

Engagement with the HWB

1. Introduction

During the process of creating our new strategy for the HWB, we have reviewed our terms of reference and considered how we can drive greater engagement with the Board and the work it focuses on, across the entire local community.

In recent years it has been rare for a member of the public to submit a question to the Board, or attend formal meetings. With a much clearer and more focused strategy to deliver, it will be important to engage with all sorts of audiences to create a better understanding of what we are trying to do, and how local people can help.

The key groups this paper considers are:

- BANES residents/members of the public
- Businesses, agencies and partners
- Councillors

The outcomes we aim to achieve by creating greater engagement are:

- Increased contribution to the work of the Board (a shining example of this is the consultation exercises run recently to influence the new strategy)
- Stronger performance in terms of delivering the five priority areas in the new strategy
- More public/general awareness of who we are, what we do, how it fits in the wider Local Authority/health ecosystem and why it is important

2. Recommendation

The Board is invited to discuss the proposals and agree how, and by whom, they should be taken forward.

3. Proposal

A similar exercise was carried out in February 2020 off the back of work developing the previous HWB strategy. Some of the proposals have already been adopted, some are in our view no longer as relevant or as much a priority, and some have been included in this paper as they are still likely to be effective but have not yet been delivered.

We have separated our suggestions into five areas:

a. Purpose

What is the HWB? Outside of the members and their organisations, we believe there is a very low level awareness or understanding of the HWB, and its place in the wider ecosystem.

We propose creating a pithy way of describing what the Board is, why it's important, and how it can help residents.

b. Communication

The HWB has benefited from the recruitment of two excellent colleagues to work on the new strategy, but their contracts are due to expire imminently. With only limited support possible from the Local Authority, we need to get support to promote the work and discussions of the Board over time, ideally aligned to our new strategy.

We propose identifying potential resource who may be able to provide a more consistent and targeted communication output across Local Authority and partner channels. In the first instance we should consider how far the new Inequalities Manager role could pick this up.

c. Meetings

For the last four years, at least, meetings have taken place at the Guildhall in Bath, usually in a large room capable of managing large numbers with the appropriate AV facilities.

While this means the meetings can be managed effectively, we do not know if this sort of environment puts off potential visitors, and we believe the location makes it more difficult for residents in other parts of BANES to come along.

We therefore propose we rotate the meetings around different locations (Bath, Keynsham, Radstock/MSN, Chew Valley). We should also specifically promote agenda items which are likely to be more appealing to residents before each meeting.

d. Impact

The impact of our work is something we have found difficult to articulate in the past. Our new strategy should make this easier, but there is no doubt it will be easier to engage with various audiences if they can see that the HWB, and engagement with it, delivers value.

We propose we should focus more on how residents' input and ideas influence the decisions and activities of the Board, eg the surveys completed to support development of the strategy, and the outcomes we achieve. This would be an additional element of the second proposal (Communication), potentially using a similar resource.

e. Committee

Relying on BANES residents getting more engaged through better communication alone may not achieve as much impact as could be achieved if we created further mechanisms for engagement. Some of these already exist, others could be created.

We propose to gauge interest in a resident committee/working group, which could be consulted on key issues and represent the voice of BANES residents. Alongside this we propose to discuss with the leads of the existing neighbourhood and health patients forums across BANES to see if we could make better use of them.

f. Joining up

The ecosystem in which the HWB sits is complex even to those of us who work within it each day. It is more likely that residents and other stakeholders will be willing to engage with our work if they understand how it fits within this framework.

We propose we better explain where the HWB sits in the wider ecosystem and how it plays a key role in improving health and wellbeing. This could potentially include communicating about the efforts of partner/linked organisations which may be more familiar to residents. This proposal is aligned with the first one (Purpose) and again would require a similar resource capability.