Aberdeenshire COUNCIL Business Services

REPORT TO MARR AREA COMMITTEE – 25 MAY 2021

Draft Engagement and Participation Policy

1 Reason for Report

1.1 This report updates committee members on the progress to date with developing an Engagement and Participation Policy (the draft Policy") for Aberdeenshire and asks committee members for comments on the draft Policy.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

2.1 Provide comments in regard to the draft Engagement and Participation Policy; and

2.2 Note the development of guidance to support implementation of the Engagement and Participation Policy.

3 Purpose and Decision Making Route

3.1 The Council's Community Engagement Strategy was adopted in 2009 and is supported by a consultation code of practice and a consultation toolkit. In 2016, a Community Engagement Strategy Review Group was set up to review the Engagement Strategy in a consistent manner involving relevant stakeholders to ensure the direction of community engagement reflected the needs of council services, area teams, the Health and Social Care Partnership, and the Community Planning Partnership. The group has since undertaken a range of activity to consider core content and has recommended to adopt a policy approach.

3.2 The review included gathering information through informal sessions with Elected Members at Area committees (2019, 2020 and 2021), a public survey and engagement with key stakeholders (2016), and questions in the Aberdeenshire Citizens' Panel (2017 & 2021). Other changes that have influenced the development of the Policy and guide include: the introduction of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, the refresh of the National Standards for Community Engagement, recent publication of National Standards for Community Engagement for Recovery and Renewal, the development of the Participatory Budgeting Charter for Scotland, publication of the principles for community empowerment, the Aberdeenshire Council Best Value Assurance Report, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Planning with People.

3.3 Reflecting the Scheme of Governance Part 4B Scrutiny at Aberdeenshire, the Policy is a formal, concise, accessible statement on how the council intends to conduct business. A policy will support the desired outcomes of other strategies and policies by providing a foundation, overarching commitment and statement

of intent for engagement and participation activity in Aberdeenshire. The draft Policy is available at Appendix 1. The principals of the draft Policy are developed on the premise that effective community engagement and participation can lead to the delivery of responsive services and improved outcomes for communities.

3.4 Draft guidance has been developed and an executive summary of this is available at Appendix 2. The guidance will provide advice and direction to colleagues regarding the implementation of the Policy. Although guidance does not require approval by Policy or Area Committee the executive summary is presented alongside the Policy to give reassurance that the Policy is supported adequately.

3.5 The draft Policy is to be considered by Area Committees in May and June. Representations made through consultation will be considered thereafter by the Business Services Committee on 10 June 2021.

4 Discussion

4.1 The Council currently works with communities across Aberdeenshire to ensure that they have influence over local decision-making structures and benefits from the positive relationships that already exist. This Policy, which enshrines the good practice that is carried out by many Services currently, outlines Council's position, role, and commitments to ensure community engagement is integrated into Council activities to support decision-making, build relationships and strengthen communities. This Policy seeks to improve engagement processes and outcomes through encouraging a consistent approach and continual learning through evaluation, and through expanding the range of engagement methods used. Community engagement is the responsibility of all Council service areas, teams and employees and the draft Policy provides Councillors with greater opportunity to challenge Officer proposals where no extensive engagement has informed thinking. To ensure the effective application of engagement principles and processes, a Community Engagement guide will provide guidance for Council employees.

4.2 Community participation has been essential in the collective response to the emergency caused by COVID19 and the ongoing crisis. A key finding in the recent Social Renewal Advisory Board Report "If not now, when?" was that many communities in Scotland recognise that they have the skills and ability to do more for themselves and want to build on the positives of the pandemic response. It is not known if this is reflected in Aberdeenshire, although findings from the Community Impact Assessment (August 2020) suggest that people in Aberdeenshire are active in their local community and are interested to do more. Committee will be aware of the recent publication of The Route Map for Community Participation in the Recovery Phase prepared on behalf of the Aberdeenshire Third Sector Strategy Group. The draft Policy will help support key findings within these reports and provide enabling conditions for individuals and local communities to be involved through meaningful engagement exercises.

4.3 The Policy sets out why engaging with the community is important and the principles that underpin good engagement with individuals, communities and local businesses across Aberdeenshire.

4.4 The Policy is to ensure that key stakeholders across Aberdeenshire have a voice to influence the development of Council services that will affect their lives and inform the way in which services and developments in the Aberdeenshire are planned and implemented.

4.5 The Policy provides the strategic direction to ensure quality and consistent engagement across the work the Council does. The Policy will form part of a proposed Community Engagement Framework and includes guidance, evaluation and monitoring processes, and links to other related strategies. The Policy will be supported and delivered by:

- Developing a consistent approach to monitoring and evaluation
- Utilising expertise and the success of other 'champion roles' to build capacity within the organisation
- Promoting corporate engagement tools including the Engage.Aberdeenshire.gov.uk, the CPP Engagement Guide and ALDO learning
- Facilitating awareness sessions to share learning
- Creating a programme of engagement activity to align corporate resident research tools with priorities

4.6 Work will continue to ensure that performance indicators are used and to assist with monitoring progress. The reputation tracker will provide information to show an overall view on how members of the public feel the council listens to views. The recent Audit Scotland Best Value Assurance Report will provide a baseline of community engagement in Aberdeenshire with further focused self-evaluation to be undertaken during the duration of Policy to evaluate implementation. The Best Value toolkit: Community engagement self-evaluation framework will provide a template to evaluate progress and support the evaluation of the key areas. This process will also be used to refresh guidance with up-to-date case studies and best practice examples. Progress on implementing the Policy will be reported through established reporting arrangements.

4.7 The timetable for approval and implementation is as follows –

Activity	Date
Consultation with Area Committees	May and June 2021
Approval by Business Services Committee	10 June 2021
Presentations to Directorate Management Teams / Service Management Teams	June 2021
Communications – Arcadia, Yammer, social media etc.	June 2021
Training module to be developed for ALDO	June 2021

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

5.1 This report helps deliver the Strategic Priority “Economy and Enterprise” within the Pillar “Our Economy”, having the right people, in the right place, at the right time and the Strategic Priority “Resilient Communities” within the Pillar “Our Environment”.

5.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed.

Subject	**Yes**	**No**	**N/A**
Financial		**x**	
Staffing		**x**	
Equalities	X		
Fairer Scotland Duty	X		
Town Centre First		x	
Sustainability		x	
Children and Young People’s Rights and Wellbeing		x	

5.3 An equality impact assessment has been carried out as part of the development of the proposals set out above. It is included as Appendix 3 and shows positive impact.

5.4 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 as a way of supporting Empowerment.

ACORP006 – Reputation management (including social media): The Engagement & Participation 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 & Participation Policy supports the desired outcomes of other strategies and policies including the Communication Strategy

The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level:

BSSR004 - Community Empowerment: The key purpose of the Policy is to confirm the commitment of the organisation to enable quality, proportionate engagement. 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 governance arrangements.

6 Scheme of Governance

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

6.2 The Committee is able to consider and comment on proposals to develop Council policy in line with the Policy Development and Review Framework and make recommendations to the relevant Policy Committees on this item in terms of Sections B 1.2 andB.11.1 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance.

Ritchie Johnson, Director of Business Services

Report prepared by Daniel Greig (Engagement & Consultation Officer)
Date: 5th May 2021

List of Appendices

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APPENDIX 1

Aberdeenshire COUNCIL

From mountain to sea

Community Engagement and Participation Policy

[Add document date]

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Summary Table	Community Engagement and Participation Policy
Policy Status (circle as appropriate)	**Draft**
Responsible Officer	Engagement and Consultation Officer
Policy Sponsor	**Head of Customer & Digital Services**
Authorised by	*TBC*
Approval Date	*TBC*
Review Date	*TBC*

1 Policy Statement

The Council Plan states that central to achieving the Council Priorities there is a need for continued collaborative working with the combined expertise that our communities, partners and employees bring when delivering improved outcomes in Aberdeenshire.

The aim of this policy is to ensure the Council is accessible and is well informed about the issues that matter to Aberdeenshire's individuals and communities, including those seldom heard.

To help us achieve this outcome we will:

- Build and maintain relationships with communities, ensuring there is a shared understanding of the goal of community engagement exercises
- Empower individuals and communities by giving them a stronger voice and greater influence over council decisions that affect them when it is appropriate to do so
- Continuously learn from those who use our services, share results from community engagement exercises and coordinate community engagement exercises where possible
- Pursue best practice to improve our community engagement.

This policy confirms the commitment of Aberdeenshire Council to focus on: the actual needs of people; energising and empowering communities and Council and partner workers to find innovative solutions; building personal and community capacity, resilience, and autonomy.

By embedding community engagement as what we do, we will create opportunities for residents to actively contribute to matters that are important to them by creating an environment in which community involvement and participation is acknowledged, supported, and encouraged.

Community engagement and participation should aim to bring assets and skills together to transform relationships between services and the public and in doing so embrace the opportunity to develop new ways of working which allow individuals and communities to work as equal partners and in some case, take the lead where this will achieve better outcomes.

2 Principles

Effective community engagement involves an ongoing dialogue with a range of stakeholders within communities to inform the way in which we plan and deliver services. The following principles have been adopted to help shape and drive successful engagement and are reflective of the principles set out in the National Standards for Community Engagement.

To enable the Council to do this it will, as far possible:

- Involve people and organisations that are affected by the focus of the engagement, including seldom heard or easy to ignore groups, for example carers, children and young people, or gypsies and travellers;
- Identify and mitigate any barriers to participation;

- Set out a clear purpose for the engagement, which is based on a shared understanding of communities needs and ambition;
- Work together to effectively achieve the aims of the engagement;
- Use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose;
- Communicate clearly and regularly with the people, organisations and communities involved in the engagement, and provide feedback to participants;
- Assess the impact of the engagement and use what has been learned to improve future processes;
- Plan engagement opportunities across services to coordinate our approach

3 Scope

3.1 Defining Community Engagement and Participation

Community Participation or Engagement is a means of developing better services, better use of resources and encouraging more productive and positive relationships between communities and public bodies.

For the purposes of this policy, community engagement relates to the definition set out in the National Standards for Community Engagement as:

"A purposeful process which develops a working relationship between communities, community organisations and public bodies to help identify and act on community needs and ambitions. It involves a respectful dialogue between everyone involved, aimed at improving understanding and taking joint action to achieve positive change.

3.2 Defining our Communities

Communities are defined as groups of people that may or may not be connected by place, but also who share common interests, concerns, experiences, or identities.

Communities of place share a locality or geographical place, communities of interest share an identity, background or an experience for example unpaid carers or business groups. Given this diversity it is important that our engagement methods are accessible and broad reaching.

We recognise that people are members of several different 'communities', and that some people find it harder to make themselves heard than others. This can be the case where individuals belong to marginalised groups or because they haven't been involved in a way that's properly inclusive. As a Council, we want to make sure that we actively involve all of our communities in a purposeful way

3.3 Defining our methods

The method and level of participation in an engagement processes determines the depth, involvement and extent to which people have control over the process, the agenda, and the decisions.

The definitions given in **Figure 1** are used throughout this policy to encompass the range of activities in the various situations in which we interact with individuals, stakeholders, and communities.

Figure 1: Spectrum of participation

Level of participation	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
We will	Keep communities and the public informed	Listen to and acknowledge concerns and comment	Work to ensure concerns and aspirations are directly related in the decisions made	Look for advice and innovation and incorporate this in decision as much as possible and – seek to work innovatively with communities to allow them to shape policy and decisions as they are developed/evolve.	Implement what communities and the public decide
When we aim to:	Provide balanced and objective information in a timely manner	Obtain feedback on analysis, issues, alternatives and decisions	Work with the public to make sure that concerns and aspirations are considered and understood	Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision making	Place final decision making in the hands of the public

Adhering to the definitions given in **Figure 1** will ensure a consistent terminology and common language is used in community engagement processes and there is clear expectation of what is required when engaging with communities.

Requirements for different “levels” of engagement is outlined in the Engagement and Participation Guide.

Individuals can participate in a variety of ways, and to different levels of influence, in helping to identify community needs, generate solutions, plan new projects and influence how services are developed and delivered. The purpose of an engagement exercise should determine the appropriate level of engagement and identify who needs to be involved.

As a minimum, through open and honest communication the scope and opportunity for involvement should be clearly stated and when residents and citizens are involved in engagement processes, participation must always be acknowledged and participants given detailed feedback about the cumulative outcome of the process and how the exercise has influenced decision making.

3.4 Describing the context of Community Engagement and Participation in Aberdeenshire

Community Engagement in Aberdeenshire should wherever possible aim to enable a process where people work together to make change happen in their communities by people having more power and influence over what matters to them.

Recognising Council services need to be built around people and communities, their needs, aspirations, capacities and skills, community engagement should be a key day to day focus as identified in the Council plan so that communities can have influence over how things are done by being able to; identify new priorities; evaluate performance; and be involved in developing services.

In some instances, the Council is legally required to engage with the community. In these cases, the legally required level of community engagement is the minimum standard and, in all instances, must be fair and lawful and is required to

- be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage
- give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit “intelligent consideration” and response
- provide adequate time for consideration and response; &
- the product of engagement must be conscientiously taken into account

Delivery of community engagement beyond legally required levels will depend on the decision to be made (or project/service to be delivered), the community’s interest to participate, the need to understand the community’s view, and the opportunity for the community to influence the decision.

There is a range of legislation and regulation that demands and promotes engagement with communities of place and of interest, including but not limited to:

- Carers (Scotland) Act 2016
- The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014
- Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Regulations 2014
- Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013
- The Equalities Act 2010
- Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010
- Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006
- Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006
- Environment Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005
- The Local Government in (Scotland) Act 2003
- Education (Scotland) Act 2002

Engagement should recognise that communities have their own autonomy and freedom independent of the council, can face barriers to participation and can find it difficult to be recognised or heard. Where appropriate communities will be supported to initiate a dialogue with the council on their own terms, with scope to raise issues that are important to them, when they wish to:

- Start a dialogue about something that matters to their community;
- Have their voice heard in policy and service development through contributing to decision-making processes;

- Participate in the design, delivery, monitoring or review of service provision, through contributing to service change or improvement;
- Challenge decisions and seek support for alternatives which improve outcomes.

This policy is supported by the Council's revised Engagement and Participation Guidance

4 Monitoring and Evaluation

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

There is no one-size-fits-all approach, and a diverse range of appropriate methods are utilised by Council Services to ensure they meaningfully engage with those who access services and live in our communities. We will assess the impact of the engagement and use what we have learned to improve future community engagement. For example, where appropriate we will assess to what extent:

- The outcomes the engagement process intended to achieve are met.
- Decisions which are taken reflect the views of participants in the community engagement process.
- Local outcomes, or services, are improved as result of the engagement process.
- Participants have improved skills, confidence and ability to take part in community engagement in the future.
- Partners are involved in monitoring and reviewing the quality of the engagement process and what has happened as a result.
- Feedback is provided to the wider community on how the engagement process has influenced decisions and what has changed as a result.

Where appropriate VOiCE software will be used to assist the design and delivery of community engagement. This will enable officers to use a common approach for analysing, planning, monitoring, evaluating, and recording of community engagement. More information on VOiCE is available in the Engagement and Participation Guide.

To help understand the impact of engagement and inform reporting on engagement and participation we will continue to monitor the extent to which residents and communities think the council takes account of views, and work collaboratively across Council Services to ensure we monitor, evaluate and report on the consequential impact of community engagement and the influence on outcomes.

5 Related Links

Aberdeenshire

The Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership Engagement and Participation guide.

Aberdeenshire Children & Young People's Charter

Tenant Participation Strategy 2019-2029

National

National Standards for Community Engagement

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Statutory Guidance on Part 3 (Children's Services Planning) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

6 Index of Documents

a) Policy

Revision Date	Previous Revision Date	Summary of Changes

b) Distribution

Name	Title

Aberdeenshire COUNCIL

From mountain to sea

Executive Summary

Community engagement is the process of building relationships with and involving the people that live and interact in an area, including anyone with an interest or influence in, or who is impacted by, a plan, policy, strategy or action.

This guide is a detailed guide on key things to understand about how to develop inclusive community engagement.

This guide is intended to provide practical support to and can be used by any colleague involved in the process of developing and implementing community engagement exercises. The guide is intended to be used within the context of the Aberdeenshire Council Policy and part of a supporting framework detailed at Figure 1. It can also be used alongside other national, regional, and local guidance and supporting information

Figure 1: Engagement and Participation Framework

The guide explains:

- Why it is important to involve people through engagement
- Key challenges, considerations and core principles.
- The need to see engagement as a process rather than an end point, to be transparent, and to ensure engagement is diverse and inclusive.

- Design and implementing including the techniques that can used to engage, including considerations to effectively engage seldom heard groups.
- Feedback and evaluating information to understanding what has been effective, what hasn't worked well and how it can be improved for the future**.**

Guidance for community approach

This guide highlights community engagement is a purposeful process which develops a working relationship between communities, community organisations and public and private bodies to help them to identify and act on community needs and ambitions. It involves respectful dialogue between everyone involved, aimed at improving understanding and making connections between them and taking joint action to achieve positive change.

This guide explains why principles have been adopted to help shape and drive successful engagement and are consistent to those set out in the National Standards for Community Engagement. Figure 2 below shows what the national standards for Community Engagement means in practice.

Figure 3: National Standards for Community Engagement

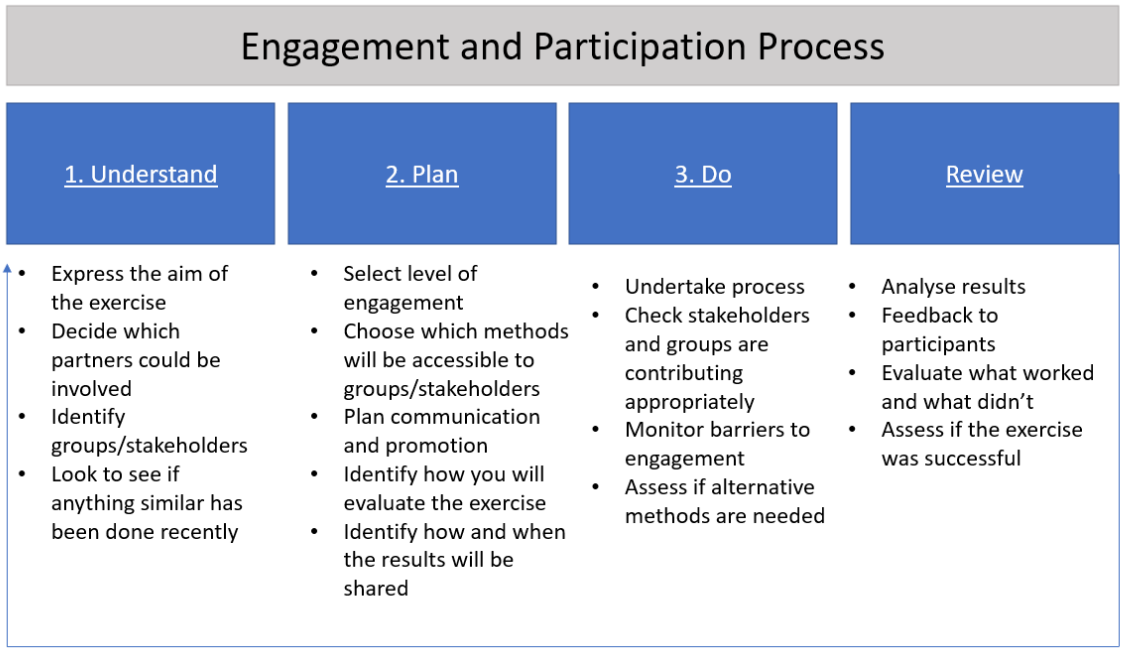
Standard	In practise
Inclusion	We involve and build relationships with people and organisations who are affected by the focus of the engagement, including make connections with seldom heard groups
Support	We identify and mitigate any barriers to participation
Planning	We set out a clear purpose for the engagement, which is based on a shared understanding of communities needs and ambitions
Working together	We work together to effectively achieve the aims of the engagement
Methods	We use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose

Communication	We communicate clearly and regularly with the people, organisations and communicates involved in the engagement, and providing feedback to participants
Impact	We assess the impact of the engagement and use what has been learned to improve future processes

Adopting the National Standards for Community Engagement as guiding principles will help ensure engagement exercises are designed around people and communities, their needs, aspirations, capacity and skills with the aim of building community aspiration, autonomy and resilience.

To explain how to apply principles this guide explains considerations for engagement planning. Figure two highlights four defined stages outlined in the guide to ensure that key questions are considered, and engagement activity is well planned using a commonly used methodology.

Figure 2: Engagement and Participation Process



This guide explains that there are many different methods and techniques that can be used to engage with communities and the method used should be based on the required outcome and the level of engagement required. Information in this guide will help understand an overview of key methods and explains the advantages and disadvantages of the individual approaches. To help understand where different approaches have been used this guide is supported by case studies from different engagement processes.

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EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

EIA Version	Date	Author	Changes
1.0	May 2021	Daniel Greig	Document created

Stage 1: Title and aims of the activity ("activity" is an umbrella term covering policies, procedures, guidance and decisions including those that affect services the council delivers).	
Service	Business Services
Section	Community Engagement & Equalities
Title of the activity etc.	Engagement and Participation policy
Aims and desired outcomes of the activity	The policy is to ensure that key stakeholders across Aberdeenshire have a voice to influence the development of Council services that will affect their lives and inform the way in which services and developments in Aberdeenshire are planned and implemented.
Author(s) & Title(s)	Daniel Greig – Engagement & Consultation Officer

Stage 2: List the evidence that has been used in this assessment and explain what it means in relation to the activity you are assessing.		
Evidence	What does it say?	What does it mean?
Internal data (customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).	Insight from corporate engagement activity would suggest a number of groups are currently underrepresented in our engagement activities.	Certain groups are considered to be "seldom heard" and more needs to be done to ensure community engagement in Aberdeenshire is inclusive, necessary support is in place.

Internal consultation with staff and other services affected.	1. Engagement with services through the policy review group. 2. Informal engagement with area committees 3. Consultation with SLT	Key officers have contributed to the policy to ensure that fairness, equality and inclusion underpin principles identified in the policy.
External consultation (partner organisations, community groups, and councils.	In a recent Citizens' Panel Survey 49% of respondents noted that they did not think there was enough opportunities to influence decision making in their community. The top methods that people wanted to use to participate in decision making were: online surveys, public meetings and small discussion groups. Data from other previous survey work shows issues preventing residents from contributing to the planning and delivery of services include; A lack of time, a lack of interest, concern that residents' views do not affect decisions, and a lack of awareness of opportunities.	A range of methods need to be used to ensure community engagement opportunities are inclusive and suit individual needs. Improvements in practise with a revised policy context can increase community participation. Ensuring methods are suitable and varied, and feedback is provided highlighting the consequential impact of engagement activity will help ensure individuals are motivated to participate.
External data (census, available statistics).		

Other (general information as appropriate).	Research published in the report 'Hard to reach' or 'easy to ignore'? Promoting equality in community engagement identified; 1. Structural inequalities are often replicated, and perhaps reinforced, in community engagement processes. 2. People face a range of barriers in getting involved in community engagement including caring responsibilities; time; confidence in the process. 3. Inequalities in income, wealth and social position can often put people off accessing community projects or participatory processes. 4. Language barriers, lack of confidence and dominant characters can discriminate against some people during community engagement, 5. Long term impacts of community engagement are rarely documented	Implementing the policy will have positive impacts as it provides the strategic direction to ensure quality and consistent engagement across the work the Council does. Work needs to be done to understand the outcomes associated with this policy to understand how it has impacted communities and particular groups.

Stage 3: Evidence Gaps.	
Are there any gaps in the information you currently hold?	Detailed information on the demographic and socio economic profile of participants in engagement and consultation activity. It has been observed that community engagement is generally skewed in favour of people with higher socio-economic status (with evidence that people who are in low income households and/or have lower levels of education are consistently less likely to participate in activities. It is also recognised that those with higher education – university and upwards - are more likely to get involved in a process than those without. More work needs to be done to monitor participation and understand barriers and support required

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:
	Standardised equalities and socio-economic monitoring questions Collect and share case studies demonstrating good practice in engaging including the experiences of people participating in community engagement exercises.	Ongoing 1st July 2021

Stage 5: What steps can be taken to promote good relations between various groups/areas?	
These should be included in the action plan.	1. Implementation of the policy will help to build and sustain relationships and connections between the Council, its partners and, group and areas in Aberdeenshire. Work will be undertaken to capture learning and share case studies to demonstrate good practise and promote the positive contributions made by groups to work collaboratively to achieve positive change. 2. Good relationships and honest communication between the Council and communities underpin effective models of participation. Work will be undertaken to report on progress implementing the policy through established reporting arrangements. 3. Each individual engagement activity has the potential to impact on people with protected characteristics, dependant on the questions being asked or the changes proposed, and therefore specific EIAs should be undertaken for engagement exercises as part of the planning stage.

Stage 6: How does the policy/activity create opportunities for advancing equality of opportunity?

1. The policy will help advance equality of opportunity for all our residents and businesses by co-ordinating the council's approach to engagement and ensuring there are clear and accessible opportunities to have an influence on services.

2. The policy will ensure measures are taken to involve groups with protected characteristics and people who are excluded from participation due to disadvantage or social or economic factors.

3. The policy and guidance will help ensure a wide range of opinions, including minority and opposing views, are valued in engagement processes.

4. Principles in the policy underpin the importance of equality and recognising the diversity of people and community aims to ensure community engagement processes build on the skills and knowledge of all those involved, and Aberdeenshire Council is committed to learning for continuous improvement

Stage 7a:

Are there potential impacts on protected groups?

The protected groups covered by the equality duty are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Who is affected by the activity or who is intended to benefit from the proposed activity and how?

Complete the table below for each protected group by inserting "yes" in the applicable box/boxes below.

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unknown
Age – Younger/Older	Yes			
Age - Older	Yes			
Disability	Yes			
Race – (includes Gypsy Travellers)				Yes
Religion or Belief				Yes
Sex (Gender)				Yes
Pregnancy and maternity	Yes			

Sexual orientation – (includes Lesbian/ Gay/Bisexual)				Yes
Gender reassignment – (includes Transgender)				Yes
Marriage and Civil Partnership				Yes

Stage 7b: Do you have evidence or reason to believe that this policy, activity etc. will or may impact on socio-economic inequalities?

This is about trying to be fair to everyone. Part of that is realising that not everyone may be starting at the same place. Some individuals and families may have low income, may have very little or no savings which means they are living from month to month therefore changes to council policies/services may have a greater adverse impact on them.

On this basis you should consider potential impacts on individuals/families by:

- Place: on specific vulnerable areas or communities (SIMD, regeneration, rural) e.g. housing, transport.
- Pockets: household resources, (Income, benefits, outgoings) ability to access a service
- Prospects: peoples life chances e.g. access to, or ability to access: employment, training, services (such as council or health) or support.

Groups of people who may be impacted include, but not limited to:

• Unemployed • Single parents and vulnerable families • People on benefits • Those involved in the criminal justice system • People in the most deprived communities • People who live in rural areas	• Pensioners • Looked after children • Careers including young carers • Veterans • Students • Single adult households • People who have experienced the asylum system	• Those leaving the care setting including children and young people and those with illness • Homeless people • People with low literacy/numeracy • People with lower educational qualifications • People in low paid work • People with one or more protected characteristic

Please complete by inserting “yes” in the applicable box/boxes below.

Socio-economic disadvantage	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unknown

Pockets: Low income/income poverty – cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing	Yes			
Pockets: Low and/or no wealth – enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future	Yes			
Pockets: Material deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies	Yes			
Place: Area deprivation – where you live, where you work	Yes			
Prospects: Socioeconomic background – social class i.e. parents education, employment and income , educational achievement.	Yes			

Stage 8: 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 you have highlighted above. Detail the impacts and describe those affected.	**Socio-economic** The draft policy promotes a variety of methods and platforms in order to reach out to different groups. This approach ensures an equality of opportunity to partake in engagement processes. The ability to influence through engagement enables communities to influence priorities and allow the Council to act on community needs and ambitions There is evidence that providing compensation and/or incentives for participation can support people on low-incomes to get involved in community engagement activity. Adhering to the principles to the engagement policy will ensure support is put in place to overcome any barriers to participation those who experience socio economic disadvantage or inequality in outcome may experience.	
	Pregnancy and maternity Women who are pregnant may have particular difficulty in attending certain engagement events, as may single parents or parents of young children. The policy commitment to ensuring methods for engagement are fit for purpose. Utilising a blend of engagement methods will have a positive impact by providing more opportunities to gather information for people that are affected by the focus of the engagement	
	Age The policy aims to improve reach and involvement for all age groups and monitor outcomes of engagement	

	Disability Utilising a blend of engagement methods will have a positive impact by providing more opportunities to gather information for people that are affected by the focus of the engagement. The principles of the policy ensure those undertaking engagement exercises understands and mitigates barriers.	

Stage 9: Have any of the affected groups/areas been involved, engaged with or 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?	Ongoing engagement through Citizens' Panel and Reputation Tracker. Feedback from engagement exercises Consultation was undertaken by SCDC when developing the national standards for community engagement.

Stage 10: 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
	No negative impacts identified	NA

Stage 11: What monitoring arrangements will be put in place? How the EIA will be used to monitor the proposal	
These should be included in any action plan (for example customer satisfaction questionnaires).	This is a new policy and as such will need to be monitored going forward. However, we are aware that there is a need to consider diverse communities and their needs in relation to how we engage and consult with them. Going forward we will monitor the impact of this policy on the outcomes from groups and build feedback into the policy review and development cycle.

Stage 12: What is the outcome of the Assessment?		
Please complete	1	No negative impacts have been identified –please explain.

the appropriate box/boxes	No negative impacts have been identified but work will continue to monitor participation and seek to identify the unknown or unintended impacts resulting from this policy.	
	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.

Stage 14: Sign off and authorisation.			
Sign off and authorisation.	1) Service and Team	Community Engagement & Equalities – Business Services	
	2) Title of Policy/Activity	Engagement & Participation Policy	
	3) **Authors:** I/We have completed the equality impact assessment	Name: Daniel Greig Position: Engagement and Consultation Officer Date: 08/05/2021 Signature: D.Greig	Name: Position: Date: Signature:

	for this policy/ activity.	Name: Position: Date: Signature:	Name: Position: Date: Signature:
	4) Consultation with Service Manager	Name: Fiona McCallum Date: 13/05/2021	
	5) Authorisation by Director or Head of Service	Name: Kate Bond Position: Head of Service Date: 14.05.21.	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.		Date:
	7) EIA author sends a copy of the finalised form to: equalities@aberdeenshire.gov.uk		Date: May 2021

Action Plan					
Action	Start	Complete	Lead Officer	Expected Outcome	Resource Implications
Standardised equalities and socio economic monitoring questions	Jan 2021	Ongoing	Daniel Greig	Standardised monitoring questions available for use by officers undertaking engagement activity.	Officer Time
Collect and share case studies demonstrating good practice in engaging at a distance, including the experiences of people participating	March 2021	July 2021	Fiona McCallum	A selection of case studies demonstrating best practise which are available to support officers undertaking engagement activity.	Officer Time
Guidance on the IIA process is reviewed to ensure IIAs are undertaken before engagement and consultation processes	June 2021	July 2022	Daniel Greig	Issues/inequality/impacts of desired outcomes of engagement activity are assessed so that evidence can be gathered through engagement activity to be used as part of solution development/further consultation	Officer time