



CABINET

Subject Heading:

Community Engagement

Cabinet Member:

Leader of the Council

ELT Lead:

Marcus Chrysotomou, Head of Communications

Report Author and contact details:

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Policy context:

This strategy relates to:

People – Things that matter to residents

Financial summary:

There are no financial implications for the Council related to this decision. The Community Engagement Strategy will be delivered with existing resources.

Is this a Key Decision?

Yes - Significant effect on two or more Wards

When should this matter be reviewed?

April 2025

Reviewing OSC:

Overview and Scrutiny Board. The Community Engagement Strategy will be refreshed each year.

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Things that matter for residents x

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy x

Resources - A well run Council that delivers for People and Place. x

SUMMARY

The Community Engagement Strategy attached at Appendix A aims to:

- Build reputation and trust by listening to residents and acting on concerns
- Demonstrate community leadership
- Encourage participation and involvement in delivery of community services (community clean ups, mentoring of pupils, parks Friends groups, library groups, etc.)
- Develop consistent approach to community consultation and engagement, embedding Gunning Principles and encouraging collaboration
- Strengthen engagement in development and delivery of health and wellbeing services and programmes
- Provide intelligence to support council-wide policy development
- Evolve service over time from information and engagement to empower residents

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet approve the attached Community Engagement Strategy 2024 - 27

REPORT DETAIL

The Target Operating Model that the Council recently conducted identified the need for a more joined up approach to how the Council conducts community engagement and participation. A bespoke team was subsequently set up under the Head of Communications to ensure that community consultation and engagement activity was more focussed and that we were more likely to achieve desired outcomes.

The Community Engagement Strategy 2024 – 27 is in its essence a work plan for that new team to ensure that we, for example:

- Work more closely with residents so that residents are fully involved in Council consultations.
- Looking at pooling resources with partners such as the NHS to get better outcomes and reach more people.
- Set up leaseholder and resident panels.
- Deliver roadshows (not just in Housing)
- Make sure there is meaningful consultation and engagement on major regeneration and housing schemes.
- Continue to engage and inform residents during new builds.
- Look at how we can use our buildings better for communities to come together.

This is one of the four key priorities of Cabinet to improve engagement (alongside IT, Customer Service and our Financial position).

The full strategy is attached to this report at Appendix A

REASONS AND OPTIONS

Reasons for the decision:

A review was conducted to see what the current engagement provision is at the council

The findings found that currently most of our engagement activity involves informing and consulting residents around key areas as appropriate with some examples of involvement and collaboration with residents. The review also found that:

- A 'hub and spoke' model should be implemented for community engagement so there is a join up for all engagement across the council and partners.
- We have a spread of teams and individuals who are engaging with residents and forums.
- There is no strategic wider plan around how we engage with residents with the exception of the Housing service.
- Other than in Housing, there is no corporate capture of feedback, data and information to help wider policy making.

- We need to create a broader range of approaches and tools to engage. This is particularly important given rapid changes in population demographics.
- It is important we understand digital poverty particularly among older people to ensure nobody is left out.
- We need to coordinate databases held across the Council to better inform engagement.
- We need to have clear 'you said, we did' feedback loops.
- The community needs to be enabled to lead more.
- We need to build community resilience and trusted relationships.

In addition, some services deliver a form of engagement activity with different resident or user groups showing pockets of good practice and expertise.

Other options considered:

The only other option considered was to not have a Community Engagement Strategy and continue with a piecemeal approach to community engagement. This would not allow Members and the Executive Leadership Team a clear oversight on community engagement and was rejected.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

There are no apparent financial implications or risks associated with the approval of the community engagement strategy. The strategy will be delivered using existing budgeted resources. It may be that work/costs arise as a result of community engagement, however, any such instances will be subject to the relevant decision making processes and funding considerations.

Legal implications and risks:

There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in the report. The approval of a Community Engagement Strategy complements Part 5 of the Localism Act 2011 which sets out measures to empower the community.

Human Resources implications and risks:

There no human resource implications or risks. Under the Target Operating Model a new community engagement team has been created to ensure the delivery of this work

Equalities implications and risks:

A full Equality and Health Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached at Appendix B with associated action plan.

Health and Wellbeing implications and Risks

There are no adverse health and wellbeing risks associated with this strategy

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Community Engagement Strategy 2024 – 27 supports the work of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan including the facilitation and promotion of the Council's Green Forum.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers