



Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Council is committed to engaging with communities and stakeholders to ensure that development, economic growth, services and facilities meet local needs and are delivered in the most cost-effective and efficient way enabling local communities to feel supported and enabled to prosper.
- 1.2 Communities are best placed to understand the needs of their local areas and effective engagement leads to better quality plans, decisions and services, with stronger communities who feel empowered and involved in deciding how their communities function.
- 1.3 Key components of engaging effectively will be to build on existing links with communities, stakeholders and local organisations, involvement of elected Members at all levels of local government as community representatives and the development of new relationships as appropriate to ensure that all parts of the community are able to participate and shape their locality.
- 1.4 This Strategy sets out our commitment to engagement and defines:
 - what we mean by engagement;
 - key principles for engaging our communities and stakeholders;
 - when and how engagement will take place.
- 1.5 The Council has a legal Duty to Co-operate with specified partners to engage constructively, actively and on an on-going basis to address cross-boundary issues when preparing key plans.
- 1.6 This strategy forms part of the Council's strategic plan "Our Plan" which sets out the Council's vision, values and objectives alongside the long term priorities and planning and corporate policy. Progress will be monitored and the plan reviewed and updated to ensure it is delivering outcomes that benefit the community and organisation.
- 1.7 The Council's approved Statement of Community Involvement setting out how and when we will involve the community in preparing development plans and processing planning applications is in conformity with this strategy.

2. Defining Engagement

- 2.1 Engagement in this context is the process whereby communities, organisations, stakeholders and individuals work together to identify and agree priorities, and develop proposals that will deliver outcomes of benefit to local communities.
- 2.2 Engagement differs from both consultation and communication in that it empowers and enables communities and stakeholders to shape and influence what happens in the locality. Consultation is whereby views are sought on a set of usually pre-determined proposals and communication is the conveying of information. Both these strands form part of the overall engagement process and should be used to support and test decisions made during, or as a consequence of, engagement.

3. Engaging Stakeholders and Communities

- 3.1 Stakeholders and communities may be both internal and external and might include officers in other areas of the Council, staff, elected Members, town and parish councils, contractors, businesses, community groups, specific interest groups, the voluntary sector, local residents, landowners, statutory and non-statutory partners, developers, planning agents, registered providers, healthcare providers, social services, local education providers and other public sector bodies.
- 3.2 The above list is not exhaustive but gives an idea of the breadth of those who might be involved in the engagement process. Those actually engaged will depend on the nature and subject of the engagement.
- 3.3 We aim to ensure that all relevant stakeholders and communities are enabled to participate in the engagement process to have a voice, including those that are vulnerable or hard to reach.
- 3.4 We will involve the local community and stakeholders in planning engagement wherever possible and ensure that engagement is publicised and promoted in advance.
- 3.5 Elected Members at all levels of local Government: county, district and town/parish are at the heart of engagement, having been elected to represent their local communities. We will principally engage with local communities through Town and Parish Councils and local Ward Members. We will:
 - Set up a timetable of events/workshops with them to discuss key issues;
 - Use the Town and Parish Voice arrangements to update, feedback and discuss specific issues and concerns;
 - Use existing Member meetings to update, feedback and discuss specific issues and concerns;
 - Ensure elected Members and Town and Parish Councils are provided with information to enable their local residents to engage with the work of the Council.

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- 3.6 Communities will be at the heart of what we do and be empowered to take responsibility for their local area and shape local plans and the delivery of services.
- 3.7 Local community and stakeholder views and feedback will be used to inform recommendations and decisions as to future plans and service delivery.
- 3.8 Feedback will be provided to all those who participate in the engagement process and the wider community.

4. When and how we will engage

- 4.1 The Council will engage communities and stakeholders to help shape:
 - the overall direction of the authority to include key corporate plans and strategies,
 - service delivery and service related policies,
 - localities
- 4.2 We will work with communities and stakeholders to agree the best format for engagement and the most appropriate times and locations for events.
- 4.3 We will use the Voice forums (Town and Parish Voice, Business Voice, Voluntary Voice and Young People's Voice), regular stakeholder meetings, Connect outreach and existing local shows and events wherever possible to engage rather than setting up separate events.
- 4.4 We will make every attempt to avoid duplication and consultation fatigue by developing a co-ordinated annual engagement plan to include a timetable of engagement for the year. All planned engagement will be included.
- 4.5 A range of tools and techniques will be used that are most appropriate to the subject, groups and localities we are engaging with and may include:
 - Single Topic discussions;
 - Workshops;
 - Focus/discussion groups;
 - On-line tools - Website, Social Media, YouTube and Video diary;
 - Open days, events, outreach;
 - Surveys;
 - Newsletters.
- 4.6 Local residents, community groups, organisations and businesses can ask to be added to the Council's consultation database to receive regular information on consultations being undertaken by the Council.
- 4.7 The primary platform for statutory and non-statutory consultations will be on-line but we will ensure that those who do not have access are able to participate through written responses or telephone/personal interview, as appropriate.

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5. Equality and Human Rights

5.1 The provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 and Equalities Act 2010 have been taken into account in developing this strategy.

6. Review

6.1 This strategy will be reviewed annually.