

Appendix C

Evolving City-Wide Engagement Strategy

A city-wide engagement strategy is being developed for the Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise, which will be proposed to her by December 2015. It will propose a new approach to engagement to achieve the goal of building sustainable ways of working that achieve collaborative relationships amongst the public, elected members and public services.

It is proposed that we trial and practice the emerging engagement approach through the Connecting Communities programme. Doing this will help the Council to develop a better understanding about how citizens and communities want to be involved in shaping and delivering public services in Coventry. The Connecting Communities will impact on communities across the city and is a prime opportunity to practice more collaborative and transparent engagement techniques and build trust amongst citizens, elected members and officers.

The emerging city-wide engagement approach will include working collaboratively with citizens simultaneously across each of these four layers:

1. **In local neighbourhoods:** We will work with citizens to find and use engagement tools that are most suited to the area and will:
 - Encourage contributions from quieter voices
 - Enable vulnerable groups to get involved
 - Build upon what is already there - the communities skills, aspirations, existing community resources
 - Help to shift the relationship between officers, ward councillors and citizens towards co-production where collaboration is the norm, as opposed to the council 'doing to' or 'doing things for' people.

Tools could include asset mapping, participatory budgeting and appreciative enquiry, which have been proven to be effective in some areas of the city. We will trial different face to face and digital methods to create community networks.

2. **Across the city:** We will draw upon and expand the network of contacts held by the Council and partner organisations to conduct city-wide deep conversations with citizens about issues that are important to them. We will use techniques such as citizens panels. The first topic will be the purpose of and vision for the city centre (as requested by participants of the citizens panel included in the combined authority engagement programme).
3. **In organisations:** We will support employees and elected members to use digital engagement tools and community engagement techniques, especially for drawing potentially excluded groups and quieter voices into public participation. We will collate and share information about both off-line and on-line conversations taking place and

show how these are used to inform decisions that are taken. This transparency is critical for building the trust needed for co-production to succeed.

4. **Digitally:** We will work with the Coventry Partnership to establish the digital infrastructure needed to support the work in neighbourhoods, across the city and in organisations. We will provide more inviting and conversational digital tools to encourage a wider range of citizens to participate and create a repository for storing and sharing all the different strands of the conversation.