

REPORT TO FORMARTINE AREA COMMITTEE – 16 JANUARY 2018

Corporate Engagement Policy

1 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Discuss the content of the report and draft policy and provide comments for consideration by the Communities Committee; and
- 1.2 Provide feedback for developing an action plan and supporting guidance.

2 Discussion

- 2.1 The Community Engagement Strategy Review Group was set up in 2016 to ensure that the current engagement strategy was reviewed in a consistent manner involving relevant stakeholders. The group has undertaken a range of activity to consider the core content of the policy.
- 2.2 The draft Engagement Policy is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.3 Reflecting the Scheme of Governance Part 4A Scrutiny at Aberdeenshire, the policy is a formal, concise, accessible statement on how the council intends to conduct business. The policy has been designed to be focused at a strategic level recognising the key purpose of the policy is to confirm the commitment of the organisation to enable quality, proportionate engagement as part of the decision making process. Key areas that have influenced the development of the policy include:
 - The refresh of the National Standards for Community Engagement
 - National policy development including the implementation of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act
 - Recent innovation and development in engagement methods
- 2.4 In line with the Policy Development & Review Framework embedded within the Scheme of Governance and to help embed engagement as a core consideration in all Council activity it is intended that the policy document will be supported by practical guidance and an action plan which will enable an engagement culture within the organisation. Activity will include:
 - Developing a consistent approach to monitoring and evaluation of engagement activity
 - Building on the success of other 'champion roles' to develop expertise and build capacity within the organisation
 - Utilising existing tools including the consultation database, the CPP engagement guide and ALDO learning
 - Developing awareness sessions to share learning and support implementation
 - Recent research and developing engagement methods

- On an annual (or more frequently as required) understanding Service engagement and consultation requirements to utilise corporate engagement methods as appropriate.

2.5 In accordance with the Scheme of Governance, Area Committees and the appropriate Policy Committee will be responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of policy implementation and evaluate the outcomes of this policy.

2.6 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

2.7 Consultation with each of the six Area Committees is taking place prior to consideration of the policy by Communities Committee.

3 Scheme of Governance

3.1 The committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section B 1.2 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as this relates to consultation on policy matters.

4 Implications and Risk

4.1 An equality impact assessment has been undertaken as part of the development of the draft policy. It is included as **Appendix 2** and demonstrates no impact has been identified.

4.2 There are no staffing and financial implications arising directly from this report.

4.3 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a [Corporate Level](#):

- ACORP002 – Changes in government policy, legislation and regulation: The policy underpins the objectives of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act. Supporting guidance will utilise recent research and publications about methods of engagement and consultation.
- ACORP006 – Reputation management (including social media): The Engagement Policy provides a clear policy statement about the principles that all engagement activity should follow which will help mitigate any reputational risks related to engagement and consultation. The Engagement Policy supports the desired outcomes of other strategies and policies including the Cooperate Communication Strategy.

The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a [Directorate Strategic Level](#):

- BSSR004 - Community Empowerment: The key purpose of the policy is to confirm the commitment of the organisation to enable quality, proportionate engagement as part of the decision making process. The policy sets out clear expectations for employees and communities about

the expectations of any engagement or consultation activity. The implementation of the policy will be monitored and progress reported at appropriate Area and Strategic Committees.

4.4 There are no Town First implications arising directly from this report.

Ritchie Johnson
Director of Business Services

Report prepared by Daniel Greig and Engagement & Consultation Officer
Date 20/12/17

APPENDIX 1: Draft Corporate Engagement Policy

1. Introduction

The Council Plan recognises that central to achieving the Council Priorities and to improve outcomes for communities there is a need for effective communication, community involvement, partnership working and good governance and scrutiny.

The engagement policy confirms the commitment of the organisation to embed engagement as a core consideration in all activity. This policy sets out a clear expectation of what is required of our employees when engaging with communities.

Supporting guidance will give clarity about the different forms of engagement and examples of good practice to follow.

2. Policy statement

Aberdeenshire Council will involve individuals and communities in how we plan and deliver services across Aberdeenshire. We want to enable the right level of participation, engagement and consultation to ensure everyone, including employees, Elected Members and partners, are confident that there has been quality, proportionate dialogue as part of the decision making process.

Reflecting the National Standards for Community Engagement, we will do this by:

- Ensuring that the way in which we engage with the community is appropriate for the issues being looked at and the audiences we are trying to engage with
- Being clear from the outset on how communities can, and will, be involved
- Giving information throughout the decision-making processes to enable active citizen participation to encourage ongoing conversations not stop-start consultation
- Engaging with communities at as early a stage as possible allowing adequate time to understand the issues being discussed
- Being clear about the purpose of the engagement
- Using the right medium to reach communities, understanding protected characteristics and ensuring barriers to involvement are minimised
- Coordinating our engagement with others to ensure communities are not burdened with engagement processes
- Ensuring feedback is provided and communities can see how their engagement helped to shape the end outcome, even if not the outcome that they hoped for
- Enabling our employees to have the confidence and skills to be able to engage appropriately based on their role and remit

- Evaluating the impact of the engagement to improve future processes

3. Scope of Policy

The provisions of this Policy apply to all employees of Aberdeenshire Council unless otherwise stated.

4. Benchmarking and monitoring

To help understand the impact of engagement and inform annual reporting on engagement and participation we will continue to monitor the extent of which:

- Residents and communities think the council takes account of views;
- Residents and communities feel they have enough opportunities to influence decision making and what happens in their community;
- the methods we use are appropriate;
- Residents and communities are given the necessary information to allow them to participate;
- Residents and communities feel that a two-way dialogue is achieved; and
- Residents and communities received adequate feedback about the outcomes of the exercise they took part in.

To inform our future approaches and help with continuous improvement we will evaluate engagement activity through evaluation and peer review.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 1: Title and aims of the activity (“activity” is an umbrella term covering policies, procedures, guidance and decisions).	
Service	Business Services
Section	Customer Communication & Improvement
Title of the activity etc.	Corporate Engagement Policy
Aims of the activity	Confirms the expectations for engagement with residents and communities
Author(s) & Title(s)	Daniel Greig Engagement & Consultation Officer

Stage 2: List the evidence that has been used in this assessment.	
Internal data (customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).	Stakeholder surveys undertaken by Community Engagement Strategy Group Review of consultation database
Internal consultation with staff and other services affected.	Services and CPP represented on Community Engagement Strategy Group and open invitation to participate in online stakeholder survey
External consultation (partner organisations, community groups, and councils).	Stakeholder survey with partners and community groups Reputation Tracker satisfaction question also analysed ‘The Council takes account of residents’ views.’
External data (census, available statistics).	N/A

Other (general information as appropriate).	Review of the National Standards for Community Engagement and associated material. Review of existing strategy and guidance.
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Stage 3: Evidence Gaps.	
Are there any gaps in the information you currently hold?	No

Stage 4: Measures to fill the evidence gaps.		
What measures will be taken to fill the information gaps before the activity is implemented? These should be included in the action plan at the back of this form.	Measures:	Timescale:
	N/A	

Stage 5: Are there potential impacts on protected groups? Please complete for each protected group by inserting "yes" in the applicable box/boxes below.				
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unknown
Age – Younger	Y			
Age – Older	Y			
Disability	Y			
Race – (includes Gypsy Travellers)	Y			
Religion or Belief	Y			
Gender – male/female	Y			
Pregnancy and maternity	Y			
Sexual orientation – (includes Lesbian/ Gay/Bisexual)	Y			
Gender reassignment – (includes Transgender)	Y			
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Y			

Stage 6: What are the positive and negative impacts?

Impacts.	Positive (describe the impact for each of the protected characteristics affected)	Negative (describe the impact for each of the protected characteristics affected)
Please detail the potential positive and/or negative impacts on those with protected characteristics you have highlighted above. Detail the impacts and describe those affected.	For all characteristics the expected impact is positive. The Policy aims to ensure that all residents and communities, regardless of protected characteristic, are appropriately involved in the planning and delivery of services.	

Stage 7: Have any of the affected groups been consulted?

If yes, please give details of how this was done and what the results were. If no, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating steps?	There has not been specific engagement or consultation with protected groups. However by ensuring the policy reflects the national standards for community engagement best practice for engaging with protected groups is being adhered to.
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Stage 8: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce negative impacts?

These should be included in any action plan at the back of this form.	Mitigating Steps	Timescale
	N/A	

Stage 9: What steps can be taken to promote good relations between various groups?

These should be included in the action plan.

The Engagement Policy is primarily about ensuring good relations between the council, its services and residents and communities within Aberdeenshire are developed and maintained including protected groups.

Stage 10: How does the policy/activity create opportunities for advancing equality of opportunity?

The policy aims to ensure equality of opportunity by having a voice in how the council plans and delivers services and that all residents and communities are clear in how they can become informed, engaged, consulted or participative in decision making, design or delivery of services.

Stage 11: What equality monitoring arrangements will be put in place?

These should be included in any action plan (for example customer satisfaction questionnaires).

Monitoring arrangements have been incorporated into the policy Every month 150 residents will continue to be contacted as part of the 'Reputation Tracker' and this will provide a 'temperature check' of whether residents believe the council 'takes account of residents views'. This monthly survey includes equality information.

Stage 12: What is the outcome of the Assessment?

Please complete the appropriate box/boxes	1	No negative impacts have been identified –please explain.
	The Engagement Policy is designed to confirm the commitment of the organisation to enable quality, proportionate engagement as part of the decision making process for communities across Aberdeenshire. It is anticipated all protected groups will be positively impacted by the proactive approach.	
	2	Negative Impacts have been identified, these can be mitigated - please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen.
	3	The activity will have negative impacts which cannot be mitigated fully – please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen

* Stage 13: Set out the justification that the activity can and should go ahead despite the negative impact.

N/A

Stage 14: Sign off and authorisation.				
Sign off and authorisation.	1) Service and Team	Customer Communication & Improvement, Business Services		
	2) Title of Policy/Activity	Council Plan 2017-2022 (if appropriate)		
	3) Authors: I/We have completed the equality impact assessment for this policy/activity.	Name: Daniel Greig Position: Engagement & Consultation Officer Date: 20 December 2017 Signature:	Name: Position: Date: Signature:	
		Name: Position: Date: Signature:	Name: Position: Date: Signature:	
	4) Consultation with Service Manager	Name: Amanda Roe Date: 29 December 2017		
	5) Authorisation by Director or Head of Service	Name: Kate Bond Position: Date:	Name: Position: Date:	
	6) If the EIA relates to a matter that has to go before a Committee, Committee report author sends the Committee Report and this form, and any supporting assessment documents, to the Officers responsible for monitoring and the Committee Officer of the relevant Committee. e.g. Social Work and Housing Committee.			Date:
	7) EIA author sends a copy of the finalised form to: equalities@aberdeenshire.gov.uk			Date:
(Equalities team to complete) Has the completed form been published on the website? YES/NO			Date:	