

Village Groups Forum - 24 September 2014

Summary of notes from Round Table discussions

Expectations from attendees

- To find out what Village Plans are, what do they mean, how may they be changed, what's their purpose?
- Engagement of residents and those who work in the area
- Networking - share ideas – find out what's going
- Presentations on planning, character areas
- VGF is a Networking event, share contacts with groups, compare notes with each other about how the VP is progressing/ problems, etc.
- Linking villages

How can Council better engage?

- Posters needed to create more publicity and information.
- Use community noticeboards
- Newsletter, printed/ paper copy ones are most needed. Newsletter should be two way LBRUT-community/resident conversations. Emails should come with just a link not too heavy a file.
- Not many people know of the village plans, not enough communication around it.

Purpose and focus of the Village Group Forum

The following broad themes were identified

To provide an opportunity for an inclusive range of groups from across the borough to engage with the council around issues and opportunities relating to village areas. In particular younger people, disabled people, seldom heard groups etc.

To provide a networking opportunity for groups to meet, discuss, share ideas and knowledge.

To monitor/feedback on Council and community progress on village area projects. To be broader than simply 'Village Planning'.

Provides an opportunity to discuss new approaches to engagement and involvement of residents, including use of technology, drawing upon other networks such as business groups, identifying 'new' topics to engage people

Who might we be missing?

- Younger people
- People with different types of disabilities
- Sports Associations/ Clubs
- Ward Councillors
- Friends of libraries
- Residential Social Landlords and Forums RHP
- User's groups
- Community organisations, Churches and faith groups, Ethnic minorities
- Health & GPs
- Businesses / Town Centre Managers
- Safer Neighbourhood Teams
- Rotary & Round Table, WI, U3A, Townswomen Guilds
- Leisure and / or health groups (Slimmers world, Bridge club etc)
- Children's centres
- Boat dwellers, Travellers

Format for future meetings

- Vary the start times linked to different themes and topics and potential audience
- Voluntary sector practice is to avoid school holidays, day time, evening
- 2 meetings during day and 2 meetings during evening (7.00 or 7.30pm) Meetings for voluntary traditionally start at 6pm - Voluntary Sector people come straight from work
- Producing a pack afterwards for those who couldn't attend
- Web page so link can be put on groups' web pages, local tweeters and other accounts and magazines
- Participants would like to hear experiences of those areas where the village plan has passed through to get a better understanding of the process, timelines, engagement process, challenges and successes.
- It will help to have case studies of how Amenity groups have worked with the council on the Village plans.
- People want to learn ways to engage and learn from other's experiences.
- It is important that the Village Plan and the Forum are owned by the community
- Communicate clearly regarding changes to the format, changes in process (the newsletters are a prime example of this: some know of the newsletters, others didn't, some want a paper copy but didn't know they can be found in libraries, others didn't know community groups could contribute to them).
- Some liked the format and opportunity to informally talk and mix with other groups, others felt the networking bit needed a focus / purpose
- Information flows between meetings are important, keeps interest and momentum (need to get right balance don't overwhelm)

Ideas for future meetings

- Find innovative ways to inform community groups about village plan, warnings that it is coming, opportunity to engage
- Programme and timeline of Village Plan development for other areas over the next 12 months, and sharing learning from the process
- Planning and transport/ cycling improvements
- Rugby World Cup – impact on different village areas
- Shopping centres more user friendly for older/ disabled residents
- Traffic and Congestion
- The forum should be used to provide updates and achievement till date.
- It should provide definitions of planning (index of terms)
- People hope to get a better understanding of current planning legislation. For instance, anything that is surfacing on the national/ local front needs to be raised here.
- School expansions (particular issue in Ham)
- Planning issues
 - Conversion of shops into homes
 - Affordable housing
- Open space and its use by young people particularly with the lack of youth centres or things for young people to do, tension that can emerge between older people and young people
- How to involve young people
- Poster on noticeboard
- Ask groups for a small list of priorities (one side of A4) which they submit to the VGF (village group forum)