

Future Shape Groups: Process and Participation

Introduction

The Future Shape Groups programme has attracted over 90 applicants from within Barnet Council and substantial commitment from our partners. Interest in the groups work will be wider than those who will actually attend the groups meetings, with members, trades unions and other staff all wanting to have their say. The outcome of the groups work has the potential to impact all people employed in public service in the Borough.

Time is short and it is vital that the Groups have the best chance to deliver a new direction. It is equally important that the way they operate is accessible and transparent; the programme to date has suffered at times from people not understanding the reasoning behind proposed major changes, leading to more uncertainty than is necessary.

This brief paper proposes a process for the Groups, divided into particular phases. It is intended as a guide for facilitators and group leads to ensure that large-scale communication and participation is the foundation of our success.

Group tasks

In a previous paper¹ we defined the task of the groups was to propose, in relation to their area of work, the most effective means of ensuring that we meet the 'Future Shape Tests' and design approaches to policy development and service provision that

- Cost significantly less.
- Take a different view of need, based on engaging with our population as citizens rather than customers of specific services.
- Are strategic and integrated, ensuring that resources are targeted to achieve priority outcomes.
- Facilitate greater self-help and service co-creation amongst members of our community.
- Are based on a clear contract between the citizens and services.
- Inspire behavioural change amongst our residents and businesses
- Can be accessed on the basis of citizen life challenges.
- Help citizens to achieve better outcomes in their lives
- Are democratically accountable

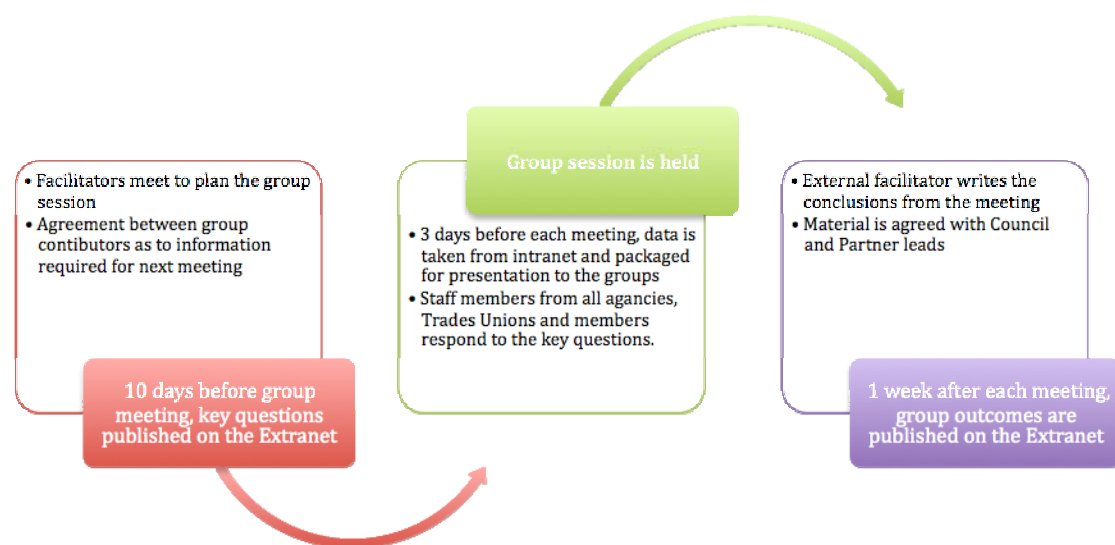
¹ See London Borough of Barnet, Future Shape Groups

This is a substantial task and we will need to effectively harness the collective wisdom of all stakeholders if we are to succeed, in order to do that we need a clear process.

Group process and participation

The key to effective communication throughout the duration of the Future Shape Groups work is to establish a transparent process from the start and to use the Councils website as the focal point of activity. We are currently developing a way of ensuring that the Intranet site is converted to an extranet to allow partner organisations to access the material.

We are proposing that the groups should have a timed cycle of planning, posting key questions, gathering responses to use in the debate and posting the outcomes of each phase.



Group Phases

We are proposing that each group has a number of recognisable phases with identifiable questions at each phase. The Phases are

1. Orientation
2. Visioning
3. Options
4. Direction

Orientation phase

In the Orientation Phase the group is concerned with information from the past and present. The group is gathering information about current practice and evaluating how good the current approach is.

The key questions at this phase are;

1. What do we do now?
2. What does it cost? What does it achieve?
3. What is the citizen experience? What do they want it to be?

Visioning phase

In this phase the Group is primarily concerned with the future; what is possible? To do this we need identify the exemplars of good practice and to draw on people's imagination as to what the future

4. What do we want for the future?
5. What are the leading practices?
6. What is next practice?
7. How can we better meet the future shape tests?

Options phase

In the options phase we are concerned with how the change we envisaged at the Visioning phase can be achieved. This is the stage at which we should engage with private and third sector partners to 'sound out' the market to see what kind of assistance it could deliver.

8. What are the options for development?
9. What capacity do we have for change?
10. What can the private/third sector offer

Direction phase

In this final phase we are preparing the case to be put to members. The questions we need to answer are

11. What improvements can be made in the short, medium and long term?
12. What savings can be made in the short, medium and long term?
13. How does this rank on the change vs. market capacity matrix?
14. How can we ensure continued democratic accountability?

These phases and the principle contributors are summarised in the table below. For a more detailed explanation of the roles see the previous paper outlining the roles of the groups.

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Summary table

Phase	Key Questions	Responsibility						
		Facilitators	External facilitators	Research Lead	PWC	Citizen Point of View	Group members	External participants
Orientation	What do we do now?			*				*
	What does it cost?				*			
	What is the citizen point of view?					*		*
Vision	Does it meet the future shape tests?	*	*		*		*	*
	What do we want for the future?	*	*				*	*
	What are the leading practices?	*	*	*	*		*	*
	What is next practice?	*	*	*	*		*	*
	How can we better meet the future shape tests?	*	*				*	*
Options	What are the options for development?	*	*	*	*		*	*
	What capacity do we have for change?	*	*		*		*	
	What can private/third sector offer?	*	*	*				*
Directions	What improvements can be made in the short, medium and long term?	*	*				*	*
	What savings can be made in the short, medium and long term?	*	*		*		*	*
	How does this rank on the change vs. market capacity matrix?	*	*		*		*	
	How can we ensure continued democratic accountability?	*	*	*	*		*	*

