

**SUBJECT: Involvement and Local Democracy**

**MEETING: Democratic Services Committee**

**DATE: 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

**DIVISIONS/WARDS AFFECTED: All**

## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To provide the committee with an update on issues of involvement in local democracy.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Committee has previously begun to explore how the authority can engage people more meaningfully in the democratic process, create opportunities for people to engage with the authority in new ways, work collaboratively and involve people in building sustainable and resilient communities. This is part of a broader desire to understanding new perspectives and ideas in democratic development.
- 2.2 The Committee have received papers on New Directions in Democracy; Issues emerging from public engagement and the Monmouthshire Made Open Platform.

## **3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Members are invited to consider how the issues in this paper, an in particular those drawn from the corporate plan should be used to shape its work programme.

## **4 KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 Local government has a key role in helping communities to define the futures to which they aspire and helping the public understand how decisions are made and also how they can participate in the democratic process.
- 4.2 The approval of a Corporate Plan setting out an ambitious programme of work means that members and officers have clarity on the areas that the organisation will be focusing on over the next four-and-a-half years. It also includes some specific references to how this will be done which are central to the work of this committee.
- 4.3 Financial pressures and the pace of change will mean members dealing with decisions which are more complex, generating considerable interest amongst local people. With less money, we will not be able to keep doing everything that we have done in the past. We will listen to our communities, find out what matters to them and focus on these areas. The need to involve people in shaping decisions and ensure transparency and accountability is paramount.
- 4.4 The corporate plan has a number of design principles. Of greatest relevance to the work of this committee is accountability:

*Through setting out plans and goals in clear ways and ensuring we are open in all decision-making, engagement and evaluation of performance. We will give account of and be held accountable for the things we do and for the things we do not do.*

The process of member and public scrutiny will continue to be an important feature in this.

- 4.5 Specific issues in the Corporate Plan of relevance to the committee are:
- Strengthening decision making and accountability
  - Re-shaping and our governance arrangements including more detailed options appraisals
  - Identifying ways to get more people involved in local democracy and scrutiny to enhance local decision-making
  - Developing remote access and attendance at meetings to maximize participation
  - Ensuring meaningful community engagement extend the reach of Monmouthshire Made Open
- 4.6 Our digital engagement platform, [Made Open](#), is about facilitating collaboration and demonstrating the impact of what can be achieved by working together with communities to identify challenges and work together on co-producing the solutions. Members have previously received a presentation about the platform. It is part of a suite of digital tools that form part of the way in which we can involve communities to help shape and inform decision-making.
- 4.7 At a previous meeting last meeting the committee agreed to identify a single issue, perhaps drawn from a range of evidence including the well-being assessment, surveys and previous engagement work and use this as a pilot to test how we can engage in more effective ways which will help ensure robust public accountability and demonstrate our commitment to involvement outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. A number of members have volunteered for this group, however the start of the work was delayed until the approval of the corporate plan. The working group will be convened and an update report provided to the next meeting of this committee

## **5. REASONS**

- 5.1 To create opportunities to work more collaboratively with communities to understand the issues that matter and work in new ways with people to develop solutions and promote engagement in local democratic processes as outlined in the White Paper, *Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed*.

## **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 None

## **7. FUTURE GENERATIONS ASSESSEMENT INCLUDING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:**

7.1 This report does not propose any change in policy or service and so no assessment has been completed.

**8. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

None

**9. AUTHOR**

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