

Gloucester Heritage Urban Regeneration Company

Community Engagement Strategy – Revised 27th May 2009

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1 The Context

Rationale

- 1.1 This document sets out the Community Engagement arrangements for the Gloucester Heritage Urban Regeneration Company (GHURC). It aims to:
- ensure that appropriate governance measures are in place to actively engage the Business and Resident Communities
 - inform and give confidence to its Founder Partners and Board of Directors that appropriate and effective structures are in place to facilitate two way communications in all aspects of the GHURC's activities.

Introduction

- 1.2 GHURC has a unique mission and vision “to bring life back to the many historic areas of Gloucester, and help create a new and prosperous city for the 21st century”.
- 1.3 The key to the success of the programme will be Community Engagement, as new homes, offices, commercial and retail outlets as well as the public realm will be developed to meet their needs and expectations.
- 1.4 If local people are not involved in regeneration or if they are unhappy with the changes that are taking place, this could delay progress or lead to further decline.
- 1.5 Gloucester is a diverse city with many different communities and neighbourhoods. Therefore Community Engagement will need to be at a local level using methods that are appropriate for each community.
- 1.6 A key element to shaping regeneration will be the involvement of residents and communities in the design processes and using forms of engagement which will go beyond traditional methods of Community Engagement.

Strategy Aim

- 1.7 The primary aims of the strategy are:
- To enable all sections of the communities of Gloucester to contribute to the future of the city
 - To ensure that communities within the regeneration areas are able to engage with GHURC and their Founder Partners in order to influence and be involved in the development and design of projects that will affect their lives and neighbourhoods.

Strategy Objectives

1.8 The primary objectives of the strategy are:

- To support GHURC and Founder Partners in understanding the importance of Community Engagement and demonstrating their commitment to it
- To establish a consistent approach to Community Engagement in the URC areas and to ensure that it is carried out to the highest possible standard
- To support the development of community skills and aspirations to enable effective engagement
- To give all Gloucester residents and businesses the opportunity to have their say
- To collate ideas and insights from local people
- To stimulate a sense of ownership of, identification with and pride of the city amongst residents
- To make best use of resources in achieving the above
- To ensure that Community Engagement is inclusive by giving every resident within the area the opportunity to express their views and to make sure that those views are listened to and respected
- To ensure that clear feedback is provided to communities which will demonstrate how their views have been taken into account in the decision making process
- To ensure that the Community Engagement process is transparent and accessible to all.

Who is this strategy for?

1.9 This strategy is intended to provide GHURC, its Board of Directors and Founder Partners with some broad principles that they should be working to when engaging with communities:

- GHURC will ensure that the principles contained within this strategy are embedded into all the plans and strategies for engaging with communities
- GHURC expects its Founder Partners to emphasise the importance of this strategy and ensure that any Community Engagement work undertaken is in line with the principles outlined in this strategy.

2 Definition

What is Community Engagement?

2.1 Within this strategy the term 'Community Engagement' is used to represent a range of activities that support the communication and involvement processes between Residents, Business, GHURC, its Founder Partners and other key stakeholders.

2.2 Terms such as 'consultation' and 'involvement' are often used, to describe Community Engagement activities. However, each term

essentially refers to different forms of engagement, which are dependent on the overall objective of the exercise.

- 2.3 GHURC will ensure the appropriate terminology is applied when undertaking any form of Community Engagement activity in order to avoid confusion and clarify its purpose.

3 Levels of Community Engagement

- 3.1 There are five levels at which Community Engagement takes place:

Information

- 3.2 This is the basic level of engagement and is simply about providing information. Although it is a form of engagement in itself, the giving of information strengthens all other levels of engagement. It is important that communities are provided with the right information (in a variety of detail and formats) at the right time about the issues about which they are being engaged. This will help communities to make informed and considered choices, identify the stages at which decisions can be influenced and be aware of opportunities for further involvement. Giving feedback from other Community Engagement activities is a vital part of providing information.

Consultation

- 3.3 The objective of consultation is to seek the views and opinions of communities on specific topics to inform the decision-making process. When using consultation, GHURC will be open to suggestions within feasible options, be prepared to take on the ideas of the community and provide feedback. GHURC will also demonstrate the impact the consultation has had on the decision-making process. Consultation is vitally important where there is a desire to see the Regeneration Framework inform local planning policy.
- 3.4 Consultation using design as a focus can offer a mechanism for giving expression to conflicting ideas within communities and as a creative process, assist in the development of solutions that can help to reconcile these differences.

Involvement

- 3.5 Involvement is where communities actively participate in decision-making and work with GHURC and their Founder Partners to make decisions about the future of their areas.

- 3.6 It is important to distinguish between consultation and involvement. If communities are not going to be involved in decision making, then it needs to be made clear that they are being consulted rather than involved. This helps to manage expectations with regard to the level of influence they may have in decision making.

Participation

- 3.7 This is a process whereby not only decisions are made together, but partnerships are formed to carry out subsequent actions.

Empowerment

- 3.8 This is where support is given to community initiatives, helping others carry out actions they have chosen, perhaps by grants, advice or support of another nature.
- 3.9 As communities become more engaged in the Regeneration process they may want to do more than give their views and opinions.
- 3.10 There are many innovative ways in which the community may wish to be more involved in shaping and transforming their neighbourhoods, for example:
- Communities carrying out consultations themselves
 - Communities providing training to other communities
 - Providing and managing community facilities such as learning centres, community cafés, credit unions, crèches and play areas. E.g. the “Four Gates Centre” formerly known as the Westgate Neighbourhood Centre
 - Self build schemes
 - Design and management of spaces and buildings.
- 3.11 Empowering local communities will bring the following benefits to GHURC and its Founder Partners.
- Engaging with and empowering communities can help to build the capacity of local communities
 - When participants are effectively engaged, their knowledge base and skills will develop
 - They will learn about their community, specific issues affecting it and organisational structures and processes
 - When communities are engaged on a level of involvement or above, their negotiating and debating skills will be developed and their confidence will grow
 - If members of the local community can be involved in actually implementing Community Engagement, practical skills can be developed, such as carrying out surveys and interviewing people.

- 3.12 The practical benefits of empowering communities include:

- Increasing the number of people available to carry out consultations

- Fewer ‘outsiders’ involved in the process
- Neighbourhood information obtained at a grass roots level
- Communities passing on their skills and knowledge to others
- Development of facilities that people will use and therefore be sustainable in the long term
- Communities developing skills which lead to employment.

Feedback

- 3.13 Feedback from community engagement activities will include the options that have been considered and the decisions and actions that have been agreed and be available to all those effected and/or interested. This will be done within an agreed time, to an agreed format and from an identified source.
 Explanations about why decisions and actions have been taken will be shared along with details of any future activity.

4 Methodology

- 4.1 There have been several different approaches to date to involve the community in the URC’s work, including the creation and development of the GHURC Area Regeneration Framework, such as:
- A ‘**Business Forum**’, based on existing business and economic associations
 - An extended ‘**Resident and Community Forum**’, based on the representative group originally set up by the City Council and the Gloucester Partnership (LSP)
 - Urban Youth Forum
 - Review meetings with the City and County Councillors through the ‘**Councillors Forum**’.
 - Employment of a Community Engagement Manager
 - Community Engagement Plans
 - Community Ambassador’s programme
 - Mobile Exhibition Unit
 - Future of the City annual event

As part of the ongoing process of engagement GHURC need to be clear on the methods of engagement being used on different topics and occasions, e.g. information sharing, consultation etc and take more of a lead with partners, developers, consultants etc in planning and preparing for community engagement activities.

- 4.2 The key responsibilities of the Business and Resident & Community and Urban Youth fora are to:
- provide comments and advice with given reasons to the URC on its Regeneration Framework, strategies, programmes and projects
 - raise awareness and aspirations in the wider business and residential community of URC activities

- receive copies of reports and Board papers for comment and feed back (excludes Urban Youth Forum).

As part of this process GHURC must be aware of the accessibility of the language used in documents presented to the fora.

Whilst efforts are being made to make the Fora as geographically representative as possible, it is acknowledged that they will not provide a link to all parts of the community.

Wider Community

4.3 There are two main approaches to contacting local people:

- Communities of place – local residents as evidenced by the Census
- Communities of interest – local people identified by other aspects of their life e.g. physical disability, employment, ethnicity or background etc. including hard to reach groups.

Communities of Place

4.4 These are largely geographical and can be measured using the existing ward boundaries. The City of Gloucester is split into fifteen different wards, three of which fall within the URC area, although the effects of the regeneration will impact on all Gloucester wards and their residents and any other visitor to or employee in Gloucester.

Communities of Interest

4.5 In the 2001 census there were 109,885 residents in Gloucester. Communities of Interest could be described as individuals who share a common interest or a member of a particular group.

Hard to reach groups

Although the term ‘hard to reach’ is probably the most recognised, it should be understood that other less ‘common’ terms maybe more accurate. It is important to ensure that in defining a community/group/individual as ‘hard to reach’ it is understood that the problem does not lie with the community/group/individual but within the approaches to them, requiring more creativity and effort in the forms of engagement used.

4.6 Part of the Community Engagement process to date has been to identify who and where the hard to reach groups are. Steps will need to be put in place to ensure that these groups are reached.

4.7 There must be awareness of the needs and interests of the audience and information and involvement needs to be targeted to ensure it is relevant and answers the questions of those being engaged.

- 4.8 GHURC and their Founder Partners will seek advice and work in partnership with those agencies who work with hard to reach groups to develop a range of appropriate Community Engagement mechanisms.
- 4.9 A range of techniques will be required in order to engage communities including:
- Printing information in a range of formats and languages. This will be done on request
 - Providing web based resources
 - Ensuring venues are accessible and appropriate to the cultural and physical needs of communities
 - Using engagement techniques which do not solely rely on participants being able to read and write
 - Use of art/artists as a way of both accessing and giving expression to the views and ideas of local communities
 - Provision of translators or signers on request
 - Drawing on experience to date and lessons learnt from previous engagement activities

The provision of services such as transport and childcare provision will assist in the involvement of those who would otherwise be unable to effectively 'engage' due to these reasons.

5 Proofing

- 5.1 The communities should be contacted about this strategy to confirm how best to engage them about the URC's activity, and at what level they would like to be involved.
- 5.2 It is unlikely that the URC itself or any other single organisation can deliver the required level of information and involvement. Several agencies and approaches will be needed to reach the wider community, including voluntary and community organisations, business' and individuals.
- 5.3 In each report presented to the GHURC Board there will be a statement referring to the impact on Community Engagement.

6 Focus

- 6.1 Community Engagement will be focused on several aspects of the URC's work, in addition to the overall picture:
- A. The "Magnificent Seven" key sites,
- Canal Corridor
 - Gloucester Docks
 - Gloucester Quays
 - Greater Blackfriars
 - Kings Quarter

- Railway Triangle
 - Greyfriars / (former GlosCat sites)
 - Plus the new Parkway Rail Station at Elmbridge (being led by Gloucestershire County Council)
- B. Public Realm (meaning public spaces) Strategy (and delivery) across the city centre
- C. Public art.

The Gloucester Partnership are taking the lead for the social regeneration of the city via the Sustainable Community Strategy. GHURC has a regeneration protocol which states its links with partners on the social aspect of regeneration.

7 The Challenges to Community Engagement

- 7.1 GHURC acknowledges that there are many challenges to engaging with communities in Gloucester. Primarily the main challenge of the programme is that not all aspects are open to community influence, as certain aspects of the programme are predetermined. Some of the decisions that are being taken are to ensure that areas have a sustainable long-term future; and this may conflict with the views and aspirations of current communities. Therefore a key part of the engagement process will be to challenge views and to debate issues with communities. As part of this process it will be imperative that communities are clear about what has been decided and is non-negotiable and what is open to influence.
- 7.2 It is inevitable that disagreement will arise and it is vital that clarity is given to communities on how decisions are taken. Strategies should also be put in place for dealing with disagreement. This may cover a range of areas including the provision of mediation services, outreach work and training for staff and partners on how to deal with conflict.
- 7.3 A further challenge for GHURC when considering Community Engagement is the need to engage across the city. Work being undertaken in the GHURC areas will have an impact on the wider community. It is vital that communities across the city have an understanding of why work is being undertaken in the designated areas and what the benefits of this will be to the city as a whole and the region. In this respect GHURC will seek to coordinate and communicate activity with other agencies working in the area.

8 Planning and Compulsory Purchase

- 8.1 Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Gloucester City Council have prepared their Local Development Framework.
- 8.2 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out when and how the City Council will undertake public and stakeholder consultation

with regard to the Local Development Framework process and in determining significant planning applications.

- 8.3 The GHURC will ensure that its Community Engagement activities dovetail into the City Councils work on the Local Development Framework, wherever possible.

9 Key Success Factors

- 9.1 The success of the strategy will depend on the following key factors:
- An open and honest approach of what Community Engagement will consist of, between GHURC, their Founder Partners and local communities
 - Building the skills and capacity of staff to effectively engage with communities
 - Building the capacity of the community to become fully involved in the GHURC process
 - Clear and timely communication
 - Effective working between GHURC and its Founder Partners
 - GHURC and their Founder Partners genuinely seeking to engage with communities throughout the process
 - Sufficient resources being used to deliver the aims and objectives of the strategy.

10 Information, Communication and Publicity

- 10.1 Information, communication and publicity are vital to the success of the URC. There will be many communities who will not want to 'actively' engage in GHURC projects and proposals but who quite reasonably expect to receive clear, understandable information about what is proposed and what is happening.
- 10.2 The URC programme also needs to be promoted in a positive light to gain the trust of the communities. As the Area Regeneration Framework plans develop it is inevitable that some communities may have fears about the changes taking place, which could result in opposition to the proposed changes.
- 10.3 It is also likely that proposed changes may result in negative publicity from the media and rumours circulating in neighbourhoods. GHURC and their Founder Partners will need to challenge negativity and through successful Community Engagement, tackle misinformation that may circulate in neighbourhoods.
- 10.4 Active Community Engagement can in itself provide positive publicity for those communities and help to change broader perceptions of people and place.

- 10.5 Gloucester citizens can be reached via a broad campaign e.g.
- Community newsletters
 - Community Radio
 - Displays in city centre and other shop windows, including hoardings
 - Leaflets distribution
 - Local press
 - Local and national radio and television
 - Local Neighbourhood Partnerships
 - New media techniques
 - Targeted approach to local schools
 - Travelling displays / Road-shows / exhibitions / presentations to/at community events
- 10.6 A variety of approaches will be required for those whose first language is not English, and other “hard-to-reach” groups who will also need a targeted approach.
- 10.7 This approach will bring a range of benefits to GHURC and its Founder Partners:
- Sharing information helps communities to gain an understanding of the regeneration priorities and processes
 - It helps to manage communities’ expectations, particularly with regard to explaining what can and cannot be achieved, what funding is available, why something is or is not being done and what constraints exist
 - Good communication will improve the relationship between GHURC and communities
 - Positive relationships can be fostered, improved and built upon
 - Use of clear formal structures (existing and new), such as the Business and Resident & Community and Urban Youth Fora, steering groups and consultative panels will ensure that GHURC and communities have a focus as to where discussion, feedback and decision making takes place
 - Utilising informal structures such as community events and a variety of media, such as video, arts projects or photography, will allow those less confident in a formal setting to make their views and opinions known.

11 Training and Development

- 11.1 A range of techniques have already been used to consult and engage communities and groups, new and existing, within URC areas during the different stages of the development of the Area Regeneration Framework. These include:
- Meetings with communities
 - Consultation with specific groups
 - Workshops
 - Surveys

- Providing a range of published information
- Display stands

The ten year programme also means that communities have the opportunity to develop skills, which will help with the process of regeneration but will also leave them with employable skills for the future.

Programme of urban design training

11.2 Additional training will provide a range of benefits to GHURC and its Founder Partners:

- Engaging with communities will enable communities to define the vision for their community, which will create areas where people want to live and work, both now and in the future
- When people are involved in defining the vision for their community, it brings a greater sense of 'community ownership' belonging, and pride. It raises expectations, encourages commitment to an area and in turn makes regeneration sustainable
- Involving communities in the planning, development and design of their area will help to make their vision real and in doing so foster a greater sense of responsibility and ownership towards it
- Developing skills and confidence in urban design
- Working with professional designers and architects to develop their own projects for buildings and public spaces
- Being involved in the recruitment of design teams, master-planners or consultants.

12 Resources

12.1 It must be recognised that community engagement requires time, money and resources and continuing commitment of the GHURC Board. Planning ahead for future work will enable GHURC and their Founder Partners to identify:

- Financial resources available
- Work being undertaken by other agencies/organisations, which may compliment the work of the GHURC, avoid duplication and save on resources.

12.2 Resources for Community Engagement Manager are funded from GHURC Executive Team Budget.

12.3 Individual Community Engagement Plans will include a statement of how the community will be engaged with individual projects and what resources have been identified to effectively do this.

12.4 The benefits to GHURC and their Founder Partners include:

- Projects are able to develop quickly once funding is obtained

- Staff recruitment process is quicker
- Training can be provided before a project has started rather than 'on the job'
- Links are in place with a range of organisations to utilise their resources.

13 Key Aspects of Community Engagement for the GHURC

- 13.1 This Strategy and its related achievements will be subject to an annual review lead by the GHURC Residents & Community Forum.
- 13.2 There will also be a periodic full external review of this strategy and GHURC community engagement.
- 13.3 The Business Forum and the Residents & Community Forum will receive all Board papers electronically and/or in hard copy for discussion a week before each Board meeting (see Forum Protocols). All relevant papers will be available on GHURC intranet.
- 13.4 Each of the Magnificent Seven sites, the Public Realm and Public Art programme will have a steering group of professionals and a "Community Ambassador" to act as a two-way messenger to residents in the area of the site, who may then ask for presentations at their own meetings as appropriate.
- 13.5 The ambassadors have been chosen carefully not just for local residents and communication skills, but also for any other skills or knowledge they can bring to the steering group e.g. local retail business for King's Square. They will also have a seat on the Business and/or Residents & Community Fora.
- 13.6 Each key site will have a "Community Engagement Plan" to complement the physical development plans. This will incorporate a range of outreach events and activities, inside and outside the central areas, using buses, displays (including on hoardings) and links to other events and websites.
- 13.7 Special attention will be given to engaging young people, perhaps through the Urban Youth Forum, Video Diary Project, Exploring the International Dimension project, and more direct contact with local schools and youth groups.
- 13.8 A Community video diary project will be established to monitor the changes taking place in the URC area and changes in people's views and perceptions. It will be shown at each GHURC Board AGM.
- 13.9 An annual 'Future-of-the-City' event will be run to review programmes. It will be an open exhibition for all members of the wider communities of Gloucester.

14 Sustaining Community Engagement

- 14.1 With such a range of activity taking place it can be easy to underestimate the difficulty for GHURC to maintain momentum and keep the community involved as plans are developed.
- 14.2 It is vital that GHURC engages the communities throughout the process and that they are able to see and participate in projects that are being developed and delivered.
- 14.3 Sustaining Community Engagement will have many benefits including:
- Building trust and Founder Partnership working
 - Raising aspirations within communities
 - Developing a positive relationship with communities
 - Development of communities' knowledge and understanding, therefore they become equipped to deal with more complex information and decision making
 - Reduced negativity and opposition.

15 Community Cohesion

- 15.1 There may be neighbourhoods within the GHURC areas or the city where communities are segregated along racial, religious and ethnic divides. Communication and consultation is seen as key to developing community cohesion and has an important role to play in this.
- 15.2 Regeneration initiatives, in particular the funding process, can be a divisive force within communities as they have a tendency to magnify the divisions that already exist between communities. Area-based regeneration initiatives and strong territorialism can create divisions between neighbourhoods and act as a barrier to different areas interacting.

(Gloucester Partnership - Community Cohesion Strategy)

- 15.3 The Home Office notes that:

'Community cohesion lies at the heart of what makes a safe and strong community. It must be delivered locally through creating strong community networks, based on principles of trust and respect for local diversity, and nurturing a sense of belonging and confidence in local people. Effectively delivering community cohesion also tackles the fractures in society, which may lead to conflict and ensures that the gains which changing communities bring are a source of strength to local areas.'

(Community Cohesion – An action Guide, Home Office)

- 15.4 There is evidence of good practice in this area, although this is an area that is still being developed, regeneration provides the opportunity to

develop new and innovative ways to engage with people to develop and build cohesive communities.

15.5 Building cohesive communities will have long-term benefits in the GHURC areas which include:

- Creating communities in which people from different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds can live and work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding
- Cohesive communities are able to identify problems and are able to work and support each other in determining solutions that will benefit the community as a whole
- Improved dialogue between the community, GHURC, voluntary and community groups and other Founder Partnership agencies

Developing a strong and cohesive environment in which people will want to live and invest.

16 Networking / Links

16.1 Many agencies and organisations will already be engaging with local communities. It is important GHURC continue to make contacts and links with these organisations in order to:

- Ensure there is no duplication of work
- Avoid 'burn out' of members of the community who are already actively involved in a range of activities
- Utilise existing Community Engagement work that is already taking place
- Draw on the local knowledge and expertise of other agencies in working with the community, identifying opportunities for engagement in the most effective and appropriate ways for the particular community.

16.2 Establishing strong links of networks will lead to a range of benefits to GHURC and their Founder Partners:

- Building up networks will ensure that GHURC have a clear idea of what work is being undertaken by a variety of agencies in the URC areas
- This information will inform the Community Engagement process and can be used to assist with resources, techniques and avoid duplication of work.

17 Monitoring and Review

17.1 GHURC will ensure that the principles of this strategy are embedded into its Annual Business Plan.

17.2 The Business and Resident & Community Forum will be responsible for reviewing the Community Engagement Strategy.

17.3 GHURC and its activities are subject to a five year review of its programme.

18 Sharing Good Practice

18.1 It is essential that good practice information can be accessible and disseminated easily.

- GHURC will develop strong links with other URCs particularly in the South West and will provide interactive information using its website and email
- Information is uploaded to the site to share with others
- National good practice details can be posted onto the site
- Links to useful websites will be available.

18.2 GHURC will have annual programme's of best practice visits made available to all Board and Fora members for the purpose of learning from comparisons to other regeneration area's.

19 References

Gloucester Partnership - Community Cohesion Strategy 2003
Community Cohesion – An action Guide, Home Office