

Report to: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 30 July 2013
Lead Member/Officer: Lead Member for Customers and Communities
Report Author: Corporate Director: Customers
Title: **Developing 'An Excellent Council Close to the Community'**

1. What is the report about?

This report describes the refreshed approach to defining what is meant by the 'Close to the Community' element of our mission statement of being 'An Excellent Council Close to the Community'

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To seek Cabinet approval for how the Council progresses with the theme of Bringing the Council Closer to the Community.

3. What are the recommendations?

That Cabinet:

- 3.1** Endorses the refreshed approach to the definition of being An Excellent Council Close to the Community as set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.2** Requires all services to develop their own plans in order to respond positively to the four themes outlined in the overview plan set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.3** Endorses a review of Member Area Group (MAG) activity to ensure that there are opportunities to feedback and gauge the views of communities at a locality level.

4. Report Details

- 4.1** An overview of how the Council engages with the County's communities and its revised approach to fulfilling its ambition on being an 'Excellent Council Close to the Community' can be found in Appendix 1 & 2 of this report.
- 4.2** Appendix 1 outlines some of the activities that have taken place in our efforts to engage with the community. Detailed analysis of engagement activity demonstrates that the Council has been undertaking consultation and engagement with residents on a wide ranging and relevant subject base. These include statutory consultations on subjects such as:

- ✘ Highways consultations on traffic orders and parking restrictions
- ✘ Rhyl Harbour redevelopment
- ✘ CiPFA Public Library User Survey
- ✘ Housing requirements of Gypsy and Travellers
- ✘ Single Integrated Plan

and also non-statutory consultations on other subject areas such as:

- ✘ Consultation with businesses and residential properties on the programme of demolition and redevelopment of the Honey Club (21-24 West Parade, Rhyl)
- ✘ Proposals to improve and develop Marine Lake, Rhyl
- ✘ Consultation with the public on the interim Planning Guidance document on wind energy development
- ✘ Anti-Fouling Strategy - consultation with Town & Community Councils
- ✘ Participatory Budgeting
- ✘ Denbighshire Residents Survey
- ✘ User input into the future direction of the service as part of the Library Strategy
- ✘ Young people's input into the Youth Work Programme and local issues
- ✘ Destination Management Plan for Denbighshire
- ✘ Leaving Care Service Evaluations
- ✘ Informal consultation on Faith Based Education and the Ruthin Area Review

A key task for the Council is to develop the use of new technologies such as Twitter, Facebook and Blogs together with a total redesign of our website in order to engage in a more modern and accessible way with residents. The previously convened Community Forums have now ceased to exist due to poor attendance from members of the public; there is now a need to consider how the Council can make better use of locality forums such as those that may be afforded through a modified approach to Member Area Groups.

- 4.3 Appendix 2 of the report lists the achievements to date of activities designed to bring the Council closer to the community under the original 3 themes that were devised in the original action plan in 2012 namely:

- ✘ representation and engagement
- ✘ service delivery
- ✘ community development

A number of meaningful actions have been completed. It is therefore timely to review progress to date and to refresh the approach and the identified priorities for the Council going forward. To this end, 4 new themes have been identified with associated actions. These are:

- 1) Democratic and Community Engagement
- 2) Putting Customers First
- 3) Mapping Needs and Aspirations and Building Capacity
- 4) Service Improvement

Each theme is led by a Lead Officer(s) and an Action Plan has been devised in order to monitor the progress against the implementation of these Actions. Progress will be measured through regular monitoring of the Action Plan, quarterly performance monitoring of the Corporate Plan and through the Service Challenge process. Every service has been asked to develop a Service Statement on how it intends to support this corporate approach by 31 May 2013. Additionally, Lead Members will be asked to regularly challenge Heads of Service at 1:2:1 meetings in order to monitor how the service is responding to the Customer Services Framework as outlined in Theme 2. This checklist is included in Appendix 3.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

This topic contributes directly to the Council's overarching mission statement of being an Excellent Council Close to the Community. This approach is expected to permeate the corporate priorities and service delivery.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

The issues covered in this report are to be delivered through funding identified for the delivery of the seven corporate priorities and funding available for direct service delivery.

7. What consultations have been carried out?

The approach proposed in this report has been discussed at CET and SLT and with the Lead Member. A number of specific aspects have been considered previously by City, Town & Community Councils and more generally in terms of the development of the Town/Area Plans. Consultations have taken place with services on the development of Customer Standards, "The Denbighshire Way" document, the website development and the complaints policy. The new self-evaluation and service challenge process have also been agreed by Heads of Service and Members, a process which now better reflects this element of our mission statement. The content of this report has also been considered by Communities Scrutiny Committee on 23 February 2013, and the approach was supported by Scrutiny.

8. Chief Finance Officer Statement

While there are no direct costs associated with this report, improving our engagement with communities should begin to affect where and how we deliver services in the future, and the associated actions will be delivered within existing budgets.

9. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

The absence of a clear and refreshed plan, places the Council at risk of not being able to deliver its mission statement in full. There is also a risk that the Council may distance itself from the communities, rather than work coherently in order to bring the Council close to the community.

10. Power to Make the Decision

Article 6.3 Council Constitution
S2 Local Government Act 2000
Part2 Local Government Wales Measure 2009

Contact Officer:

Corporate Director: Customers
Tel: 01824 712501