**Town Deal Comms and Engagement Work**

As our work begins to move forward it is clear that communication, engagement and the involvement of the residents of the Borough of Hartlepool is a vital if we are to be successful. The purpose of this document poses ideas about how we develop a comprehensive approach to reaching into our communities as we progress the work. If we are to continue with our work in a transparent and meaningful way we will need to:

* provide information
* listen to views
* be available to respond to questions and themes which emerge
* host civil debates and conversations
* provide opportunities for covid safe face to face work
* Be clear when our work is formal consultation and when it is wider / deeper engagement work

We need to be clear and think about this work in two different streams, communication and engagement, they are separate but interrelated activities.

The recommendation of the Communication and Engagement subgroup are as follows:

1. We need to focus on standard communication via our website, press releases and personal contact, as we have been doing. This should be undertaken at the whole programme level. This is not a one-off activity and will be required throughout the life of the programme and the 5 projects. Activities will need to be regular, rhythmical and brief. This approach should be complementary to our continued use of our transparent approach to publicly accessible meeting minutes on our website. Table 1 details our current recommendations regarding programme level communication.
2. Most engagement work will be project specific and undertaken by the project team supported by the Board Liaison member. However, we have identified that our engagement with children and young people needs attention at the programme level. We recommend that this is now an important and urgent piece of work. There may be other groups that require specific engagement work as we move forward. This will be addressed if / when this arises.
3. At the level of the 5 projects, we should focus on active engagement with resident/ citizen, our default position should not be statutory consultation, but ongoing , well timed engagement. Different groups, residents and people will have an interest and a passion in specific projects. Engagement should focus around getting the right people involved.

Each project should consider the establishment of a ‘People’s panel’ *(working name only)* of between 6 – 12 residents who will lead the engagement work with the project team and the board liaison members.

People would be recruited to the panel by a ‘call to action’, some TD project boards have held formal recruitment campaigns to assure diversity. We will also ask the local councillors to get involved in promoting the call. We would need to ensure the panels are supported with induction and development as they will be champions of the work and working in a civic capacity.

1. We will use an engagement platform to ensure high quality engagement tools are deployed, enabling residents to get involved. Hartlepool Borough Council has recently purchased an engagement platform which has all the functionality that is needed. Engagement platforms being used by other Town Deal Boards can be seen in the resources section.

We will need to keep methods and approaches to engagement based upon the evidence of what works in a 21st century environment. We have had a short conversation about the need to reach into some groups and places in the Borough, taking the communication and engagement work to people, rather than expecting people to come to the projects. Part of our conversation included the use of community vehicles which could be used for such work, an example from education is cited in the resources section.

1. We should employ a part time community engagement practitioner to provide dedicated time and focus to ensure high quality engagement and support the Board in its interventions. We should consider developing a secondment / paid internship to this post to grow talent, keep energy high and spread the skill base about public engagement. Details of the possible focus for this role are at appendix 1.

*Dr Maxine Craig*

*(On behalf of the Communication and Engagement Subgroup)*

14.07.21

**Resources :**

* Example of good practice - Engagement at the project level, if you click on step 4 and scroll down you can view how residents can be involved including in ideas generation and also participatory budgeting:<https://newhamco-create.co.uk/en/projects/affordable-workspace-3-1>
* Promotional bus to visit communities <https://www.promotionalbus.co.uk/promotional-vehicles/news/Linc-Higher-Education-Promotion-Tour/>

Table 1: Standard programme level communication

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Timeframe** | **Possible approach with rationale** |
|  |  |  |
|  | **AFTER EACH BOARD MEETING** |  |
| 1. | Publishing of minutes on our website |  |
| 2. | Production of short video clip to share the main news | This work could be undertaken by various members of the board. In this format the messages could be shared on all social media platforms.  In this work we should seek transparency around progress, timescales and any challenges which are being faced.  This work could be used by all local ward councillors in their own communication with their residents.  We could also offer these clips into care facilities across the town to keep residents up to date. |
|  |  |  |
|  | **INTERVENTION TO TAKE PLACE 6 / 8 WEEKLY** | Often a monthly rhythm is too frequent and six / eight weekly offers a little bit more space for work to progress. This would need to be monitored depending on progress. |
| 3. | Town Deal Talk and Walk | We could offer an opportunity for residents to walk with us around the route of the work whilst we share the story of the work.  We could also make use of the town’s expertise in Virtual Reality and explore how VR can be used for those not able / willing to access the walks.  This face-to-face walk makes board members available to meet with interested residents in a covid safe way and could bring the work to life. The responsibility for this could be that 2 board members work together for each walk. As with any of these approaches they should be used as a piece of action research to see if they work and are useful. Again, we could ask Local Councillors and officers to get involved as a way of deepening our approaches to working alongside residents. We should offer walkers a drink at the end of our walk and support local businesses by purchasing from them. This will need budget. |
| 4. | Virtual meetings (via team or zoom) | Scheduling a virtual Q and A would enable us to reach into our communities. We could ask people to pose their questions prior to the event but be online to discuss their points. Clearly this would need careful design and facilitation but moves away from static forms of Q and A  If the meeting is kept to 30 minutes it might be attractive to residents. Again, all approaches should be reviewed. |
| 5. | Update for Economic Forum and other business-related groups in the town. | This would be a specific business update or we could alert the business community to the updated website. |

Appendix one:

**Focus of the Town Deal Engagement practitioner’s role**

To support the Hartlepool Town Deal board with all communication and engagement work.

To work as a bridge to the HBC Communication team, on issues related to the TD

To work alongside the Engagement subgroup leads to ensure a high-quality plan of engagement interventions are deployed.

To design, develop, implement and evaluate the engagement plan

To work using leading edge, behavioural science approaches to public engagement.

To manage the budget associated with engagement interventions, as agreed by the project groups and the TD Board.

To prepare reports and evaluations as required.