Community and Engagement Committee
12 June 2019

**State of the Borough Debate**
Report by Director, Communities

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Cllr Tim Cobbett, Portfolio Holder for Engagement and Continuous Learning

The Chair has agreed to accept this report on the grounds of urgency in accordance with the provisions of s100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 by reason of special circumstances, namely that this report requires consideration prior to the annual State of the Borough Debate and, therefore, adequate time for its outcomes to be undertaken. As the next meeting of the Community and Engagement Committee is 24 September 2019, the Chair has agreed that this report can be urgently considered at this meeting of the committee.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To set out the themes for the 2019 State of the Borough Debate that will be put to the community to select through a vote; and the initial ideas for how the event will operate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To RESOLVE that -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) the choice of themes for the 2019 State of the Borough Debate that will be put to residents for voting be approved;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) the process of selecting the panel and the emerging plan for the event be noted and the Director, Communities authorised to make minor adjustments to the arrangements in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Engagement and Continuous Learning and the relevant Opposition Spokesperson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits to the Community:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The community gets to choose the topic for debate on a strategic issue that matters to the people that live, work and study in the borough. The community gets to hear from experts on a topic and a discussion from a variety of voices. After the event the Council will follow up with a response on what can be done about the key issues raised.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Points

A. The annual State of the Borough Debate will take place on 21 November 2019.
B. During July, the community can vote on the theme of the debate from a list that aligns with the council’s strategic priorities.
C. The event will be held at a suitable venue in the community, to be decided in due course.
D. A panel of experts and community representatives with make up the panel for the State of the Borough Debate.
E. Borough-wide promotion of the event will take place from October, with an opportunity for the community to sign up and submit questions that will be put to the panel for debate.

Context

1. The State of the Borough Debate was introduced as part of the constitutional changes agreed at the Council meeting on 14 July 2015. It is scheduled in the municipal calendar as a meeting of the Full Council. It is therefore expected that all Members attend. However, as the focus of the event is community engagement the Council’s Standing Orders concerning debate are customarily suspended to allow keynote speakers and public participation. The event is ordinarily open to the public, who can ‘turn up on the night’, although invitations are sent out to a large number of community and resident groups who can reserve places. The debate is ordinarily held in the Council Chamber and is webcast.

2. In previous years, Members have chosen the theme for the debate. Topics to date have been:
   ● 2015: ‘Growth’ (keynote speaker: Stewart Murray, Asst Director of Planning at the GLA);
   ● 2016: ‘The Role of the Future Council’ (keynote speaker: Prof Catherine Staite, Director of INLOGOV);
   ● 2017: "Harnessing the Borough's culture and creativity to shape the future of the Borough - a new approach to engaging our communities, enabling them to flourish and delivering good growth for the Borough" (keynote speakers: Shonagh Manson, GLA Asst Director for Culture and Creative industries and Robin Hutchinson MBE, Chair of Creative Kingston);
   ● 2018 - Brexit: what will the impact be on our borough? (keynote speakers were David Randall, Canbury Works (SME businesses), Mathew Bennett, Wilmott Dixon (construction industry), Marcus Dyke, Youth Parliament (young people), Patricia Turner, CEO Kingston Voluntary Action (voluntary sector and funding), Sarah Olney, former MP for Richmond Park (December 2016 - June 2017), Oliver Turnbull, Managing Director UK, 2VizCon).

Proposal and Options

3. To support the council’s commitment to strengthening community engagement it is proposed that this year the theme for the debate is chosen by the community and the event is held away from the council offices at a location in the community.
4. The Debate is a public engagement opportunity to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the Council. It is open to everyone and will not be run as a regular Council meeting.
5. The community will be provided with a list of themes for the debate and asked to vote for their preferred option.

6. The proposed list of themes is as follows:

   **Improving Our Environment** - e.g. improving air quality, trees, sustainable transport, biodiversity, climate change, recycling, single-use plastic, etc.;

   **Keeping People Safe** - e.g. crime and antisocial behaviour, helping homeless and other vulnerable groups, domestic violence, modern day slavery, etc.;

   **Keeping People Healthy** - e.g. health and mental health, well-being, happiness, increasing independence, reducing isolation, living well, mindfulness, etc.;

   **Growing Kingston Together** - e.g. regeneration, the changing nature of the High Street, the role of culture and tourism, economic development, skills and culture, housing and development, affordable housing, etc.;

   **Making Kingston Better, Together** - e.g. active citizens, community budgeting, commissioning, volunteering, community engagement, Connected Kingston, etc.;

   **Keeping Kingston Moving** - e.g. sustainable transport, cycling, walking, parking, 20mph zones, school streets, etc.

7. Voting can be done digitally through the Let's Talk online engagement portal or on postcards that will be available in community spaces e.g. the council’s Information and Advice Centre, other council sites; libraries and leisure centres.

8. The theme with the most votes will be the topic chosen for the debate.

9. The event would be held at a location in the borough of suitable size, access and facilities.

10. A panel with be recruited with relevant interest and expertise to the chosen theme. This will reflect the makeup of the borough and enable a balanced debate to take place. This will include one member of the panel being a young person to address this usually under-represented group.

11. The event will be widely publicised through both digital and traditional print methods. This would include providing a signup link and the opportunity to submit questions for discussion by the panel. We would ensure that representative groups are part of the audience by sending targeted invitations for them to partake, to make this as inclusive an event as possible.

**Consultations**

12. The community will be provided with a list of themes for the debate and asked to vote for their preferred option.

13. Voting can be made via the Let's Talk online engagement portal or on postcards available in community spaces.

**Timescales**

14. Voting on the themes of debate will take place during July 2019.
15. Preparation for the event will take place from August to November 2019. This involves selection of venue, panel members and experts, programme schedule agreed, invitations and promotion of the event, etc.


Resource Implications

17. The event preparation will be managed using existing staff resources

18. A budget will be required for promotion, venue hire, facilitation, filming equipment, refreshments and other essential items.

Legal Implications

19. None

Risk Assessment

20. No immediate risks apparent.

Equalities Analysis

21. The event will be published widely and targeted invitations will be sent to known equality groups.

Health Implications

22. Keeping People Healthy is an optional theme for the debate.

Road Network Implications

23. Keeping Kingston Moving is an optional theme for the debate.

Environmental & Air Quality Implications

24. Improving our Environment is an optional theme for the debate.

Background papers - None other than those referred to in this report

Author of report -
Paula Tribe, Corporate Head, Strategy and Engagement
Paula.tribe@kingston.gov.uk 0208 547 5421

Louise Footner, Assistant Director, Culture, Communities and Engagement
Louise.footner@kingston.gov.uk