



**Resources and Public Realm  
Scrutiny Committee**  
6 September 2023

**Report from the Corporate Director  
of Communities and Regeneration**

**Councillor Donnelly-Jackson,  
Cabinet Member for Customers,  
Communities & Culture**

**Community Engagement Framework**

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>List of Appendices:</b>	Appendix 1: Kingston Council Community Engagement Framework
<b>Background Papers:</b>	0
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Lorna Hughes, Director of Communities <a href="mailto:Lorna.hughes@brent.gov.uk">Lorna.hughes@brent.gov.uk</a>  Amira Nassr, Head of Strategy & Partnerships <a href="mailto:Amira.nassr@brent.gov.uk">Amira.nassr@brent.gov.uk</a>

**1.0 Executive Summary**

1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the development of a Community Engagement Framework (CEF).

**2.0 Recommendation(s)**

2.1 To note the purpose of the Community Engagement Framework (CEF).

2.2 To note the progress made so far.

2.3 To make any further suggestions on next steps, focusing on:

- Further suggestions for organisations to take part in the workshop sessions

- Whether the Framework is helpful in making engagement opportunities clearer for residents

### **3 Detail**

#### **Contribution to Borough Plan and Strategic Context**

- 3.1 The CEF is being developed to outline the council's approach to community engagement. It helps to support the Borough Plan themes and in particular that of Thriving Communities and the desired outcome- enabling communities.
- 3.2 The aim of the Framework is to support both residents and the council to better consult, engage and communicate with one another and ensure that there is an ongoing dialogue and opportunities to take part in the council's decision-making processes.

### **4 Background**

- 4.1.1 The purpose of the Community Engagement Framework (CEF) is to outline a set of clear principles and standards required for community engagement. The Framework will explain what residents and stakeholders can expect from our consultation and engagement initiatives and will be publicly available. Attached at Appendix 1 is Kingston Council's CEF; an example of what we are working towards.
- 4.1.2 The CEF is being developed using co-production and co-design techniques and will set out the tools, methodologies and mechanisms used by the council. The CEF has used engagement methods that are focussed on dialogue using workshops and focus groups that start with open questions that allow ordinary residents to participate without prior knowledge or understanding.
- 4.1.3 The CEF will set out ways of engaging with residents that use tools and techniques that are based on discussion such as Appreciative Inquiry.
- 4.1.4 The Framework will:
- Set out the standards and process for community engagement
  - Set out the tools and methods to be used to engage communities
  - Set out the ways in which officers will engage with newer communities
  - Set out the way in which diverse needs will be met
  - Provide specific guidelines for how the council interacts and consults with the communities in Brent
  - Introduce a community of practice for internal staff
  - Provide guidance on training and skills development for staff.
- 4.1.5 The aim of the Framework is to ensure that more residents are made aware of how their involvement in council led consultation can influence and shape council decisions that affect the borough and that the increased involvement

will foster a stronger sense of trust, ownership, and perception of council services.

4.1.6 Brent Council does not currently have a formal CEF. However, there is a strong understanding across the organisation that community engagement and consultation are the cornerstones of successful service delivery.

4.1.7 Citizenlab is the main online participation platform used by Brent Council, with 3,836 registered users and more than 60 consultations undertaken since April 2022. Each consultation undertaken during 2022 has had differing levels of engagement and interaction. The Citizenlab platform does provide a useful way of gathering responses for consultations, but it is not a substitute for community engagement and needs to be seen as a useful tool for formal consultation processes alongside other dialogue methods.

4.1.8 Most of the council's formal consultations are conducted online, which does not appeal to all communities. The platform requires initial sign-up, which the council has identified as a barrier. The sign-up requirement frequently discourages residents from using the platform, reducing the level of consultation responses.

## 4.2 Benefits of a Community Engagement Framework

4.2.1 The CEF aims to broaden and improve accessibility, and make involvement and consultation more ongoing, engaging, and mutually beneficial. It will also help to support the new approach to Brent Connects meetings and the ongoing dialogue.

4.2.2 By implementing a CEF, the council aims to improve the standard of engagement offered in a more consistent, accessible and visible way. broadly.

4.2.3 In setting out a CEF, the council is creating a delivery mechanism for the Borough Plan Strategic priority 3- Thriving Communities where the desired outcome 1 is focussed on enabling our communities to thrive.

## 4.3 Outline of Community Engagement Framework approach

4.3.1 Our approach to community engagement will remain one that seeks to widen participation while ensuring that the process can adapt to local needs and circumstances. Our approach aims to allow all diverse groups in our local community to participate and be heard.

4.3.2 The CEF will be co-designed and co-produced with residents, community organisations, Members and internal staff who frequently interact with Brent residents and employees. We want to hear from as many groups as possible, including religious communities, young people, seniors, members of the LBGTQ+ community, individuals with disabilities, people from various Black, Asian, and ethnic backgrounds, as well as both men and women.

4.3.3 The CEF will be utilising findings and figures from the recent census to ensure that it is tailored and responsive to the changing demographics and needs of the Borough.

4.3.4 An external provider has been commissioned to undertake this work on behalf of the Council. A clear brief and specification has been provided to them as well as a list of contacts.

#### 4.4 Engagement Plan

##### 4.4.1 Internal engagement

4.4.2 The external provider initiated its internal engagement at the end of July 2023 and has met with a number of internal officers, including Directors across Customer Access, Transformation and Environment as well as officers who work with Brent Health Matters, youth engagement and residents at a more face to face, customer service level. There has been some difficulty with this due to annual leave and availability of participants and so the project will be extended to allow for more time for engagement.

4.4.3 This internal engagement has tried to focus on key individuals involved in community engagement who regularly speak to Brent's diverse communities. The purpose of these sessions have been to outline why a CEF is being developed, the key priorities for community engagement and the sharing examples of best practice community engagement.

4.4.4 Questions have focused on what makes great community engagement, examples of poor community engagement, what monitoring tools can be used and how residents can be encouraged to participate (i.e., are incentives necessary).

4.4.5 Interviews with two of the thematic leads have been completed so far. There will be additional sessions conducted with the other Thematic Leads and key partners over the next few weeks.

##### 4.4.6 Member engagement

4.4.7 Interviews have been completed with a number of Brent Connect Chairs and Vice Chairs as well as other Lead Members. These sessions have outlined why a CEF is being developed and used to develop and agree how we intend to use the Framework for engagement.

##### 4.4.8 External engagement

4.4.9 The external provider will be organising face-to-face gatherings through key community organisations and forums. These will be used to outline why a CEF is being developed, the key priorities for community engagement and the key methods for community engagement.

4.4.10 There will be focus groups and sessions with residents to explain what activity has been undertaken so far and what this has started to develop. The intention is to share an early draft of the CEF with residents late September to gain insights and opinions on the approach, considerations, and amendments made accordingly. These will be used to further develop the CEF.

4.4.11 At these workshops, the initial set of principles (as outlined below) will be shared and tested with residents.

4.4.12 The current list of those who will be approached to take part in the workshops are:

The Hub Romanian & Eastern European
The Romanian & Eastern European Hub
SAAFI - Somali
Step Up Hub -Somali
AAPA Organisation CIC
Serene Me – Black Community
Asian People's Disability Alliance (APDA) – Asian
Brent Pensioners Forum
Jason Roberts Foundation –Young People
Hornstars

## 4.5 Initial Findings

4.5.1 The Framework is very much in its early development with a number of key individuals and groups still left to consult with.

4.5.2 Early findings have been summarised and a number of themes have been identified. It is evident that our communities expect us to be able to demonstrate the effort we have made to hear from them when we are making a change or developing ideas and proposals.

4.5.3 It is important that we are able to learn together, listening carefully to the opinions of individuals and groups that might not always be heard, especially those who might be struggling financially or socially. We want to build equity in at the start of all our engagement.

4.5.4 It is noted that this may require us to use different ways to listen and include these groups in decisions to make sure our policies and services are fair for everyone.

4.5.5 Whichever tools and techniques are used, the following principles and standards have been suggested:

- Strengths based
- Proactive

- Accessible
- Area focused
- Collaborative
- Timely
- Honest
- Visible

4.5.6 Under each of these principles, there will be a set of standards that explain our expectations within the CEF.

4.5.7 The CEF will also set out how these will be monitored. Some suggestions for this are set out below:

- Community Engagement Internal Network to share learning and best practice
- Resident involvement in Monitoring and Reviewing Progress
- Learning shared with Communities and Partners
- Establishment of a Resident Reader Group.

#### **4.6 Implementation Plan**

4.6.1 As mentioned above, workshops will be organised with various resident and community groups to share some of these initial findings.

4.6.2 The views and content of these sessions will then be added to the Framework and it will be amended accordingly.

4.6.3 The Framework will then be shared with Senior colleagues and Members.

4.6.4 The publication of the Framework will be supported by a robust internal and external communications and engagement plan.

4.6.5 As part of the work to embed the CEF across the organisation, we propose to create a Community Engagement Internal Network. The terms of reference of this group will be to share intelligence and good practice, avoid duplication of work with Brent residents, and ensure that the organisation's training offer is appropriate to ensure staff have the right skills to do this.

4.6.6 This will be established as a product of the CEF and inform the monitoring of its application.

#### **4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement**

4.1 The CEF is being developed with key internal and external stakeholders. This has taken the form of one-to-one interviews, workshops and focus groups.

#### **5.0 Financial Considerations**

5.1 Costs include the amount paid to the external provider for the development and completion of the CEF.

5.2 Financially, the goal of the CEF is to make Community Engagement more efficient and effective without increasing the cost.

## **6.0 Legal Considerations**

6.1 There is no general duty for public authorities to consult those affected by their decisions; but a duty to consult may be imposed by statute, or may arise in public law either because of the duty to act fairly, or as a result of a legitimate expectation.

6.2 The Council's duty to consult those interested before taking a decision can arise in a variety of ways. Most commonly, the duty is generated by statute. The duty to consult however is also generated by the common law duty to act fairly when deciding on issues such as policy proposals or when there is an established practice of consultation.

## **7.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

7.1 Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a duty when exercising their functions to have 'due regard' to the need:

- a) To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity; and
- c) Foster good relations between those who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not.

7.2 This is the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The 'protected characteristics' are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

7.3 The proposals in this report will be subject to an equality impact assessment. However, officers believe that there are no adverse equality implications and the framework will have a positive impact assisting in advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relationships.

## **8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

8.1 Not applicable.

## **9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)**

9.1 Not applicable.

## **10.0 Communication Considerations**

10.1 A robust communications plan will accompany the CEF.

**Report sign off:**

**Zahur Khan**

Corporate Director of Communities and  
Regeneration