

Rural West Area APB Engagement Plan

Decision Paper – June 2011

Purpose of Paper

- 1) To recommend that a Rural West APB Engagement Plan is developed and implemented, ensuring key engagement activities reflect community priorities and are delivered, monitored and owned by partners.

Introduction

Community engagement involves working together with the community to improve their quality of life through involving them in decision making and influence over the services they receive.

With the growing government agenda on localism and rapidly changing public sector environment there is an increasing need for agencies to engage with the local community. The benefits for the APB in engaging with residents can include helping inform priorities, provide a better understanding of how residents experience services and help influence how resources are allocated.

Public organisations have a range of reasons and methods why they want to engage with the community. This may be as simple as offering information about services and policies or more targeted engagement helped to shape service planning or priorities. Cheshire West and Chester Council uses a range of engagement processes include Community Forums, targeted consultation on specific subjects, resident panels and IT such as interactive web services, surveys etc. Many APB partners use similar approaches.

An APB Engagement plan

Whilst joint community engagement activities between partners do take place they tend to be organised and led by individual agencies driven by the objectives and the outcomes that they want to achieve.

It is suggested that a shared APB Community Engagement Plan that maps and promotes engagement activity across all partners, would avoid duplication, reduce the number of meetings, rationalise structures and allow for more joined up consultation and communication.

The plan would need to be flexible in order to respond to new and emerging issues and also have mechanisms to ensure communities can raise issues back to the APB. The plan should also capture activities that have been planned by partners e.g. consultations, surveys, community events and training etc. This would allow the sharing of information about partner engagement activity and provide the opportunity for joint working.

Recommendations

1. Establish an APB owned Community Engagement Plan
2. Partners to contribute to the development and delivery of the plan and identify opportunities for joint working
3. Regular monitoring and updating of the plan to be undertaken and reported back at each APB meeting