1. Introduction

1.1 The LSP commissioned an inter-agency working group (membership outlined below) to explore the potential for an LSP-wide strategic framework for community engagement. The working group has now met on three occasions and it would be timely to give a progress report and early draft strategy (attached). This discussion paper aims to summarise key issues so that the LSP and other key stakeholders can give steers to guide further work.

Members of the LSP-wide working group

John Hazeldine – LBB Assistant Chief Executive, Strategy & Improvement
Charles Obazuaye, LBB Assistant Chief Executive HR (and Council’s lead Director for “equalities”)
Rebecca Jarvis – LBB Commissioning Manager (Adults & Community Services)
Sheila Bennett – LBB Assistant Director Customer & Democratic Services
Mary Manuel – LBB Head of Local Economy & Regeneration (Renewal & Recreation)
Terri Walters/Michael Watts – LBB (Children & Young People)
Gavin Moore - LBB Strategic Development (Environment & Leisure)
Jean Levy/Fiona Baird/Eithne Rynne, Community Links Bromley
Catherine Charles, Broomleigh
Ann Coppinger/Barbara Mesa, Bromley PCT
Dave Prebble, Partnership Manager, Met Police

2. Bromley’s current position

2.1 Our work, and the attached draft document, indicates plenty of evidence that we are starting from a relatively healthy baseline – certainly better than many other areas. There is already a considerable amount of activity locally both in the way of public services engaging through:
- communication (e.g., Borough Briefing and other similar agency-based communication vehicles);
- consultation (e.g., “Place survey, APOH);
- community access and engagement (e.g., community outlets, engagement fora, CLB-related and other voluntary and community sector groups, safer neighbourhoods, residents’ associations, ‘Friends’ groups etc).
- increasingly, choice and personalised services for individuals, personal budgets etc.

2.2 A more extensive list is attached as an Appendix, but even this is not fully comprehensive. However, much of what currently exists has emerged
piecemeal. An early conclusion is that a major focus of any community engagement strategy locally should be to better integrate, coordinate and streamline what is already going on. We probably do not have significant gaps requiring the implementation of new initiatives.

2.3 Nevertheless, we should not be complacent and will not be able to buck future trends and changes summarised below, so our framework will need to continue to evolve and be adapted.

3. National position

3.1 ‘Community engagement’ is currently such a live topic of debate nationally and in most borough areas because:

- Fewer citizens are willing to take part through traditional democratic or political processes alone.
  - Membership of the 3 main political parties fell by 75% in the last 25 years of the 20th century
  - Falling electoral turnout and registration levels, most significantly amongst the young and most disadvantaged groups
  - Some evidence that the young may well not ‘learn the habit of voting’ and that even the ‘baby boomer’ generation have a different attitude towards a citizen’s ‘duty to vote’ than their parents
  - Reducing levels of trust in and deference towards traditional institutions and politicians

- Conversely, membership of or willingness to take part in single-issue groups, campaigns, protests, petitions etc., have held up or even increased

- Citizens also have higher expectations of having their say, opportunities for choice etc – bred by their experience of improved customer service when they buy ‘private goods’. Citizen perspectives and community engagement will also be a key element of the new CAA judgment

- New technology (web, e-mail, SMS etc) is shifting the goal-posts about how and when citizens can and will get involved

- Many of the major public policy challenges we now face cannot be achieved by local public service providers alone, especially in an era of increasing pressure on public spending. Increasingly these challenges, as recognised at the recent LSP away day, require ‘behavioural change’ and can only be solved with the active involvement and personal responsibility of citizens themselves – e.g.
  - reducing crime and anti-social behaviour,
  - improved health, obesity, teenage conceptions,
  - reducing waste, emissions and traffic,
3.2 ‘Representative democracy’ will continue to be the critical cornerstone of how (difficult) public policy decisions, choices and trade-offs are made – by democratically elected ‘community leader’ representatives who are held to account publicly and through the ballot box, at both national and local levels. But the above bullet points illustrate how the nature of representative democracy is changing and is likely to be weakened over time unless we adapt. Active participation by as many people as possible is essential for a healthy democracy – ‘participative democracy’ is not an alternative to ‘representative democracy’, but an essential ingredient to complement and add value to the latter.

3.3 Any Bromley LSP-wide community engagement strategy needs debate and agreement amongst key stakeholders about the local framework (mechanisms, balances, controls) that will meet future “BBB 2020 Vision” needs.

4. Towards a draft strategy for Bromley

4.1 Much in the attached early draft strategy could well be regarded as ‘motherhood and apple pie’ and, therefore, un-controversial. As mentioned above, we already have an extensive framework of community engagement, but one which has largely grown up piecemeal in response to individual agency, departmental or service needs. The working group has attempted to codify a more strategic framework within which we might all agree to operate – e.g.

- **Who?**
  - Borough-wide
  - Geographic communities*
  - Communities of interest
  - Individuals

- **How?**
  - Inform
  - Consult
  - Access (inc. redress)
  - Involve
  - Empower

* There is a danger that the term ‘community engagement’ implies only area-based involvement arrangements. In fact, they are only one dimension of community engagement.

4.2 We have identified a large range of current initiatives so a top priority for further work should be (over time) to better coordinate, and probably streamline, what we already do into a more cost effective framework to meet future needs.
4.3 Equally the draft sets out various principles and pledges for consideration and debate. Again many of these may not be regarded as too controversial. By way of example, there would probably be general agreement to:

- continuing the ’direction of travel’ towards more transparent and open arrangements to ”Inform”, “Consult” and give “Access” to local people in relation to local services and decisions
- encouraging and helping ’communities of interest’, community/resident/friends groups, volunteers and the voluntary sector generally to take more active involvement and responsibility in local matters
- better personalise services and give choice to those individuals or families who are direct consumers of local public services

4.4 However, there are equally other matters where there may be general concerns or differing views and where it would be very helpful to focus specific local LSP debate. For example:

- Firstly, there is some understandable concern that increased community engagement could be a ‘stick’ used ‘against’ public services and will create rising expectations and wish-lists at a time when public service resources will be under mounting pressure. There is a cost to engagement so it must be proportionate and also focused where there may be genuine options or choices to be considered
- The evidence of a significant body of local people wishing to take a more active part in local governance arrangements is not conclusive. Hence, there is a particular concern (not just in Bromley) about the dangers of non-representative and unaccountable interest groups taking over engagement arrangements to impose their views on the broader community – ‘power without responsibility’
- The above concerns are especially relevant in respect of any devolved decision-making powers over “collective decisions” at an area or ward level. However, some area-based engagement arrangements are already in place or are likely to be further developed in the near future:
  - Safer Neighbourhood Panels (SNPs) are generally perceived to have been success story already in engaging local people in tackling community safety priorities at a ward-level. They could have wider potential, but are a good example of where unrepresentative local ‘activists’ could have a disproportionate voice
  - Parallel developments are enhancing the powers of ward councillors as democratically elected local representatives to raise matters on behalf of their constituents;
  - The establishment of a network of 6 area-based children and families initiatives is also well underway (children’s centres, extended schools etc) and will raise issues of who decides and is accountable for local decisions about priorities etc
Similarly, in terms of locality access, public services have a wide range of outlets (schools, hospitals, GPs, clinics, libraries, leisure centres, area offices etc.) many of which are looking to expand their “one-stop shop” potential.

- We need a shared vision about how we see these area-based initiatives fitting together strategically and how we see them being developed in the future.

- Most of our thematic partnerships have some form of community engagement forum, with the LSP itself likely to re-establish one. Again we need to agree how we see these fitting together – linked to the parallel review of partnership working.

- Similarly, other significant engagement mechanisms continue to be established in response to specific national requirements – e.g., new LINKs for health and social care. The existing patchwork of initiatives could become more fragmented over time without a clear strategic framework.

- We need to consider whether or how specific engagement mechanisms might fit as part of any local LSP-wide framework. Some specific tools currently being promoted as part of a new national framework are regarded by many (not just in Bromley) as unproven – citizens juries; petitions; participatory budgets. However, rights for citizens to use some such tools are likely to be established as part of the new statutory framework, so we at least need to consider how we will handle them as part of our local arrangements.

- Similarly new technology opens up new opportunities and we need to consider how actively we wish to embrace its potential (e.g., e-mail, internet, web 2.0 etc.), especially to engage the young, those who lead “busy” lives or otherwise are unlikely to be engaged through traditional means alone. Citizens will in any event increasingly have the ability to use such techniques unaided (e.g., e-petitions), so we likewise need to consider how they will fit into our local framework.

- Last but not least, there is a prominent viewpoint that any strategic document which sets out (and potentially enhances) citizens’ rights and powers, also needs to be seen in the context of the expectations in return from ‘responsible citizens’ – e.g., to respect the rights and freedoms of others. The attached document does not reflect such a statement of both “rights and responsibilities” – it could be adapted, or a parallel document developed.

5. Conclusion

5.1 In reporting progress to date on an early draft strategy, this discussion document seeks to identify those issues where further steers would be welcome from the LSP to guide further work. These issues are especially summarised in 4.4 above. We need an active participation and involvement.
framework which works locally and which complements and adds value to ‘representative democracy’ rather than weakening it.

5.2 Subject to these steers, the working group will continue with a particular focus on better coordinating and streamlining what we already have into the proposed strategic framework. Our starting point will be by bringing together some of the major (but separate) databases of initiatives and groups – e.g., Council’s database of groups and consultation register, CLB’s database, work being undertaken to establish the new LINK, etc.
## Appendix

### Examples of extent of Community Engagement in Bromley

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borough-wide: Residents/citizens generally</th>
<th>Geographic communities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Borough Briefing</td>
<td>• 22 Safer Neighbourhood Panels</td>
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<td>• Place survey</td>
<td>• 22 Safer Neighbourhood Policing Teams</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The Bromley Community Engagement Forum</td>
<td>• Mottingham &amp; Cotmandene Centres</td>
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<td>• Local Development Framework:</td>
<td>• Resident Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement of Community Involvement</td>
<td>• Darwin at Downe World Heritage Partnership</td>
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<td>• Bromley Biodiversity Partnership</td>
<td>• Countryside Ranger Group</td>
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<td>• Bromley Sports Consultative Panel</td>
<td>• Tree Wardens</td>
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<td>• Bromley Arts Council</td>
<td>• Bromley Biodiversity Partnership</td>
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<td>• Bromley Arts Panel</td>
<td>• Historic Buildings Owners Group</td>
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<td>• Countryside Consultative Panel</td>
<td>• Architects Panel for Bromley</td>
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<td>• Pro Active Bromley</td>
<td>• Advisory Panel for Conservation Areas</td>
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<td>• Sport Bromley</td>
<td>• Arts Groups and Art Services Providers</td>
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<td>• Countryside Sites Friends/Volunteers</td>
<td>• Sports, Community and Voluntary Groups</td>
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<td>Groups</td>
<td>• St Paul’s Cray Community Engagement Strategy</td>
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<td>• Library Service Community Engagement</td>
<td>• BEECHE Centre</td>
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<td>Framework</td>
<td>• Library Friends groups</td>
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<td>• Bromley Lifelong Learning Partnership</td>
<td>• Mottingham Community Forum</td>
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<td>• Bromley Skills for Life Consortium</td>
<td>• Cotmandene Centre Steering Group</td>
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<td>• Bromley Business Skills and Support</td>
<td>• Beckenham Beacon Public Involvement: (PCT lead)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Network</td>
<td>• Rapid Health Needs Assessment</td>
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<td>• Bromley Community Learning Working</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Bromley Museum Service Volunteer</td>
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<td>Group</td>
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<td>• Bromley Museum Service Young</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curators’ Club</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Field Studies Centre Volunteer</td>
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<td>Programme</td>
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<td>• Friends of Bromley Field Studies Centre</td>
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<td>• Healthcare for London</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Picture of Health</td>
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### Users: Individuals

| • Public Surveys including Mori poll, KIN surveys of local residents on wards, |
| • Consultation on internet regards our estate and Victim surveys              |
| • Public Library User Survey                                                  |
| • Library and museum users informal feedback                                   |
| • Mottingham Community Learning Shop and Cotmandene Centre Drop-In sessions   |
| • Mottingham Community Learning Shop and Cotmandene Centre informal feedback and feedback forms |
| • CLB Volunteers Centre                                                        |

| “Communities of interest” (for a specific ‘cause’ (e.g., those with a particular disability); or a specific client group (e.g., older people) |
| • ‘Active Involvement’ strategy and engagement fora (CYP)                       |
| • Links through the Bromley Police Community Advisory Group                   |
| • Road Safety Panel                                                           |
| • Key sector events for businesses                                            |
| • ‘Boost your Business’ Business Support Exhibition                           |
| • Local Purchasing survey for businesses                                      |
| • A-Z Guide to Local Services for Business questionnaire                     |

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- National Patient Survey
- Annual patient snapshot survey
- PALS
- LINK
- Service-users involved in care planning at an individual level
- Funding for person centred planning (Learning Disabilities)
- ACS supports advocacy and self-advocacy to support people to take more control over services they access, and to contribute to service development

- People into Employment partnership
- People into Employment project
- People into Employment Drop-In event (June 2008)
- TrEE Centre Programme
- Voluntary Sector Forums
- Wheelchair Users Steering Group
  - Health, Social Care & Housing Partnership Board
  - Bromley Refugees Partnership Group
  - Care Homes Forum
  - Older People Partnership Group
  - Learning Disability Partnership Group
  - Mental Health Partnership Group
  - Older People with Mental Health Issues Partnership Group
  - Physical Disabilities Partnership Group
  - Sensory Impairment Partnership Group
  - Home care provider forum
  - Care home provider forum
  - Learning disabilities provider forum
  - Services for Homeless People - Focus Group
  - Fundraising and one-off consultation events
  - Consultation as part of strategy development and business planning
  - Ethnic Communities Programme
  - Somali Well Women Clinic
  - Diabetes Patient Support Groups
  - Cancer Patients Network
  - Cardiac Patients Network
  - Maternity Services Liaison Committee
  - Breast and Cervical Screening
  - Health promotion ethnic minorities forum.
  - Drugs treatment groups
  - Hollybank Steering Group
  - Hollybank -parents of children with different types of needs
  - Research and Development as part of Clinical Governance
  - Chislehurst Town Centre Management Group
  - West Wickham Town Centre Association
  - Petts Wood Business Association
  - Biggin Hill Traders Association
  - Hayes Christmas Lights Committee
  - Cotmandene Business Group
  - Bromley/Beckenham/Orpington
  - Biggin Hill Youth Event (BCEF)
  - Youth Conference (planned)

In addition there are a wide range of specific one-off communication, consultation and engagement arrangements to address particular issue-based needs on a task and finish basis