

Chief Executives' Group – North Yorkshire and York

20 June 2013

Community engagement – joint working principles

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To consult the Chief Executives' Group on proposals for a statement of joint working principles for engaging communities.

2 Background

- 2.1 On 30 April 2009 the North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership (NYSP) Executive adopted 'Working together with communities – a community engagement and neighbourhood management framework for North Yorkshire'.
- 2.2 The framework was developed to improve how partner organisations involve communities within North Yorkshire and contains a set of shared definitions, principles and standards for engaging with communities.
- 2.3 The framework has been used to underpin partnership engagement across the county, including community engagement forums in Selby and neighbourhood work in Harrogate.
- 2.4 Changes to partnership working and structures in the county, including the dissolution of the NYSP, mean that the framework now requires review, and there is the opportunity to streamline and reduce the length of the document.

3 Continuing need for shared principles

- 3.1 The partnership landscape in North Yorkshire is changing, for example, the advent of clinical commissioning groups and the Police and Crime Commissioner. However, meaningful engagement with communities is, arguably, more important than ever.
- 3.2 Public sector finances in general are being squeezed, requiring difficult decisions to be made about future service provision, and effective consultation and engagement must be at the heart of these decisions.
- 3.3 It is clearly best for communities, and the partner organisations, if consultations and engagement are properly co-ordinated, planned and of high quality. Shared mechanisms and structures, where appropriate, reduce costs and decrease the likelihood of consultation fatigue, adding value through working together rather than individually.

4 Review of framework

- 4.1 Discussions at the North Yorkshire and York community engagement officers' group indicated support for a simplified statement of shared principles to underpin the continuing importance of engagement to partner organisations. Clearly engagement is not a single activity; it is a way of working which is about inclusion, input and influence and there is no intention to be prescriptive or stifle innovation within organisations. Rather it is about acknowledging and making the most of opportunities to share resources and avoid duplication.

- 4.2 The framework has therefore been revised to produce a two page statement of high level principles to which all organisations can be invited to sign up and which can continue to underpin joint engagement.
- 4.3 The draft statement of joint working principles for engaging communities is attached at Appendix 1.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 Subject to the agreement of the Chief Executives' Group, a light touch consultation is planned with the proposed signatory organisations detailed in Appendix 1 over the next few weeks with a view to bringing a report and final statement of principles to the November meeting of the Group for sign off.

5 Recommendation

- 5.1 That the Chief Executives' Group approve the proposed process of review and consultation, and offer comments on the draft statement of joint working principles for engaging communities.

6 Appendices

- 6.1 Appendix 1 – joint working principles for engaging communities

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Assistant Director – Policy and Partnerships
North Yorkshire County Council
May 2013

Appendix 1

Joint working principles for engaging communities

We want North Yorkshire to be an even better place for everyone to live, work or visit

This is our shared vision in the North Yorkshire Community Plan 2011 – 2014 and to achieve it, we need to make sure that we engage with the communities within North Yorkshire so that the improvements we make and the services we deliver reflect the needs and desires of North Yorkshire residents.

We are, collectively, committed to improving the quality of our services, making better use of resources and more effectively meeting the needs of our communities. We aim to do this by working more closely together to involve our communities in the decisions and practical actions which affect their lives. This means that we will place engagement of communities at the heart of service development, planning and delivery.

By taking this approach we will be able to ensure that we base our decisions on community needs and provide feedback to people about the way we used their participation to shape our decisions. We will build on good practice and use existing structures where appropriate. We also recognise that the rurality of the County can present challenges to this approach and will ensure that ways of working reflect this.

This document is designed to supplement and support our statutory responsibilities and any strategies adopted by individual organisations.

What do we want to achieve?

- To improve the ways in which people and communities can influence and shape services which will help create better quality services that better meet their needs.
- To recognise the value of providing support to enable people and communities to increase their skills and knowledge and take control over the issues that affect their lives.
- To improve joint planning and co-ordination of activity in the County between different agencies and sectors, avoiding duplication of activity.
- To demonstrate that there is collective ownership and recognition of the importance of engaging and working with communities.
- To build on current good practice and strengthen what works well.

We will:

Be inclusive

- Engaging with communities as a mainstream activity and not as an afterthought
- Involving people in a way which meets their needs rather than ours
- Engaging at the most local level that is appropriate for the specific purpose
- Engaging with voluntary and community organisations, in particular those that can facilitate the involvement of groups and individuals who are seldom heard
- Making effective use of community representatives including councillors
- Supporting community development and empowerment which underpin and strengthen community engagement at all levels

Be open

- Being clear about why, what, when and how
- Being honest and accountable
- Feeding back what was said and what we are going to do about it

Be effective

- Only carrying out engagement activities if the information we need is not already available
- Allowing sufficient time
- Targeting engagement activities and avoiding duplication
- Evaluating the effectiveness of our engagement and making the necessary changes
- Planning our engagement in the light of available resources and explaining any constraints
- Making sure staff responsible for engagement have the skills and capacity to achieve high quality engagement

Share

- Contributing to shared engagement structures, where these are in place
- Sharing profiling and mapping allowing evidence-based deployment of resources
- Sharing and co-ordinating information, analysis, resource allocation, feedback and communication
- Using joint problem solving where appropriate.
- Developing joint performance measures, monitoring and improvement processes
- Providing nominated officers in each agency to act as contact points for joint action
- Providing strong local and thematic leadership at strategic level to support this work
- Committing resources contributed by all partners, where possible and appropriate, to support shared outcomes

[Date]

Proposed Signatories -

North Yorkshire County Council
Craven District Council
Hambleton District Council
Harrogate Borough Council
Richmondshire District Council
Ryedale District Council
Scarborough Borough Council
Selby District Council
North Yorkshire Police
North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service
Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
North York Moors National Park Authority
Leeds, York and North Yorkshire Chamber of Trade
North Yorkshire and York Forum
NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups
North Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner