

Appendix 5

Brent Civic Centre Project - Communications & Consultation

A Communications & Consultation strategy covering both internal and external communications was developed and adopted in June 2007. Its purpose is to inform, engage and involve key stakeholders in the development of the project, ensuring there is an 'informed debate' by getting out key messages such as, community benefit, open democracy, greater service efficiency through 'joined up' services, as well as value for money and the unsuitability of the current property portfolio.

The following activities have been undertaken over the last two years. To date responses from staff and general public has been largely positive.

Communications and Consultation activities

Internal

- Civic centre in the light of Neighbourhood Working, Urban Canda – 2 day workshop at Letchworth Hall / Managers and Members. November 2005
- Front of House Workshop Session – Urban Canda / Managers. August 2007
- Green Travel Plan – survey 2006 / (being repeated January 2008).
- New Ways of Working – workshop sessions Brent Senior Managers Conference – Sept 2007.
- Consultation/information sessions at staff forums including Women's, Black and Asian, Disabled. More are planned.
- Article featuring interview with Civic Centre Project Director in Insight magazine.
- Presentation at Senior Managers' Group meeting.
- Briefing meeting with Leader, Deputy Leader of Brent Council, and the Leader of the Labour Group.
- Briefings to political group meetings are planned.
- Development of web pages on council's intranet informing staff and seeking feedback.
- Briefings to DMTs.
- Briefings to CMT.
- Architects briefings with Unit Heads and CMT members.
- Senior managers' awayday and briefing.
- Annual Staff Survey 2007 – provides information on satisfaction with physical working conditions and health and safety issues.

External

- Article in the Brent Magazine.
- Presentation at Wembley Area Consultative Forum.
- Wembley Vision Event, June 2007– references to new Civic Centre in Leader of Brent Council's speech.
- Prepared Briefing and Q&A document to ensure consistent messaging externally.
- Media relations – issued press releases to local media and specialist press following Wembley Vision event, achieving positive coverage in all three local papers.
- Managed press inquiries from specialist press

Communications & Consultation Strategy

January 2008 – December 2008

Introduction

This new Communications and Consultation strategy covers both external and internal audiences and includes short, medium and long term phases of the project. The activities and timelines for the next twelve months are included at the end of this document.

There is considerable overlap between Communications and Consultation and some of the opportunities utilised will provide scope within both aspects of the strategy.

Background

On 12 December 2006, Brent Council's Executive agreed in principle to proceed with the new civic centre project to the next stage. The 'next stage' involves:

- Finalising a detailed strategic brief;
- Further analysis of staffing and accommodation requirements;
- Identify, (deciding between) the preferred sites;
- Agree formal and binding commercial terms, for site and procurement options.

The intention of this communications and consultation strategy is to outline how we will **inform, engage and involve** key stakeholders in the development of the project from planning, commissioning and building, through to civic opening. Initial themes for communication and consultation are likely to focus on the site identification, building and accommodation, including new ways of working, and facilities and services within the building.

The new civic centre building will not only accommodate many of the council's services, all its departmental headquarters and a space for Members to meet and work, but one that could also provide unprecedented levels of public access and facilities. These could include: a new state-of-the-art central library and learning centre, community meeting and performance spaces, registrar's services, a large capacity assembly hall, cafés, retail and exhibition space. A building that will be a community asset for the residents of Brent, for years to come.

An opportunity exists for developing a facility that better reflects the modern and multi-cultural character of the borough and provides a new type of meeting space for the community.

The role of local government has changed significantly since the building of the current 'Town Hall'. Modern civic buildings need to be reinvented as centres of active public and political life. They need to attract as many visitors as possible, present the council in an open, participatory and positive light and become places where people want to go.

Objectives (what do we want to achieve)

In order to provide information and consult with key stakeholders including the local community and Brent Council staff, a strategy needs to be deployed which covers the following:

- Who we communicate and consult with
- What we will communicate and consult about
- How we will do it
- Time plan

Objectives – external

- To increase awareness of the project and reasons for the move
- To secure buy-in from Brent's residents, create a sense of involvement and ownership
- To encourage Brent's residents to participate in the process
- To create a platform for residents to influence and shape the development of the project
- To communicate benefits to residents of delivery of joined up council services
- To shift perception that residents will have to pay for the new building through large increases in council tax bills
- To communicate to residents the principle of adding value to the regeneration of Wembley/taking a direct stake in the area which will otherwise be dominated by leisure, sport and entertainment facilities.

Objectives - internal

- To mobilise and increase staff awareness of the project and reasons for the move
- To secure buy-in from staff across all service areas into the concept
- To shift perception away from fear of new working practices and modern methods of working to recognising change as a positive aspect of working for a modern, multi-cultural local authority
- To give relevance to joined up council services, able to offer more efficient and better value services for Brent's residents
- To engage all staff to participate in the process to shape the new building, new ways of working, technology requirements and staff facilities

Target Audiences (who will we communicate/ consult with)?

As the most diverse local authority borough in the UK, a consultation and communications exercise needs to take account of the many cultural needs and differences of our communities.

In addition, considerations for enhancing local democracy and the importance of a new civic and public building within the notion of '**place shaping**', should be adopted as key drivers in the success of this project.

Communications and consultation activity needs to be widespread and general, but also targeted to ensure representation in relation to our diverse communities, future users and staff. Three distinct stakeholder groups present themselves:

- Brent People
- Brent Council Staff (including Members and Trade Unions)
- Partners

A more detailed breakdown of stakeholder groups and opportunities for communication and consultation is set out in a matrix at the end of this document.

How we will communicate and consult

Communicating Externally

In order to ensure an 'informed' debate, there is a strong need to start 'drip feeding' information to key stakeholders to ensure they are 'informed' about the initiative.

Soft messaging

- Presentations at forums, for example, service user consultative forum
- Web site development
- More in-depth coverage in The Brent Magazine and Insight
- Leader's Press briefings - different elements of the project to be flagged up at regular intervals
- On-line 'Bulletin Board' for staff
- Define favourable, positive key messages to promote the project.
- Repeat and stick to key messages using carefully defined positive language.
- Use examples/case histories (**personal human interest**) of change to get message across in marketing materials (pledge cards, posters).
- Overcome trust issues in relation to change in working practices by painting positive pictures of how delivery of **joined up** services will help to delivery **better value** services to Brent's residents.

Key messages

- Community Benefit
- Unsuitability of current property portfolio
- Value for money

- Open democracy
- More efficient/joined up services
- Sustainable, modern building
- Modern, flexible methods of working
- Community as stakeholder in a major new development in London

Support

- Identify a 'member' spokesperson
- Identify internal/external (service area and partner) 'champions' (for example, Project Board).

External Consultation/Information

Civic Centre Public Involvement Group

The Brent Citizens' Panel was completely renewed between 2006 and 2007. Membership currently stands at approximately 1,600 people. The panel has been successfully used for a range of quantitative and qualitative research and consultation projects (surveys, focus groups etc). The panel can also be used as a community resource.

Recent acquisition of on-line consultation and database tools allow for better management of the panel and the creation of an epanel with unique, (pass worded) access to an on-line bulletin board.

It is proposed to create a 50-strong 'public involvement group' recruited from the Citizens' Panel and guided and supported through a comprehensive consultation and engagement process, providing information, building knowledge and understanding of the project and providing the members with an opportunity to influence decisions. The objective is to create a sense of ownership, involvement and participation amongst a core group of citizens, ultimately promoting them as ambassadors for the project.

The group would be asked to give medium to long term commitment and will be financially rewarded through nominal payments to cover expenses. There will be benefits for both individual group members and the Council from their early and continuing involvement in the development of this project.

The roles of the group would be to act as:

- a 'visionary' group
- consultees in their own right
- a control group to evaluate wider consultation initiatives
- ambassadors for the Civic Centre project

A programme of consultation and presentational activity will be devised within the group to refine their own level of involvement and creating a vision and planning to achieve it.

Some ideas for work programme include:

- Inaugural meeting – getting to know each other/what the project is about and meeting other key stakeholders and partners
- Session to examine what people think about their community – how a new Civic facility would impact on this
- Planning for Real Session
- Review and preview of questions/presentation materials
- Views on suitability of approaches to wider public involvement.

Area & Service User Consultative Forum Meetings

- Brent has an active network of area and service user forums. These forums provide regular opportunities for on going dialogue with user and single interest groups as well as the general public.
- There are over 4,000 records on the current area consultative forum database; about 1,200 members of the public will attend these meetings over the yearly cycle. Area forums present a good opportunity for informing and creating debate with this group of residents.
- Service User Consultative Forums attract similar numbers over a yearly cycle. Membership of these groups tends to be more cohesive and focussed around single issues or issues specifically relevant to the particular user group.
- Recent improvements to service user consultative forums together with the establishment of a Brent Youth Parliament and a multi faith forum mean better opportunities for engaging with these key groups of stakeholders.
- There are many other user and single interest groups operating within Brent. These groups are currently being mapped for future engagement.

Media Relations

- Issue regular press information to local and specialist media through Leader's Press Briefings and other times.
- Manage any reactive press inquiries through statements.

Touring Exhibition - The Civic Centre Story

- Create a moveable exhibition of display materials with the history of the project story boarded. Use comment cards to capture responses and answers to specific questions.

Internet

- Create webpages on council internet with updated information on project. Please note: this will need to be updated regularly and must comply with website standards for all users including those with disabilities.

Internal Communication & Consultation

Outlined below are some key opportunities for communicating and consulting staff about the project:

- **Brent Intranet** – regularly update new pages within Brent’s intranet communicating key issues, benefits to staff. Web polling asking staff for suggestions and invite ‘debate’ via a discussion forum (bulletin board), encouraging staff to participate and engage with initiative.
- **New Presentations to existing staff forums, including:**
 - Black & Asian Staff forum
 - Disabled Staff forum
 - LGBT staff forum
 - Women’s staff forum
 - Parents & Carers forum
- **Personal message to all staff from Anna Woda, Project Director**, setting out key issues, what it means for staff and what steps are being taken at what time... ‘personal reassurance message’
- Regular articles in **Insight** and service area newsletters
- Internal web polling (Q&A) asking staff for efficiency suggestions (exercise ensuring staff voices, ideas and concerns are involved)
- **Brent Council Staff Briefing** for staff with key internal and external speakers – March 2008
- **Members’ briefings** – organise in-depth session to brief all members on progress of project
- **Staff Panel** - In addition to the above there is a staff panel recruited from the recent staff survey. The staff panel can be used to recruit focus and workshop groups. The panel can also be used for small scale survey work.
- **Annual Staff Survey** – provides a valuable opportunity and the most accurate way of gauging overall staff response to any particular issue.

Other options for routine information provision and consultation with staff include:

- Team and section meetings
- Recruit a team of ‘civic centre champions’ (from the Project Board) to act as ambassadors to help get positive messages across to all staff
- Departmental Managers’ briefings
- Workshop sessions with the staff panel and Improving Brent facilitators.

	Stakeholder 1	Stakeholder 2	Opportunity	Contact
Public	Residents	General	Brent Magazine Wembley Way Area Consultative Forums	Communications Prafula Shah Consultation Team
		Youth	Brent Youth Parliament Schools	Sarah Mansuralli
		Elders	Pensioners Forum Better Govt for Older People Forum Brent Pensioners Action Group	Christabel Shawcross Edwin Ambe Ron Colman
		Disabled	Brent Disabled User Forum BADP	Faye Austin
		BME	BME SUCF	Diversity Team
	Business	Local Businesses	Town Centre Management Groups Local Business Groups Chamber of Commerce	Osita Udensen
	Day visitors	Current external visitors to Brent Office Buildings e.g.	Comment Card through OSS	Sandra Carson

Partners	PCT	Staff / Users	User Involvement LINKs	Judith Lockhart Consultation Team
	Police	Ward level	Safer Neighbourhoods Teams Safer Neighbourhoods Panels	Sector Inspectors
	LSP	Voluntary Sector	Partners for Brent Local Public Service Board Voluntary Sector SUCF BrAVA (BrAVA NEWS) BRAIN	PRU PRU Mike Bibby Arsim Canolli Kathy Ferris
Staff	Local Authority	Staff generally	Insight / Intranet Annual Staff Survey	Communications Consultation HR Strategic Managers
		Staff Panel	Ad-hoc workshop / focus groups	Consultation Team

		Staff Forums	Women B & A LBGT Disabled Parents & Carers	Diversity Team Irene Bremang Mark Burgin Christine Simpson Jennifer Crook
		Members	Members Briefing	Member Development Group Offices
		Other Politicians		Group Offices

Activity	Provisional time frame
Presentations to ACFs and SUCFs	March 2008 and ongoing
Internet pages (development)	March 2008 and ongoing
Intranet pages updates	Ongoing
Recruitment of Public Champions from Citizens' Panel	February 2008
The Brent Magazine activities	Ongoing
Insight activities	Ongoing
Staff Consultation	Ongoing
Staff Briefing meeting	March 2008
Architectural/design competition	December 2008/early 2009
Members' briefings	February 2008 and ongoing
Touring Exhibition	December 2008/early 2009