

## **Appendix 1: Summary of lessons learned**

### **Race Equality Commission**

In the report of the Race Equality Commission, a number of issues related to engagement were identified:

- Engagement was sometimes seen as being done for its own sake, not in order to do things differently and directly involve people in that work;
- Forums were established but seen as talking shops and not places that were trusted to take action;
- Work stopped and started, when engagement needs to be ongoing to develop to deliver its potential;
- The pandemic revealed that the arrangements we had in place were not effective, and that we needed to do more to actively reach out to people;
- This meant that the connections between communities and community organisations on the one hand, and decision makers and service deliverers could be lacking, leading to feelings that assessments of need were distant and without nuanced understanding, resulting in action not being properly linked to need;
- There was a conclusion that 'many individuals and groups are inadequately or inconsistently consulted and remain outside of decision-making loops that affect them and their local communities.'

### **Peer Challenge**

The Peer Challenge team were specifically asked to look at our approach to engagement, and their report highlighted a number of points to address:

- Local Area Committees were seen as a good starting point, but not enough by themselves to deliver meaningful engagement, involvement or empowerment for communities;
- There were good examples of practice in services, but broader structures to support engagement need to be developed for more impact;
- Getting the basics of customer experience right is a key part of building trust with citizens and communities, and engagement is critical to this;
- There was an opportunity to think more broadly about the Council's approach to engagement through the City Goals work and development of the Council Plan;
- Strong and sustainable arrangements will need to go beyond the LACs to invest in more in partnership working so that there is more co-design and co-production of solutions and services with partners, particularly at community and neighbourhood levels.
- There is appetite among partners to work with us to support progress.

## Lowcock Report

The Lowcock report into the Street Tree disputes also had some key insights:

- The issues arose partly due to a failure to listen and respond to concerns, starting from limited initial consultation on the plans for Streets Ahead (using only Community Assemblies and not engaging key stakeholder groups) and continuing into our response to those raising concerns as the programme began to be implemented;
- There was a mistaken view that complaints to the Council about an issue were a reasonable reflection of the views of residents as a whole, when this is not always the case;
- Where the Council did start to engage during the disputes, its messaging was at times misleading and was not trusted as a result;
- Where structures such as the Independent Tree Panel were put in place to help resolve issues, the whole organisation was not fully behind them;

As a result the Inquiry made a specific recommendation in relation to engagement, that “The Council should sustain the emphasis it has recently placed on partnership, local engagement and consultation and consider what more it needs to do to ensure that a culture conducive to that is fully embedded.”