



West Devon Borough Council

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

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West Devon
Borough Council

FOREWORD

I am pleased to introduce the new Consultation and Engagement Strategy for West Devon Borough Council.



Cllr Lois Samuel

West Devon Borough Council has always been committed to listening to residents, businesses and partner organisations in shaping the area and our priorities. This strategy is about us further improving our understanding of our community's needs, views and experiences, through consultation and engagement.

In adopting this strategy, we are making a clear commitment for how we will consult and engage in the future and the principles that we will use in that engagement.

We have developed this strategy during a time where our communities have come together to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. It has seen the Council with a closer relationship with our communities and we need to ensure that we continue to build on this relationship.

The lasting impacts of the pandemic will mean that the coming years may be tough but through effective communication, consultation and engagement, we can help to manage public expectations as well as understanding their views on our future direction. I am confident that through delivery of this strategy we will further strengthen our engagement with a wider range of residents and groups from across the borough.

Cllr Lois Samuel



WHY DO WE NEED A CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY?

Our communities have a central role to play in influencing and shaping what happens in West Devon. 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 borough 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

'Communities of Place' where people identify with a defined geographical area ranging from the whole borough, 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	Residents will have a better understanding and trust in the work of the council and the decisions we make
 Stronger Communities	Community members and groups are involved in work to support their area
 Policy and Practice that reflects the views and needs of the community	Innovation and change takes place through community action
 Increase customer satisfaction and sense of ownership of service provision	The relationship between the council and residents is mutual, instead of residents being passive recipients
 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
 Greater targeting of resources	We have greater numbers of people interested in the change we need to make, and willing to help us shape that change
 Stronger partnerships	Residents playing a greater part in decision making

WHY IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPORTANT TO US?

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 playing 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 community action

OUR APPROACH TO COMMUNITY 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 (see the levels of community involvement below)



Support – We will identify and overcome barriers to participation



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



Inclusion – We will make a real effort to ensure that we consider how we will reach out to those in our communities who may struggle to be heard

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION?

Increasing levels of community involvement

Level	Informing	Consulting	Involving	Collaborating	Empowering
Aim	Providing Information that people need to know	Capture residents views on issues, but the ultimate decision rests with the Council	Enabling our residents to test, design and evaluate the work of the Council	Partner with the public in every aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	Promoting independence – enabling our residents to take on delivery of Council functions, place final decision making in the hands of community led organisations
The Intention	To keep you informed	To keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	To work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influences the decision	To look to you for advice and innovative ideas in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum possible extent	To facilitate communities to take responsibility for designing and delivering services themselves
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social media / online ● Face-to-face local meetings ● Newsletters ● Papers ● Exhibitions ● Roadshows ● Factsheets ● Websites ● Public notices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engagement Panel ● Residents' Panel ● Service User Panels ● Community Clusters ● Budget consultation survey ● Corporate Strategy Discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Budget challenge through community clusters ● Co-Production of service development ● Youth Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Co-production ● Residents Panel ● User involvement in recruitment to top posts ● User involvement in grant decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parish Plans ● Participatory budgeting ● User led commissioning

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 borough



Learning and evolving

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

OUTCOMES

KNOWLEDGE



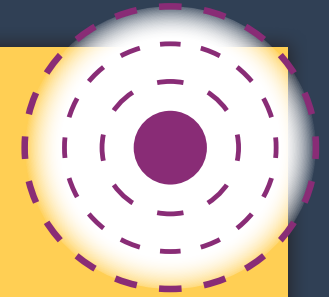
The collective knowledge of our communities will help to shape ideas that make West Devon a great place to live, work and visit

AWARENESS



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

INFLUENCE



Our communities are able to 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



Members and staff are supported to involve communities effectively in everything we do

INCLUSIVE



We are proactive in reaching out to those that are hardest to reach

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 West Devon 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 West Devon 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
Implement a requirement for officers to consider Consultation and Engagement Activity through all Committee reports	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

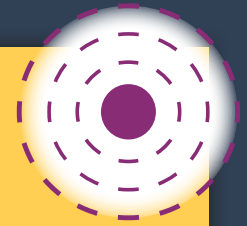
FEEDBACK



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

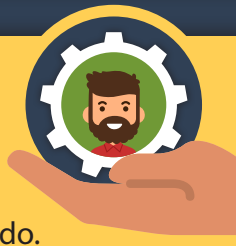
INFLUENCE



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

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 Borough and share on a refreshed Member Intranet	Sept 2021

INCLUSIVE



Considering how we will reach out to those in our communities who may struggle to be heard

How we'll work towards it	By
Undertake an assessment of current barriers to participation in Council life and set out an action plan for addressing them	March 2022
Develop approaches to reaching out to some of the hardest to reach residents (aligned to our developing Equality Commitment)	Autumn 2021
Improve the awareness of support available to community groups and social enterprises in West Devon	April 2021



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