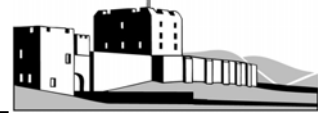


# Community OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

CARLISLE  
CITY COUNCIL



**cOMMITTEE** [www.carlisle.gov.uk](http://www.carlisle.gov.uk)

## *Committee Report*

**Public**

**Date of Meeting:**

**28 August 2003**

**Title:** DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT BEST VALUE REVIEW: UPDATE

**Report of:** Review Team

**Report reference:** SP18/03

### **Summary:**

This report updates Members on the progress of the Democratic Engagement Best Value Review. It includes two appendices:

- A project plan timetable;
- A summary Scoping Report.

### **Recommendation:**

Members are asked to consider and comment on progress with the review.

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## **Democratic Engagement Best Value Review**

### **Progress Report**

1. Detailed compare work with other authorities and organisations has been completed and analysis of this is underway. This should be completed by the end of September.
2. Parish Clerks were sent letters and information on 11 July and asked to circulate this to Parish Councillors for their responses to be sent back to the City Council by the end of September. None have yet been received.
3. Members of Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee took part in a consultation workshop on Tuesday, 22 July.
4. Other Members are being consulted through Focus sessions for each political group. The Conservative Focus session planned for Thursday, 24 July had to be cancelled because not enough Members could make the date. A new date is being organised. The session for the Labour group went ahead on Thursday, 31 July and the one for the Liberal Democrats on Wednesday, 13 August. The two Independent Members have been written to separately and asked if they wish to participate in the consultation process. All Members have been offered one to one briefings with the joint lead officers if they wish.
5. Consultation with other groups will be taking place through September. These include the Access Group, groups representing ethnic minorities and the faith communities and other hard to reach groups.
6. The questionnaire sent out to attainers (those young people in the District who reached 18 and were eligible to vote in last May's election) has been completed and the report made available to all Members and employees.
7. The Citizens Panel is being convened as part of the consultation process and the

questions have been compiled.

8. The Consultation Strategy being produced as part of the Review is in the process of being refined following approval in principle by the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
9. The Reference Group is due to meet for the first time during the week commencing 22 September. This had to be delayed because of school and officer holidays. The Group consists of representatives from Trinity and William Howard Schools (both teachers and pupils) the Youth Panel, Age Concern, the Access Group, staff and media.
10. It is expected that the consultation process can be completed by the end of September and the results analysed during October followed by the development of Options for Improvement.
11. The next stage would be to consult on these options, followed by development of the Action Plan. It is believed we can complete the Review, as planned, by the end of November.
12. A further report is due to Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 October when it is hoped to present the draft Options for Improvement.

## Appendix 1: Project Plan

|                                 | Period   |       |       |     |      |      |        |
|---------------------------------|----------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|--------|
|                                 | February | March | April | May | June | July | August |
| Activity                        |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |
| Scoping                         |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |
| Gather Initial Data             |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |
| Finalise Review Plan            |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |
| Initial Compare Work            |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |
| Detailed Compare Work           |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |
| Analyse results of compare work |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |
| Consult with Members            |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |
|                                 |          |       |       |     |      |      |        |



## **1. Introduction:**

Carlisle City Council's Corporate Plan 2002-05 commits to three objectives of direct relevance to this Best Value Review:

CO1 Encourage community participation and inclusion in the Carlisle area

CM3 To develop our community planning process to ensure it addresses the aspirations and needs of our local communities

CM4 To reinvigorate democracy and improve voter turnout at elections.

## **2. Background:**

Several pieces of work either completed or being carried out by the City Council, relate to this Review and will be considered by the team. These include: Supporting Communities Best Value Review; Consultation with Citizens; Electoral Campaigns; Implementing Electronic Government and Area working.

## **3. Key Areas and questions:**

The Review can be divided into six key areas, addressing the following questions:

### **Access:**

- 1) Why do people not attend City Council meetings and what can be done to encourage them to attend?
- 2) What do those people who do attend think of them?
3. How can the meetings be made more relevant to the public?
4. What have other authorities done to increase interaction with the public?

### **Policy:**

1. Are we fulfilling our responsibility to consult?
2. Are we being sufficiently imaginative in the methods of consultation we use?
3. Do other authorities use referenda and is this method appropriate in Carlisle?
4. Do those people currently consulted feel their views help to shape policy?

### **Interaction:**

1. Do the public believe they have good access to their Councillors and how can it be improved?
2. Is area working of relevance?
3. Which are the most effective ways Councillors communicate with people?
4. Is there a suitable mechanism to enhance the role back-benchers fulfill?

#### **Youth:**

1. How can the workings of the City Council be made more relevant to young people?
2. How can the views of young people be used to help shape policy?
3. What role can we play in the teaching of Citizenship in schools?

#### **Engagement:**

1. Which other groups are we failing to engage with?

#### **Elections:**

1. How can we remove barriers to voting?
2. What have other authorities done to raise registration and turnout?

#### **4. Terms of Reference:**

The Review will, in summary, address the following points:

- How can the City Council engage better with its citizens?
- What can we do to improve turnout at local elections?
- What can we do to engage young people and other disengaged groups?
- How can we make City Council meetings and the decision-making process more interesting?
- How can we consult more effectively on policy matters?

#### **5. Involvement:**

Members will have an important contribution to make in this Review as well as officers from, mainly, four Business Units: Legal and Democratic Services; Strategic and Performance Services; Member Support and Employee Services and Economic and Development Services.

**March 2003**