Appendix A:

Report of the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee's Task and Finish Group:

Resident Engagement and Building Trust

April 2024

Contents

Foreword

**Cllr Mohindra
Chair**

In November 2023 the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee launched this Task and Finish Group to explore concerns in relation to three of the five Corporate Priorities: Building Trust; Resident Focussed; and Enabling Residents and Communities.

The scope (Appendix A) of this Task and Finish group was considerable and I am pleased that, we recognised, early on, the need to focus on areas where relatively simple solutions could be implemented, at minimal cost, to the greatest effect. Our investigations therefore do not include the significant and varied service related activity, nor work necessary to build community capacity, possible only when resources allow. Neither have we explored the many complex interactions that affect residents' trust in the council. Our recommendations whilst probably representing the tip of the iceberg of work required to fully deliver the priorities in the corporate plan, I believe they are essential building blocks, without which future improvement work would almost certainly falter.

We have been fortunate to be able to link to improvement and development work already underway or being planned, and in so doing, have secured buy-in to our proposals from relevant senior officers.

I am grateful to members of the Task and Finish Group for their input and contribution to this work. I would also like to thank the scrutiny officers and several senior officers across the organisation for the support they provided.

Our work has resulted in recommendations to support the role that members have as the conduit of information between Council, residents and communities. This could prove to be an important factor in re-building the trust residents have in their council. We have also made several recommendations that add value to current resources to support members and officers connect with borough-wide and local communities, by

Our investigations have also identified a significant oversight in ensuring our consultations are co-ordinated and meet the minimum standards necessary to ensure residents feel they can influence key aspects of the council's work, in a way that suits them, is timely and transparent. We hope that our recommendations will be reflected in the Target Operating Model, currently being developed.

The committee also considered the engagement of residents in the democratic process and has recognised the need for the scrutiny offering to improve in this regard.

Finally, the council's biggest challenge remains the need to increase the capacity of residents and communities across the Borough to enable and empower residents and communities to live well independently: build the capacity and resilience of their communities, to foster self-sufficiency and to create platforms that allow our community to shape Slough's future.

Councillor Subhash Mohindra
*Chair, Resident Engagement and Building Trust
Task and Finish Group*

Executive summary and recommendations

A Scrutiny Task and Finish group on Resident Engagement and Building Trust was convened in November 2023. This was in response to commissioners' concerns in relation to resident engagement, a resident survey revealing a significant decline in trust in the council and that three of the five corporate priorities of Building Trust, being Resident Focussed and Enabling Residents and Communities related to our interaction with residents. This is its report.

The Task and Finish Group made the following recommendations:

Member Communications

a. To add all SBC Councillors to the distribution list for media releases from the communications team, to ensure members receive the latest news at the same time as the public; and

b. Cabinet to endorse a monthly release by the Communications Team to Councillors, either stand-alone (Councillors' Cascade?) or as part of the current bulletin schedule. The main aim of this to provide Councillors with key Borough-wide and local information that they can pass on to residents. Typically, this would include latest news, upcoming major street works, major planning applications received, performance data, information from partners for example TVP or Frimley Health and information about commissioned services as well as planned community and consultation events.

Consultation

c. The CEX should ensure that the Target Operating Model includes a senior officer with corporate responsibility to ensure a strategic approach to resident engagement, consultation and communication to ensure quality engagement, meeting required standards that are consistent and co-ordinated across the organisation (and ultimately with Partners). The appointed officer, as a priority should:

    i. Meet with the Scrutiny Chair, Task Group Chair and Scrutiny Officer to discuss the member and resident feedback in relation to Consultation set out in Appendices D and E.

    ii. Refresh and submit to Cabinet the Corporate Engagement Policy (Slough Engagement Policy 2015) including a review of customer standards, applied through all of our interactions with residents. (Current standards go back to 2013); and

    iii. Review, refresh and relaunch the Slough Engagement toolkit with case studies of current slough examples, links and resources.

d. Promote Citizen Space internally and externally, as the Consultation and Engagement Hub for Slough. This will be relaunched shortly with a new look and feel that will highlight accessibility links and set out the consultation and feedback standards residents can expect.

e. Cabinet asks the CEX to establish and develop a forum of officers (reporting to CLT) across the council (and partners) that will helps ensure there is a cohesive and joined-up approach to consultation and engagement across the council, a Corporate Consultation and Engagement calendar, peer support for officers to share best practice as well as monitoring of consultation standards; and

f. Cabinet asks the CEX and CLT that, from immediate effect, the consultations for 2023-24 and all consultations going forward are published on Citizen Space, including both the results of all consultations and a link to the ultimate outcome (Cabinet report) within proscribed time periods. Whenever possible, as a courtesy, provide feedback specifically to those people who contributed to a consultation.

Community Networks

g. That Cabinet request the Member Development team work with the Community Development Officer to develop a simple self-service tool, for Members by which they can refer residents to relevant community groups. This would be of value in Members' surgeries, and an opportunity to connect with community groups and to build local conduits for 2-way flows of information;

h. Cabinet directs Community Development to produce a guide for Councillors that list key sources of information about Borough-wide and ward-based Community Groups;

i. Cabinet directs Member Development to commission a training module, to be rolled out for all councillors, helping them learn about how to make connections (see g above) with residents and borough and local community groups (see h above). The LGA starter kit for front-line councillors offers a useful starting point;

j. Cabinet request Democratic Services and CLT to find ways to publicise the Community Directory to all councillors and officers responsible for consultation and engagement ; and

k. Cabinet request that Cabinet Reports have a new section (in Implications section perhaps), setting out the detail of resident and community engagement that has taken place especially in relation to new policies and changes to services.

Democratic Engagement

l.   (To Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee) That over the life of this administration, the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee should aim to continuously improve the way it involves the public in work programming, priority setting and the investigation of issues, including, developments such as:

- Putting out a public call for work programme topics at the beginning of the year;
- Calling for public evidence whenever a T&F group is launched;
- Making greater use of options to invite or even co-opt expert witnesses to assist in representing specific relevant groups on a topic-by-topic basis; and
- Making greater use of alternative approaches to scrutiny that enable greater public representation either directly or through community representatives.

m.   Cabinet approve and instruct Member Development to commission a training module to be developed and rolled out to all **committee chairs** (open to all other councillors) on public participation options and methods. This will assist the council in developing better, more consistent and pro-active practice with respect to a resident engagement element at its committees.

n.   That the Cabinet and other Committees where appropriate make better use of Slough's Youth Parliament (YP) as a way of involving young people in the decision-making process, on issues that are relevant.   In particular, the Cabinet should consider consulting the YP during the budget-setting process, and meet the YP to discuss young people's priorities and how they might be taken forward; and

o.   Cabinet endorses the recommendation that the Electoral Registration Officer commissions a review to identify what additional action could be taken by the council to improve the rates of voter registration and voting especially amongst any identified under-represented groups of residents in Slough.

1. Introduction

Effective overview and scrutiny provides constructive 'critical friend' challenge and ensures the voice of the public is heard. It should be led by objectivity and evidence by people who take responsibility for their role and drive improvement in public services.

This report sets out the work and conclusions of a task group of the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee (CISC) that was convened at the end of November 2023. The Task Group met on 4 occasions, the fourth meeting taking place on the 26 March 2024 to inform this draft report and recommendations before submission to CISC on 23 April 2024.

1.1 Membership

Councillors:

- Subhash Mohindra (Chair);
- Zaffar.Ajaib;
- Christine Hulme;
- Pavitar Mann;
- Frank Mark O Kelly; and

Slough CVS

- Ramesh Kukar

Supported by:

- Rebecca Curley, Community Development Officer
- Michael Edley, Governance and Scrutiny Officer
- Dave Hounsell, Acting Head of Service, CEO Office
- Anita Jan, Tenant Participation Officer
- Sally Kitson, ASC Partnership Manager;
- Alexander Polak, Head of Governance and Scrutiny; and
- Kate Pratt, Acting Head of Communications

1.2 Terms of Reference

The broad terms of reference of the Task and Finish Group were as defined by outcomes in the Scope of work (Appendix A.) These outcomes were approved by CISC at its meeting on 28 November 2023.

2. Background

Local authority best practice is defined across seven overlapping themes (Fig 1) that reflect what most local authorities already do or are striving to achieve. While these themes are all interdependent, strong governance, culture and leadership underpin effective partnerships and community engagement, service delivery and the use of resources. Continuous improvement is the outcome of all the themes working well together.

Figure 1. The seven best-value themes

As is the case for Slough (https://www.slough.gov.uk/commissioners), it is these themes that underpin the basis of the Minister's intervention in a failing council and inform the Commissioners' directions and subsequent assessments. As part of Slough Council's response to intervention, it undertook a resident survey parallel to a similar nationwide LGA survey. This revealed a significant loss of trust in the Council, down to 25% of Slough respondents that said they trust Slough Council a great deal or a fair amount compared to 59% of national respondents. Finally, the Council's relationship and interaction with residents features in 3 of the 5 corporate priorities (see Fig 2 below).

Figure 2: The 5 Strategic Priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan 2023.

Resident Focused

Providing financial sustainability

Enabling residents and communities

Strengthening partnerships

Building trust

These priorities are characterised as follows:

Building trust: Work to restore trust and confidence in SBC: ensuring that we are reliable, responsive, and open, as we continue to recover and improve;

Resident focussed: Serve the people of Slough first and foremost: responding to their concerns, ensuring their views are heard and delivering on the issues that matter most to them; and

Enabling residents and communities: Focus on enabling residents to live well independently: building community capacity and resilience, fostering self-sufficiency and creating platforms that allow our community to shape Slough's future.

These were the principle factors informing the decision to launch a task and finish style scrutiny investigation.

3. Approach

The Task and Finish Group's approach to this investigation was through the collection of evidence by a combination of: discussions with officers; a survey of councillor colleagues; informal conversations with residents; comparison with neighbouring Councils; some preliminary 'secret, shopper' style activity; reviewing relevant guidance such as that from the LGA[1] and CfSG[2]; and their own experiences of interactions with residents.

Task Group members met on 3 occasions, and at each, they received, reviewed and discussed information put before them. The discussions led the task group to either:

- Identify potential improvements that might require a recommendation to Cabinet/Council/Committee, or a proposal to a member of CLT;
- Identify specific issues they should investigate further; or
- Close off a particular line of enquiry.

At its first meeting, members had previously carried out their own desk top research on aspects of resident engagement and reviewed the results of the Resident Survey. A wide-ranging discussion followed in which members recognised the wide number of activities and issues associated with the three outcomes, (Building Trust, Resident Focussed and Enabling residents).

The task group concluded that at their 2nd meeting they would be more likely to add value by focussing on 3 specific aspects of resident engagement each relating to one of the 3 Outcomes set out in the scope as follows:

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[1] New Conversations: An LGA Guide to engagement (Feb 2017)

[2] A. Aiken, 2022: How to write effective survey and research questions. CfGS

Building trust: In the resident survey, residents considered councillors the most trusted source (43%) when it came to information from council sources. The task and finish group identified the potential for Councillors to have a front-line role in disseminating consistent information by being a conduit / cascade locally.

Resident Focussed: Councillors agreed to explore how Consultations are experienced by residents, as well as evaluating alternative (representative) approaches to securing residents'/service users' views on issues and activities.

Enabling Residents: Councillors sought to focus on opportunities to enable more residents to participate in democratic engagement, believing that any improvements more likely to be realistic than a drive to build resident and community capacity.

Members agreed that these issues would be investigated, through hearing evidence from relevant SBC officers:

- At their 2nd meeting (Appendix B) by focussing on member communications and consultations; and

- At their 3rd meeting (Appendix C) by focussing on alternative (representative) approaches to securing resident engagement and considering democratic engagement.

Further research, led by members following each of these meetings, generated further evidence (Appendices D and E) that informed the findings and associated recommendations which were discussed and finalised in the members' 4th meeting (set out in Section 4}.

In making recommendations, the Task and Finish Group were conscious of the need to focus on corporate issues and to recognise the current resource pressures faced by the Council.

4. Findings and recommendations

4.1 Building Trust: Member Communications

The response from councillors to the task group members' survey (Appendix D1) clearly re-enforced the proposal that Councillors would value a regular (Monthly) update that supports their role as Ward Councillor that they could cascade to residents in their wards or have as a reliable resource to respond to typical resident queries.

A 'Councillor Cascade' would complement the Members Bulletin, which provides members with council activities/events they should be aware of in their role as Borough Councillors.

The Cascade would ensure members were equipped with key messages and press releases, consistent accurate information about the council and highlight activities (such as road works, events and consultations) directly relevant to residents.

The proposal is founded in the finding (SBC Resident Survey 2023) that residents most trust information provided by their ward councillor. It is envisaged that the exact content of the cascade would evolve over time in response to member and resident feedback. Two recommendations result:

a. Cabinet to endorse the addition of all SBC Councillors to the distribution list for media releases from the communications team, to ensure members receive the latest news at the same time as the press and public;

b. Cabinet to endorse a monthly release, by the Communications Team, to Councillors, either stand-alone (Councillors' Cascade?) or as part of the current Members' Bulletin schedule. The main aim of this is to provide Councillors with key Borough-wide and local information that they can pass on to residents. Typically, this would include latest news, upcoming major street works, major planning applications received, performance data, information from partners, for example TVP or Frimley Health, and information about commissioned services as well as planned community and consultation events.

4.2 Resident Focussed

4.2.1 Consultation

Consultation is used informally and formally to ensure resident voices are heard in the shaping of policies and delivery of universal services. The transparency afforded to the consultation process is key to the trust residents have in the council.

There are a number of issues regarding the way we consult our residents on key issues, as can be seen in feedback from residents via Councillors' responses to the Task Group's survey (Appendix D2). In summary they relate to matters of quality, consistency, co-ordination, accessibility and a failure to feedback either the results of the survey or the final decision made by Council, cabinet, committee or Director. It is these broad themes that the task group has responded to in the following recommendations:

c. The CEX should ensure that the Target Operating Model includes a senior officer with corporate responsibility to ensure a strategic approach to resident engagement, consultation and communication to ensure quality engagement, meeting required standards that are consistent and co-ordinated across the organisation (and ultimately with Partners). The appointed officer, as a priority should:

    i. Meet with the Scrutiny Chair, Task Group Chair and Scrutiny Officer to discuss the member and resident feedback in relation to Consultation set out in Appendices D and E.

    ii. Refresh and submit to Cabinet the Corporate Engagement Policy (Slough Engagement Policy 2015) including a review of customer standards, applied

through all of our interactions with residents. (Current standards go back to 2013); and

    iii.   Review, refresh and relaunch the Slough Engagement toolkit with case studies of current slough examples, links and resources.

d.   Promote Citizen Space internally and externally, as the Consultation and Engagement Hub for Slough. This will be relaunched shortly with a new look and feel that will highlight accessibility links and set out the consultation and feedback standards residents can expect.

e.   Cabinet asks the CEX to establish and develop a forum of officers (reporting to CLT) across the council (and partners) which helps ensure there is a cohesive and joined-up approach to consultation and engagement across the council, a Corporate Consultation and Engagement calendar, peer support for officers to share best practice as well as monitoring of consultation standards; and

f.   Cabinet asks the CEX and CLT that, from immediate effect, the consultations for 2023-24 and all consultations going forward are published on Citizen Space, including both the results of all consultations and a link the ultimate outcome (Cabinet report) within proscribed time periods. Whenever possible, as a courtesy, provide feedback specifically to those people who contributed to a consultation.

4.2.2 Community Networks

Community and voluntary groups have the potential to offer access to groups of residents brought together because of where they live, of having a common interest or by association.

These groups offer the potential for more targeted, bespoke engagement, as well as the source of advice on the most appropriate means by which to engage particular groups of people.

These groups may also act as a conduit for the two-way flow of information for consultation exercises and other forms of engagement. where the advocacy of a group may secure more and better-quality responses than the council might independently.

At ward level, by accessing community groups, Councillors may be able to direct residents, if appropriate, to valuable local support networks or to receive information and advice on topics and issues that may be unfamiliar to a Councillor. In all cases, Councillors would benefit from understanding and connecting with groups in their area and the Task Group make the following recommendations to support members in this respect:

g.   That Cabinet request the Member Development team to work with the Community Development Officer to develop a simple self-service tool, for Members by which they can refer residents to relevant community groups. This would be of value in Members' surgeries, and an opportunity to connect with community groups and to build local conduits for 2-way flows of information;

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h. Cabinet directs Community Development to produce a guide for Councillors that list key sources of information about Borough-wide and ward-based Community Groups;

i. Cabinet directs Member Development to commission a training module, to be rolled out for all councillors, helping them learn about how to make connections (see g above) with residents and borough and local community groups (see h above). The LGA starter kit for front-line councillors offers a useful starting point;

j. Cabinet request Democratic Services and CLT to find ways to publicise the Community Directory to all councillors and officers responsible for consultation and engagement ; and

k. Cabinet request that Cabinet Reports have a new section (in Implications section perhaps), setting out the detail of resident and community engagement that has taken place especially in relation to new policies and changes to services.

4.3 Enabling Residents: Democratic Engagement

The Task and Finish Group, recognising that building community capacity, typically requires substantial and sustained resources and officer time, chose to focus on opportunities to enable more residents to participate in democratic engagement. Resident attendance at public committee meetings is generally low and Rule 9 (enabling resident questions) is not actively promoted. The Task Group also recognised the responsibility of CISC in this regard.

Finally, members discussed the need to increase participation in the democratic process by segments of the population from whom we don't hear (e.g. the Polish community). In addition, members queried whether the demographics of Councillors themselves are sufficiently representative of the population. For example the Council is currently generally more male than the population, The following recommendations arose from these discussions:

l. (To Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee) That over the life of this administration, the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee should aim to continuously improve the way it involves the public in work programming, priority setting and the investigation of issues, including, developments such as:

- Putting out a public call for work programme topics at the beginning of the year;
- Calling for public evidence whenever a T&F group is launched;
- Making greater use of options to invite or even co-opt expert witnesses to assist in representing specific relevant groups on a topic-by-topic basis; and
- Making greater use of alternative approaches to scrutiny that enable greater public representation either directly or through community representatives.

m. Cabinet approve and instruct Member Development to commission a training module to be developed and rolled out to all **committee chairs** (open to all other councillors) on public participation options and methods. This will assist the council in developing

better, more consistent and pro-active practice with respect to a resident engagement element at its committees.

n. That the Cabinet and Committees make better use of Slough's Youth Parliament (YP) as a way of involving young people in the decision-making process, on issues that are relevant. In particular, the Cabinet should consider consulting the YP during the budget-setting process, and meet the YP to discuss young people's priorities and how they might be taken forward; and

o. Cabinet endorses the recommendation that the Electoral Registration Officer commissions a review to identify what additional action could be taken by the council to improve the rates of voter registration and voting especially amongst any identified under-represented groups of residents in Slough.

5.0 Conclusion

This task group has identified 15 improvements to the approach the Council takes to its engagement (communication, engagement and consultation) with residents. It is hoped that they will contribute to improved outcomes in relevant current strategic priorities in the Corporate Plan. The work of the task group has only touched the tip of the iceberg in terms of the totally of the Council's interaction with its residents.

There is undoubtedly a need to bring an overarching, corporate, more consistent approach to improvement in the way we engage with residents. This should be outcome driven, and measured against aspirations described in terms of residents' experience of how they receive information, how they are involved in the design and delivery of the services they use and how empowered they feel as individuals and as members of the communities (of place, of interest and by association) to which they belong. Ultimately this is likely to be couched in terms of outcomes relating to strong, resilient, connected communities, rather than strategies for communication, engagement, involvement and empowerment.

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Appendix A: Scope of work for Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

SUMMARY:	SBCs Corporate Strategy 2023-27 sets out 5 principles, 3 of which relate to the interaction between residents and the Council. This Task and Finish group will review the degree to which the council has a vision that sets out its ambition, is clear and consistent about its overall approach to achieving it and has begun to put in place firm foundations for for residents to engage and to build their trust		
Scrutiny Officer	Michael Edley	**Steering Group**	Cllrs: Mohindra (Chair), Hulme, Mann, O'Kelly, Ajaib + Ramesh Kukar (CVS)
Project Lead	Caroline Adlem		
Strategic Lead	Sarah Hayward [3](Director)	**Other stakeholders**	Kate Pratt, Dave Hounslow

Outcome	Objectives	Outputs
Building Trust: Slough has reference to a framework that ties together factors affecting trust and mechanisms to strengthen (e.g. commitments to customers in Engagement, Communications and Consultation (ECC)) and is consistent in their application and understands the benefits and risks in relation to reputation and trust so the Council can pro-actively re-build residents' trust.	Key trust drivers	• how to measure quality and outcomes of ECC (LGA Toolkit?) • clear staff support/overarching guidance • self-assessment (LGA Tool)
Resident Focused: The council is aware of Slough's communities of place, interest and association and is connected to them through community leaders, through the VCS and other ways. As a result better quality engagement means that our services reflect the needs of residents and relevant customers, and residents and communities feel engaged and involved in	• How do we currently engage strategically with VCS • Resident voice in democratic process • Engagement in policy, strategy, service	• Offer to communities and VCS corporately and degree of cross dept consitency • Corporate info about engaging strategic community and voluntary orgs

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[3] The Director and Project Lead effectively left the employ of the Council early in 2024.

Outcome	Objectives	Outputs
service design and delivery as well as able to engage with the democratic process	development design, delivery	
Enabling Residents and Communities: Slough BC recognises the co-dependence/relationship between building stronger more resilient communities and the 2-way relationship with its communications and engagement with residents and has strategies in place to build community capacity building communities where residents feel respected, valued and empowered so they are confident and more self-sufficient with leaders that build bridges between different communities.	- What are we currently doing? - Benchmark/best practice - Role of VCS - Levers sticks and carrots to build capacity and leadership	- A common language and if when and how the council is proactive.in building capacity - How the Council plans to enable (and empower) communities at a strategic level
In Scope	**Out of Scope**	**Resources**
Complaints, online meetings; scrutiny, reporting, PSED Subsequently agreed that the enabling strand was too complex and that SBC was not ready/could barely afford anything in this area	Childrens engagement? T&FG on this in March. Service specific relationships	background

Building trust: Work to restore trust and confidence in SBC: ensuring that we are reliable, responsive and open, as we continue to recover and improve.

Resident focussed Serve the people of Slough first and foremost: responding to their concerns, ensuring their views are heard and delivering on the issues that matter most to them.

Enabling residents and communities: Focus on enabling residents to live well independently: building community capacity and resilience, fostering self-sufficiency and creating platforms that allow our community to shape Slough's future.

Work streams	Objectives	Outputs/milestones	*Target Date / Completed*
Research analysis and interpretation	Review of resident survey, Review of member survey What builds trust, What loses trust Response time commitment and actual across different interfaces Secret shopper, and user testing of translate Complaints Data **Finbar McSweeney,** reporting process and data Review of recent consultations **Dave Hounsell** Data relating to Councillors' case files **Finbar** Website hits (several target pages), Accessibility of website (note we are in top 10 in country Attendance at public council meetings (in person /online), Petitions data **Nick Pontone** Can we benchmark	•	
Consultation	Task group members to explore with residents their experience of consultation to feed into Dave Hounsell proposals for new approach to consultation	Analysis and interpretation of member input that lead to recommendations regarding consultation	*13 march*
Internal comms	To make recommendations relating to the development and content of members bulletin so that members can cascade information to residents	Recommendations for Members bulletin and resident cascade,	*13 march*
Democratic Engagement	Receive evidence about the ways by which residents can engage formally and informally in the democratic process and institutions of Slough BC	Recommendations	*Evidence from witnesses on 6/3/24*

Appendix B: Notes of 2ⁿᵈ Meeting of Task Group

Task and Finish Group on Building Trust and Resident Engagement

31ˢᵗ January 2024: 2ⁿᵈ Meeting

Initial discussion focused on need to narrow down the focus of groups investigations.

Arising from the previous meeting were 4 priorities:

- Community Empowerment
- Customer Contact
- Consultation
- Democratic Engagement including member communications

Due partly to lost time over the holiday, compounded by officer illness in the new year, there was the recognition that the Group needed to be pragmatic in the scope of its work.

It was recognised that Community Empowerment (Building resilience, Community development, stronger communities) was complex and wide ranging. It was almost certainly beyond the capacity of the group to get traction on this import aspect of Community Engagement at this time, notwithstanding the financial challenges the council is facing that predicates against implementing any recommendations the group may make.

It was also acknowledged that Customer Contact (resident reporting of issues, complaints etc), whilst clearly in need of review, would also present complex challenges in any investigation at this time.

It was agreed that the two areas of Consultation and Democratic Engagement offered the group the opportunity use their own experience and research in areas that are currently under review and therefor open to any recommendations that might arise from the Group's investigation.

Democratic Engagement

A useful reference to help understand the different aspects of this topic can be found at this link

[21ˢᵗ Century Councillor](#)

This sets out the key challenges and multiple roles of a Councillor.

Task group members then commented and offered evidence in relation their role as councillors as follows:

- Leafletting draws greatest response from residents. Can get a ten percent response rate on leaflets from councillors – national party politics, this experience was supported by officers. BUT this is an expensive way to communicate.
- Discussed benefits of paper going through letterboxes. About £18k for a single run on folded A4. We do put other things in the council tax billing, but there is only so much we can do so before it weighs too much.
- Apart from online, what do we do to help local people know about their local councillors? Do we just leave it to the political parties? Difficulties in accessing electoral register due to GDRP restrictions.
- In residents survey councillors were the most trusted (43%) when it came to information from council sources
- If a resident comes and registers themselves on the electoral register, why can't we send them info about their local councillor, how to contact them, who they are, other council services - can we do it by email when people register?
- Can we ask people whose emails we hold for permission to add them to our list?
- Can we expand the SBC newsletter to email more people?
- Many people don't generally go online a lot in relation to the council.
- Councillors do not have enough up to date information about their local area. Would be good to have an updatable information pack.
- Don't think councils engage with councillors well enough about things happening in our wards, so we can't help inform our residents. This needs to improve.
- Council is currently investigating an email newsletter system – there is a cost implication.
- We have Slough Alerts – costs only £1k a year, but it works – councillors rate this. Planning to do more in the new year to help people get more direct/targeted information
- What about an app for SBC? Our website is entirely mobile friendly so in effect that's our 'app'. Our website can report things fine, so no need for an app there.

From this discussion there emerged a link to work KP is undertaking in regards to developing the members bulletin and council-to-member-to-resident communications and information flow.

Communications

Kate P is working on a big internal communications plan:

- A key element is based, to some extent, on expansion of the Members' Bulletin;
- Coupled to this exploring idea of communication/distribution hubs.

E.g.

- Via faith-based organisations, where for example we ask Imams to give the proper advice re fasting and children.

- Eastern European parent governors – sought one via the local catholic church
- What do we do to engage with local religious leaders in order to leverage their influence/stamp of approval: Community notices distributed in places of worship etc
- One councillor has 55 WhatsApp groups, one or two for each street in his ward, Councillor can circulate messaging at the press of a button to about 2000 people. Another advantage of WhatsApp is you can informally poll people quite easily.
- Note - The member newsletter doesn't come into 'focused' inbox because it goes to multiple people.

KP: Comms team is keen to get better corporate information to members. Kate wants to change the members bulletin so that it can include the equivalent of a cascade – e.g. here is some info on a consultation, press releases or opinions, or whatever, and recruit Cllrs' efforts to assist with the dissemination and engagement of it.

Currently it is clear that councillors have different information, so we're not being consistent with residents. Do cllr like the above suggestion?

Kate P would welcome this group having an active role to play in designing this new approach to supporting member communications with residents.

Kate will work with Cllrs O'Kelly and Ajaib to funnel member feedback

Consultation

NB difference between statutory consultation and informal consultation. Doing the latter better and at an earlier stage in the process makes Statutory much easier.

DH: The Council has been trying to review its model of formal consultation.

There will be a new director of strategy, change and resident engagement starting in 2 months' time, so there is an opportunity to influence them and the new model of consulting.

What we do now:

There are some we have to do (Statutory) – like the corporate plan, equalities objectives etc. They're important, but they don't get a great deal of engagement.

People aren't that interested in responding re the budget!

We get lots of responses to are things people use every day like libraries consultations. In this case we use more mechanisms – focus groups, drop-ins, etc

We know we need to consult more and earlier to shape policy and ask why are we doing it? Check it's not tokenistic. Make sure the feedback will genuinely change policy and practice.

Ask when to do it (early as possible, this is easy)

Ask HOW we should do it

There are different models:

a. Centralised? One team runs every consultation

Is good because it's a lot of expertise needed to do it well

b. Devolved

Is good because people know about the subject matter. But results in variable quality, variable approaches across the organisation etc

c. Hub and spoke

Central small team with the expertise, who advise the subject matter experts who run their own consultations

London Borough of Kensington & Chelsea have provided some input for SBC team (they have done lots of work on this in wake of Grenfell disaster)

Learning from this – planning to use 'Citizen Space' which helps us communicate better through our website etc and coordinate the online side of things.

But we are at the place as a council of acknowledging that the model needs to change, but we've not done it yet, so councillors' views would be well timed.

Recommend support for the hub-and-spoke structure.

Discussion:

Members feedback from residents say consultations are tedious. They give up. Have to create a password etc etc. Same for planning. Councillor has to help people do it. So most residents give up, we need to make this more user friendly.

DH: The planning portal requires a login – this is the barrier. But our other consultation things we offer up, there is no password required.

DH: We're always going to need a mixed-methods approach to how we consult. People need to have lots of ways to talk to us, so that nobody is excluded for any reason.

We also need to accept that a proportion of residents simply do not need or want to engage with the council. A 2% response rate on a door drop is considered normal.

Why can't we listen to people's views on facebook, why do we have to direct them to our portal?

We like engagement which grew based on interest. Do you like this, yes/no. if you don't, would you like to tell us why?

It would be useful to help the consultation team learn about what the experience of people is who use the various engagement portals.

Can we ask on facebook?

Is the organisation settled on the hub and spoke methodology? It's how it's worked recently

Do we publish the results of consultations?

It's not good enough for the only feedback which residents get about a consultation to be buried in a council or cabinet report.

Note that the staff survey can't just be found by any officer easily.

Note that our consultation that's been launched on EDI etc is at the very bottom of the webpage, not at the top.

DH: Citizenspace has a 'you said we did' function in it. But this it not always used. So we should make sure this is always done in future. RBKC make sure this is always done within a week of a decision being made.

NB: How do we address it if the public say one thing and we do another. This is all about transparency, which is how we build trust!

Feedback re the CPZ carparking consultation event held in Chalvey. About 100 residents were complaining there had not been enough time for the consultation and they missed the date. Officers offered to allow late responses.

DH: These kind of things will happen if there's not a consistent approach followed across depts – so the proposed hub/spoke model could help cover it.

KP: This confirms that there is variation happening. Comms picked it up afterwards too.

Should have a step built into the standard consultation process which guarantees relevant councillors will be notified.

Note example of a planning consultation where the sign on the lamppost was hidden by foliage which the council hadn't cut. So residents launched a petition to say they had not been properly consulted.

DH: We tweet saying these are new/recent planning applications. But realise we don't send these direct to councillors.

DH to ask members to do some research and pass on the anecdotal experience of residents with respect to consultation. DH to suggest some key questions to ask perhaps. 2/3 task group members to work with Dave on this: Cllr Mohindra and either Cllr Mann/Hulme + Ramesh Kukar (Slough VCS) perhaps

NEXT STEPS

Work on Communications and Consultation to proceed immediately with aim to report 13 March (See below)

Interim officer/member meetings (via teams) on comms and consultation to be organised according to need by KP and DH

Two task group meetings: ME to set up in discussion with Chair.

The first one (6 March) more exploratory on the issue of democratic engagement – Alex and the following people to provide thinking, case studies etc

- Rebecca Curley – could help us a bit with input on the democratic engagement side…
- Anita Jan: Citizens panels and assemblies –in housing and has some experience of this – she does tenants' engagement
- Sally Kitson

The second (13 March): Kate will seek Task group members views on developing the bulletin so that there will be a template comms product to look at, and we've done our research on residents, to input to Kate's product and feedback what we've found and look for any more actions out of that.

DH will feedback work in relation to task group members' views / resident experience of Consultation.

Appendix C: Notes of 3rd meeting of Task Group

Apologies

Cllr Hulme and Ramesh Kukar (CVS)

The aim of this meeting: To bring evidence to councillors of 3 case studies representing different approaches to resident/stakeholder engagement.

1. ASC Co-Production Network (CPN), Sally Kitson: **Appendix A**

Sally and her team have worked hard to establish an informal recruitment process that enable selection of volunteers to better represent the various [protected] characteristics of service users and hard to reach groups.

ASC have realised that it is necessary to move away from expecting residents to come to us to feed in on issues, there is a need to reach out more, especially into settings which we would not normally hear from to promote the CPN role and recruit members. Working with the CVS is key as well as taking advantage of social media platforms.

The main challenge, at the moment is to bring the male experience to CPN.

There are currently 12 residents with direct experience of health and social care that form the network. Furthercommunity volunteers who are also 'experts by experience' are involved in the recently re-launched Adult Social Care steering groups, that oversee the newly developed strategies (Carers, Older People's, Learning Disabilities and Autism)

Coproduction Network volunteers are offered training to support them in their role to actively participate as members.

2. Community Development and Community Networks, Rebecca Curley: **Appendix B**

Rebecca was keen to reiterate that any approach to communities had to be more bespoke than in the past.

It was clear that community networks had the potential to offer a valuable conduit for the flow of information in both directions.

3. The Tenants' and Leaseholders Housing Board: **Anita Jan**

Slough Borough Council's Housing Service has recently updated its Resident Involvement Strategy. This is to ensure SBC meets the strengthened requirements of the Regulator for Social Housing; in line with the Social Housing Bill 2023. The strategy was approved by Cabinet in December 2024 and is about to be launched on 18 March.

The housing service has recently recruited Tim Blanc, an Independent Chair for the Resident Board. The board is an important part of the council's governance

structures. It is responsible for co-regulating, scrutinising, and influencing the Housing Service offer.

The board consists of 12 (currently 8) residents (nine tenants, three leaseholders) and the independent chair, the team are looking to recruit more members to bring the board up to full complement.

This is a statutory board of the council's tenants and leaseholders, modelled to some extent on the Scrutiny model. The board can investigate issues of concern to their community (e.g. repairs, grounds management) in relationship to people living in council housing (rented/leasehold).

In April 2024, Anita is to be joined by 3 officers, The council's housing stock consists of 7200 tenants/leaseholders. A significant amount of officer time will be spent on creating opportunities for the wider community to help shape services; as well as build capacity of the board members' to be effective in their role.

In addition to support to the board, a monthly housing newsletter is circulated online (approx. 2000 people). Housing has recently started printing a number of hard copies to ensure we are sharing this with residents who may not have online access.

Possible task group recommendations:

- A list of services supplied by Bex's team, with self-service instructions for how councillors can refer residents;
- Councillors need a guide, or a list of the key websites which they could look up themselves;
- Councillors' surgeries – if members wanted to focus their surgeries on a particular issue at a particular time, and members wanted to publicise that, officers may be able to come and support you when you do this. Not necessarily officers – maybe you could have links to eg BabyBank, via your surgeries. If you know that something is a bit of a need in your area, invite another organisation along to your surgery with you. When you do, you can ask for their contact details, and ask if they're okay with being added to your WhatsApp to keep them updated.
- Recommend that a member development session is put on for all councillors helping them learn about how to make these connections locally.
- Maybe Councillors aren't aware enough that the members bulletin exists.
- We need to publicise the Community Directory to all councillors and officers.
- There should be more work done on customer standards, and they should be applied through all of our contact with residents. Current standards go back to 2013?
- Should reinstate a forum of officers across the council (and partners) which helps ensure there is a cohesive and joined-up approach to consultation across the council, as well as keeping an eye on consultation standards.
- The council needs to improve the way it provides feedback to people who input into consultations.

Appendix A: ASC Co-Production Network

THE SLOUGH CO-PRODUCTION NETWORK - APPROACH

➢ **Coproduction Network (CPN) set up in 2019** to ensure **local residents** with direct experience of health and adult social care **have a real say** in what services should look like.

➢ Local residents with very **different lived experiences work alongside senior SBC ASC staff and other partners** including health and Healthwatch to support the development of policies, strategies and services.

➢ The CPN is **very committed group -** agreed together how it works through a ' **charter**'.

➢ It has **strengthened** over time and profile has increased.

➢ The commissioning team has developed a **strategic commissioning framework which outlines our approach–** CPN has a key role in commissioning projects – ie volunteers part of project groups to support the development of service specifications and involvement in tender panels

THE SLOUGH CO-PRODUCTION NETWORK - EXAMPLES OF WORK

Supported designing accessible leaflets and information for residents

- **Self-neglec**t and **Direct Payments** – raise awareness/promote

- Winter blues **campaign material -** promoting services.

Involved as **active participants with SBC, NHS and Slough SVC in deciding the allocation of the 'One Slough Fund'** to voluntary sector groups in line local aims and objectives highlighted within Slough's Health and Wellbeing and Corporate plans.

Part of the **recommissioning of voluntary and community sector service contract** –help design what the service should look like and participated in provider validation meetings prior to contract award

Supporting Advocacy recommissioning . CPN volunteers part of partnership project with social workers from Learning Disability, Mental health and localities teams and NHS representatives. Reviewed current service specification and designed new outcome/ service specification for the new advocacy service. Volunteers part of the tender evaluation panel

THE SLOUGH CO-PRODUCTION NETWORK - EXAMPLES OF WORK CONTINUED

o **Worked with Healthwatch** to gain insight into the experience of Slough resident's access to their GP. This work was incorporated in April 2023 report titled **What Matters Most**

o **Involved in the recruitment of Adult Social care staff,** agreeing interview questions and sitting on panels to help decide who should be appointed (Coproduction lead, Carers Support and Development Officer) and led stakeholder panel for senior posts – recent ASC Director of Operations

o **CPN volunteers led workshop with ASC for local residents** to help support the recruitment of more volunteers. More residents have joined us

o **Supported the review of Oak House–** Part quality conversations with residents, families and staff to get feedback on experiences at the service. We worked with commissioner and provided feedback to help inform the commissioning options.

EXAMPLES OF RECENT ENGAGEMENT WITH RESIDENTS

- Community Network Forum
- Co production recruitment workshop
- Quality Conversations at Oak House
- Carers Strategy
- Older People Strategy
- Learning Disability Strategy
- Autism Strategy
- Carers Rights Day
- Accelerated Reform Fund
- Substance misuse seminar
- Executive function / Brain injury resource pack developed in response to serious case reviews (safeguarding)
- Substance misuse – managing two national grants including monitoring and performance reporting to DHSC on a quarterly basis

Carers Rights Day – 23 November 2023

Slough

12/12/2023   4

Coproduction Video.pptx

Slough

12/12/2023   5

Appendix B: Community Networks

Slough Poverty Forum

Launched in June '22- monthly meetings with representatives from voluntary, community, statutory, business and private sector to address cost-of-living challenges

Outcomes

Capacity building
Sharing intelligence
Repair Café Slough
Cost-of-living resource pack
Problem-solving for groups
Building links and networks
Community Support Café
Bridging gap between sectors

Aligned and united approach of support for residents around cost-of-living

Ensuring overlaps in delivery are considered

Weekly Community Development Drop-Ins

Community Directory

A partnership approach to developing and expanding existing website into a community directory meeting needs of residents and partners Slough Community Directory – Activities and services to keep Slough residents fit and healthy (sloughhealth.org)

Outcomes

- Free platform for community groups
- Free platform for residents to search for activities, groups and support in their area
- Linking groups and partners
- SP and GPs resource to utilise for benefit of patients
- User-friendly

- Self-sustainable
- Builds on self-help, prevention and resilience
- Trusted resource
- In progress with capacity to change functionality

Volunteering and community work

Ways to already engage

- Early Help also do the Slough Information and Services Guide Slough Information and Services Guide (sloughfamilyservices.org.uk)
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Slough Street Guardian scheme – pilot launching for the Town Centre with view to roll out borough-wide – poster attached
- Link with Parish Councils
- Link with NAGS

- Link with existing groups such as Chalvey Community Partnership, Britwell Community Forum, Langley Forum, West Cippenham Tenants and Residents Association
- Slough CVS volunteering Slough CVS – Slough Council for Voluntary Service

Case study: Slough Street Guardian vision

Town Centre pilot to roll-out March 2024 through Slough Community Transport and Shop Mobility

Appendix D: Feedback from Councillors in response to task group members' survey.

1.   Member Information needs/Weekly member bulletin:

The idea behind this information is that councillors should share with their residents information relevant to them

An emailed monthly list of "links" to councillors

Planning applications: For example, planning applications are a source of pain when residents don't notice a yellow planning notice and then get up in arms when building is started.

Road works/disruptions: Letting residents know about Road works notice gives the appearance that there is a plan in place, and someone is in control

Planned Council works (road markings, potholes, hedge trimming, tree/parks maintenance: Planned council works again gives the appearance that there is a plan in place, and someone is in control.

Issues with recycling collections, policy reminders for recycling: Issues with recycling and bins are still going on with no clarity on a remedy, More resident guidance would help. It is also noticeable that rubbish is blown all over the town and street cleaning has disappeared, will it ever come back?

Fly tipping reports: Fly tipping is a disgusting feature of every large town. Maidenhead is possibly even worse than Slough. It would be good for councillors to communicate what action the council is taking, how much it costs the residents, who are the culprits etc.

Resident Complaints: A report on customer complaints is a normal part of every large organisation and should be public domain.

Press releases could be shared with councillors at the same time as they are posted, I catch some on Facebook and repost them to share but I am not using face book during the day

Generally, members do find the Bulletin quite useful as a prompt of upcoming meetings and agendas. I think this can be used to share more wider information with members like information on complaints, fly tipping etc…

The format can be frustrating on a mobile device so this needs to be looked at across all browsers.

Customer Contact Centre performance is it possible to have this broken down to the types of calls they are receiving. E.g. Bins, Parking issues, Children's Services etc? Is there any ward intel that can be included?

Social media:

There are issues which get to social media or the press before we, as councillors, get to see them. It is frustrating to have to be on the back foot sometimes.

The other thing is that bad news propagates quickly, it would be helpful if there was a weekly social media summary which was sent via email fact checking statements and giving the councils official position. This could be added to the weekly bulletin.

WhatsApp:

We see some council services have started using this more with individual community groups to broadcast messages of upcoming events. All members have council/personnel smart phones and use this platform so something to review.

Old Citizen Magazine

This one of the best communication devices to residents that we had and It would be good to see something like that happen again once or twice a year and then be supplemented with an online version which might be updated perhaps once a quarter or monthly basis. I think our web/online platform Jardu probably has ability to produce this digital piece**.**

Other:

Can we have member information about training and mini briefs in a stand-alone sperate bulletin or via another platform so that members can easily access as when needed for self-learning and development.

information of all the pick ticket items that will be happening in their wards, this is a bit patchy…for example we get emails of planning apps but not on other majors works that are about to happen in a particular ward.

I would love to have a Councillors hub, a landing page on which there could be links to all the information requested by councillors

We could have a section on

- Constitution, for reference
- Meetings calendar, agenda and minutes - for review
- Cabinet decisions by date and items coming up for decision
- Member training - past and upcoming
- Discussion forum in topical items
- A section to raise questions of the leadership but limited to the conservative alliance
- Byte sized topic of the week - something new to share from the business
- Press releases going out in the councils name
- Call stats comming into the building, response rate,KPI's
- Message from CLT
- And so on……….

Once the hub is in place, we can add to it. The hub would be the landing page which each councillor laptop would be taken to on logging in, so each councillor would start thier day with an opportunity to browse what is happening in council

 I would like to add that having timely information on road closures and temporary traffic lights is crucial. Collaborating with relevant departments or implementing a system to provide councillors with this data in advance could facilitate proactive communication with residents. Sharing such updates on social media platforms can enhance community awareness and engagement, benefiting both councillors and residents**.**

2. SBC Consultations

- In general, when a survey is put out for residents, they can be unwieldy to reply to and often don't ask the right questions, for example when residents are offered say three choices but in fact like none of them and there is no way to indicate that (this was one direct feedback from the children's centres changes a year or so ago).
- Improved advanced notice of these would be useful and to be planned not across periods when people may not be around like XMAS type periods..
- Officers from SBC get in touch either directly and send over their consultations to disseminate through Slough cvs networks and emails. There are also SBC officers, who work with SCVS, who will often send over from other departments.
- I don't think SBC have asked us to share any information about their online portal.
- If we see a consultation for residents on SBC social media channels, we will share them without being asked.
- How often residents get involved with consultations? Very Rarely - maybe once a year at the most!
- Which 'channels', e.g. online Planning Portal, online Citizen Space, in person, through councillors, do they use to express their opinions? If it is a survey that is quick and with easy tick box options to select.
- What can be difficult when they try and respond to a consultation? Time and relevance of the consultation with regards to if the issue has an impact on my life.
- Do residents hear a reply from the council if they do respond to a consultation? I can't recall - so probably not
- What would make it easier for residents, and more meaningful? Same as above has to be relevant... no point asking me about changes in Langley if I live in Britwell for example.

Examples of engagement sites

PLANNING PORTAL WINDSOR: **https://consult.rbwm.gov.uk/kse/**

Planning Portal of Surrey: **https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/land-planning-and-development/planning/applications-register/process/have-your-say**

The council lets itself down time and time again in consultations.

If the council decides to go ahead with a consultation exercise, it's important to make sure we give people enough time to respond. We also need to make sure that there is sufficient time to analyse the results, evaluate the process and consider residents views before any decisions are decided about the next steps.

- The length of time needed will vary depending on:
- the consultation channels selected
- the ability of consultees to participate (for example, if they have special needs)
- the time of year (for example school holidays) – election periods should be avoided
- the level/number of responses we are seeking or expecting
- if other local events are taking place Mela, Local Fairs, faith events etc. (can we use this to our advantage)?

Best practice suggests we should plan for up to six to 12 weeks for a consultation exercise. We should also be aware of the legal requirements for statutory consultations.

Whom to consult

We will need to identify the people or groups who are likely to be affected by, or have an interest in, the focus of the consultation. Will the exercise be open to lots of different people or will it be restricted to a certain group (e.g. service users at a day centre or bus users/road users for a bus lane)?

Although It is unrealistic to consult everyone about everything, We should strive to achieve a representative cross-section of views to ensure that we understand differing views within the community. If we have a target group in mind, it may be possible to consult with this entire group depending on its size.

When selecting whom to consult, we should think about the type of information that we can expect to receive. For example, individual users can give a snapshot of the service as they have experienced it, while non-users might give a relatively impartial but possibly uninformed view. Representative groups can offer good knowledge about a service, and their views might be stronger than those of the general public who might offer more general perceptions about service provision. We may want to set a target number of responses you wish to reach, broken-down by certain characteristics (e.g. gender, age and ethnicity). This will be beneficial when evaluating the effectiveness of the consultation exercise.

It is important that your consultation is representative of your communities. There will be many local variations but some of the groups you may wish to consider are:

- older people
- young people (consent may be required from a parent/guardian)
- people from different ethnic backgrounds
- people with disabilities (steps may need to be taken to gain informed consent)

- people on low incomes
- faith groups
- Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, and Transgender people
- migrant workers
- travellers
- homeless people.

We may need to ask participants to provide a small amount of information about themselves (their age, gender etc.) to enable you to make a judgement about representativeness.

Ways to consult

There are lots of ways to consult local people; the scale of which should be proportional to the potential impacts of the proposal or decision being taken. Some methods are 'quantitative' and others are 'qualitative'. Each has advantages and disadvantages. The method we choose will largely depend on the type of questions we want answered (and the subject matter, if it is a sensitive subject, for instance).

Some of the methods we might want to use.

Method	Channels	Other channels
Self-completion surveys	Post Text messaging	Social media Online
Telephone interviewing	Telephone interviewer	Computer-aided
Face-to-face surveys or interviews	Door knocking On the street Focus groups Sounding boards	Citizens' panel/jury Service user panels Workshops
Feedback forms or comment boxes or show of hands	Open days or drop-in events Consultation days, exhibitions and roadshows	Community forums Public meetings
Online venues	Chat rooms	Online forums or discussion groups

.

When thinking about what method to use it's important to think about what you want the exercise to achieve, the resources you have available to conduct the consultation, and whether you have all the data that you need to be able to conduct a statistically robust consultation.

You should also make sure that your consultation is accessible to all those who wish to participate, which might mean identifying and overcoming any barriers to their involvement. For example, offer a range of dates and times of day for events (some older residents may not wish to be out at night and working people might not be able

to get to a daytime event). Remember that different groups will have different and specific needs depending on language barriers, literacy ability, access, cultural differences and different levels of understanding.

Communicating the results is critical.

it's important to communicate the findings to our internal and external audiences. Developing key messages to summarise findings will help stakeholders understand the outcomes of the consultation and what the next steps will be.

it is important to clearly articulate whom you consulted, the methods you used and how the information gathered will inform your future work.

If possible, we should show that all opinions and suggestions have been taken into account and explain if there are reasons why it hasn't been possible to address all of the issues raised by the people you consulted.

The results and the outcomes of the consultation should be published as soon as they are available and you should make sure that the format you present your results in is suitable for all your audiences.

The council should also tell people about any changes made as a result. It is also good practice to have a dedicated consultation section on our website.

Self-Evaluating your consultation.

Evaluation is an important aspect of any consultation. At the end of each consultation we should ask ourselves:

- did your consultation achieve its objectives?
- did you use the right methods?
- did you reach your required response rate?
- did you reach all your desired groups?
- how did consultees contribute to the outcomes?
- did they understand why they were involved?
- did they receive adequate feedback?
- were there any unexpected outcomes?
- was the process cost-effective?
- what has changed as a result?
- what would you do differently next time?
- who might find what you have learned useful and how can it be shared with them?
- Evaluating your consultation exercise will help to measure how effective the council is at running consultations and assess whether we need to make any changes to your processes.

I detail below further information from my colleagues with their recent experience with Destination Farnham Rd scheme consultations. This is a very recent consultation and is for a fairly big scheme in a key area of Slough town.

Their findings are below:

- We made a number of observations with regards to the typical difficulties the council has in engaging residents and stake holders.
- We spoke to Mars who have approx. 1000/1200 staff on-site and many use the Farnham Road, however senior management were totally unaware of the scheme and that it was being consulted upon.
- We spoke to approx. 300 residents over two weekends canvassing them individually over their thoughts and collated this in a report to officers.
- In the past we have been told "councillors" opinion are marked as individual feedback. Which as councillor is frustrating as residents are very reluctant to engage.
- We had a number of drop in session run by officers, however many of the officers hadn't even visited the actual site. Resulting in stake holders like Mr Ali from Checkout conducting his own walkabout with officers.
- We also note that very nice booklets were printed with a questionnaire on the back but the drop in areas made no provision for drop box for people to drop them off at the leisure.
- The trouble is that residents don't want post such paper copies we make no provision on paper drop ins.
- More generally the online version was useful for those that have access.
- But for those that don't we're missing out on a huge cohort of resident important feedback.
- Our walkabout achieved a lot of interest, and we would encourage councillors who are impacted to get involved.
- I should add we still don't know the return rate for the scheme from residents.

Appendix E: Notes from meeting between Cllr Mohindra (Chair) & ASC Co-production Network (CPN)

Date 20^Th March 2023
Present:

- Cllr Mohindra
- Marcia Wright CPN Volunteer
- Sue Benford CPN Volunteer
- Gaye Jeynes CPN Volunteer
- Bestina Bukori Adult Social Care Coproduction and Engagement Lead
- Sally Kitson Partnership Manager (note taker)

Introductions /Purpose of meeting:

Cllr Mohindra outlined that a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group has been set up to build trust and improve residents' experience of consultation and engagement. He was there keen to speak directly with residents to understand their current experiences of engagement and communication the Council.

CPN volunteers were invited to be part of this as local residents that are actively involved with the Council.

Summary of discussions

CPN volunteers were very pleased to have the opportunity to meet with Cllr Mohindra for constructive discussions in helping re-built trust. They were keen to state that they recognise some of the current issues are not new or indeed unique to Slough Borough Council.

Communication was a big theme that was identified by the volunteers from own direct experience as residents as well as listening to others through their contacts/networks in the community. They see that improving communication is key to re-building trust. Some of the issues raised included:

- SBC staff not answering telephone;
- SBC staff not responding to emails;
- Silo working between SBC departments;
- SBC staff losing information which means residents have delays in getting matters dealt with promptly;
- Overreliance on on-line information and assumptions that residents are IT literate when many are not. This means that many are excluded from accessing information or resources (eg Blue Badge)
- The SBC Citizen newsletter being delivered to households was a seen as a useful resource and way for residents getting information. This was cut following S114

- Loss of 'front facing office' for residents – Landmark Place seen as a huge loss to residents when it closed. The 3 hubs are a challenge for some residents to access. Volunteers would like to see OH as a place where residents can get information /support;
- Loss of services - day services and lunch clubs since covid;
- Language barriers in Slough makes communication challenging;
- Citizens Advice Bureau not offering face to face support;
- Concerns that not all staff adopt a compassionate approach when dealing with members of the public – they believe this may be under more pressure with recruitment cuts; and
- More proactive approach to communicating good news stories /opportunities - Volunteers recognise that there are lots of positives about Slough. Need to consider how this can be shared/promoted in a more coordinated way

The group had lots to say about housing. This included:

- Wanting to see SBC take a more proactive approach to filling empty properties – they felt this is hindered as a result of the number of housing allocation officer posts being reduced.
- Repairs and property upkeep slow – a more proactive/responsive approach to avoid that properties becoming beyond the point of repair or more serious maintenance required
- Re-establishment of tenants/resident association meetings as opportunity to engage directly with residents.
- Carers fobs not working (managed by housing) which means families finding it difficult to access properties for the person they support .

Consultation – volunteers have suggestions as to how this can be improved.

- Gave example of a recent consultation event stating venues and timings not practical – not on bus route and lack of parking
- Need to ensure residents are involved from the outset in processes
- Consultation needs to take a range of formats.

Experience of being CPN volunteers

- Really valuing being involved in the network and involved in decisions
- Talked about advocacy recommissioning and having a real say/influence on design of service and selecting provider
- Helping ensure residents get clear information. They gave example of being involved in designing the Direct Payment and Self Neglect leaflets – able to share their own experiences about what information residents really need and is pertinent to them
- Want to be involved in discussions / decisions early on
- Valuing opportunities to influence and shape the autism strategy consultation – would like to see more opportunities across the council where residents are involved in methods of consultation.