

(a) Engaging with the Community

On behalf of the Local Service Board, the Council has previously arranged a series of Community Forums across the County which had senior representatives from all of our key public / voluntary sector agencies. Although widely publicised, attendance at these meetings were poor with more Officers present than members of the public. It was agreed therefore to move away from generic public meetings unless there was a specific issue to be aired (e.g. school modernisation, Local Development Plan) and concentrate on other forms of consultation and public engagement.

Most Services are engaged in some form of public / user consultation at any one time either through surveys / questionnaires or direct contact with the community. This approach is underpinned by extensive consultation on our key corporate strategies such as the Corporate Plan, The BIG Plan (our single integrated plan) or Service led engagement e.g. faith based education and Town Plans. A mapping exercise was undertaken in 2012 of all consultation activities undertaken by individual Services demonstrating a wide ranging subject base and a 'snapshot' of recent and planned engagement for the next few months is to be found in Appendix 1.

The Council is using more creative opportunities to engage with residents or 'communities of interest' with greater emphasis on the use of social media (Twitter, Facebook and blogs) and the complete re-design of our website which will be launched in June and will improve on-line consultation questionnaires and surveys. A Residents Survey to approximately 6,000 residents will also be undertaken in 2013.

The Council will also respond positively to developing issues which arise requiring immediate public engagement e.g. the recent establishment of a St Asaph and Ruthin Community Flood Recovery Group.

Through the Town and Community Council Charter, the Council has strengthened its engagement procedures with councils which complement the Liaison meetings, Cluster meetings and Town Clerks Group meetings.

There is however, further work to be undertaken with Councillors in respect of identifying engagement opportunities between Councillors and residents either individually or on a ward basis (e.g. councillor surgeries) or as Member Area Groups (e.g. annual open meeting). The views of Scrutiny Members are sought on these two suggestions.

(b) Redefining our approach to be an 'Excellent Council Close to the Community'

The Corporate Plan 2012/2017 sets out an ambitious agenda for change within the Council, and places a clear focus on developing excellence, whilst also remaining close to our communities. Since we began to define in more detail what

being close to the community really means, a number of improvements have been achieved over the last 18 months or so. With the development of the new Corporate Plan, it is an opportune time to reflect and review what has been achieved, and refine the priorities and actions necessary to ensure that we meet the ambition and desire to be close to our community.

This document aims to reflect on the achievements to date, and also attempts to set out the focus for future actions.

Achievements to Date

In the initial Getting Closer to the Community Action Plan, three key themes were identified namely:

- ❖ Representation and Engagement
- ❖ Service Delivery
- ❖ Community Development

Representation and Engagement

The objective here was to:

“Improve the Council’s level of meaningful engagement and representation leading to improving perceptions, understanding and service delivery”

- To this end, the Council has established 6 Member Area Groups (MAGs), with an appropriate support structure and corporate leadership in place. These have been working effectively, over a period of about 18 months, and have now been given revised Terms of Reference. Members have valued this development and officers are engaging positively with the opportunities provided by Member Area Group consultations and discussions.
- A Community Engagement Strategy has been developed and agreed by Members. The outworkings of this strategy is managed by the Community Engagement Manager within the Partnership Team. A draft Participation Strategy has also been written to advise colleagues on engaging with children and young people.
- The Charter between Denbighshire County Council (DCC) and Town & Community Councils (T&CCs) has been signed by 32 out of 37 Town & Community Councils. The importance of this Charter has been discussed at Senior Leadership Team (SLT), liaison meetings between DCC and Town & Community Councils and at individual departmental team meetings. The monitoring of the effectiveness of the Charter is being carried out by the Community Engagement Manager, and a full review will take place in May 2013.
- The Council has been heavily involved in delegating certain services to the larger Town Councils. This has included the transfer of responsibility for the Llangollen Town Hall to the Town Council, the Corwen Healthy Living Centre to

a Community Partnership and a cost sharing arrangement between the Council and Denbigh Town Council for the operation of Denbigh Town Hall. A meeting has taken place with Ruthin Town and community council who have already expressed an interest in taking on more responsibility around the management of Allotments, bus shelters and the town parks/playing field, some grounds maintenance. The actual costs of the services will be shared with the clerk on the 21st February, when the council members will be in a position to consider further the devolution of the service. As one of the first town councils to pilot the scheme they are enthusiastic about taking on the responsibility of services providing it is cost effective and the standard of the services is not compromised. Prestatyn Town Council in response to the need to work more collaboratively is now working with the relocating of Prestatyn Library Project Team. The project is scheduled to complete in July 2013 and will see the relocation of the public library to a new location within Prestatyn. As part of the project it is envisaged that the library will take on a new role within the community and a centre of information. There will be a clearly defined information service operating there and the Town Council will contribute to that service. It is proposed that the CAB (Citizen's Advice Bureau) will be accommodated in the library moving from its present location currently funded by the Town Council.

- The second residents' survey has been completed and services have been requested to reflect relevant messages from our residents into their Business Plans.
- Work has begun on improving the way information is made available by the Council through the development of the new website, and a review of the way that we deal with feedback and complaints.
- Our engagement with the business community within Denbighshire has been progressed, and there are now clearer arrangements in place in terms of liaising with business groups, Chambers of Trade, etc.
- The support arrangements for the Third Sector Liaison Group have been improved by an appointment made by Denbighshire Voluntary Services' Council (DVSC) and this forum provides for an effective partnership between DVSC and the Council.

Service Delivery

The objective of this priority was to:

“Ensure that services respond effectively to the needs of residents by becoming increasingly more resident focussed”

All services were asked to carry out an initial self-assessment of the activities and processes that enabled them to work in a way that was closer to the community. Subsequently, the service challenge process has included this aspect in service position statements.

Whilst it is not possible to specifically measure improvements in the way services are delivered to reflect the needs of our customers and residents, services have become more customer focussed over the last 18 months, and there are some clear examples of where services have attempted to become more community focussed. These include:

- Bringing the regulatory Planning processes closer to the communities, community based deployment of staff and the mapping of provision within Youth Services, and now the emerging structure for the new Highways and Environmental Services Department
- The priorities within the Corporate Plan and The Big Plan are largely based on what the community has been stating as important issues
- New Corporate Plan includes a commitment that we will work with all of our councillors through MAGs to develop the road maintenance programme
- The involvement of services in participatory budgeting schemes
- The Town Plans have been agreed for our main towns and these are currently being further reviewed with the additional requirement to consider the needs of rural communities beyond the towns
- Work on developing the customer standards for all services has been undertaken with a view to finalise the standards in early 2013
- The budget planning process has been managed in a way that has seen frontline services largely protected from cuts
- Social care services have been developing a single point of access and community champion scheme, and developing Extra Care Housing facilities in our main towns
- During the recent flooding emergency, the Council responded in a way that brought it closer to the communities affected by the floods, both in the response and recovery phases

Community Development Role

The objective under this priority was:

“To provide an improved infrastructure to enable community development and enrichment to take place coherently within DCC”

- The funding that has been available for community revenue and capital projects has been secured for the foreseeable future, and forms part of the funding strategy for the Corporate Plan. A review of how this funding is to be allocated in the future has been undertaken in order to make funding decisions that are more strategic in nature than has been the case in the past.

- Funding has also been agreed within this element to support the infrastructure required for future participatory budgeting opportunities within the Council
- Through a partnership with the Community Foundation in Wales, a Community Development Fund has been set up which will make use of 57 redundant trust funds that the Council has not been utilising effectively in the past
- The Council has developed a Covenant with the Armed Services community which identifies opportunities for engagement with serving personnel and veterans
- The Communications, Marketing and Leisure Department have developed a Denbighshire Volunteering Strategy, which will become a Council wide strategy in the near future
- Locality based mapping, planning and delivery structures has enabled the Council to better understand the needs of the communities and where there are gaps in provision
- Ongoing active support is provided to aid the development of the Communities First Cluster in Denbighshire

Securing Further Improvements

In order to build on the work that has already been undertaken, four new strands have been developed, which clearly overlap with the priorities identified in the initial plan. The proposed revised strands are as follows:

- 1) Democratic and community engagement
- 2) Putting our customers first
- 3) Mapping community needs and aspirations and building capacity
- 4) Service improvement – this involves 2 sub-strands:
 - a) Developing the right culture; and
 - b) Designing services to be physically close to their communities

The element under these four themes are summarised further in Appendix 2. Once agreed, these elements will be included in relevant Service Business Plans and monitored accordingly in order to ensure full and effective implementation.

‘Snapshot’ of recent, current and future consultations

List of Statutory Consultations

Service	Purpose	Comments
Highways & Infrastructure	1) Vale Street, Denbigh - Limited waiting/residents' parking bays 2) Rhyl Road, Denbigh - Double yellow lines 3) St Asaph Town Centre - Various changes to parking restrictions 4) Ruthin Town Centre - Amendments to parking restriction changes made last year 5) Ffordd Derwen, Rhyl - Double yellow lines	On-going public consultation re traffic orders etc.
Business Planning & Performance – Corporate Improvement	1) Council's Public Sector Equality Duty. We are partners in a regional consultation event in spring 2013 2) Planned equalities consultation with various County organisations and groups	
Business Planning & Performance – Project Management	Rhyl Harbour redevelopment To invite comment on the draft operational plan for the new pedestrian and cycle bridge.	Statutory: ➤ Marine Consents Unit-email/letter
	Rhyl Harbour redevelopment To invite comment regarding the scope and implementation of a Harbour Empowerment Order	Statutory: ➤ Marine Consents Unit-email/ letter
Libraries	CIPFA PLUS (Public Library User Survey)	Required every 3 years. Completed Children's survey Nov 2011 surveying 971 children. Completed Adult survey Nov 2012 surveying 2373.
Housing & Community Development	Housing requirements of Gypsies and Travellers	We will be carrying out a public consultation in the next few months to develop the Local Housing

		Strategy
Business Planning & Performance – Partnerships & Communities	Single Integrated Plan	We will be consulting on Part 2 of our 'BIG Plan in 2013 using similar techniques to the Part 1 consultation but learning from what proved successful and what did not in terms of public engagement opportunities.

List of Non-Statutory Consultations

Service	Purpose	Comments
Highways & Infrastructure	1) 1.Trellewelyn Road, Rhyl - Pedestrian safety scheme 2) Vale of Clwyd Cycle Route (commencing Feb 2013)	May become statutory dependant on land acquisition
Regeneration Services	To inform the adjacent businesses and residential properties of the procedures and programme of demolition and re development of the site on Rhyl promenade known as the Honey Club (21-24 West Parade Rhyl)	26.11.12 Very poorly attended despite public notices, and hand delivery to immediate adjacent streets
Regeneration Services	To garner the public's views on proposals to improve and develop Marine Lake, Rhyl in order to advise Members and assist with the planning application	6.12.12 Fairly well attended and the proposals for a "cableski system" and changing rooms were well received
Planning & Public Protection Service -	Wind Energy Development Interim Planning Guidance To consult with the public on an interim planning guidance document. The guidance document will enable a consistent approach to submitting planning applications and definition of terms relating to wind energy development proposals.	Letters and emails sent out to targeted public organisations and open to all members of the public. Consultation lasted 9 weeks, one additional week because of Christmas holidays. Press release issued at the start of the consultation. DCC website and links updated with the information and how to contact us. No drop-in sessions scheduled because the

		document was not location specific. Approximately 25 responses received.
Business Planning & Performance – Project Management	<p>Construction/Procurement for the 6 NW authorities</p> <p>Consultation with the Construction Industry regarding approach to procurement of construction projects across North Wales. Developing a framework for NW authorities to use for the projects in the 21st Century schools programme.</p>	<p>Positive feedback from the construction industry. Project team changed the lotting strategy as a result of the consultation.</p> <p>Method: Questionnaire, OJEU PIN (Prior Information Notice)(72 completed), Feedback event/Engagement event to feedback result from the questionnaire and highlight key drivers for the project (Nov 2012), meetings and monthly updates about progress with the project.</p> <p>Feedback about consultation event: The event was very positive with 98% of delegates who returned a feedback form (49) stating that the event was either excellent or good and attendance was well represented across North Wales and nationally, over 120 delegates attended.</p>
Business Planning & Performance – Partnerships & Communities	LSB Engagement Strategy	Lead organisation on developing a joint strategy. Currently engaging with partner organisations with the establishment of an LSB Engagement Working Group
	Anti-Fouling Strategy	Engagement with Town & Community Councils and interested stakeholders
	On-going engagement with our 37 Town & Community Councils	We have a Liaison meeting (CEO / Leader), Cluster meetings and Town Clerks Liaison meetings

	We partner or lead on Participatory Budgeting events throughout the year	Using Participatory Budgeting as a forum for identifying the priorities within communities
	Regular consultation on delivering our obligations in the Town & Community Council Charter with DCC	Reviewing the Charter and its effectiveness
	Adoption of an Armed Services Covenant	Consultation programmed with the Armed Services and British Legion.
Business Planning & Performance – Project Management Team	Rhyl Harbour redevelopment To invite comment on the draft operational plan for the new pedestrian and cycle bridge.	Non statutory: ➤ Harbour Forum face to face at meeting
	To invite comment regarding the scope and implementation of a Harbour Empowerment Order	Non statutory: ➤ Harbour Forum- face to face at meeting
	External evaluation of the 'P5T1 Physical Regeneration of North Wales programme' which is being managed by WG to gain feedback re the project.	➤ Face to face interviews with Members of the Public ➤ Telephone survey of local businesses.
	General consultation regarding the drawings/design detail for the harbour	➤ Face to face at Harbour Forum meetings ➤ Face to face with Members of the Marine Lake Users Forum
Business Planning & Performance – Corporate Improvement	Denbighshire Residents' Survey To ascertain resident satisfaction and opinions about council services and life in Denbighshire.	The residents' survey is a biennial general survey delivered to 6,000 households in the county. The survey design is to enable statistically significant results for each of 6 area divisions of the county. The focus is to provide data to support our corporate plan priorities, to indicate service performance and broader community satisfaction with Denbighshire as a

		place to live. In this respect it has similarities with the English 'Place' surveys and Best Value General Surveys which were antecedent.
Business Planning & Performance – Corporate Improvement	Town and Community Council Public realm and roads qualitative surveys To support corporate priorities on roads and cleaner towns and villages	This work is still in the design stage and we hope to utilise the knowledge of Town & Community Councillors to provide more detailed qualitative evidence to support the quantitative data derived from the residents' survey.
Libraries	User input into future direction of service as part of Library Strategy	Held 16 stakeholder workshops across the county late 2012
	Summer Reading Challenge - feedback on programme	Children and adults encouraged to complete feedback slips
	Bookstart – feedback on programme	Families attending rhymetimes are surveyed twice a year to measure impact.
	User survey on Xmas opening hours	Feedback boxes in all Leisure Centres
	User input into future priorities as part of Leisure Strategy	Held 14 stakeholder workshops across the county early 2011
	Mapping day held with 50 partners late 2010	Results fed into Leisure Strategy
Youth Service	User survey	Annual survey of young people
	Input into corporate priorities	Surveys completed at all Youth Centres
	Input into BIG Plan	Surveys completed at all Youth Centres
	Input into Youth Work programme and local issues	Surveys completed at all Youth Centres and projects
	Input into Transport issues	Surveys completed at all Youth Centres
	Feedback on Anti Bullying	Consultation in partnership with schools
	Social use of Welsh	Consultation in partnership with Urdd
Housing & Community Development	Destination Management Plan for Denbighshire	

Housing & Community Development	Area Plans	Development of existing Town Plans to include the wider rural area
Housing & Community Development	Public Consultation on European Structural and Rural Development Funds 2014-2020, currently being undertaken by the Welsh Government	
Social Services	<p>i. to understand the experience of service users accessing the service</p> <p>ii. to identify how well service users have been involved in the development and delivery of services</p> <p>iii. to identify areas for improvement within the service</p>	There is an established 'Have Your Say' survey with children, young people and parent appropriate versions. The survey is sent to families at key intervals depending on how long they have been receiving services AND at the point of cases being closed
	To develop a comprehensive profile of children with disabilities and their families with a better understanding of their needs, the services they access, the impact of the disability on their own lives and those of their family members	A detailed scoping tool (series of key questions) has been developed and is being completed by Social Workers, Teachers and key education staff who work with children with disabilities. To date in the region of 350 children have been profiled.
	<p>Team Around the Family and Families First Panel</p> <p>To undertake an evaluation of the TAF and Families First Panel and identify:</p> <p>i. experience and contribution of all key stakeholders</p> <p>ii. strengths and areas for development of the two elements</p> <p>iii. identify impact on outcomes for families</p>	<p>The methodology being used includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - data analysis on activity (numbers) - focus groups with TAF team - survey/ 1:1 and focus groups with key stakeholders - consultation with service users in receipt of the service
	<p>Leaving care service evaluation</p> <p>To identify experience of care leavers, foster carers, Social Workers and Personal Advisors within the externally commissioned</p>	<p>A range of methods were used which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - surveys to all key stakeholders (relevant questions for each groups) - focus groups with staff

	<p>service to identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. experience of service users receiving the service ii. identify impact on outcomes for care leavers iii. requirements for new personal advisor service currently being commissioned 	<p>groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - focus groups with care leavers. <p>This evaluation saw real engagement from care leavers through the various methods and the value of their contributions has helped shape the service specification for the personal advisor service to be re-commissioned. In addition a series of improvements to the way in which the Social Work element of the care leaver service is delivered</p>
	Regular formal and informal engagement with service users	
Customers and Education Support	Consultation with parents at Blessed Edward Jones and St Brigid's to discuss the future of faith education in North Denbighshire	<p>Letters sent to all parents, consultation to end 29th January anticipate over 100 responses to questionnaires plus additional letters. Parents meetings held at both schools attended by approximately 160 people.</p> <p>Consultation also held with the school council's for both schools.</p>
	Consultation with parents to consider the future primary provision in the Ruthin area	<p>Letters will be sent to all parents, approximately 900 at the start of February. Consultation to end 22nd March. Meetings will be held at all 11 schools for parents and online survey will be available to gain opinions in addition to paper based questionnaire and requesting comments by e-mail and letter.</p>

1. Democratic and Community Engagement

- Member Area Groups (MAGs) – continue to support and develop the MAGs as effective local, political fora
- T&CC Charter – monitor the implementation of the T&CC Charter and review its effectiveness in May 2013.
- T&CC Delegation of Services - continue to work with T&CCs on the delegation and/or shared management of assets and functions
- Communication with Members (Member/Officer protocol) – further improve the way that we work with Members on local ward issues
- Community Engagement Strategy – in line with the Local Government Measure, ensure that the Community Engagement Strategy is implemented effectively

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2. Putting Customers First

- Customer Standards – publish the newly created Customer Standards for all services in April 2013, and begin to monitor their effective implementation as from September 2013
- Access to Information – launch the new interactive website in June 2013 and improving access to information and the ability of customers to interact with the Council
- Feedback and Complaints – improve the feedback and complaints procedures.
- Reviews of One Stop Shops
- Community Hubs - consider how we can improve the access to information within communities, using community hubs or mobile provision, especially in rural areas
- Residents Survey (3) - carry out a third residents survey in 2013
- CRM System -improve the way that the current Call Centre operates, in order to improve and speed up responses to queries from services by locating call centre staff within service areas

4. Service Improvement

- New corporate self-evaluation framework – develop a new corporate self-evaluation framework that gives greater emphasis on monitoring how close the service is to its community
- Service statement on what Bringing the Council Closer to the Community (BCCC) means for the service - require services to produce a service statement defining what BCCC means for that particular service
- Welsh Language Standards – the development of Welsh Language standards to reflect new levels of expectations from the Language Commissioner and our bilingual community
- Structural design and operation to enhance closeness to the community – how the structural design and operation of services enhances the ability of that service to be close to its community
- Assets – how can the way we use our assets promote community development and sustainability

3. Mapping needs and aspirations and building capacity

- Town Plans/Area Plans – review the current approach to community based planning
- Community based funding strategy – the development of community based planning and associated funding strategy as defined in Town/Area Plans
- Community Endowment Fund – support the implementation of the Denbighshire Community Endowment Fund
- Locality mapping e.g. YS, others – promote the use of locality mapping such as the pilots undertaken within the Youth Service
- Participatory budgeting schemes – support the infrastructure requirements for additional participatory budgeting schemes
- Volunteering strategy and voluntary sector engagement – develop a Denbighshire wide volunteering strategy to both encourage volunteering activity for staff, together with making effective use of volunteers within the Council
- Engagement with businesses – further develop our engagement and support function for local businesses