

Report to: **Hub Committee**

Date: **16 March 2021**

Title: **Consultation & Engagement – Task and Finish Group Concluding Report**

Portfolio Area: **Communications**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken:
Following the Council meeting to be held on 30
March 2021

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Recommendations:

That the Hub Committee consider the draft Community Consultation & Engagement Strategy (as set out at Appendix B) and RECOMMEND to Council that it be adopted.

1 Executive summary

- 1.1 At the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1st September 2020, it was resolved to form a Task and Finish Group to lead the development of a Consultation and Engagement Strategy for the Council
- 1.2 A group was formed to develop the strategy with the agreed Terms of Reference set out in Appendix A to this report.
- 1.3 Members have met a number of times in order to consider the principles for consultation and engagement that the Council should adopt.
- 1.4 Having considered best practice and local barriers to participation in Council consultation and engagement, this report sets out the conclusions of the Task and Finish Group and a draft Strategy.

- 1.5 A version of this report was considered at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 2 March. At this meeting, Members unanimously recommended approval of the draft Strategy (as set out at Appendix B).

2 Background

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1 September 2020, Committee considered a draft of the Council's Covid-19 recovery plan. To build upon the positive engagement seen throughout the pandemic, it was proposed to establish a Task and Finish Group to develop a Consultation and Engagement Strategy.
- 2.2 In discussion, Members were supportive of this suggestion and a Consultation and Engagement Strategy Task and Finish Group comprising of Cllrs Cheadle (Group Chairman), Daniel, Kemp, Kimber, Leech and Samuel was established.
- 2.3 The Group was tasked with developing proposals for how the Council consult and engage and presenting its concluding report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration and if supported, recommendation to Hub.

3 Actions of the group

- 3.1 On the 13th October 2020, the Task and Finish Group held its first meeting to consider the terms of reference for the group. These were agreed and are included as Appendix A to this report.
- 3.2 The Task and Finish Group were clear that it would be important to ensure that any Consultation and Engagement Strategy specifically focused on how we improve engagement with those that could be deemed 'Hard to Reach'. In West Devon, in addition to the usual hard to reach groups, there is also the issue of poor digital connectivity which could be a barrier to participation in Council matters.
- 3.3 Officers engaged with the Local Government Association to understand best practice in Consultation and Engagement and as a result were able to provide the Task and Finish Group with a number of reference strategies from exemplar Councils.
- 3.4 These strategies were considered by the group who then reconvened on 22nd October to share their views on what they considered worked well and, more importantly, what the strategy for West Devon should be.
- 3.5 This discussion informed a first draft of priorities which were then refined by the group in to a final draft strategy.
- 3.6 One of the actions that Members felt should be implemented quickly is the inclusion of a consideration of Consultation and Engagement activity within the Implications section of committee reports. This would enable Members the opportunity to understand what consultation and engagement is being proposed and that it is in line with our Consultation and Engagement Strategy.

4 Outcomes/outputs

- 4.1 Task and Finish Members have created a draft Consultation and Engagement Strategy that they have unanimously endorsed.
- 4.2 The draft Strategy is set out in Appendix B to this report. After consideration by both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then the Hub Committee, the Strategy will be finalised for Council to consider adoption.
- 4.3 The Strategy includes a delivery plan of activities and materials that will be developed to support our ambitions for consultation and engagement. This work will be taken forward under the guidance of the Lead Hub Member for Communications, Cllr Samuel.

5 Options available and consideration of risk – future recommendations;

- 5.1 The Committee is asked to consider and endorse the draft Strategy attached at Appendix B, making any recommendations on potential amendments.
- 5.2 The Committee is further asked to recommend that Council adopt the Strategy.

6 Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	
Legal/Governance	Y	Effective Consultation and Engagement is a key aspect of good Governance. Members of the group also felt that it is important to review the committee report template to include a consideration of consultation and engagement activity within the implications section.
Financial	Y	There may be financial implications as a result of the Strategy when the delivery plan is created but at this stage there are no financial implications.
Risk	Y	There is a risk that the Council overcommits to consult and engage through the strategy. It is important to say that the Strategy sets out a wide range of Consultation and Engagement methods. The key is that the Council is upfront on the level of engagement and influence participants can have.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	Developing a Consultation and Engagement Strategy is a positive step in ensuring that we

		reach out to a wide range of individuals and there are specific considerations of how we will take steps to overcome barriers to participation
Safeguarding	N	
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	
Other implications	N	

Supporting Information

Background Papers:

Appendix A - Consultation & Engagement Task and Finish group – Terms of Reference

Appendix B - Consultation & Engagement draft strategy