

**Title:** A Next Phase for Stronger Communities Partnership

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 At it's meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011, the SCP agreed to establish a Strategic Planning Group (SPG) made up of its main partners to look at next steps for the SCP, following feedback from the City Engagement Summit and proposed changes to the city's partnership structures. The SPG<sup>1</sup> met on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2012, and discussed the following:
- What partners want and can offer SCP
  - Proposed Protocol with B&H Strategic Partnership and Change in Role
  - Review of Membership
  - Prioritisation of Work Areas
  - Mechanisms for Working with Other Partnerships
  - Resourcing

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 The SPG are recommending that SCP agree the following:
- To cease operating as of 31st March 2012
  - To re-branding and re-promotion of the partnership as the 'City Engagement Partnership', operating from 1st April onwards
  - To focus and streamline its membership (see below)
  - To dissolve its sub-groups, including the CEF Implementation Group, and set up working groups as and when work areas demand it
  - To establish an agenda setting group that will meet before each City Engagement Partnership meeting
  - To set up a mailing list of people with an interest in engagement activities in the city
  - To review these changes in September 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> Attendees: Gordon McCullough, CVSF, Geraldine Des Moulins, SCP Chair and CVSF Rep, Jannet Cook, SCP Vice-Chair and CVSF Rep, Lisa Mytton, CVSF, Michelle Pooley, BHCC, Mary Evans, BHCC, Jane Lodge, Clinical Commissioning Group, Bruce Mathews, Sussex Police, Simon Newell, B&H Strategic Partnership

### 3. A 'City Engagement Partnership'

- 3.1 The SPG discussed their thoughts on what the **role and remit** of the Stronger Communities Partnership should be, taking into account past achievements and recent changing policy context. It was felt that the main purpose of SCP should be:
- To provide strategic leadership on engagement across the city, discussing partners planned engagement activities and providing advice and guidance to partnerships as requested
  - To be the place in the city where partners share best practice and lessons learnt from previous engagement activities
  - To be the place in the city which provides consistent messages about how engagement should be carried out and provide tools and resources to enable this
  - To be a critical friend; providing 'challenge' to colleagues in a safe space and offering solutions to problems presented
  - To be the place in the city where resources and expertise around engagement is shared by all partners (including data) to avoid duplication of activities and prevent organisations from working in isolation/silos to drive up the quality of engagement.
- 3.2 It was felt that to work towards achieving the above, SCP would benefit from a '**rebranding**' and re-promotion of its purpose across the family of partnerships. It is therefore proposed that SCP ceases to operate as of 31<sup>st</sup> March and moves into a new phase as the City Engagement Partnership (CEP) as of 1<sup>st</sup> April. Promotion of the partnership would include highlighting existing resources such as the Community Engagement Framework (CEF), Reward and Recognition Guidance and the Concerns and Solutions Matrix (Appendix 1). This work should also be based on the SCP's Communication Plan which was drafted in March 2011.
- 3.3 Brighton and Hove Strategic Partnership will support the CEP in its rebranding to help strengthen relationships across the family of partnerships. It will start this process by presenting the recommendations in this paper at its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> February.
- 3.4 It should be noted that a refresh of the CEF is planned, which will be overseen by the partnership and is likely to include creating an interactive tool which people will be able to access on-line, making the CEF more user friendly and helping with promotion of the partnership.

## 4. Ways of Working and Work Areas

- 4.1 In the past, SCP has been criticised for meetings which are focussed too heavily on issues relating to Brighton & Hove City Council and members have felt there is a need to re-engage its partners. It is also recognised that the process of agenda setting since the Partnership Manager Post came to an end has not been perfect, and the chair has felt uncomfortable about making decisions alone around what items should be prioritised for each meeting.
- 4.2 It is therefore proposed that an **agenda setting group** is set up based on the Strategic Planning Group. This group would meet before each City Engagement Partnership meeting, ensure that all partners feed into and prioritise agenda items and identify key officers who may need to be invited to the meeting depending on items for discussion.
- 4.3 The first task of this group would be to carry out a **mapping exercise** of significant engagement activity in the city over the coming 12 months. A request would go to each of the Partnership Managers for this information which would form a 'timetable' that will determine agendas for future partnership meetings where relevant. It is therefore also proposed to stop all current sub-groups of SCP (including the CEF Implementation Group) and set up new working groups as and when work areas demand it. Due to the end of funding for implementation of the CEF and completion of projects (apart from the Engagement Showcase Event on 27<sup>th</sup> February), it was felt that the CEF Implementation Group had come to the end of its operation.
- 4.4 Another early task for the agenda setting group would be to scope how the partnership can **link into existing city mechanisms**, to link strategically and improve communications e.g. with the Public Service Board. It would also seek to map specific work areas, discuss any amendments to the proposed protocol with the B&H Strategic Partnership and any changes needed to update the Terms of Reference. Any decisions to be made would be taken to the full CEP meeting for discussion and sign-off.
- 4.5 It is proposed that this way of working be **reviewed** after a 6 month period to make sure all members are happy with the functioning of the partnership.

## 5. Membership

5.1 **Current membership** as stated in the Terms of Reference is as follows:

### **CVSF representatives**

#### *Elected representatives*

- Four elected representatives from neighbourhoods, to represent all neighbourhoods in B&H
- Four elected community based communities of interest groups from the following equality strands: Age, Faith, BME, LGBT, Disability and Gender, to represent equalities in general.

*NB following a restructure in the CVSF Reps structure last year the number of reps currently stands at 6 rather than 8*

#### *Support officers*

- Two area based community development representatives
- CVSF/SCP support officers

### **Statutory agency representatives**

#### *Strategic Officers*

- LSP Co-ordinator
- Chief Exec's Policy Unit Officer
- Voluntary Sector Unit Officer
- Equalities and Inclusion Team Officer
- Neighbourhood Management Team Officer

*Officers with a strategic remit for community engagement from statutory agencies/council departments*

- Police
- PCT
- Housing; BHCC and RSLs (Social Landlords Forum)
- Adult Social Care
- Customer Services
- CYPT
- Environment
- Adult learning
- Employment and skills (economic development)

#### *Others*

- Councillor representatives from each of the main political parties

5.2 The **proposed new membership** of the City Engagement Partnership is as follows:

- CVSF Elected Representatives – 4 Reps (from Equalities, Communities and Small Groups themes representing neighbourhoods and/or communities of interest)\*
- Sussex/Brighton and Hove Police – 2 officers
- Clinical Commissioning Group – 2 officers
- Fire Service – 1 officer
- Brighton & Hove City Council – 5 officers (across directorates as necessary)
- University/Adult Learning – 1 officer
- B&H Strategic Partnership – 1 officer (Head of Partnerships)
- Councillor Representatives (one from each of the main political parties)
- Other officers – to be invited by the agenda planning group to reflect discussion/work areas
- Support – Brighton & Hove City Council Community Engagement Officer and CVSF Development Officer

\*The suggested reduction from 6 to 4 CVSF Reps will need to be discussed by the current Reps and ratified at the CVSF Reps Council as this has implications for their representation activity.

- 5.3 It would be up to each of the partners to nominate their representatives and provide consistent attendance at the CEP. Partners will also be asked to nominate a deputy who could attend in place of the regular member. It is felt that this reflects the need to rationalise membership across the board, and to make meetings more streamlined and focussed.
- 5.4 The SPG discussed how to ensure that the voices of those who are seldom heard are fed into city partnerships by either using existing mechanisms or setting up new ones. This could also be about mapping pathways for public agencies to engage with those who are seldom heard. The role of the CVSF Equalities Network and linkages need to be considered and strengthened. This issue will be picked up by the agenda planning group described above.
- 5.5 The SPG recognises that narrowing the focus of the partnership's membership increases the need to communicate with officers and a wider audience of people interested in engagement activities taking place across the city. It is therefore proposing to set up a mailing list of all interested parties and well as members of the CEP, which will provide a synopsis of key issues discussed at each meeting and will report on activities and outcomes of the CEP. The mailing list might include, for example, Resident Involvement Officers (Housing), officers from the council's Policy Unit and Service User Involvement workers etc.

## 6. Resourcing

- 6.1 Resources are needed to service the partnership, manage information and data, build relationships with key partners and carry out relevant activities. The City Council is willing to dedicate their Community Engagement Officer to supporting the partnership and CVSF can commit some officer time (to be negotiated). It was felt that this was important to ensure the partnership is **independent** and not council focussed. Other partners agreed to source resources (not necessarily funding) when activities require it.