Northampton Borough Council

ADDENDUM

Cabinet 25th September 2007

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Community Engagement Task and Finish Group

The attached report of the Community Engagement Task and Finish Group was considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 – Partnerships, Regeneration, Community Safety and Engagement on Wednesday the 12th September 2007.

The following recommendations were agreed to go forward to Cabinet for consideration and approval:

1. The recommendations, as approved by Cabinet of the previous report of the Public Engagement and Communications Task and Finish Group be carried out.

2. That the Cabinet considers new ways for the public to speak at Council meetings and that it clarifies the current position.

3. That reports to all Committees contain an implications paragraph on Community Engagement and Consultation. Meetings Services should act as the gatekeeper to ensure that all reports contain these details and reject any reports that do not contain the relevant information.

4. That, once published, the web-based resource of information on community engagement that is being produced by the organisation `Involve', be used by all departments when carrying out consultation.

5. That a Strategy for Community Engagement be devised which reflects organisational priorities and increased partnership working in accordance with the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)'s devolved structures. It should be recognised that this is an evolving area.

6. That as Portsmouth City Council's Consultation Toolkit has been recognised as an example of best practice this document be considered as a template for a Consultation Toolkit for borough council staff.

7. That for the public to be more trusting of the Council, it has to be open and transparent in reporting all of its activities. All public information should therefore be widely available and published.

8. That the mechanisms for receiving public feedback be examined and a policy produced. The mechanisms for reporting back from Neighbourhood Management need to ensure that information received is reported to the relevant Council departments and Councillors.

9. That the philosophy of Neighbourhood Management is extended across the whole town. Each area should have its own Communication/ Participation Plan that is resourced by the Council. Within this there should be a feedback mechanism.

10. That Neighbourhood Partnerships be fully resourced in order that their role can be enhanced and that they form part of each area's plan (as described in recommendation 9) should this be appropriate for that area; and that Northamptonshire County Council are urged to send representation to Neighbourhood Partnership meetings.

11. That Parish Councils be contacted and provided with details of the plans for Neighbourhood Management. It should be stated that where the Council is aware of any overlap of duties in an area where there is an active Parish Council; the Council would not wish to be involved but it would need to ensure that the Parish Council complies, for example by hosting public meetings, and furthermore signs up to the Council's Protocol if, after public consultation, a particular Parish Council did not want a Neighbourhood Partnership within their area. This will form part of the area's plan as described in recommendation 9.

12. That it be recognised that the Neighbourhood boundaries are not fixed and may need to be reviewed once sufficient evidence for change is established.

13. That the Council recognises that in order to consult with hard to reach groups it will have to consider how best to inform those in the community whose contact with the Council is minimal. These will include passive members of the community who have limited social engagement, members of the community for whom English is not their first language, members of the community who take a disinterest in the administration of Local Government. In order to reach these groups the Council should consider how to ensure that information written in clear, concise language can be delivered beyond people's front doors and/or is communicated to them via the social networks they are engaged in.

14. That a consultation budget be implemented. Analysis should take place to ascertain the amount of resource required.

15. That consideration be given to internal and external mediums for the consultation process to ensure that cost effective and modern forms of communication are considered.