

Participation and Communications Action Plan

PROGRESS UPDATE: MAY 2012

The following table has been updated to demonstrate progress against milestones since the adoption of the Strategy and Action Plan in May 2011.

Our Objectives over the period 2011/12 – 2013/14:

- 1. Inform our decision-making with improved knowledge of what local people think and want through an on-going dialogue**
- 2. Maximise the use of technology to transform our communications and engagement activities and make them more cost effective**
- 3. To increase the effectiveness of our formal consultations**
- 4. Improve our internal communications**
- 5. Communicate in ways that are accessible to all**
- 6. Better join up our consultation and communication activity both internally and with our partners**

The following actions will help us achieve our aim to better inform, consult and involve local people in decisions about their town and the services they receive.

OBJECTIVE 1. INFORM OUR DECISION-MAKING WITH IMPROVED KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT LOCAL PEOPLE THINK AND WANT THROUGH AN ON-GOING DIALOGUE

a) Building on the Big Conversation offer a range of ways for local people to input to debates

b) Capturing people’s views when/wherever they give them to us and feedback how we’ve used them to improve service delivery and inform priorities

Actions	Timescale and Milestones	Progress as at May 2012
<p>1. Planning Consultation Establish the Council’s new Pre – Application Planning Consultative Forum bringing together developers, councillors and the community to consider significant planning developments in advance of planning applications being submitted.</p>	<p>During 2011/12 Pre-Application Planning Consultative forum, developed, established and progress evaluated.</p>	<p>Achieved The pre-application planning consultative forum has been developed, established and been used as a consultative mechanism for the first time during 2011/12. The first forum held in September 2011, for a proposed leisure development in West Marina on the former bathing pool site, worked effectively and was well received by those who attended. The impact of this new consultative method will be further evaluated when another forum is held.</p>
<p>2. Place Survey Undertake a local Place Survey with Local Strategic Partners</p>	<p>Summer 2011/12 Local intelligence available to inform partner discussions at Town Conference in September 2011 and subsequent service and budget planning for 2012/13 onwards</p>	<p>Achieved The survey asked over 1800 local people for their views on levels of satisfaction with local public services and quality of life issues, and also considered progress against five of the town’s key Community Strategy targets. The results generally show an improvement on 2008 findings. The full report is available www.hastings.gov.uk The 2011 Local Place Survey showed improvement perception held by local people that they can influence decisions affecting their local area – this was a key area of concern for the O & S Review.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2008 25% people Agreed/Definitely agreed they could influence decisions • In 2011 this figure rose to 33%
<p>3. Area Structures Develop Neighbourhood Plans within each Area – to be confirmed with Area Management Boards</p>	<p>Publication of Neighbourhood Action Plans by end of Qtr 2 Progress reports to Area Management Boards (AMB) from Qtr 3 Quarterly You Said We Did reports to AMBs.</p>	<p>Achieved Area Plans agreed and published, see: http://www.hastings.gov.uk/decisions_democracy/our_partners/area_management_boards/ You Said We Did reports available</p>
<p>4. Communities of Identity Support groups such as Youth Council, Hastings Intercultural Organisation, Senior’s Forum etc. to feed into local decision making</p>	<p>TBC – 2011/12 targets currently being drafted</p>	<p>Achieved Groups supported by Regeneration Services staff and encouraged to engaged via Big and Little Conversation, Equality Impact Assessments and Meet the Leader activities.</p>
<p>5. Planning Policy Refresh the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (Part of the Local Development Framework) which sets out how local people are involved in planning policy development and decisions.</p>	<p>2011/12 Programmed publication date August 2011. SCI completed in line with amended policy requirements – abolition of regional strategy, Localism Bill etc.</p>	<p>Achieved Adopted by Cabinet in September 2011 Available from: http://www.hastings.gov.uk/environment_planning/planning/localplan/ldf_documents/#sci</p>
<p>6. Reflecting views in decision-making Include details of how public views, consultation and engagement has informed recommendations in reports (already highlighted in Forward Plan)</p>	<p>Qtr1 : Add Local People’s Views as a Policy Implication on the Corporate Report template</p>	<p>Achieved Corporate report template amended and details included in reports to Cabinet etc.</p>

OBJECTIVE 2. MAXIMISE THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO TRANSFORM OUR COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND MAKE THEM MORE COST EFFECTIVE

- a) Encouraging local people to use our website Facebook, blog, text-messaging etc and other technologies to engage with us
- b) Boost our customer focus and contact by implementing our Contact Centre to better meet people’s needs at their first point of contact
- c) Channel Shifting so that we use electronic means of communicating wherever possible and appropriate
- d) Targeting communications based on what people have told us they want to know

Improvements identified actions required	Timescale for completion Milestones	Progress as at May 2012
<p>7. Launch new HBC website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit for purpose website with good accessibility and easy to use • Encourage greater use of web-based services assisting with Channel Shift and 24/7 • Enable live surveys and polls to gather live intelligence • Refreshed content developed 	<p>2011/12 Launch Quarter 1 2011/12</p> <p>Q1: Overhaul and improvement of content: Democratic Services Content refreshed to include: Improved search facility – Local Councillor can be found via Postcode input. Improved maps, images and content about our Parks and open Spaces.</p> <p>Q2, 3, 4 Milestones To be determined. By year end: web visits increased 10% year on year.</p>	<p>On-going</p> <p>The new website was launched on 12th August. Although there were some initial teething problems, in particular with broken links, the new website gives much greater versatility, and the ability to update it in real time.</p> <p>The new website is leaner and more efficient than the old site - thousands of pages that were attracting 'dead traffic' have been removed so there is now a clearer picture of who our visitors are and what they want from us.</p> <p>In 2012, the website achieved a 'three star' rating in the SOCITM 'Better Connected' report. In the last decade, it has never achieved more than a 'two star' rating in this annual assessment which grades local authority</p>

		<p>websites according to their usability and overall quality. The improvement can be directly attributed to the success of the redesign, restructure and re-launch, and we are now aiming to achieve the top 'four star' rating in 2013 which would place HBC in the upper tier of local authority websites nationally.</p> <p>Find My Councillor implemented</p> <p>The interactive features recommended in the Scrutiny review's recommendations have not yet been fully implemented. While users of the website cannot yet rate HBC pages(now planned for summer 21012), the design, layout, content, text and navigation has become more user friendly.</p> <p>Key tasks for 2012/13 include introduction of a new 'Living in Hastings' website to support the Re-Branding Hastings activity.</p>
<p>8. Social Media Evaluate and expand use of social media Facebook and Twitter as means of debate and encouragement of ideas (Used successfully by Leader in Big Cons)</p>	<p>Support officers and Members to use social media effectively by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Assess use of social media tools and share learning and best practice from recent exercises and pilots during the Big Conversation - Qtr 1. b) HBC Social Media policy and protocols developed and agreed – Qtr 1 c) Provide guidance for staff on consultation pages – Qtr 2 d) Further Social Media Training for 	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Social Media used more regularly for consultations and engagement – most recent is the Climate Change Strategy consultation.</p> <p>Members Social Media Training undertaken</p> <p>Every page on the website now carries two 'share' buttons which allow visitors to share web content across Twitter and Facebook.</p> <p>The Council has 1540 followers on Twitter and an increasing number of residents are using this channel to communicate about services. The Facebook profile</p>

	<p>Members – Qtr 3 e) Establish Members Blog pages and encourage use by Qtr 4</p>	<p>averages 360 'likes' a month and, although it is less active than the Twitter profile, it has become an important way of residents communicating at key times in the year (e.g. during periods of severe weather).</p> <p>The Council runs or support various blogs (on both blogger and wordpress) which continue to be popular and, at its peak, the Council Leader's blog attracts over 1500 visitors a month.</p>
<p>9. Explore potential and undertake a cost-benefit analysis of new planning software Software provides for a clickable map on website enabling users to find relevant planning applications. Also enables individuals to set up an account to be notified about new applications by areas (e.g. my street) or by type e.g. new pubs</p>	<p>During 2011/12</p>	<p>Achieved Systems have been evaluated and an order has been placed. Will be implemented in 2012/13</p>

OBJECTIVE 3: INCREASE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR FORMAL CONSULTATIONS

Actions required	Timescale for completion Milestones	Progress as at May 2012
a) Involving local people in debating options and new ideas before coming forward with firm proposals		
<p>10. Consultation Documentation Ensure Council consultation documentation contains full and clear details of options, including costs where appropriate, and ways to input views/have you say that are accessible to all</p>	<p>Quarter 2: 'Planning a Consultation' template (completed by all staff planning a consultation) refined and enhanced to support drafting of options prior to consultation and captures considerations about accessibility for all.</p>	<p>Achieved Revised Pro Forma in use that supports service areas when planning and thinking through consultations. The detail is checked by the Council's Policy team, in advance of posting information on the Council's public website and going live with the consultation.</p>
<p>11. Collating Ideas Pick up on and respond to issues as they arise from Area Management Boards, Councillor surgeries and other local fora.</p>	<p>Ongoing throughout 2011/12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Regular Chairs and Champions report to Cabinet/LSP to include emerging issues b) Work with Councillors to support responses to issue raised at surgeries. c) You Said We Did responses collated annually for publication 	<p>On-Going AMB Chairs and Champions reports are collated (next one is being prepared currently) – key issues have been included in the Area Plans and monitored quarterly. (Plus see 3 above)</p> <p>Further work required in this area.</p>
<p>12. Overview and Scrutiny Reviews Continue to involve local people in Overview and Scrutiny Review of Council functions</p>	<p>Appropriate involvement of local people to be determined, subject to confirmation of Annual Scrutiny Review programme in June Q1.</p>	<p>Achieved Process discussed and agreed with Chairs and Vice Chairs.</p>
b) Adhering to our Community Engagement Standards		
<p>13. A Responsive Council All correspondence from the public is recognised and acknowledged (including complaints) and an</p>	<p>Complaints (and responses given) monitored quarterly.</p>	<p>Achieved Complaints monitored by Communications Officers. Annual report due in quarter 1 2012/13.</p>

appropriate timely response given.		
<p>14. A Committed Council Raise awareness of our commitments outlined in Community Engagement Standards across HBC.</p>	<p>Subject to consultation responses and Cabinet approval, circulate commitments to all HBC service areas and communicate these via the channels outlined in objective 4 below by Q1.</p>	<p>Achieved Details circulated to all staff and regular reminders are included in @bit, the weekly staff electronic newsletter</p>
<p>15. Implementing Recommendations Continue to implement the remaining recommendations made by the O & S review. See report to <u>Overview and Scrutiny</u> on 11th March 2010 for full details and recommendations.</p>	<p>A report detailing progress against these recommendations will be submitted to O & S Resource's committee in Q2.</p>	<p>Actions have been incorporated elsewhere in action plan.</p>

OBJECTIVE 4: IMPROVE OUR INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Actions required	Progress as at May 2012
<p>Implementing an Internal Communications Action Plan based on the learning from the Big Conversation staff engagement pilots and other feedback from staff</p>	
<p>16. Listening to Views & Testing Ideas Continue to support the Staff Focus group to seek views and test new ideas</p>	<p>Achieved and On-Going into 2012/13 The approach to internal communications and staff engagement was significantly changed and improved during 2011/12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Staff Focus Groups were superseded by the Staff Commission who contributed to the senior management re-structure and suggestions for cultural change. This Group will be re-called in 2012 to test progress. • Staff Ideas and Innovations were given a higher profile via the Heads of Service • The Directors have been attending Team meetings to engage staff with the challenges facing the Council and seek ideas and input. • Meet the Leader events were held to enable staff to discuss issues with the Leader and Deputy • The staff survey was carried out in an innovative way which used hand held devices that allowed for anonymous instant results to be displayed to all participants. This was followed up with discussion groups to gain further insight to the answers given and identify improvements. 56% of staff attended the sessions which was a significant increase on the numbers who took part previously. An action plan has been developed to assess progress against a number of initiatives/actions proposed by staff and/or management to improve communication and efficiency and these are informing development of the staff engagement programme for 2012/13. • The Council was successfully re-accredited in October 2011 and we therefore continue to be recognised as an Investor in People (IiP). • The Little Conversation encouraged staff to contribute ideas about future service delivery
<p>17. Building on Ideas Publicise the recently re-launched Big & Small Ideas process (previously the Innovations Group) as a mechanism to capture and progress staff ideas</p>	
<p>18. Plan together Continue to involve all staff in service planning, target setting and monitoring progress.</p>	
<p>19. Meet the Leaders All staff Meeting/Meet the Leader Event to convey next steps for organisational change</p>	
<p>20. Blogging Continue to use the Chief Executive Blog to deliver key updates – ensure all staff can access the Leader’s Blog either live or via Intranet page</p>	
<p>21. Talk with the Chief Executive Continued availability of Chief Executive to all staff</p>	

<p>22. Online Dialogue Assess the scope for further use of the Yammer internal networking tool.</p>
<p>23. Capturing Staff Views Staff survey to enable staff to contribute to the direction of the organisation and assess their support through employee engagement initiatives.</p>
<p>24. Investors in People Achieve Investors in People re-accreditation, signifying ongoing commitment to our staff.</p>
<p>25. Testing Staff views as residents Continue to capture the views of our staff in their capacity as residents and stakeholders in the town as began in the Big Conversation</p>

OBJECTIVE 5: COMMUNICATE IN WAYS THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

Actions required	Timescale for completion Milestones	Progress as at May 2012
a) Provide a single point of contact for all initial contacts (one phone number for calls and text messages and one E-mail address) by implementing our new Contact Centre		
<p>26. One Stop Contact Centre Expand and develop the Contact Centre to include the majority of Council Services</p>	<p>March 2012</p>	<p>Achieved and On-going Physical alterations were made to expand the HIC into a new 'front of house' and the enlarged HIC opened on Friday 30th March. Tourism, planning, waste, and electoral registration 'phone and face to face enquiries are now handled by the contact centre, and over 95% are dealt with to finality there. Environmental 'phone services were transferred to the contact centre on 29th March, leaving Housing, Revenues & Benefits, and the residual leisure work to transfer.</p>
b) Using Plain English and not jargon		
<p>27. Being Clear Reviews the standard of plain English used in public documents.</p>	<p>By end of Q2 2011/12.</p>	<p>On-going The re-launch of the Council's website has greatly improved accessibility. Report templates have been updated and reissued. There is further work to do in this area – only limited training has been carried out.</p>
<p>28. Getting to the Point Consultation documentation and other detailed information destined for public consumption to include an Executive Summary</p>	<p>Ongoing during 2011/12. All consultation information to include an Executive Summary prior to website publication Q4. Council Tax leaflet including summary of Council's commitments</p>	<p>Achieved The consultation pro-forma supports this activity and this best practice is adopted as a matter of course now. Council Tax leaflet published as planned.</p>

	and spend produced.	
<p>29. One Place One Plan? Consider how the Council's strategies and commitments can be further aligned or joined up so these are clearer to the public.</p>	<p>Q1: Map and evaluate Council strategies and consider how these can be streamlined into fewer documents or presented more appropriately. Q2: Consider previous commitments made in the context of unprecedented spending cuts. Q2. Feed in results as appropriate support discussions at Town Conference in September.</p>	<p>On-going This work will continue in 2012/13 and will inform the development of the 2013/14 Corporate Plan and Budget.</p>
<p>c) Give clear information about what the Council does and how to access its services</p>		
<p>30. What the Council does and does not do Enhance the Council's website to clearly convey services the Council provides and signpost where HBC is not the provider</p>	<p>Q1. Launch the Council's new website. Q2. Flag up on the Council's website details of the services the Council does and does not provide building on Big Conversation correspondence. Signposting to appropriate other agencies to be undertaken in line with overhaul of web content of each service area.</p>	<p>Achieved Details of services the Council does and does not provide are provided on both are external and internal websites. Signposting to alternative services are provided on the appropriated web pages where necessary and appropriate.</p>
<p>31. Using Images Further develop the Council's You Tube Channel and Flickr pages to convey key messages that reduce dependence on written literacy.</p>	<p>Q1. Evaluate scope and capacity to enhance this channel. Q2, 3 & 4 – to be confirmed.</p>	<p>Not Achieved Although these channels are used when appropriate there hasn't been capacity to develop these further.</p>

6. Objective 6: Better join up our consultation and communication activity both internally and with our partners

Actions required	Timescale for completion Milestones	Progress as at May 2012
a) Pooling what people tell us in one place so we can use these views and ideas to inform decisions, our policy and our priorities		
32. Working in Partnership Use the Local Place Survey research as an opportunity to test and pool consultation resources and associated communications	Q1. Methods and research details drawn up in partnership. Q2 Survey undertaken. Q3. Results conveyed via Town Conference and other appropriate methods.	Achieved Worked partnership with LSP partners to develop the Local Place Survey questionnaire and used partners contacts and networks to circulate questionnaires with some success.
33. Pooling what you tell us Pooling information at the Contact centre to inform Corporate priorities and service planning.	TBC subject to role out of Contact Centre in 2011/12	On-Going This data is being collated as the Contact Centre embeds. This will be a key focus of work in 2012/13.