

## **Draft Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy – Summary of Consultation**

### **Online Survey**

There were 88 responses to the online survey of which 91.7% described themselves as residents, 9.7% as representatives of the VCS and 6.9% as other. Other included an officer from Thirteen Group, an employee, an independent voluntary community support provider, a villager and a resident and VCS representative. 98.6% of those taking part said that they were responding as individuals.

When asked about the vision of the strategy comments included:

- There is a need to get out, meet and listen to the community.
- We need to develop and improve our communications particularly our social media links
- It is important to involve children and young people in this work.
- Community centres are important.
- There is a need to be realistic about what can be done and we should ensure what we propose is achievable.
- We should encourage people from different backgrounds to understand each other's beliefs and what's important to them – this could be done through Council hosted workshops for representatives to share their experiences with others.

When asked whether we had identified the right actions to focus on to improve how we involve and listen to our communities 82.9% answered yes. Comments about anything else that the Council should be doing under this priority included:

- Consultation should be early in the process so that residents don't feel that we are just paying lip service or ticking a box.
- We should explain specifically how we intend to listen to communities.
- Be seen and listen to people's views.
- People want to see action not talking.
- There is a role for partners/partnerships in this activity – we need to link to others like schools, colleges, police, fire and health.
- We need to communicate / promote this work better – one proposal was to have a central notice board in Middleton Grange to display new information/plans/proposals.
- The role of Councillors in engaging with their wards and responding to people is important.
- Training for council staff that are not used to working with residents/communities.
- Use positive language rather than start on a negative 'rebuilding trust'.
- Concerns around the challenge of doing this and also about wasting time and money to do it.

When asked whether we had identified the right actions to focus on to improve how we support community action 74.0% answered yes. Comments about anything else that the Council should be doing under this priority included:

- Should refer to the help that partners such as Thirteen and Home Group can play in supporting community actions.

- Council should have points of contact to offer support and guidance around this activity.
- Council could provide technical assistance (IT) or act as a focal point where skilled individuals could donate their services for the benefit of the community.
- Use existing residents groups as ambassadors to areas where such groups don't already exist so that the whole town is covered and they feed up to wider action groups (north/south).
- Bring local groups together to share ideas and successes.
- Listen to everyone, not just the moaners.
- Concerns were raised regarding resources – need to be realistic and make things simple.
- Concerns that the Council should be doing this improvement work not expecting communities to do it.

When asked whether we had identified the right actions to focus on to improve how we build strong and inclusive communities 75.7% answered yes. Comments about anything else that the Council should be doing under this priority included:

- Using other approaches to engage households such as questionnaires as round table forums might scare some people away.
- Include reference to trust as well as building understanding between communities.
- Actively encourage young people to take part.
- Provide more myth-busting information.
- Use social media.
- Listen and act.
- Need a holistic approach – people of all backgrounds, similar and different.
- Concerns around anti-social behaviour.

### **Community Forums**

The draft Strategy was presented to the Community Forums on the 18<sup>th</sup> October and the following comments were made:

- Query about how the commitments in the strategy would be met given the staffing reductions across Neighbourhood Services and acknowledgement of the difficulties faced by the Council in light of budget cuts – it was acknowledged that reduced resources were an issue but that the strategy was designed to help residents and recognise the role played by the Voluntary Sector.
- It was questioned whether it was compulsory for ward councillors to attend their ward surgeries – it was noted that they should be there if possible but that individual ward councillors could make their own separate arrangements.
- It was suggested that Councillors might go back into schools to discuss the strategy with the Children – it was agreed that this would be looked into.

### **Safer Hartlepool Partnership**

The draft Strategy was presented to the Safer Hartlepool Partnership on the 20<sup>th</sup> October and the following comments were made:

- It was recommended that the Strategy include reference to the Centre for Independent Living as a basis for key consultation and the Council's commitment to the Tees Valley of Sanctuary.

### **Learning Disability Partnership Board**

The draft Strategy was presented to the Learning Disability Partnership Board on the 24<sup>th</sup> November. They agreed with the priorities and added:

- Listen to people
- Give people choice
- Take a targeted approach – don't assume one way of engagement suits everyone
- Make things easy to understand
- Go out to people – don't expect them to come to you
- Work to develop community champions – deliver training to them
- Have neighbourhood reps as volunteers on Council
- If you ask us about something then do something with it or show us how you've listened
- Use questionnaires
- Don't just do consultations 9-5 Monday to Friday – be more flexible
- Help people be a good neighbour – show them what it means?
- Learn from others good work – have other councils done something similar – can you learn from that?
- Community not just about where people live – communities of interest as well
- Go into schools
- Focus on what is good not what is bad
- Don't just want to be with people with a disability – more interested in being with people who have similar interests

### **Your Say, Our Future – Public**

Discussion around social action and community engagement, which are key elements of the Strategy, took place at the public Your Say, Our Future event on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November. The following comments were made:

- Recognised that the Council's role is a leadership one – to create the conditions and environment to enable the VCS to come forward and deliver social action.
- Identified the need to communicate better around this work using social media, video/audio technology such as vlogs and you tube channels. This should include promoting links to other organisations and promoting what other people (who are doing it for themselves) are doing – role models.
- Noted that engagement is the starting point and that people need to see the impact of their opinions on what is done in the town.
- Should look at staff volunteering - 5 hours a year could make a big difference.
- Put Hartlepool first and Council second.
- As well as looking at what works we should look at what didn't work, why not and what we will do differently – experiment until we get it right like Hartlepool Action Lab example.

- Opportunity around Community Organisers funding – training people to take control of their own lives and taking action.

### **Your Say, Our Future – Staff Sounding Board**

Discussion around social action and community engagement, which are key elements of the Strategy, took place at the Your Say, Our Future Staff Sounding Board on the 28<sup>th</sup> November. The following comments were made:

- Recognise the need for the Council to support or make it easier/clearer for those in the VCS who are looking to host events which will be good for the town e.g. Wintertide Festival, Headland Carnival etc. This could be through a single point of contact in the Council for events.
- Need to recognise those who put time in to improve the town – award from the Mayor and an event/photo opportunity.
- Would welcome the introduction of a staff volunteering scheme – some events which contribute to council priorities will struggle to go ahead without volunteers e.g. Big Lime Triathlon.