



South Hams District Council

# **CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

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South Hams  
District Council

# FOREWORD

## I am pleased to introduce the new Consultation and Engagement Strategy for South Hams District Council.



Cllr Nicky Hopwood

This strategy is about us improving our understanding of our community's needs, views and experiences, through consultation and engagement. We will then use this information alongside other evidence, to inform the design and delivery of our services.

We are by no means starting from scratch; South Hams District Council has always been committed to listening to local people to help shape where they live, and the services that they receive. This is however an opportunity to provide a clear commitment for how we will consult and engage in the future and the principles that we will use in that engagement.

The years ahead will continue to be challenging for Local Government with many uncertainties around future funding and the changing pressures that will no doubt come

about as the full impact of Covid-19 is realised. It will therefore be even more important that through effective communication, consultation and engagement, we can help to manage public expectations as well as understanding their views on our future direction.

Over the coming months we will be developing toolkits for both our Councillors and Officers setting out how they can support delivery of this Strategy.

I am confident that through delivery of this strategy we will further strengthen both our partnership working and engagement with our local communities.

**Cllr Nicky Hopwood**



# WHY DO WE NEED A CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY?

Our communities have a central role to play in influencing and shaping what happens in South Hams. We recognise that our role as a local authority is changing, and we're committed to helping people to do more for themselves, for each other and for their community.

In adopting a Consultation and Engagement Strategy it is our aim to not only reach out to the community but to ensure it has a sense of ownership over the future policies and actions of its district council.



# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

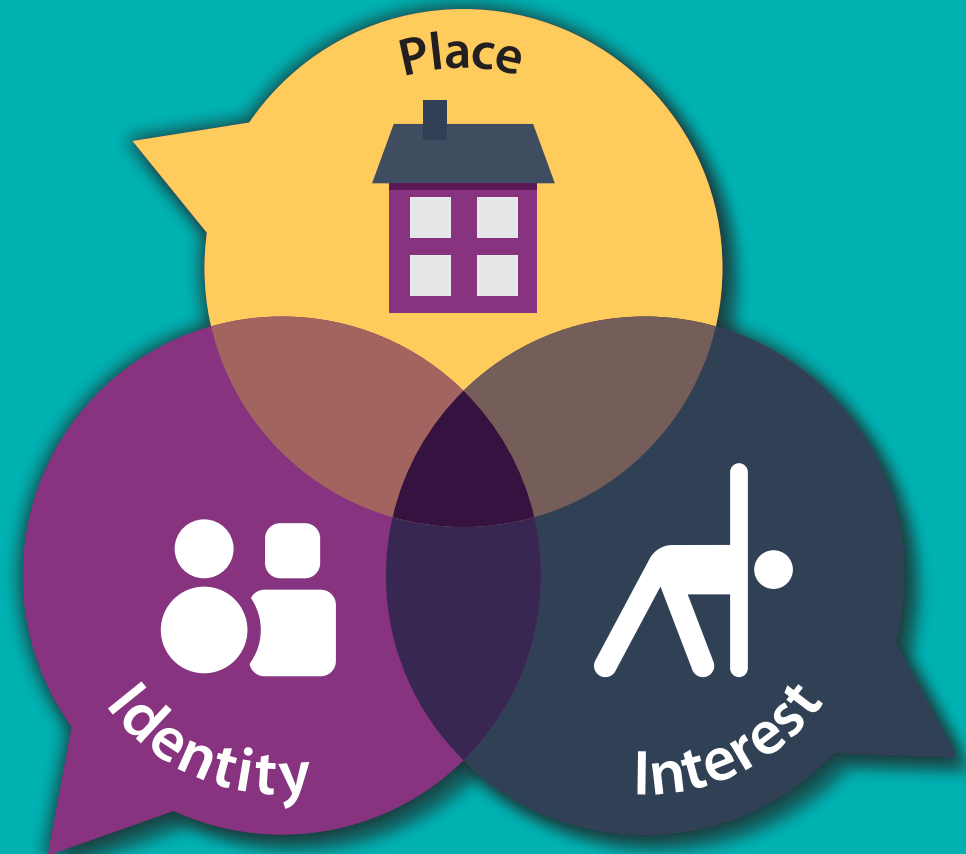


Community Engagement is a planned process, which has the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people, whether they are connected by place, interest or identity, to encourage them to actively take part in making decisions about their community and empower them to take leadership on matters of local need.

**'Communities of Place'** where people identify with a defined geographical area ranging from the whole district, a town, a parish, a hamlet, a street or estate.

**'Communities of Identity'** as defined by those people, such as ethnic groups, people who share a particular experience, interest or stake in an issue, or characteristics such as young people, older people, disabled people, ethnic groups, or lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

**'Communities of Interest'** where people share a particular experience or interest, which might include tenants and resident groups, parking permit holders, people involved in environmental projects, or people who come together to use services such as parks, green spaces, or community buildings.



# WHAT ARE THE AIMS AND BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT?



Aims	Benefits
 Better communication and understanding	Community more aware of the Council's initiatives and the reason for their introduction
 Improving further the relationship between the community and the Council	Build trust through the effective use of the Community Engagement Strategy
 Policy and Practice that reflects the views and needs of the community	Community, by its involvement, shows its enthusiasm for the actions on which it has been consulted
 Increase customer satisfaction and sense of ownership of service provision	Enthusiastic support from community for policies on which they have been consulted
 Increased transparency and accountability	Our communities feel that we communicate honestly and openly with them, giving them a greater understanding of the reasons for the Council's decisions and actions
 Encouraging connections to develop within the community	Communities working together in consultations bring about a cohesiveness

# WHY IS CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT IMPORTANT??

We are in challenging times, so it is more important than ever that we keep our communities informed and listen to their ideas. Through effective community engagement:

- ◆ Residents will have a better understanding and trust in the work of the Council and the decisions we make
- ◆ Residents will play a greater part in decision-making
- ◆ The relationship between the Council and residents is mutual, instead of residents being passive recipients
- ◆ Community members and groups are involved in work to support their area
- ◆ We have greater numbers of people interested in the change we need to make, and willing to help us shape that change
- ◆ Innovation and change takes place through diverse networks and community action

# OUR APPROACH TO CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT



**Planning** – We will be clear on the purpose for the engagement which is based on a shared understanding of community needs and ambitions



**Inclusion** – we will identify and involve the people and organisations that are affected by the focus of the engagement



**Methods** – we will use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose



**Support** – We will identify and overcome barriers to participation by engaging through a range of methods



**Communication** – We will communicate clearly and regularly with the people, organisations and communities affected by the engagement



**Impact** – We will assess the impact of the engagement and use what has been learned to improve our future community engagement



**Empowerment** – We will endeavour to empower our communities to take leaderships roles where appropriate

# WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION?

Increasing levels of community involvement

Level	Informing	Consulting	Involving	Collaborating	Empowering
Aim	By providing Information that people need to know, we are ensuring we are transparent.	Capture residents' views on issues.	To have a more in-depth form of consultation where we invite communities to test Council procedures and processes.	To work alongside the community, giving equal power in the decision-making process.	Promoting community leadership. Encouraging, and supporting where possible, our residents to take the lead on initiatives.
The Intention	That our communities know what is happening within the Council and are aware of any information that relates to them.	To provide opportunity for the community to inform us of their views within our decision making process. We will communicate clearly as to where the ultimate decision making power rests. We will provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision making.	Through involving members of the public we have policies and procedures that are effective and represent the needs of the communities.	To increase the communities ownership and engagement in formulating solutions, innovations or improvements through working together.	To support communities to take responsibility in designing and delivering local innovation.
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Social media / online</li> <li>● Face-to-face local meetings</li> <li>● Newsletters</li> <li>● Papers</li> <li>● Exhibitions</li> <li>● Roadshows</li> <li>● Factsheets</li> <li>● Websites</li> <li>● Public notices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Engagement Panel</li> <li>● Residents' Panel</li> <li>● Service User Panels</li> <li>● Community Clusters</li> <li>● Consultation survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community testing of services before roll out</li> <li>● Community boards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Co-production</li> <li>● Residents' Panel</li> <li>● User involvement in decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Parish Plans</li> <li>● Participatory budgeting</li> <li>● User led commissioning</li> <li>● Referendums</li> </ul>



# THE PRINCIPLES WE'LL APPLY TO OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH YOU

## Trustworthiness

We should aim to build trust with the community by communicating clearly, honestly and transparently through:

- Being clear with you what our intentions of the engagement are
- Being upfront about how much influence your engagement will have
- Reporting back on the results of the engagement so that you know what impact your input has had



## Openness

We should be open to new ideas and keep our communities informed about what is happening at the Council.

- Tell you about the work of the Council and the challenges faced
- Encourage and listen to ideas about how we can do things differently

## Inclusivity

We should understand that innovation, vision, and creativity are born of diversity. We should try to consult and engage with a diverse range of people; especially including those who are often marginalised.

- We will identify and develop plans to reach our hard to reach groups so that your voice can be heard



## Collaboration

We see that our community is facing many issues that no one group, or sector, can address. In our engagement, we should find ways of bringing people together to regenerate the community, and to build resilience for our district, found in the connections between people.



## Learning and evolving

We will learn from the feedback we receive through our engagement to ensure that we continuously evolve



# OUTCOMES

## KNOWLEDGE



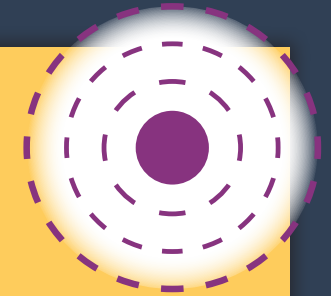
The collective knowledge of our communities helps to shape ideas that make South Hams a great place to live, work and visit

## AWARENESS



Local people in our communities are aware of how and when they can get involved

## INFLUENCE



Our communities influence issues that affect their communities and are involved in improving their local area

## FEEDBACK



The Council learns and evolves based on the engagement we undertake. Communities participating in engagement understand how their views have made a difference

## SUPPORT



Councillors and officers are supported to involve communities effectively in everything we do

## EMPOWER



Our community is empowered to meet both current and future challenges

# 2021/22 DELIVERY PLAN

The following sets out the specific actions that we will deliver during 2021/22 to support delivering our outcomes.



## KNOWLEDGE

The collective knowledge of our communities helps to shape ideas that make South Hams a great place to live, work and visit.



How we'll work towards it	By
Undertake mapping of partner organisations and key groups across the South Hams including how we currently engage with them and how we might engage better in the future	June 2021
Survey our residents and key partners to understand how they want to engage with the Council (linked to Corporate Strategy development)	May 2021

## AWARENESS

Local people in our communities are aware of how and when they can get involved.

How we'll work towards it	By
Develop a forward plan of consultation and engagement activities for each year - co-ordinated with local partners to avoid 'consultation fatigue' and to join up opportunities to engage	April 2021
Adopt a consistent campaign theme for all consultation and involvement activity to increase recognition and encourage participation	May 2021
Review and enhance the 'Get Involved' web page and engagement portal to include greater information on the range of opportunities for engagement and improve feedback on engagement activities	September 2021
Develop our digital communications offer through a review of social media to improve our reach and interaction with residents (use of polls etc.)	Autumn 2021

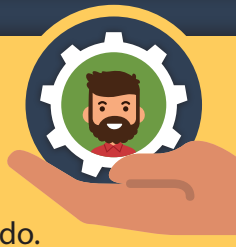
## FEEDBACK



The Council learns and evolves based on the engagement we undertake. Communities participating in engagement understand how their views have made a difference.

How we'll work towards it	By
Introduce an online involvement tracker to provide information on how feedback from consultation has shaped outcomes	April 2021
Include a review of consultation and engagement activity alongside the delivery plan for the following year	May each year

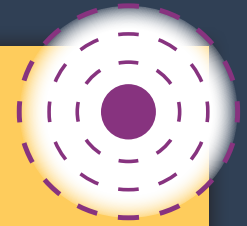
## SUPPORT



Councillors and officers are supported to involve communities effectively in everything we do.

How we'll work towards it	By
Development of an officer toolkit to support delivery of the strategy	April 2021
Deliver staff training on what 'Good Engagement' looks like – developing a network of staff trained in engagement across the Council	May 2021
Develop a Member Engagement Toolkit to support councillors to promote opportunities to get involved in local activities and decision-making	April 2021
Capture best practice from across the District and share on a refreshed Member Intranet	Sept 2021

## INFLUENCE



Our communities influence issues that affect their communities and are involved in improving their local area.

How we'll work towards it	By
Improve access to Council committee meetings by introducing digital tools so that people can better follow or participate in meetings.	Jan 2022

## EMPOWER



Our community is empowered to meet both current and future challenges.

How we'll work towards it	By
Work to develop online platforms to enable showcasing of best practice in community engagement between the Council and our communities to enable our communities to connect to achieve specific outcomes. (Climate Change Boards as an example)	March 2022
Refresh our crowdfund platform and SeaMoor Lotto schemes to empower communities to get their schemes off the ground	March 2021
Enable our communities to advertise volunteering opportunities to the Council to enable staff to volunteer to support community schemes that will make a difference to South Hams. This both builds capacity but also creates links across the South Hams.	Ongoing
Improve the awareness of support available to community groups and social enterprises in South Hams	April 2021



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