

Committee	Date	Classification	Report No.	Agenda Item No.
Overview and Scrutiny	30 November 2010	Unrestricted		
Report of: Acting Joint Service Head, Scrutiny & Equalities Originating Officer(s): Keiko Okawa Scrutiny Policy Officer		Title: Scrutiny Review - Citizen Engagement Strategy Ward(s) affected: All		

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report updates the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the outcome of the Scrutiny Review of the Citizen Engagement Strategy held between 23 September 2010 and 4 November 2010.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the outcomes of the scrutiny review and agree the recommendations in the report.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2000 (SECTION 97)

LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Background papers

Name and telephone number of and address where open to inspection

None

N/A

3. Introduction

- 3.1 This report provides a summary of the scrutiny review of the Citizen Engagement Strategy. This review examined the Citizen Engagement Strategy in its development process to feed into the development of the Strategy.
- 3.2 This review comprised of three activities: Introductory session held on 28 September 2010; Visit to Community Champions Workshop on 30 October 2010, and; Scrutiny Challenge Session held on 4 November 2010.
- 3.3 The Introductory session was attended by 14 stakeholders including residents. Councillors who attended the session were Cllr Rajib Ahmed (Chair), Cllr Shafiqul Haque, Cllr Gloria Thienel, Cllr Kabir Ahmed and Cllr Zenith Rahman. The chair of the review, Cllr Rajib Ahmed, visited the Community Champions Workshop, which will feed into the development of the Citizen Engagement Strategy. The Scrutiny Challenge Session was attended by 22 stakeholders including Third Sector organisations and residents. Councillors who attended the session were Cllr Rajib Ahmed (Chair), Cllr David Edgar, Cllr Zenith Rahman and Cllr Bill Turner.

4. Purpose

- 4.1 The purpose of this Scrutiny review was to examine the Citizen Engagement Strategy in its development process and to help ensure that the Strategy is robust. This review's recommendations and input will be reflected in the formulation of the final strategy.

The objectives of this scrutiny review were to:

- Develop understanding of government policy, its implications and requirements of the Council;
 - Consider the overall principles of engagement between the Council and residents;
 - Consider the barriers to engagement between the Council and residents and to find solutions;
 - Examine the pilot models of citizen engagement and help develop feasible and effective models;
 - Consider how the Citizen Engagement Strategy helps the Council's efficiency agenda;
 - Consider how the Strategy can help deliver One Tower Hamlets;
 - Consider the role of members within the Citizen Engagement Strategy.
- 4.2 Both the Introductory session and the Scrutiny Challenge Session were chaired by Cllr Rajib Ahmed (Scrutiny Lead – Excellent Public Services). The Introductory session was structured as follows:
- Anjum Shabbir (Cabinet Office) presented on the Big Society Agenda;
 - Shanara Matin (Head of Participation and Engagement, Tower Hamlets Partnership) introduced the policy context and the development process of the Citizen Engagement Strategy;

- Workshop – Attendants split into two groups and discussed the following:
 - Barriers to citizen engagement and their solutions
 - Councillors' roles in citizen engagement, and
 - Community capacity for engagement.

4.3 The challenge session was structured as follows:

- Shanara Matin (Head of Participation and Engagement, Tower Hamlets Partnership) presented on the draft of the Citizen Engagement Strategy (Appendix);
- Break away sessions – Attendants split into two groups and considered the following questions:
 1. What would a Powerful Public look like?
 2. How can the themes outlined in the draft Citizen Engagement Strategy help to deliver a Powerful Public?
 3. Are there any other key issues that need to be addressed in the Citizen Engagement Strategy?
 4. How do key stakeholders – residents, Third Sector organisations, the Council and Councillors – need to act (differently) to create a Powerful Public?

4.4 The Community Champions Workshop provided the review with a positive example of citizen engagement. It highlighted examples of active Community Champions in the borough and showed there was an appetite for widening the range of community champion roles on offer. It was felt that that it was important that Community Champion activities aim to promote a positive message, but the Council should not use them to promote the Council's successes.

5. Background

5.1 Involving people and communities in improving their local areas has been evolving in the UK and Tower Hamlets for a number of years. The previous government aimed 'to shift power, influence and responsibility away from existing centres of power into the hands of communities and individual citizens', while the state provided support and a fair distribution of resources.¹ In the time of the extensive efficiency savings, the new Coalition Government has promoted the Big Society idea, and emphasised the importance of redistributing power from Whitehall to people and communities. In this context, local authorities, which have focused on the involvement of people and communities and improvement of services for many years, are required to respond to the cultural change of the Big Society agenda.

5.2 The Big Society agenda emphasises the transfer of power and responsibilities to the community, rather than the community relying on the state. The government argues this is the only way to achieve fairness and opportunity for all.² The Big Society agenda has three strands: social action; public service reform, and; community empowerment. People provide time, effort and money to causes

¹ *Communities in Control: real people, real power*, 2008, p. 1.

² 'Building the Big Society' at <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/407789/building-big-society.pdf>

around them. The government must foster and support voluntarism, philanthropy and social action. The government will become smaller and charities, social enterprises and private companies are encouraged to join as public service providers.³ This is taking place at a time of substantial budget cuts.

- 5.3 Various concerns and issues around the Big Society agenda have been raised.⁴ Anna Coote of the New Economic Foundation argues that the Big Society agenda threatens to undermine social justice and widen inequalities, since there is nothing in the plan to ensure that everyone – regardless of background or circumstance – gets a fair and equal chance to participate or benefit. She points out time constraints of individuals – those with low-paid jobs and big family responsibilities in particular, including lone parents – on participating in the agenda. The agenda may exclude time-poor and financially constrained individuals.⁵
- 5.4 A Policy briefing by the LGiU⁶ outlines issues of the Big Society agenda, including 1) the co-existence of Localism and Strategic Planning; 2) the possibility of blurred accountability, and; 3) the effect of budget cuts on community and voluntary sectors. First, the policy briefing points out there are two competing logics at play. On the one hand, Total Place or Place Based Budgeting approaches are about joining up and pooling services in a local area; on the other hand, the Big Society approach is fragmentary and is about citizens and communities organising independently to find solutions to service delivery issues. A questions arises – Is it possible to pursue them both at the same time? – i.e. how can we ensure that services delivered by citizens and communities benefit a wide range of population, even if their focuses are narrower? Second, the Big Society agenda needs to be clear how citizens, communities and voluntary groups will be accountable for services they deliver, who will hold them to account, and what the role of the Big Society will be in holding itself to account. Third, the paper states that there is a concern that cutting budgets and drawing back services will have an adverse impact on the voluntary and community sector and that in the future there will not be the capacity to take on the responsibility for local service delivery.
- 5.5 Tower Hamlets has endeavoured to involve residents in decision-making processes for many years. Its commitment and achievement of citizen involvement and empowerment has been recognised by the award of a green flag of Comprehensive Area Agreement for engaging and empowering local people and its successful participatory budgeting process ‘You decide!’ Nevertheless, the Council’s consultations with key staff, managers and partners indicated that there were still areas of improvement for citizen engagement. They think that the Council needs to make more effort to achieve effective citizen engagement.
- 5.6 To change the way of interfacing between the Council and residents, the Council previously conducted a series of reviews on engagement, including the Continuous

³ ‘Big Society Speech’ by the Prime Minister David Cameron, 19 July 2010.

⁴ For example, see ‘Cameron’s Big Society attacked as ‘a cover for spending cuts’, The Independent, 20 July 2010.

⁵ ‘Cameron’s Big Society will leave the poor and powerless behind’, by Anna Coote, Head of Social Policy, The New Economics Foundation, 19 July 2010, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jul/19/big-society-cameron-equal-opportunity>

⁶ Laura Wilkes, ‘The Big Society’, LGiU essential policy briefing, 6 August 2010.

Improvement Programme 2006-07 and Best Value Review of Consultation and Involvement in 2004-05. The following drivers were identified to establish an effective new approach:

- Effective engagement results in savings, improved services, better user experience and increased trust.
- Supporting the development of community capacity can help manage the impact of service reductions alongside increased demand.
- Tower Hamlets is excellently placed to lead the way in relation to new government initiatives like Big Society.
- There is a requirement to create a new partnership between citizens and local authorities in which both cooperate to create robust neighbourhoods as equal partners.

5.7 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has also undertaken work to strengthen community involvement. In 2009-10, the Scrutiny Review Working Group on Strengthening Local Community Leadership made a number of recommendations in the three key areas: Developing new model of community leadership; Resident participation, and; Engagement through partnership.

6. Citizen Engagement Strategy and the changing environment

6.1 The Council and its partners have been developing a new Citizen Engagement Strategy to set out how the Partnership can create a more “powerful public.” This Strategy aims to set out how citizens can participate and engage with the decision-making process that impact on their lives and local communities and take greater control over the issues that are important to them. The Strategy seeks to transform the Council and partners’ organisational cultures by advocating a bottom-up approach from residents in the conduct of public affairs by transforming their inward-looking cultures. Citizen engagement in this strategy means not only the sharing of power, information and mutual respect between the government and residents but also letting residents take the initiative in public service delivery by redistributing power to them.

6.2 The Strategy will be finalised in December 2010 and the Partnership is looking at ways to take a genuinely participative and innovative approach to how the Strategy is developed. In particular it is piloting new types of engagement activity and involving local residents, frontline staff and elected Members through this review, to take part in the development of these pilot projects. The learning from these projects will be used to inform the final strategy. Its development process is as follows:

- Strategy development projects:
 - Community Champions
 - Local Governance Structures
 - Public and Patient Engagement in Health and Social Care
 - Men’s access to health services
 - Case studies/ linkages to other strategies
 - Boundary Estate Total Place Pilot
 - Effective and Lean Engagement

- 6.3 A major challenge local authorities including Tower Hamlets are facing is the unprecedented scale of spending cuts. On 24 May 2010, the Coalition Government announced a £6.2bn package of in-year savings affecting the current year. Local Government's share of these savings was set at £1.165bn, and subsequently the London Borough of Tower Hamlets has agreed efficiency savings of £7.63m this financial year, including £4.125m of grant funding.
- 6.4 In light of this spending cuts and implications of the Big Society agenda, many questions arise, including:
- Will the Council reduce its role in the future? With less money to spend, will the Council create space for the private sector and the voluntary and community sector to encourage them to provide more services? If so, will the role of the Council change in terms of citizen engagement? What will be the roles of the private sector and the voluntary and community sector?
 - Is citizen engagement a luxury for the Council in the time of spending cuts?
 - Do the Council and its partners need to act differently in terms of engagement in this new era?
- 6.5 Clarifying the Council and other key partners' position on changing service provision may provide a new approach to citizen engagement, including 'who' does 'what' kind of activity in terms of citizen engagement. A case for citizen engagement has been identified, including strengthening communities, building trust and social capital and contributing to more effective and efficient public services.⁷ However, the spending cuts may require the Council and the partners to find different ways of citizen engagement. The Citizen Engagement Strategy need to consider these factors and respond to the changing environment around the public sector in a specified timeframe.

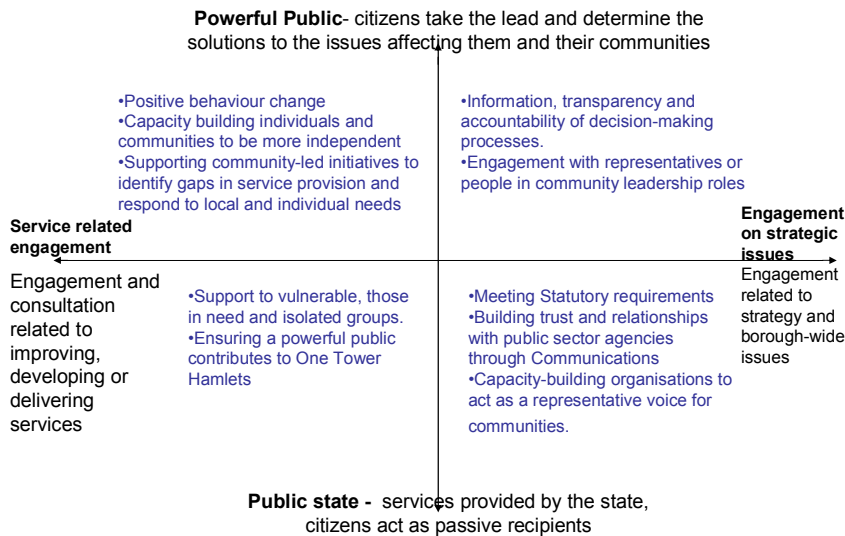
7. Key discussion points

- 7.1 At the two meetings, participants were given presentations by Anjum Shabbir (Cabinet Office) on the Big Society agenda and by Shanara Matin (Head of Participation and Engagement, Tower Hamlets Partnership) on the Citizen Engagement Strategy.
- 7.2 Anjum Shabbir highlighted that the Big Society needed to be defined locally by the community, facilitated by local authorities. Local authorities' role under the agenda will be not only funding and service providers but also strategic advisors, which will require behaviour change to the Council and partners. It was stated that the Government expected local authorities to develop their own response to the Big Society agenda, rather than the Government providing direction. Local authorities need to connect organisations and be strategic enablers for initiatives and/or community organisations.

⁷ *Good conversations: successful communities, better services – Positioning paper* by ippr north and Social Regeneration Consultants, October 2010, pp. 1-2.

- 7.3 Each local authority has different barriers to achieving the Big Society agenda. For example, Tower Hamlets, where there are significant but not large numbers, has a different challenge to Barnet that has over 40,000 volunteers participating in activities each year. It was noted that the agenda did not mention its implications for the issue of equalities and cohesion, which is an important agenda in Tower Hamlets.
- 7.4 It was stated that the Big Society was about 'cutting back' the role and funding of the public sector. Inevitably, funding would be one of key barriers to developing community leadership and community engagement. Local authorities need to use the existing networks or initiatives in place effectively to develop community leadership and engage the community.
- 7.5 Shanara Matin explained that key drive and aim for the Citizen Engagement Strategy was to create a Powerful Public, Tower Hamlets' own approach to the Big Society agenda appropriate to the borough. Key questions of the Strategy are how the Council and partners can do more for less resource and ensure continued support to vulnerable communities. The Council and partners have already had many engagement networks and engagement activities. However, the activities were fragmented and potentially caused 'consultation fatigue' for some citizens.
- 7.6 Through stakeholder workshops and the Partnership Executive, Tower Hamlets Partnership identified three key themes for the Strategy. They are:
- Supporting a powerful public
 - Revising local governance structures
 - Lean and effective engagement.
- 7.7 In the Scrutiny Challenge Session, key points of a discussion paper 'Citizen Engagement Strategy – Initial findings and options', which was circulated prior to the session, were highlighted. The paper updated the Scrutiny Working Group and participants attending the Challenge Session about the findings from the research and case study reviews that are being used to develop the Strategy. The Challenge Session was an opportunity to test key position statements and the direction of travel that is emerging from the findings.
- 7.8 Using the model below, which was developed from the mapping of case studies and projects in the borough, it was explained that there was a role of public agencies in engagement.

The role of public agencies in engagement?



7.9 It was stated that there were two areas that needed to be further explored as part of the development of the Strategy. They are:

- Organisational Capacity for developing a powerful public
- Community Capacity to be a powerful public

7.10 'Organisational Capacity for developing a powerful public' is to respond to the issues and problems that public service providers currently operate and to consider how this can be improved. This theme considered two areas of how the Council could improve engagement through doing things differently within organisations:

- Resolving local issues
- Lean and Effective Engagement.

It was argued that service providers must improve their ability to resolve local issues, in the context of significant funding cuts and wider structural reform of public services. It was noted that over-consultation and a lack of feedback about the impact of resident participation contributed to consultation fatigue. Past reviews have failed to enforce standards or a gate-keeping role to co-ordinate participation and engagement aligned to the delivery of strategic objectives.

7.11 It was explained that the 'Community Capacity to be a powerful public' aimed to understand the baseline at which local communities want to engage and the context in which the Strategy would need to position itself in responding to Citizen needs. The following was identified as activities in this area:

- Simplifying the engagement experience for citizens
- Reconsidering how accessing services can be an empowering process
- Co-ordinating volunteering to support delivery of strategic objectives
- Commissioning the third sector to deliver engagement

8. Recommendations

8.1 All participants in the two sessions agreed with the value and importance of citizen engagement. The discussion in the Challenge Session, which focused on the discussion paper, can be categorised into two: 1) issues that the Strategy needs to cover/ address, and; 2) the 'goal' of the Strategy – what would a Powerful Public look like. In terms of the first area, participants felt it was important that the following points be addressed in the Strategy:

- Purpose of the Strategy
- What would a powerful public look like?
- Scope of the Strategy (actors of engagement, in particular)
- Clear pathways to the goal of the Strategy

In relation to the purpose some Members felt that a clear political vision of the Council would be helpful in establishing the borough's local approach.

Participants also argued that the relationship between the Citizen Engagement Strategy and the Council and partners' other strategies including the Community Plan and the Third Sector Strategy needed to be clarified.

8.2 Efforts to engage with the community were always seen as important and necessary, including the discussion on the impacts of reduction and/or changes of resources. However, participants argued for clarity on the cost of engagement, replacing the existing way of engagement with creative and less expensive options. It was also noted that the Strategy needed to identify stakeholders in engagement and how they relate to each other.

Recommendation 1 – That the Council and the Partnership clearly outline the purpose, vision of a Powerful Public, scope, pathways to the goal of the Citizen Engagement Strategy, and the relationship between the Strategy and other key strategies including the Community Plan and Third Sector Strategy.

Recommendation 2 – That the Council and the Partnership consider the impact of the current financial climate and employ cost-effective, creative and innovative ways of engagement in the Strategy.

8.3 Participants had extensive discussion on the goal of the Strategy, i.e. what would a Powerful Public look like? The most striking feature of participants' view on a Powerful Public was one that included the whole, diverse community, represented all voices and connected different groups in the borough. Participants emphasised the importance of including all communities – not only geographically located ones, e.g. LAPs, but also communities of interest and cross-cutting communities. Participants stressed that equality groups needed to be included within our definition of a Powerful Public. They highlighted the following groups as the ones comprising a Powerful Public:

- Residents from different socio-economic background

- LGBT community
- Business community – employers and employees
- Marginalised and vulnerable residents
- People with disabilities
- Ethnic minorities
- Underrepresented groups
- Women
- Young people
- Visitors.

Participants stated that since the business community including Small- and Medium-scale Enterprises (SMEs) contributed to a wider community, for example through providing employment and skills to employers, the Strategy needed to acknowledge that the business community, including people who work in the borough, comprised a Powerful Public. In addition, it was also stated that it was necessary to acknowledge tourists as an actor of a Powerful Public. The borough attracts many tourists and visitors from the neighbouring area and the world due to its heritage, culture and economic and social activities, and will receive more in 2012. Since they make huge impact on the economy and society of the borough, it was suggested that their voice needed to be heard to achieve a Powerful Public.

- 8.4 It was noted that a Powerful Public should pursue the common interest of all community. Although participants were aware of the cost of engagement, they generally agreed that the effort should be made to include all groups in the community, including ‘hard to reach’ groups and those who are difficult to contact, for example people who live in gated communities. It was noted that only such inclusion and representation could achieve cohesion in the borough. It was suggested that art and culture could be catalysis of cohesion.

Recommendation 3 – That the Council and the Partnership consider communities of interest and ‘hard to reach’ communities in the Strategy, aiming to achieve cohesion in the borough.

- 8.5 Participants emphasised the importance of communication in the development of a Powerful Public and engagement. They agreed that effort to establish a Powerful Public would be hindered by poor communication and to take sufficient means of communication to engage the community was important. At the beginning of the engagement process, reasons of the engagement need to be clear. Information sharing and feedback to the community throughout the process will encourage people to engage further and avoid their disillusionment. Effective communication between the Council and partners, and the community will help communities interact and communicate each other, which will help develop a Powerful Public. The importance of accessible language and data format to a wider public was also stressed.
- 8.6 Participants touched upon some residents’ apathy about engagement. It was noted that active residents needed to be assertive and avoid being discouraged by the apathy. It was suggested that developing understanding among residents of the

importance and possible impact of citizen engagement would help create an environment encouraging residents to be more active doers.

Recommendation 4 – That the Council and the Partnership continue developing effective communication with the public, promote the importance of the citizen engagement in a Powerful Public and encourage stakeholders to get involved actively and to interact with other communities.

- 8.7 Participants also had extensive discussion on how key stakeholders – residents, Third Sector organisations, the Council and Councillors – need to act (differently) to create a Powerful Public in the Challenge Session. Participants' image of residents and other key stakeholders in a Powerful Public was that they were aware of local issues, and active and responsible doers. Residents and other key stakeholders in a Powerful Public would get involved in local community, local issues including environment and education, and local politics. It was argued that residents and other key stakeholders in a Powerful Public would try to solve local problems, collaborating with the public sector, with strategic thinking. They may be providers⁸ as well as receivers of services, which would require a cultural and psychological shift among the residents and the public sector. Participants also noted that residents and other key stakeholders needed to clearly understand their role in a Powerful Public.
- 8.8 Participants frequently mentioned that stakeholders including residents needed support from the public sector to become active actors in a Powerful Public. It was mentioned that it was a naïve idea that a Powerful Public could be created exclusively by citizens. It was stated that in a Powerful Public, residents and the public sector would work together as partners by playing their roles to improve the neighbourhood and tackle local issues. For example, it is difficult for residents to tackle anti-social behaviour without support from the public sector including the police.
- 8.9 Participants stressed that a Powerful Public did not exclude the Council – rather, the Council needed to function actively. It was stated that the Council could do the following to create a Powerful Public:
- Promote cohesion in the community, including more diverse workforce at the all levels of the Council
 - Coordinate different stakeholders such as residents, Third Sector organisations and the business community and enable them to develop their capacity
 - Provide other stakeholders with necessary assistance/support including capacity development and resources such as small grant and meeting space.
 - Provide a safety net
 - Conduct consultation with other stakeholders

⁸ Time Bank was referred to as an example of this. Under the scheme, for example, if someone baby-sits for a neighbour for one hour, this person will be entitled to have someone else's help for something he/she needs (e.g. gardening, housekeeping etc.) for one hour.

- Motivate residents to get involved through incentives and good communication including feedback.

It was noted that the Council needed to be more open and accessible. Participants felt that the structure and contact points of the Council were complicated and it was sometimes difficult to interact with the Council.⁹ They stated that the Council needed to be open to external suggestions and respond swiftly.

Recommendation 5 – That the Citizen Engagement Strategy clearly outline the role of the Council in supporting a Powerful Public; in particular, consider its capacity building, coordinating and Community leadership roles.

- 8.10 Councillors have already played an important role in citizen engagement working for/with the community through various activities such as surgeries. However, participants suggested that Councillors could further advocate and represent the community. Councillors are expected to be Community Leaders – communicate effectively with residents, advocating and campaigning for local issues, connect different groups and individuals to solve local problems and improve the local environment. Participants also felt that Councillors engagement with local issues and residents could be further extended.
- 8.11 It is important that the insights of Strengthening Community Leadership Scrutiny Review in 2009-2010 inform the role of Members in the development of this Strategy. The review recognises that a vibrant local democracy should encompass many different types of community leadership. In supporting Councillors to play their part, it is necessary to define what community leadership means in relation to the role of citizens and the role of elected representatives and tackle any questions about a conflict between participative and representative democracy.
- 8.12 The role of elected Members is unique because of its democratic mandate. This gives weight to their decisions and the accountability they can demand in making them – as well as the judgment that can be made of them by their electors at the ballot box. Non-executive Members in particular have opportunities to provide ward level leadership as they are likely to have more time to do this than their Cabinet colleagues. This is particularly important to the development of localisation. There are different roles and purposes of community leadership and they can be both complementary and at odds with each other. It is useful for the role of councillors to be defined in relation to other types of community leadership. This could help recognise that councillors can play a unique role in facilitating dialogue between local people and service providers.

Recommendation 6 – That the Citizen Engagement Strategy clearly outline the role of elected members particularly focusing on their local community leadership role in connection with the development of the localisation agenda.

- 8.13 Participants agreed that Third Sector organisations have important role to play in a Powerful Public and citizen engagement. It was mentioned that there exists a

⁹ Some participants were aware of LAPs, but they also mentioned that there was a long waiting list to be a LAP member.

breadth of involvement that Third Sector organisations could take on ranging from taking on service delivery that currently the public sector provides to empowering citizens or supporting independent mechanisms to hold partners to account. For example, it was noted that small Third Sector organisations were able to conduct consultations with small groups at cheaper cost. Some residents also mentioned that we needed to understand of the 'limitation' of the Third Sector organisations and clarify their feasibility. It is critical that the role of the Third Sector in supporting a Powerful Public is much more comprehensively understood. The discussion on Third Sector organisation can be further extended in consultation with Third Sector organisations on Third Sector organisations' role in a Powerful Public and in citizen engagement

- 8.14 Participants also stated that the business community could be a key stakeholder in the Big Society agenda and the Strategy. Not only does the business community provide employment opportunities, services and opportunities for development skills, but businesses, large corporations, in particular, may be able to provide support and funding to the community.¹⁰ As above, it was stated that the business community played a significant role in the community and needed to be acknowledged as a stakeholder in a Powerful Public.

Recommendation 7 – That the Council and the Partnership clearly identify key stakeholders, specifically including residents, the Council, Councillors, Third Sector organisations and the business community and clarify in the strategy their roles and develop the Strategy further in consultation with the key stakeholders.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 This Scrutiny review was an opportunity for Councillors and other stakeholders to add to the development of the Citizen Engagement Strategy that the Council is currently developing and feed into the Strategy in its development process. In the Scrutiny Challenge Session, participants examined the discussion paper 'Citizen Engagement Strategy – Initial findings and options', which presented the initial findings from a range of activities that were being reviewed and pilot projects to inform the Strategy. This document also distilled two emerging themes from the findings: Organisational capacity to develop a powerful public, and; Community capacity to be a powerful public.
- 9.2 However, it was agreed that further consideration was needed to develop the Strategy. The recommendations from this review shed light on the need to include the view of communities of interest. The recommendations also identified the necessity of clear purpose, scope, pathways to the goal of the Strategy, what a Powerful Public would look like, and appropriate stakeholders and their roles in the Strategy. The recommendations included the need to consider the impact of the current financial climate, and reminded the importance of the communication and its

¹⁰ Businesses contribute to the community through not only its business activities but corporate community activities. Participants pointed out that such corporate community activities, especially by large international corporations, needed to be coordinated.

possibility. All participants hope that this review will help ensure that the Strategy is robust.

10. Concurrent Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal)

- 10.1 Article 6 of the Council's Constitution provides that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may consider any matter affecting Tower Hamlets or its inhabitants and may make reports and recommendations to the Full Council or the Executive in connection with the discharge of any functions. It is consistent with these terms of reference for the Committee to conduct a scrutiny review and to make recommendations to the Executive.
- 10.2 The development of a citizen engagement strategy appears to fall within the Council's functions. The Council is empowered under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 to do anything which it considers likely to promote the social, economic or environmental well being of Tower Hamlets, provided the action is not otherwise prohibited by statute. The power may be exercised in relation to, or for the benefit of: (a) the whole or any part of Tower Hamlets; or (b) all or any persons resident in Tower Hamlets. In exercising the power, regard must be had to the Community Plan. The links to the Community Plan are made in section 12 of the report, where it is stated that the citizen engagement strategy will be "a vehicle" for achieving the One Tower Hamlets ambition.

11. Comments of the Chief Financial Officer

- 11.1 This report describes the outcome of the Scrutiny Review of the Citizen Engagement Strategy held between 23 September 2010 and 4 November 2010.
- 11.2 The financial environment the Council now faces has changed in particular the fact that the Council will no longer receive the same levels of government funding from 2011-12 onwards and therefore will not be able to continue or offer similar levels of financial commitments it has up until recently.
- 11.3 There are no specific financial implications emanating from this report but in the event that the Council agrees further action in response to this report's recommendations then officers will be obliged to seek the appropriate financial approval before further financial commitments are made.

12. One Tower Hamlets Considerations

- 12.1 The borough's ambition, One Tower Hamlets, is to reduce poverty and inequality, bring communities closer together and provide strong leadership by involving people and giving them the tools to support and improve their lives. The Citizen Engagement Strategy, which is seeking to establish a bottom-up approach from residents, aims to provide a vehicle for achieving the ambition.
- 12.2 This Strategy aims to improve access to services for all groups, including marginalised and vulnerable people. The community involvement also ensures that the services be suited to needs of all groups. That will enhance equalities in the community. In terms of cohesion, successful community involvement encourages all

groups to build strong networks with other groups. The networks will ensure the increase of contact and understanding between different groups. Community leadership is the Strategy's ultimate aim. The Strategy aims that residents take the initiative for decision-making in public service delivery.

- 12.3 The Strategy is aligned with the Big Society agenda in the context of transferring more power to residents; however, there is general concern with the agenda, that is, the agenda could widen inequality and engage those who have greater capacity to participate. This Scrutiny Review aims to ensure that the Strategy identifies the equality implications of this agenda and makes recommendations to use this Strategy to strengthen equality, community cohesion and community leadership.

13. Risk Management

- 13.1 There are no direct risk management actions arising from this report.