

ITEM 5	
Report to:	Blackpool Town Deal Board
Subject :	Community Engagement Final Report
Relevant Officer:	Jeff Scales, Locality and Community Engagement Project Team
Date of Meeting:	10th July, 2020

1. Purpose of the report

To present the final report on the Community Engagement Exercise to the Board for approval, and report on next steps.

2. Recommendations

- For the Board to note the findings and approve the report;
- For the Board to consider the findings and analysis undertaken with regard to the content of the Town Investment Plan and the criteria for the related Town Deal submission to be submitted by July 31st.

3. Background

At the previous Board meeting, Locality presented their proposed approach to undertaking a community engagement exercise which sought to build on previous public engagement work undertaken by the Council and Business in the Community. Initial engagement activity has now concluded and a report detailing the findings is attached.

The main engagement tools used were:

- A bespoke interactive website using the Commonplace platform, which was widely publicised through a social media campaign, partner organisations, and other routes. This included a mix of basic survey questions and open ended comment boxes;
- 1-1 and 1-many interviews with local residents, particularly those from “seldom-heard” groups, the undertaken by the CVS and other VCFS organisations;
- Stakeholder engagement interviews with both board members and wider stakeholders (particularly focussed upon VCFS and Social Enterprise Leaders, and the Business Community).

At the time of writing the attached report, the site had received 5409 visitors, with 973 individual respondents making over 1500 comments in total. The social media stats were as follows:

- Facebook activity saw a mixed of organic (free page posts on Blackpool Council page) and paid activity to encourage engagement.
- Total results saw content reach over 200,000 people (202,883) and 29,384 people engage.
- Additional social activity included LinkedIn and Twitter - with a further 35,000 reach and 1,500 engagements on these channels
- Although the majority of social media 'call to actions' sent traffic to the Commonplace website directly a number of posts included the Town Deal landing page within the Council site - this was viewed by over 4,000 people
- E-shots about the Town Deal survey was also distributed within the Council’s e-newsletters
- Staff newsletter was deliver to over 2,000 and our e-news to over 22,000 subscribers

In addition to this, 20 resident interviews, 26 stakeholder interviews, and 62 “seldom-heard” engagements were held over the same period. 442 people have signed up to be kept informed about the project in future, with 381 expressing an interest in discussing their responses. This is a solid basis on which to build further engagement activity in the future.

The website will remain open for comments until 17th July, after which the ability to make contributions will be paused pending submission of the Town Investment Plan. Additional comments received after June 30th will be reviewed and considered, with any substantial new issues being raised being and forwarded to the Project Lead for further consideration.

The main trends and themes, which align with the findings from this engagement exercise were:

- An ambition that resident’s needs should be prioritised over tourists
- To reconfigure the local housing market
- To modernise Blackpool’s tourism offer
- To improve the “street scene” and to develop more green spaces and green public realm in the town centre and other urban areas
- Improve transport connectivity and passenger experience – tram and rail particularly, as well as re-establishing international air travel
- Investment in youth facilities and services, mental health support and support for the most vulnerable (particularly homeless people)
- Reinvigorating the town centre - developing a vibrant, high-end café and bar culture and supporting the night-time economy

Further details of the methodology, and an overview of the findings, are included in the Executive Summary (pages 3-8).

4. Next Steps

As the Town Investment Plan is to be finalised for submission by 31st July we are now seeing how best to ensure that the comments and suggestions made by residents and stakeholders are reflected in the Town Investment Plan and assess those elements which accord with the priorities of Town Deal funding. The Board’s views on this are sought.

The Board will recall that the Town Investment Plan will be focusing on the overall investment needs of the Town across all 5 themes identified. From this list those schemes that best meet the criteria to qualify for Town Deal funding will be submitted to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, and resources and other support will be sought from other Government departments and agencies for other initiatives in the Town Investment Plan. This is addressed in the paper elsewhere on this agenda on the Town Investment Plan.

Work is also underway to organise, redact, and analyse the open-ended comments received. A short report summarising common comments and including the full text of submissions made will be circulated to board members for consideration in the run up to the submission of the Town Investment Plan at the end of the month.

As part of the submission to Government, we are also required to produce a Stakeholder Engagement Plan. This will detail our proposed approach as to how communities and stakeholders continue to be involved in the design and delivery of the proposed schemes. The intention is to deliver the requirement of the Towns Fund that local people feel they have had the opportunity to shape the measures which they believe to be most important to Blackpool’s future. In addition to ensuring existing participants have the opportunity to oversee and shape our work, it will also include measures to continue to broaden participation in the engagement

process, and to continue to reach out and engage residents from seldom-heard groups, particularly those under-represented in the work to date. A draft will be circulated to the Board for comment on July 17th.

The plan will be developed by the Council's Policy, Strategy and Research Manager (Scott Butterfield), in collaboration with the Community Engagement Project Team:

- Chair of VCFS Leaders Group (Tracy Hopkins)
- Blackpool Project Lead, BITC (Andy Charles)
- Marketing Officer, Blackpool Council (Nicole Billington)

Regular reports will be brought to board on progress, ensuring that the voice of the resident continues to be central to our considerations.

Work on the Community Asset Mapping exercise is ongoing and will conclude by July 31st. This will also complete Locality's involvement in the project. Once complete, this will be used as the basis for future stakeholder engagement.