

Community Engagement

To: **Horizons Main Board**

Date: **1st July 2010**

From: **Laura Halstead**

Purpose: **FOR DECISION: (FD)**

Board Members are asked to approve our proposed community engagement activities for the next nine months.

Recommendation: That Board Members **agree** that we focus our work, in partnership with the local authorities, on creating and delivering major growth site engagement plans. Including specifically:

- Helping to draft community engagement strategies with the local authorities.
- Helping to organise community forums.
- Delivering a renewable energy awareness raising campaign (see Item 8c).
- Continuing other community engagement via online and PR means.

Contact:	Name: Job Title: E-mail address: Telephone No.	Laura Halstead Communications Manager Laura.halstead@cambridgeshirehorizons.co.uk 01223 714176
-----------------	---	--

Community Engagement - clarifying Horizons' role

Background

In September 2008 the Cambridgeshire Horizons Boards approved the 2008-2011 Communications and Community Engagement Strategy which included the following core business objectives and statement:

1. *Coordinate development and infrastructure implementation.*
2. *Overcome barriers to sustainable development.*
3. *Secure and manage funding for infrastructure.*
4. *Ensure developments employ high quality sustainable design.*
5. ***Communicate the wider benefits of the planned development to the wider community.***

If we do not communicate our objectives clearly and effectively to the local community, we will struggle to achieve our aim of creating sustainable, integrated communities in and around Cambridgeshire. By engaging with the local community at an early stage we can help them to understand the key elements of a major development, dispel myths, and take onboard their comments and feedback to create the best solution for new, and existing, residents.

One of the key measurements for success was: "the number of community and stakeholder events will increase by 30% (including "ambassador" talks, conference speeches, public meetings and education work)."

Current climate

Since the aforementioned strategy was created there has been a major economic downturn, change in government, some developments have been delayed, whilst others are progressing well, and cutbacks in local authority teams have reduced capacity in some areas. We have nonetheless continued to run or assist with a number of events that fit the description above, such as providing support for the first North West Community Event and running the first round of public consultation for the revised Green Infrastructure Strategy.

However, Cambridgeshire Horizons is keen to ascertain the level of work the Board would like us to either assist with or carry out over the remaining months of the 2008-11 business plan period. This paper sets out in more detail the community

engagement work which is referred to in the draft work programme (see agenda item 8a within the 1 July Board papers).

Options

We are asking for a decision on which of the following options, either singly or in combination, would be favourable over the remaining 9 months of the 2010-11 period:

1. **Draft and implement a community engagement strategy to raise awareness of the growth agenda as a whole.**
2. **Draft a comprehensive community engagement strategy in conjunction with the Partnership Communications Group to cover all major growth sites.**
3. **Help to create and implement individual partnership community engagement strategies for individual growth sites.**
4. **Assist with community engagement events that have been organised by the local authorities as required.**
5. **Focus community engagement via online and PR means only.**

We do not have enough collective resource to do all of these. There are benefits and risks to each of the proposals above, as outlined below:

Option 1: Draft and implement a community engagement strategy to raise awareness of the growth agenda as a whole.

Risk or Benefit?	Detail	Risk or benefit level
Benefit	Public awareness of the growth agenda is increased through a cohesive campaign of engagement, supported by strong PR.	High benefit
Benefit	A single organisation would take the lead to progress the development a cohesive plan for engagement relating to growth as a whole.	Medium benefit
Benefit	Increased awareness of specific topic areas, such as renewable energy and green infrastructure, will help increase residents knowledge prior to formal consultation activities.	Medium benefit

Risk	The rapidly changing political situation could mean that the strategy needs to flex, therefore such work may not make this the best use of our time.	Medium risk
Risk	If we fail to join up all strategies, parallel pieces of work could take place, therefore confusing local resident and not making best use of resources.	High risk
Risk	The timescales involved with producing and approving such an in-depth partnership strategy may prohibit delivery within the timescales.	High risk

Option 2: Draft a comprehensive community engagement strategy in conjunction with the Cambridgeshire Partnership Communications Group (CPCG) to cover all major growth sites.

Risk or Benefit?	Detail	Risk or benefit level
Benefit	Public awareness of the growth agenda, and specifically the major growth sites, would be increased through a cohesive campaign of engagement, supported by strong PR.	Medium benefit
Benefit	The CPCG will have a clear remit to produce a combined piece of work. All partners will have high level buy-in before the process starts.	Medium benefit
Benefit	Additional capacity would be provided to the local authorities.	Medium benefit
Risk	Not all partners sign up to a combined engagement strategy.	High risk
Risk	If we fail to join up all growth related engagement work, parallel pieces of work could be taking place, therefore confusing local resident and not making best use of limited resources.	High risk

Risk	A lack of public awareness of the growth agenda could lead to increased resistance to planned development.	High risk
Risk	The timescales involved with producing and approving such an in-depth partnership strategy may prohibit delivery within the timescales.	High risk

Option 3: Help to create and implement individual partnership community engagement strategies for individual growth sites.

Risk or Benefit?	Detail	Risk or benefit level
Benefit	Additional capacity would be provided to the local authorities.	High benefit
Benefit	High level buy-in to partnership community engagement strategies for individual growth sites will provide a clear focus for the work.	High benefit
Benefit	Public awareness of the proposed major development sites will be increased with a cohesive programme of engagement, linked to specific events and PR activity.	High benefit
Risk	With the sole focus on major growth sites, we would not engage with the broader community who may choose to live within these new developments, or those who live in areas where growth will be taking place at a later stage.	Low risk
Risk	Too many officers become involved in the process, duplicating effort and not making best use of time.	Medium risk

Option 4: Assist with community engagement events that have been organised by the local authorities as required.

Risk or Benefit?	Detail	Risk or benefit level
Benefit	Additional capacity would be provided to	Medium benefit

	the local authorities for specific events.	
Benefit	Public awareness of specific issues is increased.	Medium benefit
Risk	Without a comprehensive strategy opportunities could be missed, and the programme may have significant peaks and troughs.	Medium risk
Risk	A lack of public awareness of the growth agenda could lead to increased resistance to planned development.	High risk

Option 5: Focus community engagement via online and PR means only.

Risk or Benefit?	Detail	Risk or benefit level
Benefit	Additional feedback from local residents could be obtained via a third party.	Medium benefit
Benefit	Continuous activity will produce a steady stream of growth related stories and online engagement opportunities.	High benefit
Benefit	This is a low cost option that all partners can utilise as required.	Medium benefit
Risk	By focussing on online and PR means only we are narrowing our audience.	Medium risk
Risk	A lack of public awareness of the growth agenda could lead to increased resistance to planned development.	High risk
Risk	Residents feel less engaged with the wider growth agenda, with limited opportunities to have their say.	Medium risk

Given the assessment above, it is proposed that we focus on Option 3: working in partnership with the local authorities to create and deliver growth site related engagement plans, but also continue with Option 5: Focus on community engagement via online and PR means. In particular, this would support our taking forward the following key projects:

- Carrying out the renewable energy awareness raising campaign (as outlined in agenda item 8c).
- Working with the local authorities to draft comprehensive community engagement strategies for each major growth site, and working with other areas to help create growth related campaigns as required.
- Helping to deliver events such as the North West Community Forum, and in future the Southern Fringe/ Trumpington Community Forum. For example, by providing specialist support, such leading on PR and marketing activity (which would be fully partnership branded).
- Continuing to expand engagement opportunities via online (e.g. Twitter, YouTube, Growth in Cambridgeshire e-newsletter and website) and PR means, linking in to the aforementioned strategies.

Recommendation

As per the cover sheet.