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MEETING	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TASK GROUP
DATE	24 APRIL 2013
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS RUNCIMAN (CHAIR), BARNES AND STEWARD

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### 1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal interests, not included on the Register of Interests, or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in respect of business on the agenda. No additional interests were declared.

### 2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

It was reported that there were no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

### 3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Task Group held on 20 February 2013 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### 4. **IMPROVING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SCRUTINY REVIEW - DRAFT FINAL REPORT**

Consideration was given to the draft final report of the Community Engagement Task Group. A Group set up in September 2012, to look at the issues affecting levels of community engagement across the city in respect of community engagement, CYC customer services and financial inclusion.

It was confirmed that no additional information had been included in the report since the last meeting. However, as the Task Group had previously acknowledged the importance of a good working relationship between ward committee members and the need for an understanding of each party's role, the

report suggested that the Group may like to recommend the introduction of a 'Statement of Intent' setting out some principals for working together, which all ward team members could be encouraged to sign up to. A draft statement of intent had been provided at Annex E with an updated copy circulated at the meeting.

To conclude the work on the review, members of the Communications Team were in attendance at the meeting to provide further information in relation to CYC consultation and consultation feedback.

The Chair outlined the work of the Task Group to date including details of consultation undertaken with the Resident Associations Federation and the Parish Council Liaison Group. It was noted that although there were differences between wards, the city and rural areas, many of the issues they raised were common to both, and that Residents Associations and Parish Councils had much to offer in the way of community liaison. It was now hoped to get a steer from the communications team to inform the Task Groups work and final report.

The Head of Strategy, Partnerships & Communication confirmed that their team had encountered similar challenges in engaging residents. Both Your Ward and Your Voice were written for a broad audience and they had been examining ways of reflecting the flavour of individual wards in future publications. However with recent budget decisions they were unable to produce different documents for each ward but special editions were produced on a rolling basis to relate to specific issues in particular areas.

He went on to make a number of useful comments for the Group, including:

- The communications team would look at the use of CYC magazines and newsletters to better reflect the needs of individual wards.
- The newly updated CYC website received 120 public comments daily, often requiring responses, relating to services, service deliveries and requests. It was confirmed that the site was updated as a result of many of these comments.

- Work was continuing with Customer Services/ICT to provide a larger range of services through the Do It Online facility.
- Use of social media, with complaints and service requests now being received on Twitter. This was only covered at present on a part time basis however full time monitoring of the Twitter and Facebook sites would commence in May to ensure the authority was more responsive.
- CMT had recently agreed to place a staff organisation chart on the Council's website. This would include Heads of Service and above with job titles, responsibilities and contact details together with details of officer expenses, similar to the publication of members information, for openness and transparency.
- Sampling the effect of communications had been undertaken to ensure that the subject matter was easily understood and conveyed to residents what the information meant to them.

Members went on to question a number of aspects of the work undertaken by the Communications Team, including:

- Response times – confirmed as Customer Service Charter response times of 1 day, although Twitter/Facebook responses were within 4 hrs.
- Guidelines followed by departments when communicating with residents - confirmed guidelines regarding plain English, font sizes, image and colour use were provided however it was considered that individual departments were often better placed to provide information direct for their customers, although the Team could advise on writing for particular audiences.
- Communication of major decisions - communications plans for major decisions were prepared to ensure key messages were conveyed. The importance of consulting with and talking directly to residents on issues was also reiterated.
- PC/RA's should have their own dedicated pages to enable minutes to be posted, with earlier notice/notification of their meetings etc for residents.
- Budget constraints - although communication was often the first area to suffer cuts( with a budget of only £4k) it was through communication that residents details could

be mapped to inform their work. Data from the Press e.g. readership, interests etc were also useful.

- Reference to inability for Ward Members to include articles in Your Ward/Voice, suggested cross party input should be examined.
- Need for public engagement particularly regarding welfare changes - reference to good results received from ongoing work in GP's Surgeries and contact with the faith sector with the provision of benefit and debt information amongst other things, as often the first point of contact for a number of hard to reach residents.
- Agreed need to target particular groups of people rather than mass communication.
- Reference to Tang Hall advice hub as a good model where residents could access a range of services and opportunities.
- Consultations/Meetings – PC/RA's required greater notice of consultations etc. Suggested introduction of page on the Council's website dedicated to the dissemination of information to Parish Council's and Residents Associations to include copies of their minutes and details of all consultations in progress, with closing dates and feedback facilities/methods.

Consideration was then given to the following options:

- Identify what if any further information was required to conclude the work on the review
- Agree revisions and/or additions to the report to form the draft final report for the review
- Agree the draft recommendations shown in paragraph 55 of the report
- Identify any additional draft recommendations arising from the review outside of those shown in the report.

The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that copies of the review final report to Cabinet would be sent to the Residents Federation and Parish Council's Liaison Group for their information, with any feedback reported to Cabinet.

Following further lengthy discussion it was

RESOLVED: i) That approval be given to the draft final report of the Task Group subject to the following revisions and additions:

## **Draft Review Conclusions (Para 55):**

**Delete** recommendation iii) and replace with Introduce Resident Association and Parish Council Forum pages on the CYC website, to disseminate information e.g. to include details of consultations and to display agendas and minutes from PCs and RAs etc

**Amend** recommendation iv) to read “Adjoining Parish Councils to be informed of significant planning applications when they are affected.”

**Amend** recommendation v) to read “The Council to use Parish Council/Resident Association notice boards and newsletters, wherever possible to communicate council information relevant to the area.”

**Amend** recommendation vi) to read “Training on the role and importance of the relationship with Parish Councils and Residents Associations should be included in new councillor induction programmes.”

**Merge** recommendations vii) and viii)

**Amend** recommendation ix) to read “That Members should be actively encouraged to attend Parish Council/Residents Association meetings as part of their Council induction programme.”

**Amend** recommendation x) to read “The Council to ensure feedback is given on consultation responses.”

**Amend** recommendation xi) to read “Any significant changes ensure that Parish Councils and Residents Associations are informed of them in good time e.g. charging for second green bin and details included on their dedicated web pages.”

**Amend** recommendation xii) to read “Council documents should be checked for jargon i.e. continued use of Plain English.”

- ii) That the revised draft statement of intent circulated at the meeting, as Annex E, be approved for inclusion in the final report.

REASON: To conclude the work on this review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols and form the final report for consideration by the Corporate and Scrutiny Management Committee at their meeting on 13 May 2013.

Cllr C Runciman, Chair

[The meeting started at 4.45 pm and finished at 6.20 pm].