

TELFORD AND WREKIN CO-OPERATIVE COMMISSION
REPORT OF THE VALUES AND COMMUNICATION SUB GROUP
2 MARCH 2012

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the work of the Co-operative Commission Values and Communication sub group and to set out the proposed recommendations to be considered by the Co-operative Commission Assembly.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Co-operative Commission Assembly/Cabinet agrees the recommendations proposed in Section 4 of this report, and that these are implemented by Telford and Wrekin Council, working in partnership with other organisations in the Borough as appropriate.

3.0 INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Cooperative Commission Assembly meeting held on 16th September 2011 identified Values and Communication as a theme for one of its working groups along with some of the issues the group should consider (see Appendix (i))
- 3.2 The Values and Communication sub group had a broad membership, including representatives from partner organisations, Parish Councillors, members of voluntary sector and community groups and head-teachers. The full list of group members is attached in Appendix (ii).
- 3.3 At their first meeting, the group focused on developing proposals for a set of co-operative values for both the Council and the wider community. In developing their proposals, the group considered the International Co-operative Alliance's definition of co-operative values and examples of values adopted by other co-operative organisations, such as Oldham Council (a member of the Co-operative Council network).
- 3.4 Using this information along with their own direct knowledge and experience, the group members worked together to agree 6 draft co-operative values. As the group wanted the values to be adopted not just by the Council but more widely across the Borough, each value includes two statements. The first statement starting 'we will' explains what each value means for both officers and members of the Council, whilst the second statement starting 'we would like everyone to' sets out how the values apply to the wider community.
- 3.5 The group then consulted both the Employee Commission and the residents' Community Forum on the draft values in December 2011. Following a request from members of the Employee Commission, the group also agreed that all Council employees be given the opportunity to give their views on the draft values through the Employee Commission's own survey, which was carried out during January 2012. A summary of the feedback on the draft values is attached in Appendix (iii).
- 3.6 The group then reviewed the feedback received, carefully considering all suggested changes in wording. As a result, the group agreed a revised set of 4 co-operative values, which are attached in Appendix (iv). The group also developed a number of additional recommendations relating to the values (see Section 4), again reflecting the feedback received from residents and Council employees.
- 3.7 The other major focus for the group was to consider how the Council communicates and consults with people and how this could be improved. To help develop their recommendations, the group invited officers from the Council that lead communication and engagement to talk about the Council's current approach. To give a different perspective the group also asked the Chair of the

Brookside Improvement Group to share their experiences of communicating and consulting with their community at a very local level.

3.8 The group also considered feedback from the Community Forum meeting in December 2011, where residents were asked to give their views about how the Council communicates and consults with them and to suggest improvements. The group also reviewed the results of a number of focus groups that the Council had previously run, which focused specifically on communication. A summary of the feedback from the Community Forum and the Council-run focus group that the group considered is shown in Appendix (v).

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The group identified four key areas of focus:

- Co-operative values;
- Communication;
- Consultation;
- Co-operative borough.

4.1.2 For each area of focus, the report sets out the desired impact and the recommendations with rationale.

4.2 Co-operative Values

4.2.1 Desired Impact:

- Co-operative values adopted and put into practice across the Council and the wider community

4.2.2 Recommendations and rationale:

Recommendations:	Rationale:
<p>That the Council adopts the proposed co-operative values in Appendix (iv) and promotes these within the Council and across the Borough. Supporting recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask the Council's Co-operative and Community Scrutiny Committee to develop proposals for assessing how well the values are being put into practice, to include considering whether an independent ethics committee should be established to oversee this; - Deliver a communication and training programme for employees and the community to educate people about the values and help to embed them; - Review the values after 12 months. 	<p>The group felt that having a clear set of co-operative values was fundamental to the Council becoming a Co-operative Council and in the longer-term moving towards a co-operative Borough. They recognised that people would need to be educated about the values and that embedding them would be a 'journey' that would take time and effort. The group stressed the need to keep the values under review and to regularly take stock of how well they are being put into practice. They did not want to be too prescriptive about how the Council should do this, but felt that it would be useful for the Council's Co-operative and Community Scrutiny Committee to help develop this.</p>

4.3 Communication

4.3.1 Desired impact:

- People communicated with in a clear, simple and timely way (see values);
- People find it easier to communicate with the Council;
- People more aware of the Council and its services.

4.3.2 Recommendations and rationale:

Recommendations:	Rationale:
Investigate the use of phone applications that enable people to report issues and access information, for example via barcode scanning	The group discussed a new fault reporting phone application developed by Lewisham Council and also opportunities for communicating information via barcodes that can be scanned and decoded by mobile phones. They felt that these might make it easier for people to interact with the Council or to understand and recall information. These phone applications could be particularly useful for communicating with school-age children and their parents.
Use existing contacts to widen awareness of the Council and the services on offer	The group suggested that the Council broadens out the range of information provided to specific target groups. For example, instead of just sending information to Flex Card holders about leisure services, the Council could also provide a broader range of information about the Council and its services.

4.4 Consultation

4.4.1 Desired impact:

- People involved in decisions that affect their lives and feeling that the Council listens and is prepared to take on new ideas (see values);
- More people getting involved and sharing their ideas (see values);
- People more aware of opportunities to get involved.

4.4.2 Recommendations and rationale:

Recommendations:	Rationale:
Offer the option of face to face interaction wherever possible and research which other methods of consultation, such as the Internet/social media, will be most effective for which people.	The group felt that talking face to face with people was very important, particularly as not everyone has access to or the skills to use the Internet/social media. They recognised the value of other methods of consulting and that different people prefer different methods (see also Appendix (v)). They felt that the Council should understand the target audience when planning consultations to avoid making assumptions about people's preferences, for example that all young people have a preference for social media.
Publish and promote a forward plan of upcoming consultations with clear start and finish dates	The group discussed the importance of feeding back to people after consultations and telling them about future opportunities to give their views (see also Appendix (v)) and that whilst some people would be willing to look for this themselves, for example through the Council's Website, the Council should also be proactive about keeping people informed. The group recognised that there might be cases where it would take a long time to respond to a consultation – but that there should still be regular updates in these cases, even if it is to say that decisions have not yet been made.
Develop an online progress tracking tool for consultations (with the option of using the contact centre to provide updates for those without Internet access)	
When consultations close, publish, promote and feedback to participants what will happen next with target timescales where possible (if implementation is likely to be lengthy, identify a target 'next step' date)	
Provide more rewards for people who take part in	The group recognised that it would not always be

consultations or sign up for social media	appropriate for the Council to offer financial rewards, but felt that the Council could offer a broader range of other rewards, including contributions from partners, for example the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust.
Get the most from consultation events by consulting on more than one thing at a time, promoting upcoming consultations and always giving people the opportunity to share whatever is important to them (even if this is not directly relevant to the main consultation topic), for example by having a suggestion box at each event with a standardised post-card.	The group suggested that there was scope for the Council to join up and better co-ordinate consultations (see also Appendix (v)).
Ensure that wherever possible Councillors attend consultation events alongside relevant Council officers to inform people about whether implementations are realistic	Linking to the proposed co-operative values, the group felt it was important that the people that make decisions attend events and are open with and are accountable to people about what can and cannot realistically be done.

4.5 Co-operative Borough

4.5.1 Desired impact:

- People empowered with the skills to help themselves and their communities (see values)
- Organisations working together to support their local communities and to encourage people to do more to help themselves.

4.5.2 Recommendations and rationale:

Recommendations:	Rationale:
Continue to run and promote the Community Forum set up by Rights and Fairness Telford (RAFT) to give residents the opportunity to get involved in local decision-making, and ensure that members of the Community Forum are kept informed about what has happened as a result of their involvement	Group member Andy Smith reported to the group that the first meeting of the Community Forum on 15 December 2011 was well supported with over 50 people taking part and a lot of interest and enthusiasm. The group felt it was important to keep up the momentum and make sure that members of the Forum got regular feedback to sustain their interest and promote a long-term relationship. The group also stressed the need to feedback regularly to members of the Forum, to include emails to all members and updates as meetings at agreed milestones.
Build on the success of existing community groups, such as the Brookside Improvement Group, working in partnership to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Run training to develop similar skills and capacity in other parts of the Borough (to include sharing the learning from Brookside) and investigate running an active citizenship learning programme aimed at individuals who want to get involved in their community; - Set up a mentoring programme to support people who want to set up groups in their own areas; - Carry out a mapping exercise of community involvement across the Borough and using this to promote the training, support and mentoring set out above in parts of the 	The group were keen to promote Brookside Improvement Group as a local success story and to use this as a 'prototype' to roll-out to other areas. The group also recognised that not everyone would want to get involved through a community group; therefore they felt there was also a need to offer training and support to individuals who wanted to be more active in their community. The group stressed that the size and diversity of Telford meant that any training, support and mentoring should be adapted to suit different areas. The group felt it was important to continue a dialogue between groups and where things don't work to see this as positive learning opportunity rather than a failure. The group suggested that help available should be actively promoted in areas with less community involvement

Borough where community involvement could be improved	and fewer established groups although they did stress that any mapping exercise should be short and focused.
Meet with Town and Parish Councils via the Parishes Forum to discuss how Town and Parish Councils can get involved with the proposed co-operative values and how the Council can support Town and Parish Councils to communicate better with local residents about what is happening in their local areas.	The group felt it was important that Town and Parish Councils were aware of and involved with the proposed co-operative values. They also felt that Town and Parish Councillors had an important role in communicating information to local residents, although the group had had mixed personal experiences of this.

5.0 OVERLAP WITH OTHER COMMISSION SUB GROUPS

- Commissioning Services and Procurement – that the Commission holds the Council to account to ensure that the values are embedded in all that it does.

Appendix i - The following list identifies some of the issues associated with this working group that were discussed at the commission meeting on the 16th September.

1.1. Local community involvement

1.2. Work with other co-operative councils –

- What does success look like here
- Best practice – what can we use
- Doing with rather than to!

1.3. How are we going to structure our agencies to achieve co-operative working?

- Want to achieve a ‘creating and co-operative ‘ borough
- Council as facilitator?
- Have clear values/messages
- Communication is key
- Need some ‘quick wins for communities’
 - o Show change/difference we’re making
 - o Deliver on promises – engagement is key
- What is the vision? – about the people of T&W – is about the communities we serve
- How are we going to measure success

1.4. How are we going to achieve success as a co-operative? How will we know we’ve made a difference?

1.5. Fairness – how are we going to prioritise? Explain why things have been prioritised

1.6. Communication and engagement –

- Face to face engagement
- Going out to local communities
- Joined up engagement from public sector
- People power – supporting people to do things for themselves
- Developing new ways to consult and engage
- Communication – plain English, improve mechanisms

1.7. Communication -

- Communication about proposals and plans – general issue about communication between partners/communities
- More face to face talking to each other
- Isolation, people working alone

1.8. Relationships –

- Relationships between Parish & Town Councils and Borough Council – needs to be enhanced to support – suggestion for commission to look at it to start new relationships
- Encourage Parish councils to engage with communities
- Need to engage communities and keep people on board
- Public sector to deliver joint engagement
- Challenge to bring people together – need to bring different communities together

1.9. Role of communities in helping themselves – link to community engagement

1.10. Communication, engagement and empowerment –

- Face to face communication
- Joined up engagement
- Going out to local communities
- People power – supporting people to do things for themselves
- New ways of consulting and engaging

- Underpinning – all commission priorities communication –
- Language – use of plain language
- Methods and mechanisms

1.11. Principles and values – approach relationship between Council, partners and the community

Appendix ii - Members of Cooperative Commission Values and Communications Sub Group

Shah Bhatti	Tan Bank Mosque
Graham Clark	New College Wellington Regeneration Partnership
Julia Clarke	Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust
Sian Deane	Holmer Lake Primary School
Cllr Rae Evans	Telford & Wrekin Council
Cllr Ann-Marie Houghton	Hadley Parish Council
Paul Kalinauckas	Black Country Re-Investment Society
Cllr Jim Loveridge	Stirchley & Brookside Parish Council
Steve Miller	Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
Rev Keith Osmund-Smith	Coordinating Chaplain & Interim Street Pastor Coordinator
David Parker	Newport Regeneration Partnership
Tina Rogers	Brookside Improvement Group
Arul Selvaratnam	Standards Committee, Telford & Wrekin Council
Rev'd Andy Smith	Telford Christian Council
Neil Stonehouse	Phoenix School
Steve Wall	Sutherland School

Support Officers

Felicity Mercer Telford and Wrekin Council
 Parvinder Chana Telford and Wrekin Council

Appendix (iii) - Feedback on Draft Co-operative Values (Community Forum and Employees)

Value	Comments
<p>• Ownership</p> <p>We will – be accountable for our own actions and empower people with the skills to help themselves</p> <p>We would like everyone to – take action and responsibility for themselves and their community</p>	<p><u>Feedback from Community Forum (C) and Employees (E):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree (Ex9) - Sounds good/reasonable (Ex6) - This should already be part of our values/intrinsic to Council (Ex4) - Everyone should take responsibility for themselves (Ex3) - Some people will not take action/responsibility – how will you empower them? (Ex3, Cx1) - Need to take action if people don't meet our expectations (Ex2) - This is social responsibility (Ex2) - (Employees) not always accountable for actions – these can be instructions from Councillors (Ex1) - People can't take responsibility in the face of big business (Ex1) - Using the word 'accountable' leaves Council open to being criticised if we do something that does not please everyone (Ex1) - Should also be about empowering organisations e.g. 3rd sector? (Ex1) - Still too much silo working and problems batted between services at Council (Ex1) - Some groups cannot take ownership – homeless, vulnerable, disabled (may need to involve advocates/carers) (Cx1) <p><u>Feedback from Group Members:</u></p> <p>Amend value to read 'We will – be accountable for our actions and empower people by giving them the skills to help themselves by developing a culture of social responsibility/we would like everyone to – take action and responsibility for themselves and ownership of their community' (Rae Evans)</p>
<p>• Involvement</p> <p>We will – involve people in decisions that affect their lives and listen and respond to what people tell us</p> <p>We would like everyone to – get involved, share their views and challenge the way we do things</p>	<p><u>Feedback from Community Forum (C) and Employees (E):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sounds good/reasonable/needed (Ex11) - Not realistic to consult on everything – add 'where possible', need to be clear with people when and how they can get involved (Ex5) - Need to manage expectations – giving a view doesn't always mean it will be accepted and acted upon, there are conflicting demands (Ex5) - Should be/we are already doing this (Ex4) - Agree (Ex3) - Residents may not feel comfortable challenging the Council (Ex2) - Consultations don't reach a wide enough audience (Ex2) - How do you get the community to engage/challenge? (Ex2) - Needs to be more than token questionnaire (Ex1)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficult to do this on top of other work (Ex1) - Need to offer ways and means to do this (Ex1) - Should start from top at Council (Ex1) - We have elected members as the people’s way of deciding how things get done (Ex1) - Professionals are paid for knowledge – please don’t take all decision-making away from them (Ex1) - Engaging doesn’t always produce answers (Ex1) - As an employer too? Involve employees in decisions that affect their work (Ex1) <p><u>Feedback from Group Members:</u> Amend value to read ‘We will – seek to involve our partners and people in decisions that affect their lives and listen and respond to what people tell us/We would like everyone to – get involved, share their views and challenge the way we do things’ (Rae Evans)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairness <p>We will – be open to everyone by understanding and responding to different people’s needs</p> <p>We would like everyone to – treat each other as equals</p>	<p><u>Feedback from Community Forum (C) and Employees (E):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could merge ‘Fairness and Respect’ (Ex1) - Add ‘realistic’ here? (Ex1) <p><u>Feedback from Group Members:</u> Amend value to read ‘We will – respond to everyone’s needs in a fair and consistent way/We would like everyone to – treat each other as equals’ (Rae Evans)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect <p>We will and we would like everyone to – respect and care for others, be willing to compromise and value the different ideas and skills that people bring</p>	<p><u>Feedback from Community Forum (C) and Employees (E):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could merge ‘Fairness and Respect’ (Ex1) <p><u>Feedback from Group Members:</u> Amend value to read ‘We will and we would like everyone to – respect and care for others and value the different ideas and skills that people bring’ (delete ‘willing to compromise’)(Rae Evans)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Togetherness <p>We will – work together with the community to reach a consensus for mutual benefit</p> <p>We would like everyone to – work with and support others</p>	<p><u>Feedback from Community Forum (C) and Employees (E):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No specific reference to young people? – include them/value their perspective? (Cx1) - Community is about local geographic areas, sub-communities can lead to divisions (Cx1) - Could key parts be incorporated into ‘Involvement’? (Ex1) <p><u>Feedback from Group Members:</u> Amend value to read ‘We will – work together with and for our communities engaging them to reach a consensus and mutual benefit from what we do/we</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness <p>We will – be open about how we work and make decisions, communicate in a clear, simple and timely way and be prepared to change and take on new ideas</p> <p>We would like everyone to – be open about what they want to improve in their community and willing to talk with us</p>	<p>would like everyone to – work with and support others’ (Rae Evans)</p> <p><u>Feedback from Community Forum (C) and Employees (E):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Add honesty to this value (Ex1) <p><u>Feedback from Group Members:</u></p> <p>Amend value to read ‘We will – be open and honest in the way we work and make decisions, communicate in a clear, simple and timely way and be prepared to change and take on new ideas/we would like everyone to – be open and clear about what they want to improve in their community and willing to talk with us’ (Rae Evans)</p>
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Other comments:

Suggested additions to values:

- Something missing – honesty/integrity – say one thing and do another (Cx1)
- What about honesty and realistic? (Ex1)

Other suggestions/comments:

- Values are strong – a more concise and direct version will get the message across to people, we want to understand and ‘live’ them, there are too many values (Ex1)
- No reference to overall working restraints – financial, conflicting demand, manage expectations (Cx1), similar concerns expressed by a number of employees that we might not be able to always deliver these values
- Soft: how to measures? How do you do it? Benchmarking (Cx1 and Ex2)
- Need an ethics/scrutiny panel to check values are being put into practice – membership should be by interest/ability (Cx1)
- If this change comes about, it would lead to great benefits but it will need a major culture change (Cx1)
- Will only be successfully implemented with community involvement (Cx1)
- Incentives/building relationships ongoing (Cx1)
- Could we make it clearer that ‘we’ refers to ‘the Council’/ Who are ‘we’? Councillors? Employees? Both? (Ex2)
- Use service planning as a way for all areas to say how they will meet values (Ex1)
- All ‘we would like everyone to’ statements are patronising (Ex1)
- These values could be completely radical or utterly meaningless (Ex1)
- Shouldn’t these have been written to involve employees from the start? (Ex1)
- Set out values clearly in job descriptions (Ex1)

Appendix (iv) - Co-operative Values

- **Ownership**

We will – be accountable for our own actions and empower people with the skills to help themselves

We would like everyone to – take action and responsibility for themselves and their community to the best of their abilities

- **Openness & Honesty**

We will – be open and honest in the way we work and make decisions and communicate in a clear, simple and timely way

We would like everyone to – be open and honest about what they want to improve in their community

- **Involvement**

We will – work together with the community, involve people in decisions that affect their lives and be prepared to listen and take on new ideas

We would like everyone to – work with and support others, get involved and share their views to help us develop the way we do things

- **Fairness & Respect**

We will – respond to people's needs in a fair and consistent way

We will and would like everyone to – respect and care for themselves and others, value the different ideas and skills that people bring and treat each other as equals

Appendix (v) Communication and Engagement – Summary of Community Feedback

Issues/comments raised about current approach to communication and engagement:	Source:
Consultation: outcomes already in mind, not listening, Council does things then tells us	CF/FG
Internal communication inefficient – queries don't get answered, individuals get passed around	CF
Uncertainty about terms of engagement/consultations	CF
(Not enough) feedback after consultation	CF
Community Panel: good way of getting views and built-in feedback	CF
Communities are motivated when issues directly affect them – need a different approach to individual/local issues than issues of wider relevance	CF/FG
Communication/engagement could be better co-ordinated – within Council and joined-up with partners (services repeating things seems to happen a lot – stop duplication)	FG
Need information in different ways – needs to fit lifestyle	FG
Suggested Improvements/Changes:	Source:
Accountability for issues raised and not addressed – more information about who's responsible for what (named officer/members) so we know who to direct queries or concerns to	CF/FG
Train staff so that they know who to pass queries to and communicate progress/action	CF
(Better) liaison between officers and members	CF
Consult people more before doing things – more time for consultation	FG
Feedback after consultation and check regularly with the public that messages are getting out	CF/FG
Greater use of Internet/social media e.g. Twitter/I-phone apps – information punchy/brief (but remember not everyone has access)	CF/FG
Try different ways of engaging/communicating face to face: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use word of mouth: Doctor's surgeries, supermarkets, Parish Councillors; - Have a presence at community centres/shopping malls; - Link in with local groups/organisations e.g. BIG, churches; - Road-shows in various parts of the district (at time of Fun days etc) – increase knowledge of what Council does; - Use arts and celebrations as a means of engaging; - Tap into local youth clubs, sport in schools; - Work with Community Support Officers; - Open days to Council offices; - Annual Citizens' Conference. 	CF/FG
Make sure there is a good age spectrum – involve/include more young people	CF/FG
(Bring back) Insight magazine and use other people's magazines	CF/FG
Increase co-ordination of communication/engagement within Council and join up more with PCT/voluntary organisations/partners to reduce duplication	CF/FG
Devise a locally-based communication model and tell people in advance what's happening in their local area	FG

Key

CF – Community Forum

FG – Focus Group (run by Council to understand issues about communication)