

Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny
Date:	28 July 2009
Subject:	Place Survey
Responsible Officer:	Alex Dewsnap, Divisional Director of Partnership Development and Performance.
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Paul Osborn, Performance, Communications and Corporate services
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix 1: Place Survey results

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

Recommendations:

That Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Note the work undertaken to date on developing community involvement and consider receiving further reports as the work develops

Reason: (For recommendation)

To ensure that the issues raised by the Place Survey are adequately addressed

Section 2 – Report

2. Background

2.1 The Place Survey was conducted between September and December 2008 across the whole of England and Wales. Locally, it sought the views of 3,250 Harrow residents on a list of issues prescribed by Government. An initial report on its findings was presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21st April 2009.

2.2 The previous report highlighted as issues of concern the scores for “public services promoting the interests of local residents” and for “public services acting on the concerns of local residents”. At that time, the results from other authorities were not available to put the Harrow scores in context. London-wide averages are now available as set out as an appendix. This shows that for the two highlighted questions, Harrow’s score was below the Outer London average and, in the case of “promoting the interests of local residents” substantially below the Outer London average.

2.3 While these are new indicators about which little research has been undertaken, there is good reason to suppose that they react to being well informed in the same way that the overall public satisfaction score behaves. In other words, the better informed residents are about what the Council is doing, the more satisfied they are with the way the Council runs things and it is very likely that they will also be more inclined to feel that the Council promotes their interests and acts on their concerns. Accordingly, CSB has commissioned work to further develop the approach to community involvement in the borough as a response to these disappointing results.

2.4 In particular, the community involvement project seeks to:

- Develop a common understanding of what is meant by community involvement
- Determine the ambition for the Council in taking forward community involvement in the shaping of services
- Gain support for the development of a cross council/partner approach to community involvement
- Co-ordinate all of the current initiatives in community involvement undertaken by the Council and partners.

2.5 In researching how to approach this project and preparing the initial documentation, the following actions have been undertaken:

- Identifying what level of community involvement the Council wants to concentrate its efforts on with reference to the framework for community engagement (research-inform-consult-involve-collaborate-empower)
- Identifying how community involvements fits within the transformation programme
- Gaining clarity on how to use consultation. The Council is currently carrying out a range of activity across the spectrum of the community engagement framework, but it is not always clear about why this is done, whether the outcomes are shared and more importantly whether the views of the community influence service improvement

- Visiting 4 star Councils, regarded as good at community involvement
- Evaluating community engagement (what have been some of the benefits across the partnership)
- Producing a gap analysis by:
 - Identifying all activities which have an impact on community involvement by carrying out a desk top mapping exercise and brainstorming exercise on what the Council, PCT, Police, Business sector and the VCS are doing for community involvement e.g. existing service users groups, forums, how representative they are etc.
 - Considering the outcomes of the Local Democracy and Economic Development and Construction Bill, and the Sustainable Communities Act, i.e. the use that could be made of the Panel of Local People the Council has to consult and other aspects of the Bill such as participatory budgeting, and consider and meet the requirements of the Duty to Involve
 - Considering the Empowerment White Paper e.g. tenant management organisations, Parish Councils
 - Addressing key aspects of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 e.g. Councillor Calls for Action and the Local Involvement Network (LINKs).

2.6 CSB has approved in principle the approach suggested but have asked for further work to be done around recommending an approach to community involvement for the future whilst recognising the contribution to community involvement that is made by many Council services in their normal day to day activities. Work will now be focused on these aspects as well as producing an improvement plan and toolkit which will set out how to break down barriers and enhance community involvement by moving forward to collaborating and empowering our communities.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Equalities impact

A full equality impact assessment will be conducted on the approach to Community Involvement when it has been more fully developed but before it is implemented.

3.2 Legal comments

There are no legal implications arising from this progress report.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 None arising from this report.

Contact: Mike Howes Ext 5637

Background Papers:

Appendix 1 Place Survey results

APPENDIX 1

Question No	Base	Question	Response	2008/09	BVPI 2006/07	BVPI 2003/04	Inner London average	Outer London average	Overall London average
6		Here are some things that other people have said about their local public services. To what extent do you think that these statements apply to public services in your local area?							
	1021	Local public services promote the interests of local residents	A great deal	5			8	6	7
			To some extent	30			40	34	36
			Not very much	47			40	44	43
			Not at all	18			12	15	14
	1019	Local public services act on the concerns of local people	A great deal	7			8	7	7
			To some extent	34			41	35	37
			Not very much	40			37	41	40
			Not at all	19			15	16	16