

Subject – Approach to Engagement – Community Groups Identified/Link Officer Role established

Purpose of the Report

Bassetlaw District Council like many other organisation are keen to engage with local community groups and organisations.

The Council recognises that these groups are often best placed to provide feedback on service delivery and have the expertise/experiences to shape how we provide future services.

Our Approach

To engage with our community groups and organisations the Council works closely with its Community and Voluntary Service.

The BCVS (Bassetlaw Community and Voluntary Service) have a community empowerment network which consists of over 100 community groups and organisations working within the area. It was recognised that it was a difficult task to engage with all these groups so **25 key groups** were identified from the network that would be able to represent the Bassetlaw Community.

The Director of the BCVS who has over 35 years experience of working in the community/voluntary sector within Bassetlaw identified the top 25 groups.

Identifying the top 25 groups was not in anyway saying that the other groups were not important, it was an attempt to prioritise effective engagement and through these groups (which tended to be the larger groups) we could reach out to others.

To support the process the role of Link Officer was established. The Link Officer would either be a Head of Service or a Director within the Council. Having a senior officer undertake this role demonstrated the organisation's commitment to this approach/effective engagement.

The following terms of reference for the Link Officer were compiled:

- To be the Council's contact point for the Community Group or organisation.
- To have regular dialogue with the Community Group or organisation.

- To increase the Council's understanding of the Community Group or organisation.
- To take positive action on any key issues that are raised from the Community Group or organisation that impact on Council service delivery.
- To support the Community Group or organisation in having a better understanding of the Council and the Services it provides.
- To work with the Community Group or organisation to shape the Council's annual consultation/engagement plan.
- To identify any key events which occur within the Community Group or organisation that can feature as an engagement opportunity in the Council's annual events plan.
- To participate in 2 meetings per year where Link Officers and community groups or organisations get together to improve engagement.

In addition to the terms of reference the Community Group or Organisation could raise any issues on the role of the Link Officer with the BCVS direct. The Council felt that the BCVS would be best placed to broker any issues.

Achievements to Date

- 25 Key Community Groups identified from the Community Empowerment Network to represent Bassetlaw
- Heads of Service and Directors allocated relevant groups
- Terms of reference compiled and agreed with the community groups
- Initial meetings have taken place with the community group/organisation and their Link Officer
- Meeting scheduled to discuss the Council's annual engagement plan for 2009/10