



WORTHING BOROUGH  
COUNCIL

Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committee  
6 February 2024  
Agenda Item 6

Key Decision [No]

Ward(s) Affected: All

## **Lessons Learnt from the Big Listen and CIL Neighbourhood Fund - Developing Council for the Community for 2024**

**Report by the Assistant Director of People & Change and Participation Lead**

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### **Executive Summary**

#### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to report on the activities and outcomes of Big Listen and the Community Infrastructure Levy as part of the Council for the Community programme.
- 1.2. It sets out the key areas of learning from the two programmes and recommended principles for future participation work in Worthing.
- 1.3. It also proposes a participation programme for Worthing based on current levels of resourcing.

#### **2. Recommendations**

**The Committee is asked to approve the following:**

- 2.1. The development of a participation programme for 2024/25 that closes the gap between participation, decision-making, delivery and communication and which includes a range of participation methods and formats, as detailed in paragraph 3.13.1.
- 2.2. Prioritise participation resource in developing the infrastructure we need internally to grow our participation capabilities as detailed in 3.13.2.
- 2.3. Develop a Council for the Community offer for how we support participation across Worthing as detailed in paragraph 3.13.3.

**The Committee is asked to note the wider need to:**

- 2.4. Develop a participation multi-disciplinary team bringing together staff to better support participation, develop participatory decision making and help communities make a difference in their streets and spaces across Adur & Worthing Councils.
- 2.5. Digital tools for people have their say and match people up to increase social action.
- 2.6. Applied learning and development programme to enable residents, staff and partners to develop and share skills in place-based working and participation and apply them to practical challenges. This will improve the quality of how we do participation – including through improved hosting and facilitation skills and make better use of partner skills.

### **3. Context**

- 3.1. Communities which have more influence and control over what happens locally are stronger and more resilient. The council's long term ambition is therefore to, where possible, pass power and control over what happens within communities, to communities. Through 2022-2023, Worthing Borough Council's participation activities, including the Big Listen campaign, have been designed to help the council better understand how to deliver this agenda.
- 3.2. In the short-to medium term, this has meant learning how to create:

- The conditions whereby all individuals and groups have the opportunity to act as citizens.
  - Safe and inclusive spaces where the council can listen, and everyone has the opportunity to be heard.
  - Safe, meaningful forums where individuals and groups can work with elected members to influence change at a local level.
- 3.3. Worthing Borough Council's commitment to listening and working with our communities is aligned to Adur & Worthing Councils' shared framework, 'Our Plan.' As Worthing Borough Council and Adur District Council work as a single organisation with shared people and services, Our Plan was published in 2023 to set out the organisation's corporate purpose, principles, ways of working, services and missions.
- 3.4. One of our organisation's three principles is 'we are participative.' This means involving citizens in relevant and meaningful ways; working well with all our partners locally and regionally to address challenges together. Through 2022-2023, Worthing Borough Council's participation and engagement activities helped the organisation understand what we need to change inside our organisation so we can fully embody this principle.
- 3.5. Two major programmes underpinning Council for the Community have been the Big Listen and Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund.
- 3.6. The Big Listen campaign launched in 2022 was the first flagship participation activity of the new administration. It was about listening and being seen to listen. This included a programme of listening events in locations across the town, an in-person and online survey, and the pilot of a digital mapping tool and engagement platform.
- 3.7. The campaign was focused on creating safe and inclusive spaces where the council could listen to residents' views on Worthing, their ideas for the future of the town, and how local people and the council could work together to move things forward.
- 3.8. The main outcomes from Big Listen have been:
- New insights from local residents
  - A new model for participation and engagement
  - Strengthened relationships and trust

More detail on the insights and the outcomes of the Big Listen can be found in the appendix on slide 2.7.3.

3.9. The key lessons learnt from this programme have been:

- The potential of digital to transform our engagement
- Telling great stories about what we are already doing
- Designing and upskilling our organisation for participation
- Being more intentional about what we ask, who we ask and where we show up
- Participation and engagement work needs resourcing with people and budget

3.10. Another key participatory programme has been the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund. This fund comes from a national 'tax' on developers such as housebuilders. The money is paid to councils as a way of paying for improvements to local neighbourhoods. Worthing Borough Council started collecting this money in 2015.

3.11. The key outcomes of the CIL Neighbourhood Fund programme 2022-2023 were:

Substantial funding for our community and voluntary sector

- £577,000 was granted to 45 organisations for a range of projects that will deliver social, cultural, physical and green infrastructure improvements for different groups of local residents.

Participatory ways of working

- The re-design and delivery of the CIL Neighbourhood Fund was a co-design and co-production by cabinet members, officers, Community Works.
- Decision-making involved members of the community and ward councillors across parties.
- Care was taken to make the fund more accessible to applicants through our communications and additional support for smaller un-constituted groups.
- Engagement with the community and voluntary sector was prioritised, carefully designed and took place in the neighbourhoods.

Place-based ways of working

- We changed and explored geographical boundaries.

- We showed up in local community spaces in the neighbourhoods.
- Council (officers and councillors) and communities (residents, groups and partners) reflected, questioned and learned together in place.

3.12. The key lessons learnt from this programme have been:

- Worthing has a diverse, generous and dynamic community and voluntary sector.
- Council has an important role as convener.
- Ward councillors are valuable community connectors.
- Community Works has a unique set of knowledge, skills and networks to share and we're stronger when we work together.
- The sustainability and accessibility of community spaces is a key issue for the voluntary and community sector.
- Community assets are abundant so we have an opportunity to use digital to make them more visible.
- Facilitation skills are essential and can be learnt through place-based practice.
- Communication can still be a challenge between community groups, residents and the council.

More detail on the process, delivery, outcomes and lessons learnt from both programmes are in the appendix.

3.13. The main principles that have emerged from these programmes has been the need to:

3.13.1. Ensure a range of participation and engagement methods and approaches are well-resourced and clearly linked to a decision making process and delivery. To include:

- a focus on activities that will help deliver Worthing's main priorities on making streets cleaner, safer and greener, improving the town centre and housing.
- improving engagement with young people.
- scaling and embedding tried and tested engagement methods in projects and service delivery.
- Experimenting with other models and methods including participatory budgeting and co-production.
- We also need to be telling better stories of how residents and civil society are making a difference.

3.13.2. Scale the work to the resource and prioritise growing the infrastructure for inclusive, representative participation. This infrastructure will need to include:

- learning and development for staff, residents and elected members.
- digital tools to connect people to improve their communities,
- building the participation resource / toolkit,
- developing our work with partners
- Exploring funding opportunities.

3.13.3. Develop a Council for the Community offer for how we support and celebrate participation across Worthing. This will:

- renew engagement with our diverse voluntary and community sector to better understand and develop the council's role/s in supporting and celebrating this sector's valuable contribution to our communities.
- outline the offer to residents, members, staff and partners for how they can get involved in participative activity, including a calendar and/or map of activity.
- help tell a better story of Council for the Community.
- propose we stop using the Big Listen brand and instead use the Council for the Community banner to badge our whole range of engagement activities in Worthing.

#### **4. Delivering Council for the Community**

In building on the outcomes and lessons learnt from the work over the past 18 months, the programme for 2024/25 should enable everyone to contribute to improving their communities around Worthing's priorities.

- Support residents to make a difference to their streets and spaces over the short term (focusing on making them cleaner, greener and safer).
- Bring together staff, residents and partners to improve outcomes over the medium term (focusing on improving the town centre).
- Empower residents to influence the future of their services and communities over the longer term (i.e. opportunities to participate in the formation of the Housing Strategy).

The outputs of the programme would be:

- A model which balances developing the infrastructure for participation and priority issues where we can test out participative methods “inside and out” with staff, residents and partners (Throughout 2024).
- A pathway which shows how staff, residents and partners can use participative ways to improve their communities (Spring 2024).
- An accompanying online tool and toolkit which provide practical methods people can use to put these into practice (Spring 2024), and exploration and testing of these methods in public spaces (Summer 2024).
- Training that enables people to learn together across the organisation and area how to implement these methods (Spring 2024) with a dedicated focus on testing these on Worthing’s priorities.
- A programme of experiments that helps test how we best support participation in a way that delivers Worthing’s priorities and embodies our values and embeds inclusive participation (Throughout 2024).
- A CIL funding programme that enables communities to put into practice community action (TBC 2024), scale up their projects through help to bid for external funding (Summer 2024) and test opportunities to support crowdfunding (Autumn 24).

In the appendix connections between Worthing Council’s priorities, Our Plan, and the Organisational Design programme are outlined.

The appendix also outlines:

- A Council for the Community offer for each target audience: residents, members, staff and partners.
- The approach to how the Council tells the Council for the Community story to each of the above target audiences.
- The infrastructure to be developed over 2024 and the resourcing to be used, and resourcing needed. The latter will be the subject of bids made to external fundings to scale up the participation activity.
- The roadmap over 2024 and the proposed governance.

## **5. Engagement and Communication**

- Engagement on the Big Listen and Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund is outlined from section 5-12 in this report, and in the appendix in sections 2 and 3.
- Proposed engagement for 2024/25 is outlined in the Appendix in section 4 “Delivering the Council for the Community in 2024/25”, in particular sections 4.4-5 and 4.9

## **6. Financial Implications**

- There are no direct financial implications arising as a result of this report. Existing funding streams in place are:
- The CIL Neighbourhood Fund which is funded via the Community Infrastructure Levy. An annual approval process for bids to this fund is already in place.
- £42,000 will be funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund to support the other participatory activity.
- The Participation matrix will involve the matrixing of existing officers working on engagement and participation into a new matrix, and will not require any additional costing.

## **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1 Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or which is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.
- 7.2 s1 of the Localism Act 2011 empowers the Council to do anything an individual can do apart from that which is specifically prohibited by pre-existing legislation
- 7.3 Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 1999 (LGA 1999) contains a general duty on a best value authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 7.4 s1 Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997 confers power on the Council to enter into a contract for the provision of making available assets or services for the purposes of, or in connection with, the discharge of the function by the Council, officers should have due regard to the requirement to carry out any data protection impact assessment, whether personal data is to be shared and enter into any data sharing agreement after taking advice from the Information Governance team.



## **Background Papers**

- Strategic Priorities for Worthing Borough Council: 2022/23 Progress Update Report and New Priorities for 2023/24, August 2023
- Our Plan, Adur & Worthing Councils, October 2022

## **Sustainability & Risk Assessment**

- A Sustainability and Risk Assessment must be completed for all reports.
- Identify Positive or negative implications, and how we may address to leverage these implications.
- If no issues are identified under a heading, then it should read "Matter considered and no issues identified."

### **1. Economic**

- How does this proposal/issue impact on the economic development of our places or the economic participation of our communities?

The proposal may positively impact economic development by fostering community engagement and participation. Engaged communities often contribute to local economic growth, and the focus on making streets cleaner, safer, and greener can enhance the overall quality of the environment, potentially attracting businesses and residents.

### **2. Social**

#### **2.1 Social Value**

- What impact does the proposal/issues raised have on our communities or specific groups within our communities?

The proposal emphasizes social value by empowering residents to contribute to their communities, improving local spaces, and influencing future services. The participatory approach aims to enhance the well-being of residents and create a sense of community ownership and pride.

#### **2.2 Equality Issues**

- Details of any equality issues, any equality impact assessment undertaken, or how the proposal impacts on access or participation.

This paper outlines that one of the three key principles for participation in Worthing going forward will be a focus on prioritising the development of infrastructure for inclusive and representative participation.

#### **2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)**

- Details of how the proposal helps to reduce crime and disorder and meet the Council's duties regarding crime and disorder reduction targets.

The focus of participatory activity on Worthing Council's priorities will contribute positively to this area, as one of the Council's priorities is on making streets cleaner, safer and greener.

#### **2.4 Human Rights Issues**

- Does the proposal impinge on anyone's human rights and if so, how is it justified under the Human Rights Act? Human rights include: Right to a fair trial, respect for family life, private life, home and correspondence, freedom of thought, expression, assembly and association and protection and quiet enjoyment of property and possessions. Also ask, is the action proportionate to the anticipated response or outcome?

The proposal does not inherently impinge on human rights. However, it aligns with principles such as the right to private and family life by involving residents in decision-making processes that affect their communities. The participatory approach respects freedom of thought, expression, assembly, and association.

### **3. Environmental**

- Are there any implications for the management, custodianship and protection of our natural resources?

The proposal may have positive implications for the management, custodianship, and protection of natural resources. Activities such as making streets greener align with environmental goals, contributing to sustainability and ecological well-being.

### **4. Governance**

- Are there any implications for or alignment with the Councils' priorities, specific action plans, strategies or policies?
- Are there any implications to the Councils' reputation or relationship with our partners or community?
- Any implications for resourcing, risk management (including health and safety), the governance of the either Council?
- The proposal aligns with the Council's priorities and also aligns to the Our Plan framework. It reflects the commitment to a participative approach and addresses the need for inclusive decision-making and community engagement.
- The proposal, if successfully implemented, could enhance the Council's reputation by demonstrating a commitment to community involvement, transparency, and responsive governance.
- The report acknowledges the need for resources, including funding and staff development, to support the proposed participation program. Risks related to resourcing, health and safety, and governance are acknowledged and addressed in the report, indicating a proactive approach to risk management.