

ITEM 6a

Camden Local Strategic Partnership

Meeting	27 March 2008
Report Title	Draft notes on the “Engaging Camden’s Neighbourhoods” seminar held on 11th March 2008
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Purpose	The LSP held a seminar on 11th March 2008 at the Hampstead Theatre entitled “Engaging Camden’s Neighbourhoods”.
Recommendations	The LSP is asked to note the report, particularly the actions to take forward summarised in section 4.

Present

- Cllr Keith Moffitt (Chair of LSP), London Borough of Camden, Leader
- Rob Larkman (Vice Chair of LSP), Camden Primary Care Trust, Chief Executive
- Simone Hensby, Camden Community Empowerment Network (Chair) and Voluntary Action Camden
- Charlie Legg, Camden Community Empowerment Network and Camden Central Community Umbrella
- Kevin Munslow, The Holborn Partnership Vice Chair and Chief Executive Officer, Olswang
- Karen Wilson, Camden Housing Association and Co-op Forum, Chair and Group Chief Executive, Origin Group
- Simon Pitkeathley, Camden Town Unlimited, Chief Executive
- Mick Hickey, Job Centre Plus, External Relations Manager - Central London District
- Cllr Andrew Marshall, London Borough of Camden, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Equalities and Community Development
- Chief Supt Dominic Clout, Metropolitan Police, Borough Commander
- Michael Scorer, London Borough of Camden, Assistant Chief Executive
- Simon Pitkeathley, Camden Town Unlimited, Chief Executive (in place of Chris Shaw)

Also attending

- Louise Matlock, Government Office for London, Locality Manager – North
- Donna Turnbull, Camden Community Empowerment Network, Strategy and Policy Officer
- Dean Stokes, London Borough of Camden, Head of Strategy and Projects
- Patrick Mesquita, London Borough of Camden, Head of Community Development and Neighbourhood Renewal
- Claire Tunley, London Borough of Camden, Head of LAA and LSP
- Mike Webb, London Borough of Camden, Senior Policy Officer

1 Welcome, apologies and introductions

- 1.1 As the Chair, Cllr Moffitt welcomed attendees, particularly Kevin Munslow as it was his first LSP meeting, and noted apologies from Moira Gibb, Anthony Kessel, Chris Shaw and Stephen Jordan. Chris Shaw was represented by Simon Pitkeathley.

2 Presentations

- 2.1 Dean Stokes began the presentations by outlining the national devolution agenda, how Camden LSP partners engage people locally including the Council's Area Forums programme and the LSP's role in consultation and engagement.
- 2.2 Dominic Clout's presentation described the work of the Safer Neighbourhoods Team in Camden and the Safer Neighbourhoods Panels.
- 2.3 Simone Hensby described how the Camden Community Empowerment Network acts as a communication and involvement loop between the borough's voluntary and community sector and the LSP.
- 2.4 More information from the presentations is contained in the slides, available to LSP members electronically on request from Mike Webb.

3 Discussion

- 3.1 It was suggested that the challenges for the partners around neighbourhood engagement were to avoid duplication and maintain flexibility. This led to a discussion of councillor representation on Safer Neighbourhoods Panels - some panels do not want councillors on them although the Canteloves panel does have elected member representation. The police are not prescriptive about membership but councillors sometimes tend to dominate meetings and can be political.
- 3.2 Local people have asked why Safer Neighbourhoods Panels and Area Forums aren't held together. There is a clear overlap between the two and there needs to be work on aligning them better but without diluting them. Certainly the police need to be involved in Area Forums when issues around crime are discussed. It was suggested they attend all Area Forums but others felt this could be confusing for attendees.
- 3.3 One distinction noted between the two was that the subject matter of Area Forums changes from meeting to meeting whereas Safer Neighbourhoods Panels are always about crime. On the other hand, both are about the quality of life in a local neighbourhood and so there is overlap. Council officers and police officers are often not able to adequately field questions about each others' services and resources.

- 3.4 Camden Town Unlimited is not on its local Safer Neighbourhoods Panel but they have a good relationship with them. The Holborn Partnership operates in more of an office-based environment and so had not come into contact with the local authority and voluntary sector forums. Their relationship with the police is much more direct for example they have had input into the Holborn Partnership's public realm projects.
- 3.5 It was suggested that Area Forums will gradually build momentum but there is the risk of always engaging the same people. Another issue raised was that Area Forums can erode long established community forums. The council needs to have a better understanding of the impact on these groups – are Area Forums complementing or undermining them? In relation to this, it was felt that it is important to distinguish between residents' groups which would meet anyway and groups that are somehow related to the council. The latter are more likely to be affected by Area Forums. It was recommended these issues be considered as part of the council's review of Area Forums.
- 3.6 The LSP noted another challenge of community engagement; different organisations cut the cake in different ways. For example, health tends to engage users of particular services or particular user groups. It was thought that this can be bewildering for local people but perhaps more consistent terminology would help. Members were surprised that the issue of GP surgeries had not been raised at Area Forums but this may be because many people see health as a national, not a local, issue.
- 3.7 The LSP were reminded that the original rationale behind Area Forums which was the sheer number of groups which were inviting council officers to attend their meetings. Area Forums were a way to rationalise this with more council control as the quid pro quo. However it was felt that they have not been very successful in attracting hard to reach groups while also not directly engaging well-known community activists. The CEN have good links with voluntary and community organisations but people will only turn up if they have an issue or asked to come by others. The police's Key Individual Networks survey reaches hard to reach people by interviewing them in their homes, so they don't have to attend meetings.
- 3.8 It was stated that Area Forums are complemented by the council's Camden Talks citizens' panel. Views from both are used by policymakers in the council and the two do not always match up. It is important for people attending Area Forums to be aware that their views do not override the council's other ways of engaging. The LSP were advised that councillors consistently report that about 80% of Area Forum attendees were previously known to them. Attendees are not asked to provide a lot of information about themselves but they are invited to register for updates after the Area Forums. The council might want to ask them what other groups they attend at this point.

- 3.9 It was suggested that the distinction between consultation and engagement is important. Engagement is about getting involved and staying involved. If people are attending Area Forums to let off steam then they will stop coming after two or three times. The LSP were informed that there has been interest in a parish council in Canteloves because it allows local people to have clear and agreed powers, albeit limited. LSP members' experiences of various neighbourhood management arrangements varied – Camden Central Partnership was felt to have worked well, as was a Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder in Westminster but similar arrangements in Gospel Oak and West Hampstead were seen as less successful. It seemed that Camden Central was successful because it had sufficient resources and structures in place.
- 3.10 The LSP were informed that research has identified some key principles for neighbourhood policing:
- Know the local population and keep this information up to date - London boroughs tend to change their population by 20% over three years.
 - Neighbourhoods are not always aligned with ward boundaries
 - Information is crucial to the public – you should tell people even if crime is going up otherwise rumours can easily fill the vacuum
 - Need to be realistic with people about resources
- 3.11 There was a word of caution around devolved budgets since allocating them can descend into petty squabbles. However the council has found devolving often quite small budgets to engage hard to reach groups to be successful.
- 3.12 The LSP was told that it needs to bear in mind the quality of engagement as well as quantity. It was suggested it could agree some standards around engagement. It also needs to consider how to engage people in the review of the Community Strategy. There was general agreement that the best way forward would be to set up a smaller Working Group to look at the issues in more detail. One issue it would need to look at is a protocol between the police and council on how Safer Neighbourhood Panels and Area Forums work together better. This may stop short of co-hosting but could involve joint advertising etc. The Working Group could also look at links with the Neighbourhood Partnerships.
- 3.13 An elected member commented that an obstacle to the devolvement of responsibilities to ward councillors may be capacity. All political parties already find it hard enough to recruit councillors although it is possible that increased powers may make the role more attractive. At the other end of the spectrum is the concentration of powers with an elected mayor. The current Executive model is somewhere in between.

- 3.14 Tensions between collective and individual views and also between neighbourhood and LSP/strategic priorities were highlighted and that it can be difficult to handle these tensions at Area Forums.
- 3.15 The discussion returned to the issue of getting beyond the usual suspects. It was felt to be particularly important in health as the people who they most need to engage are hardest to reach. One of the roles of the Working Group could be to identify and share good practice about these groups. It was pointed out that a recent Minority Outreach Project Report covered much of this ground – a major finding was that personal contact is crucial to engaging hard to reach groups which can be very expensive. The Camden Central Partnership experience reflected this – it put a lot of time and resources into building long-term relationships with communities, employing 6 people for a number of years. However the LSP can probably do more with existing relationships and with community organisations that want to get involved – it may be a question of mapping engagement across the LSP.
- 3.16 It was suggested that Housing Associations could help to signpost people to Area Forums and vice versa when people have issues best handled by their landlord.
- 3.17 The police are confident that their information gathering systems are such that they will hear about most significant things happening on the street. They have a youth issues unit that spends all its time talking to young people on the streets. However, for obvious reasons, they are less successful in learning about things that happen in private e.g. domestic violence. A challenge for the council is to share information across its 40-50 business units. Unlike the police it does not collate everything it knows in one place and perhaps hasn't needed to in the past. This is now an important priority for the council. Information about hard to reach groups may well be held somewhere in the council but is just not shared effectively.

4 Actions to take forward

- It was agreed that the LSP would set up a Working Group to look at the major issues raised in the seminar, such as:
- Developing links between Area Forums and Safer Neighbourhoods Panels
- Considering if and how other partners such as health and business might align their engagement work with the council and the police
- Establishing a shared oversight of consultation and engagement, perhaps mapping work across the partners and considering a more strategic approach