



Meeting:	BNG BOARD
Date:	16 May 2008
Contact:	Michelle Playford
Board Action:	For comment and approval
Sensitivity:	Public

Item 10: Bridging NewcastleGateshead's Residents' Panel

Link to BNG Vision and Objectives: The establishment of a Residents' Panel will support BNG's work to create great places to live as it will allow us to test key elements of our developing policies and strategies with residents before finalising them.

Recommendation: That the Board considers and approves the proposals for the Residents' Panel.

Background

The need for a residents' panel, a forum for residents to provide their views on strategic level issues, was identified by the BNG Business Plan Action Plan in 2007. Building on BNG's Commitment to Community Engagement, and complementing existing place-level engagement, the panel would provide regular opportunities to discuss key BNG-wide issues with residents.

Following initial internal discussions, a workshop was held in December 2007 to consider the logistics and practicalities of forming a residents' panel. The workshop brought together project officers and partners with particular experience in community engagement. Further research was carried out with Places for People, who outlined their own Futures Group, and Partners In Action, who run a sounding panel. Initial proposals were drawn up, and refined following further discussion within the Community Engagement Workstream. This report outlines the proposals; the full proposals are attached at appendix 10.1.

Residents' Panel proposals

The proposals, whilst providing guidance, must also be treated as dynamic as it is likely that the nature and specific characteristics of the Panel will evolve over time. Many elements of the proposals (e.g. meeting venues, frequency, code of conduct) will form the basis for discussion at the inaugural Residents' Panel meeting and will be used to draw up Terms of Reference for the group.

- **Recruitment**

We will tap into existing networks (e.g. Gateshead Community Empowerment Network, Newcastle Council for Voluntary Services) to recruit members as this will ensure we identify members with some experience/interest in engaging with agencies. Numbers will be limited to 20 and we will seek to ensure diversity in terms of the areas we draw members from, age, ethnicity and gender.

- **Meeting format and content**

Meeting topics will focus on themes and topics (e.g. housing options and affordability) which fit with BNG's overall work plan and link into key themes stemming from Board and Advisory Group. There will not be a direct report from the panel into the Board, rather BNG Board reports will highlight where the panel has had an influence on a particular issue.

- **Resident Panel administration**

The Resident Panel members will receive pre-meeting information packs, which will enable them to prepare for the meetings, and post-event reports. A calendar will also be drawn up for the

Panel which identifies key topics to be discussed, linking into BNG’s activity. The calendar will be dynamic. There will be no cash remuneration for members, but reasonable expenses will be met. A code of conduct will be drawn up and members will be appointed for an initial term of three years. This will allow members time to gain a good understanding of BNG and make a positive contribution.

Next steps

The proposals will be updated based on any feedback from the Board. Recruitment will then begin in June with the first meeting anticipated to take place in September.

Implications	
Financial:	There are some financial implications in terms of reimbursing members for expenses. The exact cost incurred will be determined following recruitment of members.
Equality:	Recruitment will seek to ensure an equal representation of members in terms of area, gender, age and ethnicity.
Sustainability:	
Freedom of Information:	Public

Risk Map Element	Brief description of any material risks, including of not proceeding.	Impact	Probability
Strategic:	Strategically, it is important that a formal means of communication is established with residents so that their views can feed into and influence BNG’s forward strategy and plans. This is also important for our reputation and potentially, financially as it has been highlighted in Audit Commission review reports.		
Financial:			
Development:			
Operational:			
Reputational:			