

**REPORT TO:** Stockport Partnership Board

**REPORT OF:** Stronger Communities Partnership

**DATE:** 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2010

**SUBJECT:** 'A Stronger VOICE: A Stronger PLACE'  
**A comprehensive community engagement strategy for Stockport**

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**1. Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Stockport Partnership Board with a copy of the draft community engagement strategy and to allow any final comments to be made prior to the document being adopted by the Board.

**2. Background**

In September 2008 the Stockport Partnership reviewed the remit of the Stronger Communities Partnership to include the lead on community empowerment and to 'Develop robust community engagement mechanisms that inform and feed into decision making processes across the Stockport Partnership'.

Since then a multi-agency sub-group of the Stronger Communities Partnership, with membership drawn from the statutory and third sectors and from the engagement leads across the thematic partnerships, has worked to develop an overall community engagement strategy that provides a shared strategic framework across the family of partnerships.

The draft strategy was endorsed by the Stronger Communities Partnership at their meeting in December and is being brought to the Stockport Partnership Board for final sign-off.

**3. Summary of strategy**

The strategy contains the following:

- A clear, ambitious vision developed by local residents - ***Stockport people working together to make a difference for our community – "As good as it can go!"***
- Statements of commitment for the Stockport Partnership:
  - a) The Stockport Partnership is committed to being led by the people of Stockport to make the quality of life in Stockport better and will treat people fairly and as individuals, regardless of their race, gender, age, ability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or socioeconomic status;

- b) The Stockport Partnership is committed to asking, listening to the views of people in Stockport, understanding what they are telling us, and acting on those views to make a positive difference;
  - c) The Stockport Partnership is committed to providing the best possible information and communications in the best possible ways to promote community spirit and maximise the engagement and empowerment of local people.
- Shared principles for engagement (based on those agreed by the Stockport Partnership in 2004) embedded within a strategic framework
  - Common aims drawn from across all the partnerships within Stockport, articulated as three strategic objectives with outcomes:
    1. **A Stronger Voice:** Communities are engaged and empowered to bring about positive change
    2. **A Stronger Place:** Quality services that reflect and respond to the needs, aspirations and priorities of local communities
    3. Underpinned by **Excellent Communications:** Our communities are confident that their views are heard and that they are making a difference
  - A performance section that identifies how each of these outcomes will be achieved and how we will know that we have made a difference.

#### 4. **Implications for thematic partnerships**

It is respectfully acknowledged that there are significant programs of engagement activity in several of the thematic partnerships. This new strategy is not intended to replace those but to complement them, provide context, add value in terms of a shared, common approach and overcome criticisms that have been expressed about a lack of co-ordination of engagement activity in the borough.

The strategy has been worked up with the involvement of colleagues from across the thematic partnerships and has been circulated to the thematic partnership boards for comment. A delivery plan is being developed to support the implementation of the strategy and there will be aspects of it that require the co-operation of relevant officers and partnerships in order to be successful.

#### 5. **Performance and other implications**

The community engagement strategy is a vital component of Stockport's ability to respond to the statutory Duty to Involve. It also addresses the issues raised in the CAA report highlighting that our approach to engagement needs to be better co-ordinated.

There are relevant aspects of performance that need to be improved:

- NI 4 – the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their local area has declined to 30% in 2008 from 35% in 2007
- 31% of people felt well informed about how to get involved in decision making in 2008 compared to 43% in 2006.

Some key components of the delivery plan to meet our Duty to Involve and improve on these indicators include developing the community infrastructure that facilitates involvement in the work of the partnership and developing a new online engagement portal that will enable both better co-ordinated engagement activity and new opportunities for local people to engage. Failure to deliver on these projects will have a negative impact both on performance and level of co-ordination.

## **6. Recommendations**

The Stockport Partnership Board is asked to

- Agree the vision, statements of commitment, principles and strategic objectives in the strategy, set out in section 3 of the report above.
- Adopt the draft community engagement strategy on behalf of the wider partnership, subject to any amendments it wishes to be made.

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