able to lead their communities. It can improve the opportunities for local people to become more involved with their local services and councils and to contact their political representatives.

3 What we need to achieve

Through this strategy we plan to improve residents' satisfaction with our services and improve their quality of life.

3.1 How will local people benefit?

In summary, we are looking to deliver the following results for local people through this strategy.

- Reaching out to those who do not currently get involved. They will have a choice in how and when to take part. Feedback from taking part will help to change how we deliver services.
- Improved decision-making and a closer level of understanding of residents' needs in each area.
- Genuine involvement – for all stakeholders to feel as if they are involved, this will be improved through understanding and contributing to planning, developing, managing or assessing proposed policies or services.
- People being more satisfied with our services. If we are made aware of the issues local people face, as well as their expectations, it is likely that we will deliver services in a way that suits them.
- More residents believing that they are kept well informed about our services, and better information and understanding about how we work, develop and deliver our services. This means that people will be better able to influence a plan, a policy or a proposal.
- A higher percentage of residents having an opinion on how we deliver services.
- Improved quality of life for residents (for example, through improved recycling and public health).
- By working with us, local people and communities can have the opportunity to be involved in local projects and to improve their personal skills, such as finding out new ways of doing things, improving communication skills and building their confidence.
- We must clearly understand the needs of residents' groups' needs and the types of involvement that different residents' groups need.

3.2 Our relationship with the voluntary and community sector

In delivering the community engagement strategy, we will aim to improve the way we work with the community and voluntary sector and improve their skills for delivering our work (such as face-to-face consultation).

We will set out clear guidance for our role and responsibilities in carrying out these activities. Similarly, we will let the people we work with know what we expect of them.

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The role of community representatives and the community and voluntary sector is essential in how we plan to make activities more accessible. As a result, it is very important that we support the improvement of skills in the sector.

Improving skills

Specific projects will include the following.

- We will recruit representatives from local community and voluntary organisations for training in consulting, representing and supporting local people. When recruiting the organisations to take part, we will pay particular attention to including the target groups identified in our equal opportunities policy. The training will be provided by a local voluntary organisation called Training Initiative for Development and Equality (TIDE).
- We expect to have trained community groups and representatives who we will be able to consult and work with or ask them to be a community representative on partnership projects.
- To support the 'Change Up' programme aim of strengthening the knowledge and skills of the voluntary and community sector, we will identify and communicate what support we can provide. This includes services of the Grants Unit and providing staff who can offer advice and support.
- We will continue to put the Harrow compact into practice and make people more aware of it.
- We will make a 'toolkit', which is a range of techniques on how to involve the community.
- We will build on community events such as Under One Sky , other community events, Intergenerational Work, Trans-Age, Black History Month, and tsunami relief co-ordination.

3.3 How we will achieve our aims

To involve local people as effectively as possible, we need a support structure and clear standards for our staff.

One way of doing this is working with our partners and the local community to share knowledge.

This is important because:

- the public and stakeholders expect us to act in a co-ordinated and consistent way;
- we can achieve value for money by sharing effort, expertise and results;
- we can avoid consulting the same people on the same issues over and over again; and

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- we will have a clear picture of what type of involvement takes place, who with and where, and can better monitor and assess the results.

3.4 Expected results

We will identify a number of projects that help to co-ordinate how we involve the community in the following ways.

- Create strong community links in the borough.
- Improve knowledge and skills in the council and the community.
- Consult people on a wider range of activities (for example, by increasing levels of young people's involvement). It is essential that we identify who we need to consult and assess the range of residents who have been involved.
- Understand the lessons we can learn from the 'open budget process' (involving local people to help decide which services are a priority) and assess whether we can extend this to other services.
- Improve the levels of information we provide in specific services to help improve people's quality of life (for example, around recycling and public health).
- Assess projects to make sure they constantly improve.
- Develop the 'Neighbourhood Renewal Pilot', which is a project to support the redevelopment of Wealdstone.
- Consider setting up area committees at ward level. In these, residents could have a say and make decisions on certain local issues that affect them.
- Carry out a major programme to involve residents on local issues such as:
 - the local development framework;
 - public health;
 - a recycling campaign; and
 - involving young people.

This strategy aims to make sure we fully understand the needs of residents, including residents who are traditionally hard to reach. One of the first things we will do is assess what processes we have in place to reach these residents. Specifically, the community engagement strategy should contain targets for the levels of satisfaction with us overall and how we involve people.

We will measure the outcomes of this strategy through the results of future 'quality of life' surveys and evaluation of specific projects (see appendix 3)

4 Monitoring and assessment

4.1 Measuring the effect of our work

There are three main reasons why measuring the effect of our work and progress over time needs to be an essential part of this strategy.

- We can learn from experience and we need to test our methods over time.
- We can develop our policies and so become more able to work with the community by setting standards for the council as a whole.
- We can work in a more open way and answer to local people for our actions and decisions.

We can assess how effective our strategy has been only by being clear on what the situation was at the start – we refer to this as the ‘baseline’. For this purpose we will use the following information.

- We have carried out a survey on the quality of life in Harrow, based on the Audit Commission’s performance standards for involving the community. We asked residents about how involved they feel, and whether they would like to be more involved in how we work and in decision-making.
- Consultation will be carried out by voluntary and community groups and will look at the level of current involvement and the level we want to see.
- We have already identified current involvement through a range of consultation meetings.
- Measuring the effectiveness of the training provided through the implementation of this strategy.

We will keep a track of specific ‘quality of life’ outcomes and innovative projects by measuring our performance compared to other local authorities that have either exceeded or achieved the upper quartile (see appendix 3).

Upper quartile targets have been set by the government and are simply suggested performance standards for authorities to meet.

- The percentage of adults who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area.
- How well informed do you think we keep residents about the services and benefits we provide.
- Whether local people feel we give good value for money.
- Strong sense of community in neighbourhoods.

The above will be influenced by.

- The extent and influence of the voluntary and community sector in the local area.
- Whether local people found the activity useful and enjoyable.
- Whether the activity influenced decision-making. If it didn’t, did we provide adequate feedback to show how we made the decision?
- Whether the activity had a positive effect on the relationship between the community and us.
- What lessons we learnt from this activity.

4.2 Monitoring responsibilities

Our Policy and Partnerships Service will record all activities (using an electronic directory) through representatives from each department of the council (link officers) to make sure the activity reflects the principles in this strategy.

The link officers will report to our Strategy and Programme Board. The Strategy and Programme Board will then consider and approve all significant new consultations. The Community Cohesion Reference Group of the Harrow Strategic Partnership will monitor how we put this into practice to make sure we are following our principles and achieving our aims.

5 Resources

Involving the community affects resources in terms of time, staff, money and material. We have a budget to offer training and support to voluntary and community groups to help them work with us effectively.

As part of our yearly process for planning services, we will ask managers to identify planned consultation and associated spending. This will highlight the level, type, timing and resources linked to activities across all sections of the council. The existing programme of consultation within the council is funded through existing budgets.

Local Area Agreement -resources

Harrow's principle is it is local people who are often best placed to know what are the priorities and needs within their own area. Therefore, involving the community is seen by Harrow as essential to achieving improved quality of life for people within the community – the main aim of the LAA. The LAA also opens up an important opportunity to secure funds from the government to help us to develop a coordinated approach to involvement.

6 Action plan

Our action plan identifies the main areas we need to tackle.

a Innovation projects

We will test new ways of involving people by developing new projects, such as.

- 'Open Budget' consultation event whereby we will invite members of the community to us how we should spend our budget.
- We will support the existing systems which are presently used in Wealdstone, our Neighbourhood engagement pathfinder.

b Communications

We will improve the way in which we inform and interact with the community by using a range of methods:

- Develop a new, inter-active and easy to follow web site, which is accessible to all and enables users to feedback information and comments
- Improve the range of Harrow People information, using the magazine as a consultation publication with regular reader surveys and feedback questionnaires
- Develop an easy-to-follow A-Z directory of services
- Use marketing expertise to encourage wider involvement in Harrow and community events.
- Extend at the council's branding profile

c Improving expertise

- We will employ a policy officer who will be responsible for involving the community. They will be based in the Policy and Partnerships Service and will supervise our co-ordination efforts.
- We will choose community engagement 'link officers' from each directorate, who will meet every three months, to share good practice and update each other on planned and past activities. They will work with officers trained in involving the community to improve their skills. They can also work with community representatives to get closer to specific target groups and issues.
- We will hold internal events and activities to tell our staff about issues that are relevant to involving the community. The events will be in line with relevant policy development, such as the Harrow compact. The first planned activity is an awareness campaign on how to work with the voluntary and community sector, coinciding with 'Compact Week' in November 2005.
- We have already written an induction booklet ('West London People') for staff, which is being used. We will assess the success of this to help develop future activities.

d Toolkit

- We will make a toolkit available to all staff. The toolkit is a list of techniques for how we will improve the way we involve the community.

e Training

- The new Harrow Corporate University (HCU) will deliver the relevant skills training.
- We will arrange training for members and evaluate effectiveness. We will make councillors aware of existing processes for involving the community to support them in their public roles. Staff will also be available for support and to access networks and community representatives.
- We will provide training and support for staff who regularly carry out consultation. We will ask each directorate to appoint a 'link officer', who will keep them informed of activities carried out in their directorate. The link officers will be the first point of contact for staff to get access to resources, and will contribute to greater co-ordination across the council.

f Database

- We will produce a database of all activities and make it available on our internal internet system.

g Communicating this strategy

We will use a wide range media to communicate this strategy.

- A full version of the strategy will be posted on Harrow Council's website, communicated through staff bulletins and the link officers group in December 2005
- The promotion of this strategy will start with a launch early in 2006.
- A summarised version of the strategy will be profiled in local newspapers, inserted in Harrow People and sent to every household and in February 2006.

Community engagement strategy

Action plan

Aim	Action	When	Who	Measurement of success
<p>1 To identify stakeholders and appropriate methods for involving them, and communicate our commitments for involving the community.</p>	Publicise our strategy and the role of the policy officer (community engagement) through our communications and main partners.	September 2005	Policy and Partnership Service	Number of targeted mailings: feedback and queries from targeted communities.
	Profile and promote the community engagement strategy through our communications by using local media and other forms of publicity	February 2006	Policy and Partnership Service	Numbers attending launch and endorsing the strategy.
	Improve our involvement with people who presently do not use our services	November 2005 ongoing	Communication Policy and Partnership Service	Improved communications systems (website, translation) etc.
	Set up a discussion forum and feedback facilities on our website and review how we use information technology to involve people.	January 2006	Directorates and link officers	Number of people visiting our website, and a system for including comments on council practice.
	Review the citizens' panel.	January 2006	Policy officer (community engagement)	Numbers of people involved in the panel.
	Each year, review how we involve people, and the resources used.	January 2006 and ongoing	Policy and Partnership Service	An up-to-date directory of activities and the resources available.

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<p>2</p> <p>To build the skills and knowledge in the community so that they can get involved effectively with us and local decision-making.</p>	<p>Organise training for representatives from the voluntary and community sector to consult other people.</p>	<p>January 2006</p>	<p>Policy and Partnership Service, and Harrow Association of Voluntary Service</p>	<p>Number of people receiving training, and number of activities delivered by the sector.</p>
	<p>Make it easier for council directorates and residents to get access to trained representatives.</p>	<p>February 2006 and ongoing</p>	<p>Policy and Partnership Service, and Harrow Association of Voluntary Service</p>	<p>Number of directorates who have representatives, and number of residents accessing the representatives.</p>
	<p>Identify and communicate our support towards the voluntary sector.</p>	<p>November 2005</p>	<p>Policy and Partnership Service</p>	<p>Use the mailing system from Harrow Association of Voluntary Service, feedback from The Voluntary and Community Sector Forum and the Change Up subgroup.</p>
<p>3</p> <p>To give officers and members the tools to involve the community effectively.</p>	<p>Produce and distribute a toolkit</p>	<p>December 2005</p>	<p>Policy officer, Harrow Corporate University</p>	<p>Number of staff using the toolkit</p>
	<p>Arrange training for members.</p>	<p>January 2006</p>	<p>Policy and Partnership Service, and Harrow Corporate University</p>	<p>Number of members trained, feedback and implementation .</p>

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	Training for council officers: each directorate to name a link officer.	November 2005	Policy and Partnership Service, and Harrow Corporate University	Number of officers trained, a link officer in relevant departments.
4 To co-ordinate all engagement activity across the council.	Develop a procedure with link officers for involving the community.	November 2005	Policy and Partnership Service	Number of officers using the procedures.
	Directorates to identify activities and a budget as part of the service planning process.	November 2005	Directorates	Corporate programme of consultation activity
	Develop a consultation database	December 2005	Link officers	An up-to-date database available to all our staff
	Explore and decide on local area committees.	June 2006	Area Managers	Numbers developed and implemented
	Establish an internal link officers' group for involving the community.	October 2005	Policy officer	A group is set up and meets every three months.
5 To raise awareness within the council and develop in-house expertise of the voluntary and community sector.	Compact Week: give the relevant directorates information on the Harrow compact and codes of working with the voluntary and community sector.	November 2005	Policy and Partnership Service	Number of events and written briefings.
	Identify appropriate sections of the 'West London People' booklet when training new staff.	February 2006	Policy and Partnership Service, and Training and Development	Evaluation given to the West London Partnership.

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6 To run innovation projects	A list of proposed events and projects for developing community cohesion.	February 2006	People First	Action points given to the West London Partnership.
	Neighbourhood engagement pathfinder	Subject to cabinet approval	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
	Local development framework	October 2005	Planning	Number of responses, and develop a statement for involving the community.
	Public health	To be confirmed	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
	Recycling campaign (slash trash)	July 05-December 06	Urban living	Local newspaper-number of responses to consultation. Number of schools accessing awareness events
	Involving young people	September 2005 and ongoing	People First and Urban Living	Numbers of people involved - improved services and more people using them.

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7 To bring together and set up appropriate systems for monitoring and evaluation.	Develop performance indicators (standards for measuring our performance) for our community engagement strategy.	January 2006	Policy and Partnership Service	Annual report
	Analyse the 'quality of life' survey.	August 2005	Policy and Partnership Service	'Quality of Life' standards are available for Harrow.
	Identify community representatives who can monitor and review how the strategy is put into practice.	February 2006	Policy and Partnership Service	A report with evaluation and recommendations from a representative panel.
	Carry out regular follow-up exercises to review and record how outcomes were used.	May 2006 and yearly	Link officers and Policy and Partnership Service	Yearly report containing follow-up information.
	Include recommendations and case studies from the scrutiny review (scrutiny is an independent group working with local people to improve services as appropriate).	January 2006	Scrutiny and Policy and Partnership Service	Case studies and feedback included in the strategy.

Appendix 1 Examples of activities where we involved the community

Directorates	Urban Living	People First	Organisational Development	Strategic Planning: Chief Executives
Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crime, disorder and drugs – consultation through leaflets and advertisements ▪ A community TV project (Safer Harrow Partnership) ▪ Slash Trash recycling campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Briefings for people who have special needs ▪ Community engagement strategy – give information at a public event ▪ Best Value performance plan and summary publication – displays in libraries and on our website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community engagement strategy – give information at a public event ▪ Best Value performance plan and summary publication – displays in libraries and on our website ▪ Yearly Customer survey on Council Tax benefit and Housing benefit ▪ Yearly customer survey for information technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Town centre development strategy (TCDS) ▪ Environmental services information leaflets
Consult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consultation on services through leaflets and questionnaires, face-to-face consultation, workshops and phone surveys ▪ A trail for kitchen waste-questionnaires, focus groups and the website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yearly school data profile with feedback from schools ▪ Early years funding consultation through Early Years and Child care Partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community Strategy consultation through Harrow Strategic Partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MORI ‘ quality of life’ survey ▪ Regular surveys at the enquiry counter on customer’s opinions and proposed changes to services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Street shopper survey ▪ Face to face and key interest groups ▪ ‘Peoples budget’- open budget event community vote on future budget allocations

Community engagement strategy

Directorates	Urban Living	People First	Organisational Development	Strategic Planning: Chief Executives
<p>Involve</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Area -based information gathering through focus groups, questionnaires, face –to-face consultation, workshops and phone surveys ▪ Neighbourhood Watch supporting police activity ▪ Young People in consultation about parks (with Children’s Society) ▪ Harrow residents who call the Antisocial Behaviour Unit, and Harrow Strategic Partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set up a Children’s and Young People’s reference group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community engagement strategy through the community and voluntary sector, and council officers ▪ ‘Reducing Fear of Crime’ scrutiny review ▪ Yearly budget consultation process ▪ Community engagement scrutiny review 	

Community engagement strategy

Directorates	Urban Living	People First	Organisational Development	Strategic Planning: Chief Executives
Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working with schools developing projects with schools ▪ Slash Trash recycling campaign-schools project 			
Empower				

Appendix 2

Harrow compact

Code of practice on consultation

The aims of this code

This code is one of five good-practice codes and supports the Harrow compact.

It is an agreement for future working relationships between us, the wider statutory sector (such as the police and the primary care trust) the private sector and the voluntary and community sector.

Effective consultation has many benefits for the community, including:

- helping to plan, prioritise and deliver better services;
- developing policies using a wide range of knowledge, experience and expertise; and
- making the voluntary sector a valuable source of informed opinion.

This code aims to make sure that consultation is carried out effectively and is co-ordinated. We suggest that to make sure organisations are consulted when they need to be, they can register through a newsletter. We will discuss this at the forum for the voluntary and community sector. A three-monthly newsletter would provide a regular opportunity for organisations to ask to be consulted on subjects they are interested in.

Actions

The statutory sector should do the following.

- Consult the voluntary and community sector on issues which are likely to affect it, particularly where new roles and responsibilities in the sector are proposed.
- Approve new policies and procedures and change existing policies and procedures, particularly when being developed, identifying as far as possible any issues for the sector.
- Consult as early as possible when policies are being developed.
- Prepare consultation documents that are accurate, clearly laid out and easy to understand.
- Make sure the information they present is accurate and that any research has been carried out in an unbiased way.
- Give the people they have consulted feedback on the outcome of the consultation.

Community engagement strategy

- Be sensitive to how any possible changes would affect the voluntary and community sector's resources.
- Accept that consultation should take place and, if it does not, explain why.
- Co-ordinate their consultations and share information to reduce repetition and make consultation more focused.
- Include a statement on the effect of any issue that would mean making major changes to the voluntary sector. This statement should include a summary of the consultation process, its outcome and its effect on a specific community or the voluntary sector in general.

The voluntary and community sector should do the following.

- Take account of the specific needs, interests and contributions of those parts of the sector which represent women, ethnic-minority groups and other disadvantaged people.
- Explain and show how the voluntary sector represents people, by saying who these people are, what groups or causes in society they represent, and how they involve those interests when developing their policies and positions and when responding to the consultation itself.
- Wherever possible, consult people direct, including services, volunteers, members and supporters. If this is not practical or appropriate, they should show that they are responding based on their knowledge and experience of working with the groups concerned.

Areas to consider

A good practice checklist

Plan and consult early – include consultation in plans for developing policies, based on specific proposals and services and more generally. Consultation should be open and meaningful. It should be made clear in the process which issues are open to change and which issues have already been decided.

Consultation methods

There are many ways of consulting, and using more than one method increases the number of responses received and their quality. Here are some methods to consider.

Focus groups

Residents' panels

Community venues

Community languages

Plain and simple language

Other formats such as Braille and large print

Consideration for the needs of people with learning disabilities and how to meet their needs

Looking at the way people receiving the information can use it

Considering the internet, although recognising that not everyone will want to use this or be able to use it

Community engagement strategy

Timescale

You need to give accurate notice to relevant specific organisations such as a voluntary and community organisations.

We suggest at least **four weeks** for standard consultations, and at least **eight weeks** for major consultations.

Feedback

There needs to be a procedure for receiving effective feedback (such as through a database).

You need to consider feedback and provide information about:

which part of the consultation information you would like feedback on and by when;

what changed as a result of the consultation; and

what parts of the consultation have been rejected and why.

It is also important to be clear that when groups are identified as being a member of a particular partnership such a community forum, they agree to this.

Appendix 3

Involving the community – measures of our performance

'Quality of life' survey	Our current performance
How well informed do you think we keep residents about the services and benefits we provide?	46% very well or fairly well informed
Which of these statements comes closest to your own attitude towards us?	35% would like to have more say in what we do and the services we provide
We give residents good value for money.	16% agree or strongly agree
We are too remote and impersonal.	32% agree or strongly agree
Which of these statements comes closest to how you feel about us?	37% have no views and 31% are critical of us
A strong sense of community in your neighbourhood	27% strongly agree or tend to agree

Our current performance will be improved by using the upper quartile targets compatible to other authorities.