

Meeting: Strengthening Communities Sub Committee  
Date: 26 January 2005  
Subject: Towards a Corporate Community Engagement Strategy  
Responsible Officer: Paul Najsarek  
Contact Officer: Bindu Arjoon  
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Nolan

### **Section 1: Summary**

The attached document is the start of the process of developing a Community Engagement Strategy. It identifies a set of principles as well as potential consultees. This report identifies the importance of a corporate standard being developed to bring consistency and quality assurance to the way in which the council engages with residents and stakeholders locally. A budget of £50,000 has been earmarked to support this activity in 2005/6 although this figure has yet to be confirmed.

### **Decision Required**

Members are asked to endorse the principles contained within the draft Community Engagement Strategy as well as supplement the list of consultees as appropriate.

### **Reason for report**

- In its Community Leadership role, it is vital that the council engages effectively with stakeholders and residents locally. The attached document aims to identify some basic principles that the council may use to do so.

## Benefits

- Currently, the various Executive Directorates and even Directorates engage the public to varying degrees and to widely varying consistency, quality and inclusiveness. The Strategy will develop a corporate standard.
- There is a clear resources benefit in rationalising our engagement activity and being clear as to the purpose of the exercise.
- Improving our methods of engagement will improve our general communication with the public. Research has shown that councils that achieved 'good' or 'excellent' ratings in their CPA assessment also had a robust communication strategy
- Undertaking good quality consultation as part of our overall engagement strategy will ensure that we develop an accurate picture of our customers' needs and perceptions of the council. This will drive service improvement.

## Cost of Proposals

- These are partially being met from within existing budgets as an officer responsible for implementing the monitoring the Strategy once developed is being employed within Organisational Performance.
- A growth bid has been submitted as part of the 2005/6 budget setting process, to facilitate the implementation of the identified corporate principles.

## Risks

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## Implications if recommendations rejected

N/A
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## Section 2: Report

### Brief History

Feedback from the public as well as council departments and even external partners has identified substantial overlap in consultation activities in Harrow as well as raised questions about the quality of some of the consultation work undertaken by the council. In order to address these issues, a Strategy is being developed which will set out the council's commitment but also identify expectations of standards that will be expected from those the council wished to engage with. It will also include guidance as to the most effective ways of engaging with particular groups.

### Options considered

N/A

### Consultation

- Corporate Management Team
- Portfolio Holders
- Harrow Association of Voluntary Service
- Additional consultation is identified within the attached document.

### Financial Implications

Any costs associated with this proposal would have to be contained within approved budgets.

### Legal Implications

None

### Equalities Impact

Engaging with all section of the communities and allowing these communities to shape the way in which the council develops and delivers its service will support the council's efforts with regard to equalities.

## **Section 3: Supporting Information/ Background Documents**

List information that is on deposit in Group Offices can be viewed on the web and will be available for inspection at the meeting:

- Draft Corporate Engagement Strategy (attached)
- Local Compact and codes of practice (available on request from contact officer)