

REPORT TO BUSINESS SERVICES COMMITTEE – 9 SEPTEMBER 2021

ENGAGEMENT & PARTICIPATION POLICY

1 Reason for Report

- 1.1 This report updates committee on the progress to date with developing the Engagement and Participation Policy (the Policy) and asks committee members to approve the Policy.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Consider, comment on and approve the Policy (attached as Appendix 2 to this Report).

3 Purpose and Decision Making Route

- 3.1 The Council's [Community Engagement Strategy](#) was adopted in 2009 and was 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 include
- the [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)
 - the [National Standards for Community Engagement](#)
 - National Standards for Community Engagement for Recovery and Renewal
 - the [Participatory Budgeting Charter for Scotland](#),
 - 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 The Policy and guidance have been reviewed taking into account the comments from Area Committees and the public consultation. Feedback from Area Committees and consultation is attached as **Appendices 3** and **4** of this Report.

3.4 Guidance has been developed and an executive summary of this is available at **Appendix 1**. Although guidance does not require approval by Policy Committee the executive summary is presented to give reassurance that the Policy is supported adequately.

4 Discussion

- 4.1 The Council currently works with communities across Aberdeenshire to ensure that communities have influence over local decision-making structures and benefit from the positive relationships that already exist. The Policy, which enshrines the good practice that is carried out by many Services, outlines the Council's position, role and commitment to community engagement ensuring it is embedded into Council activities to support decision-making, build relationships and strengthen communities.
- 4.2 The Policy seeks to improve engagement processes and outcomes through encouraging a consistent approach and continual learning through evaluation of processes and impact, 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.
- 4.3 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. Findings from the Aberdeenshire Community Impact Assessment (August 2020) suggest that people in Aberdeenshire are active in their local community and are interested to do more. There is also the recent publication of [The Route Map for Community Participation in the Recovery Phase](#) prepared on behalf of the Aberdeenshire Third Sector Strategy Group and the draft Policy will help support key findings within these reports.
- 4.4 The Policy provides strategic direction to ensure quality and consistent engagement across the work the Council does. The Policy forms part of the Community Engagement suite of documents which is in development and will include the guidance and a self-evaluation framework to empower Officers to undertake engagement activity. The suite of documents will also include monitoring processes and links to related strategies. The Policy will be supported and delivered by
- developing a consistent approach to monitoring and evaluation
 - developing expertise and the success of other 'champion roles' to build capacity within the organisation
 - promoting corporate engagement tools including [Engage.Aberdeenshire.gov.uk](https://engage.aberdeenshire.gov.uk), the [CPP Engagement Guide](#) and ALDO learning

- facilitating knowledge forums to share best practice and champion collaborative working
- creating a programme of engagement activity to align corporate resident research tools with priorities and
- developing resources and how to guide including guidance for equality considerations

4.5 Work will continue to ensure that performance indicators are used and to assist with monitoring progress using a SMART methodology. The Aberdeenshire [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 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.

4.6 The timetable for approval and implementation is as follows –

Activity	Date
Request for approval by Business Services Committee	September 2021
Presentations to Directorate Management Teams / Service Management Teams	September/October 2021
Communications – Arcadia, Yammer, social media etc.	September 2021
Training module to be developed for ALDO	October 2021
Drop-in knowledge forums	Quarterly from January 2022
Annual evaluation/reporting	Annually from June 2022
Policy review	September 2022 & September 2024

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 is agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial		x	
Staffing		x	
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland	IIA attached as Appendix 5		
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing	IIA attached as Appendix 5		
Climate Change and Sustainability		IIA attached as Appendix 5	
Health and Wellbeing		IIA attached as Appendix 5	
Town Centre First		IIA attached as Appendix 5	

5.3 An integrated impact assessment has been carried out as part of the development of the proposals set out above. It is included as **Appendix 5** 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 and 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 report 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 take a decision on this item in line with the Policy Development and Review Framework and in terms of Section C.1.1b of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to approval of a policy which is owned by Customer and Digital Services.

Ritchie Johnson
Director of Business Services

Report prepared by Daniel Greig (Engagement & Consultation Officer)
Date: 23 August 2021

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Participation and Engagement Policy Guide – Executive Summary
Appendix 2 - Participation and Engagement Policy
Appendix 3 - Feedback from Area Committees
Appendix 4 - Feedback from Public Consultation
Appendix 5 - Integrated Impact Assessment



From mountain to sea

Engagement & Participation Policy Guidance

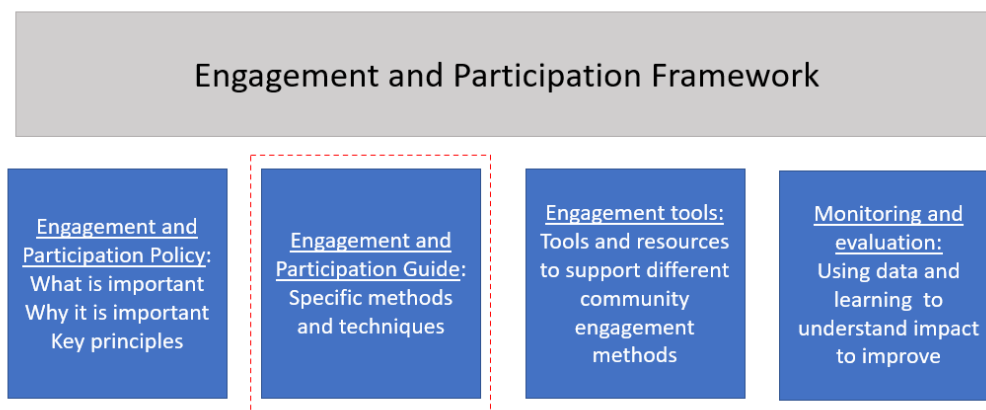
Executive Summary

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 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 be 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.

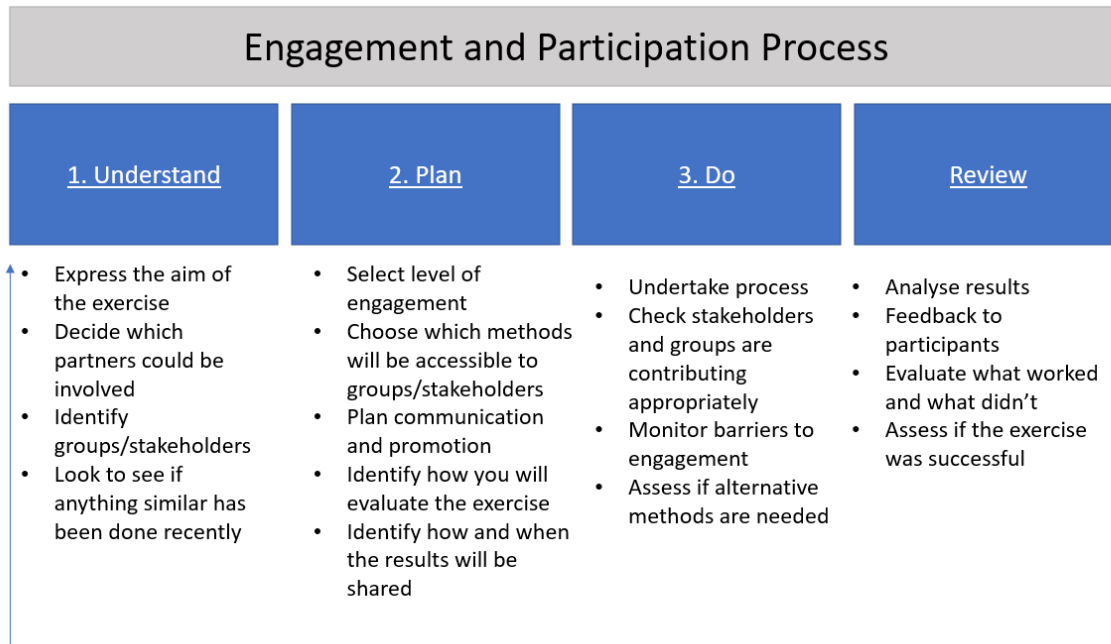
Figure 3: National Standards for Community Engagement

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.



From mountain to sea

Engagement and Participation Policy

September 2021



Contents

1	Forward - Our commitment to communities	4
2	Policy Statement	5
3	Principles	5
4	Scope	6
4.1	Defining Community Engagement and Participation	6
4.2	Defining our Communities	6
4.3	Defining our methods	7
4.4	Describing the context of Community Engagement and Participation in Aberdeenshire	8
4.5	Describing the context of inclusive engagement and participation	9
4.6	Describing the context of Community Empowerment in relation to participation and engagement in Aberdeenshire	10
5	Monitoring and Evaluation	10
6	Related Links	11
7	Index of Documents	11

Summary Table

Engagement and Participation Policy

Policy Status**Draft****Responsible Officer**

Engagement and Consultation Officer

Policy Sponsor**Head of Customer & Digital Services****Authorised by**

Business Services Committee

Approval Date

09/09/2021

Review Date

September 2022

1 Forward - Our commitment to communities

This policy details our commitment to making it easier for everybody in Aberdeenshire to have a voice in community engagement undertaken by the council.

We want to build and maintain relationship with communities, and to make sure that when we carry out engagement that it's clear what we're trying to achieve.

We want to give you – as individuals or as part of groups – a stronger voice and greater influence over council decisions that affect you where we can.

And when we have engaged with communities, that shouldn't be the end. We will work to ensure that the results of our work with you is shared and that we learn from what we find.

The word 'community' means different things to different people, and this is something we recognise.

A community may be based on the place you live, by a common interest shared by a group of people, or by your own personal circumstances.

We know that some people may find it more difficult to be involved in engagement activities, or have found that their needs haven't always been considered.

For example, does disability, ethnicity, or sexuality make it more difficult to be involved? Across our communities, some people may face communication challenges, or mental health problems, and there can be particular challenges for those experiencing homelessness or who feel isolated in their community.

We want to ensure that these 'seldom-heard' groups are given equal opportunity to be involved in engagement activities and that we remove any barriers to participation. We also recognise that people may be members of several different communities and have a number of different perspectives.

Whatever your community, it is important that we engage when proposals are still at an early stage, and that we give plenty of time to allow you to consider the proposals and provide a full response. And when a decision is to be made, the outcomes of the engagement must be taken into account.

And engagement isn't a one-sided thing. Where appropriate, communities will be supported to start discussions with the council on their own terms to raise issues that are important to them.

This could be to discuss something that matter to their community, to have a role in the decision-making process, to help shape service changes or improvements, or to challenge decisions and seek support for alternatives. And in some case you may be better placed to take the lead on projects where it will achieve better outcomes.

We want to make sure we continually improve the way we engage with communities, by learning from the information we gather, by helping participants improve their skills, confidence and ability to participate, to monitor feedback, and to review the quality of engagement and what has happened as a result.

This policy is the starting point, and we look forward to working with you and your communities over the coming months and years.

2 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 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 community engagement.

This policy confirms the commitment of Aberdeenshire Council to focus on: the actual needs of our 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, we will create opportunities for residents to actively contribute to matters that are important to them by cultivating an environment in which community involvement and participation is acknowledged, supported, encouraged, listened to, understood, and actioned.

Community engagement and participation aims to bring assets and skills together to transform relationships between Council services and the public. In doing so, we can embrace the opportunity to develop new ways of working which allow residents and communities to work as equal partners, and in some cases, to take the lead where this will achieve better outcomes.

3 Principles

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

To enable the Council carry out effective community engagement, we will, as far possible:

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

- Identify and mitigate any barriers to ensure inclusive participation;
- Set out a clear purpose for the engagement, which is based on a shared understanding of communities needs and ambitions;
- Work together to effectively achieve the aims of the engagement;
- Where possible work with residents and groups to find and use methods that are fit for purpose;
- Communicate clearly and regularly with the people, organisations and communities involved in the engagement, and provide feedback to participants in a timely manner;
- Assess the impact of the engagement and use what has been learned to improve future processes;
- Be accountable to all members of our communities;
- Take a place-based approach where possible to target the specific circumstances of a place and engage the community and a broad range of local organisations to focus on shared outcomes
- Plan engagement opportunities across services and partners to coordinate our approach

4 Scope

4.1 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 we use the definition set out in the [National Standards for Community Engagement](#) as:

“A purposeful experience 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 two way dialogue between everyone involved, aimed at improving understanding and taking appropriate action that is supported by the community and community organisations to achieve positive change.”

4.2 Defining our Communities

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

‘Communities of place’ share a locality or geographical place, while ‘communities of interest’ share an identity, background or an experience e.g., 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.

4.3 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

		Increasing impact on the decision 				
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Participation Goal		Keep communities and the public informed	Listen to and acknowledge concerns and comments, and take account of views in decision making	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 without question
	Promise to the public	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 understood and considered appropriately	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 that 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.

Working on behalf of their community, 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 could be invited to be involved.

As a minimum, through open and honest communication the scope and opportunity for involvement should be clearly stated and when residents 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.

4.4 Describing the context of Community Engagement and Participation in Aberdeenshire

Community Engagement in Aberdeenshire should aim to enable a process where people work together to identify what change is required, make change happen in their communities and, have more power and influence over what matters to them.

Council Services need to be built around people and communities, their needs, aspirations, capacities and skills. Recognising this, community engagement should be a key day to day focus, as identified in the Council Plan, to give communities influence over how things are done through identifying new priorities; evaluating performance; and being 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, must be fair and lawful. It must:

- 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; and
- the product of engagement must be conscientiously taken into account

Decisions on the level of community engagement beyond that legally required 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 \(Scotland\) Act 1997 as amended](#)
- [Environment Assessment \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#)
- [The Local Government in \(Scotland\) Act 2003](#)
- [Education \(Scotland\) Act 2002](#)

4.5 Describing the context of inclusive engagement and participation

The term 'seldom heard' refers to under-represented people who use or might potentially use services and who are less likely to be involved in engagement and participation processes.

People in 'seldom heard groups' face multiple barriers affecting access to and use of services. A positive staff attitude can help facilitate better participation of people from these groups. Good relationships and honest communication between staff and seldom-heard people who use services underpin effective models of participation. An everyday approach to participation, where there is no distinction between participation and service delivery, is most effective in supporting seldom-heard groups

Many factors can contribute to people being seldom heard, including

- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Sexuality
- Communication impairments
- Mental health problems
- Homelessness
- Geographical isolation
- Those who experience inequality in outcome or opportunity

It is recognised that there are several key barriers and circumstances affecting these groups. Many people in the various groups have limited time, limiting the extent to which they can fully consider wider issues.

This policy recognises key ways to address these barriers, including:

- Treating people with respect and valuing individual contributions
 - Describing clearly what someone can expect from getting involved and what they are expected to contribute
 - Making sure people know they can say no to getting involved
 - Offering a variety of activities and ways to get involved, such as helping others, learning, and socialising
 - Allocating sufficient resources for communication, transport, meetings, support and payment
-

4.6 Describing the context of Community Empowerment in relation to participation and engagement in Aberdeenshire

When people feel they can influence what happens in their community and can contribute to delivering change, there can be many benefits. Communities can often achieve significant improvements by doing things for themselves, because they know what will work for them. They become more confident and resilient; there are often opportunities for people to gain new skills and for increased employment as well as improved access to services and support. Aberdeenshire Council has a responsibility to create the conditions that encourage and support strong, independent and resilient communities. Communities are often best placed to determine outcomes for local services, and Aberdeenshire Council should facilitate processes which fully engage communities in the decisions that are taken about the design and delivery of services to achieve those outcomes. It is important that community voices are heard, but that this engagement differs from community empowerment, where communities lead change for themselves.

Aberdeenshire Council recognises 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.

5 Monitoring and Evaluation

To inform our approach 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 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 include and act on the views of all participant individuals and groups obtained during the 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.
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- 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 its influence on outcomes.

6 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](#)

7 Index of Documents

a) Policy

Revision Date	Previous Revision Date	Summary of Changes
09/09/2021	NA	Document Created

b) Distribution

Name	Title
	Directors and Chief Officers

Area	Ref No.	Comment	Comment/ Summary of proposed change
Formartine	F1	Needs a fundamental and radical approach to this	Covered in Policy statement
Formartine	F2	Title needs to be reversed – Participation necessary before engagement;	Title amended
Formartine	F3	Assurances depend on information on Guidance – e.g., how to work with children and young people/ the elderly/ other hard to reach groups	Section 3.4 added
Formartine	F4	Guidance should use examples of poor practice as well as good	Noted
Formartine	F5	Concern about the suggested length of the guidance: principles should be embedded in service approaches;	Work scheduled to raise awareness within Services.
Formartine	F6	Consider assessment of policy by external expert/ benchmark with other authorities;	The review of the policy included a review of work in other areas.
Formartine	F7	Emphasise need to feedback on acceptance of / reason not able to pursue community will as expressed	Communication principle – ensures feedback is given
Formartine	F8	Be aware consultation can become devalued if nothing done with output or to show it has been considered	Impact principle – ensures respondents are aware of the consequential impact of participation
Formartine	F9	Use established processes and structures in Area Manager/ Area Office as foundation/ conduit: already have local area plans, local Community Impact Assessment, local Community Planning; Place Standard information;	Methodology in guide outlines this approach
Formartine	F10	Involve communities on proposals at the earliest opportunity, shaped in cognizance with area views as expressed already in the above, not just driven by officer scenarios	Early and ongoing engagement is encouraged through guidance

Area	Ref No.	Comment	Comment/ Summary of proposed change
Formartine	F11	Coordinate engagement with partners to maximise opportunities and avoid participation fatigue	Planning principle amended to include partners
Formartine	F12	Speed up processes to ensure consultation outputs are still relevant by the time of action;	Communication principle updated
Formartine	F13	Maximise co-decision making;	Section 3.3. updated
Formartine	F14	Counting numbers participating is no guarantee of proper engagement or that policy is working;	SMART methodology to be used for evaluation/reporting
Formartine	F15	Need to establish how to monitor effective and proper use of policy	Monitoring/evaluation to be embedded into supporting framework
Formartine	F16	Be cautious that some engagement benefits those who speak loudest and most;	Involve principle – covers the need for those to be included that are affected by the focus of the engagement
Formartine	F17	Focus should be on actions which the Council takes – engagement needs to have results;	Impact principle – ensures consequential impact of participation
Formartine	F18	Needs planning consultation process to be referenced in the document	Section three of the policy covers scope
Formartine	F19	Reconsideration required of language used in the policy;	Noted
Formartine	F20	How can the Council ensure more people can influence decisions	Monitoring/evaluation ensure impact is understood.
Formartine	F21	Are the engagement methods accessible and broad-ranging?;	Methods principle ensures the methods are fit for purpose

Area	Ref No.	Comment	Comment/ Summary of proposed change
Formartine	F22	Engagement can be more inclusive and fun in the digital age;	Noted
Formartine	F23	Cover image– confused relationship snowy hillside and community	Picture amended
Formartine	F24	Page 54- sect 3.2- wordy paragraph – intention unclear;	Section reviewed – definition of community covers communities of place and interest/shared experience
Formartine	F25	Page 55 – remove “we will implement”... hostage to fortune (Balmedie Planning for Real, zoo and theme park were identified as community needs);	Diagram amended to describe empowerment exercises
Formartine	F26	Page 56 – community engagement at all levels- no reference to planning – this needs to be included;	Policy covers all community engagement activity
Formartine	F27	Page 63- range of methods needed to ensure community engagement- absolutely – not just write in and say your piece – utilise all mediums; and	Methods principle states methods must be appropriate
Formartine	F28	Page 64– higher socio-economic status response only- needs to be rectified – needs to be addressed whenever possible	Principle to ensure inclusive engagement and barriers identified amended.
Garioch	G1	Welcome policy and procedure which is set out clearly and it is good to have a consistent approach throughout the Council.	Noted
Garioch	G2	Consideration should be given to the potential for consultation fatigue experienced by communities	Work will be undertaken in line with implementation to understand future service requirements
Garioch	G3	It is important to record the difference that consultations are making and link this to the ongoing corporate improvement work	Changes to evaluation and monitoring proposed in supporting framework

Area	Ref No.	Comment	Comment/ Summary of proposed change
Garioch	G4	Consideration should be given as to whether there should be more visibility in the policy and procedure in relation to the democratic process.	Research shows adopting principles within the Policy will support the democratic process
Garioch	G5	Consideration should be given as to whether the planning application process should be reflected in the policy and procedure as this is a significant area of community engagement.	Policy covers all community engagement activities
Garioch	G6	As the setting of the revenue budget is such an important decision, consideration should be given as to whether this needs to be reflected in the policy and procedure	Policy covers all community engagement activities
K&M	KM1	The Committee welcomed the report and the opportunity to provide comments to be considered by the BSC,	Noted
K&M	KM1	The Committee suggested that working with the community must be key,	Language in principles revised
K&M	KM1	The Committee suggested that the policy should acknowledge and reflect the pre-stage of engagement,	Policy covers all community engagement activities and encourages pre-stage engagement
K&M	KM1	The Committee suggested that post Covid we have an opportunity to be part of a different way of working and this should be reflected in the policy rather than focusing on how we have done something.	Monitoring/evaluation will encourage new ways of working
K&M	KM1	The Committee suggested the inclusion of Locality Planning within the policy	New principle added

Area	Ref No.	Comment	Comment/ Summary of proposed change
K&M	KM1	The Committee suggested amendments to the language used within the policy to help build confidence and trust within in the community, for example rather than where appropriate, always appropriate	language reviewed
K&M	KM1	The Committee commented on the EIA that people get involved if there will be a benefit or a change,	Noted
K&M	KM1	The Committee commented on the need for a change in the culture of the organisation, to help build trust and confidence we should look at response times to correspondence and how we feedback to communities.	Additional information added to policy implementation
Marr	M1	Would welcome some further consideration of the extent to which the public wish to be engaged in participatory budgeting and other engagement exercises, and the degree to which they wish to be engaged, and methods of reaching more difficult to reach groups for their input and feedback.	Interim information added to cover report
B & B	BB1	Ensure that a further opportunity is given to the public to provide input/ comments before the policy is approved	Further public consultation in June 2021
B & B	BB2	Ensure that full explanation is given in circumstances where decisions seem to go against what the community wants or do not meet their aspirations	Communication principle ensures feedback is given
B & B	BB3	Consider how participation rates can be improved,	Evaluation of exercises will identify areas for improvement
B & B	BB4	Continue to consider how to better involve “seldom heard” or “easy to ignore” groups and give examples of lived experiences in the policy,	Guidance to be updated and section 3.4 added

Area	Ref No.	Comment	Comment/ Summary of proposed change
B & B	BB5	Ensure that language used in the policy is set at a level that everyone can understand,	Work to be progressed on communicating policy to services/members of the public
B & B	BB6	Demonstrate how the Council's monitoring and evaluation processes might have been impacted by the communities' involvement	Evaluation/Monitoring/Reporting will demonstrate consequential impact
Buchan	B1	To welcome development of draft Policy and note development of guidance to support implementation of the Policy,	Noted
Buchan	B2	To highlight importance of engagement and participation, particularly with those most disadvantaged and minority groups, ie those on lower incomes, under 25s, UK Nationals, males (mis-represented)	Inclusion principle and section 3.4 added
	B3	To highlight need for CPD for Officers in relation to this new Policy,	Work planned to share learning as part of implementation



From mountain to sea

Feedback from Public Consultation – Engagement and Participation Policy July 2021

Introduction

Following this initial engagement, a formal consultation was undertaken on the proposed Council Engagement and Participation Policy.

The consultation was translated into seven alternative languages (including British Sign Language) and available online and by request at service points and libraires.

One hundred and three responses were received.

From respondents who provided demographic and equality information; 60.7% of all participants were female, while 36.9% were male. 23.8% of participants described themselves as having a long-term illness or disability. 6.3% of all respondents were over 65, 16.3% were between 55 and 64, 31.3% were aged between 45 and 54, 31.3% were aged 35-44, 15% were under 34.

What we found

Scope and definition

Participants were asked to what extent they agreed with the proposed definition within the Policy. 79.8% of respondents agreed with the proposed definition, 14.4% agreed with the proposed definition with minor changes and 5.8% disagreed.

Where participants disagreed, the main themes identified included; not agreeing the Council would adhere to the definition, challenges with implementing the policy and other general dissatisfaction with previous engagement exercises.

Table 1 below highlights key amendments to the policy following specific improvements.

Table 1: Suggested amendments to scope/definition received through public consultation

Ref	Public comment	Change
PC1	joint action that is supported by the community and community organisations to achieve positive change for members of those communities	Amended
PC2	References to empowerment and being genuinely part of the decision-making process in terms of the delivery of public services.	Addressed in policy statement
PC4	A purposeful process which develops a working relationship between individuals, communities, community organisations.	Amended
PC5	Take the word "process" out! The word process sounds like it's a chore for the council. Replace the word process with experience!	Amended
PC6	Replace "joint action" with "appropriate action" - who needs to take action will vary depending on the issue and circumstances. The appropriate action will not always be joint action.	Amended
PC7	Something along the lines of... Involving communities and services in respectful conversation to achieve positive outcomes for community members	Amended
PC8	Refer to the national standards for community engagement. Be clear with communities what they can influence and change and what is for info only.	Addressed in policy scope
PC9	Go to all community groups not just those that shout loudest on social media. Many have supported this community for many years with no social media presence. Fancy web and social media posts doesn't necessarily mean they can be trusted.	Addressed in guidance

PC10	Communities and community organisations need to feel as if they have been heard, and not just listened to as a tick box exercise. If engagement is going to happen then there need to be fast and related actions, not multiple hoops to be gone through in the council before anything can happen.	Addressed in principles
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Policy Principles

Participants were asked to what extent they agreed with the proposed principles within the Policy. 83.8% of respondents agreed with the proposed definition, 10.5% agreed with the proposed definition with minor changes and 5.7% disagreed.

Where participants disagreed, the main themes identified included; using common simpler language, not agreeing the Council would adhere to the principles, challenges with implementing the policy with how the Council operates and other general dissatisfaction with previous engagement exercises.

Table 2 below highlights key amendments to the policy following specific improvements.

Table 2: Suggested amendments to proposed principles received through public consultation

Ref	Public comment	Change
PC21	"inclusive participation" not just "participation"	Principle amended
PC22	Aberdeenshire Council need an open mind and have accountable individuals at all levels	Added principle "accountability"
PC23	By identifying 'easy to ignore' groups for special treatment, you simply acknowledge the council's failings rather than promote inclusion.	Easy to ignore puts emphasise on council services to engage with these groups
PC24	Work with other public sector partners with communities to achieve improvements in multiple services at the same time, in order to avoid volunteer	Addressed in principles

	fatigue if same groups of people keep getting asked similar questions by different organisations	
PC25	Adherence to community engagement standards and voice as a tool	Covered in statement and monitoring/evaluation
PC26	A checking loop or triangulation of answers is needed to ensure that the council officer is recording community views accurately and not putting their own spin on things. True engagement happens when there is no pre-conceived expected course of action because there is no engagement bias. A perception that the council is coming to check it's views is a fast way to switch communities off.	Cover in guide
PC27	I would note that in this electronic world those who do not have access to the internet or have the means to have computers and smart phones are actively engaged in any process as this is a barrier for many people.	Covered in policy
PC28	work with participant individuals/groups to ascertain and utilise methods of engagement that are fit for purpose and acceptable to all participants' would give a greater ownership to all and indicate a willingness of the Authority to actively listen to the groups, and include all their views when participating.	Amended
PC29	The inclusion of the aforementioned "seldom heard or easy to ignore groups" needs to be active not passive i.e. positive active measures need to be made to include them.	Easy to ignore puts emphasise on council services to engage with these groups

Monitoring and evaluation

Participants were asked to what extent they agreed with the proposed monitoring and evaluation framework within the Policy. 79.8% of respondents agreed with the proposed definition, 14.4% agreed with the proposed definition with minor changes and 5.8% disagreed.

Where participants disagreed, the main themes identified included; needing to include members of the public in evaluation, being clear about the goal from individual engagement exercises, and being open and transparent about intentions.

Table 3 below highlights key amendments to the policy following specific improvements.

Table 3: Suggested amendments to monitoring and evaluation received through public consultation

Ref	Public comment	Change
PC30	need to build in proportionality to avoid over representation of tiny minorities that may disadvantage the majority	To be reviewed when evaluation/reporting
PC31	Make feedback methods and timelines very clear at the outset of the engagement so that communities and groups can anticipate when they will receive feedback, otherwise it often feels like information goes into a black hole.	Covered in policy
PC32	Don't automatically use community engagement methods for every instance - sometimes community partnership or empowerment approaches will be more effective	Covered in guide
PC33	A database where partners can access the results of evaluations	Covered in supporting framework
PC34	Turn this on its head and the Council reacts and delivers community priorities not sets the priorities based on officer/councillor priorities and cloak them in community views	Covered in policy through PR

PC34	<p>Bullet point 2 "Decisions....reflect the views of participants" is again an overused and bland meaningless expression, this is potentially exclusive not inclusive. A better wording of " Decisions which are taken include and act on the views of all participant individuals and groups obtained during the engagement process", (or something similar) would be warmer and more inclusive, again indicating more that participants will be listened to and their views will have meaning to the process - the word 'reflect' in the eyes of those who have dealt with 'council bureaucracy before and are disinclined to participate (e.g. minority groups mentioned previously) means they will be shallowly listened to and largely ignored, with a council doing what it sees fit...regardless of what they say - which is not the intention in this bullet point.</p>	Amended
PC35	<p>It is essential that the assessment of whether the appropriate engagement and outcomes have been achieved comes from the communities themselves (and, if relevant, the appropriate sections of those communities).</p>	Covered in guidance
PC36	<p>Protect the vulnerable and focus on improving Aberdeenshire's economic outlook, to make it more prosperous for all.</p>	Noted

Aberdeenshire Council

Integrated Impact Assessment

Engagement and Participation Policy

Assessment ID	IIA-000042
Lead Author	Daniel Greig
Additional Authors	Lynne Gravener
Service Reviewers	Lynne Gravener, Fiona McCallum
Subject Matter Experts	Lynne Gravener, Christine McLennan
Approved By	Fiona McCallum
Approved On	Wednesday August 18, 2021
Publication Date	Wednesday August 18, 2021

1. Overview

This document has been generated from information entered into the Integrated Impact Assessment system.

This Engagement & Participation Policy details our commitment to making it easier for everybody in Aberdeenshire to have a voice in community engagement undertaken by the council.

During screening 3 of 10 questions indicated that detailed assessments were required, the screening questions and their answers are listed in the next section. This led to 2 out of 5 detailed impact assessments being completed. The assessments required are:

- Children's Rights and Wellbeing
- Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty

In total there are 6 positive impacts as part of this activity. There are 0 negative impacts, all impacts have been mitigated. The impact on 10 groups is not known, information is provided in the detailed sections of this document.

A detailed action plan with 2 points has been provided.

This assessment has been approved by fiona.mccallum@aberdeenshire.gov.uk.

The remainder of this document sets out the details of all completed impact assessments.

2. Screening

Could your activity / proposal / policy cause an impact in one (or more) of the identified town centres?	No
Would this activity / proposal / policy have consequences for the health and wellbeing of the population in the affected communities?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect greenhouse gas emissions (CO2e) in the Council or community and / or the procurement, use or disposal of physical resources?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect the resilience to extreme weather events and/or a changing climate of Aberdeenshire Council or community?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife or biodiversity?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy have an impact on people and / or groups with protected characteristics?	Yes
Is this activity / proposal / policy of strategic importance for the council?	No
Does this activity / proposal / policy reduce inequality of outcome?	Yes
Does this activity / proposal / policy have an impact on children / young people's rights?	Yes
Does this activity / proposal / policy have an impact on children / young people's wellbeing?	No

3. Impact Assessments

Children's Rights and Wellbeing	No Negative Impacts Identified
Climate Change and Sustainability	Not Required
Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty	No Negative Impacts Identified
Health Inequalities	Not Required
Town Centre's First	Not Required

4. Childrens' Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment

4.1. Wellbeing Indicators

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Safe		Yes		
Healthy		Yes		
Achieving		Yes		
Nurtured		Yes		
Active		Yes		
Respected		Yes		
Responsible		Yes		
Included	Yes			

4.2. Rights Indicators

UNCRC Indicators upheld by this activity / proposal / policy	Article 2 - Non-discrimination Article 3 - Best interests of the child Article 4 - Protection of rights Article 6 - Life, survival and development Article 12 - Respect for the views of the child Article 13 - Freedom of expression Article 15 - Freedom of association Article 16 - Right to privacy Article 17 - Access to information; mass media Article 23 - Children with disabilities
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4.3. Positive Impacts

Impact Area	Impact
Included	The policy aims to improve reach and involvement for all age groups and monitor outcomes of engagement

4.4. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Data	UNCRC and its impact for children and young people in Scotland.	Detailed rights of young people in Scotland.	Highlights the need for opportunities to learn about topics that are important to them – through to taking part in volunteering opportunities and sharing power with decision-makers.

4.5. Accounting for the Views of Children and Young People

Consultation was undertaken by SCDC when developing the national standards for community engagement.

4.6. Promoting the Wellbeing of Children and Young People

Ensures inclusive and active participation of Council Services.

4.7. Upholding Children and Young People's Rights

Direct correlation of rights within principles of policy

4.8. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Identified.

No negative impact have been identified but will be monitored through action plan

5. Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty Impact Assessment

5.1. Protected Groups

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Age (Younger)	Yes			
Age (Older)	Yes			
Disability	Yes			
Race				Yes
	Will find out by: 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.			
Religion or Belief				Yes
	Will find out by: 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.			
Sex				Yes
	Will find out by: 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.			
Pregnancy and Maternity	Yes			
Sexual Orientation				Yes
	Will find out by: 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.			
Gender Reassignment				Yes
	Will find out by: 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.			
Marriage or Civil Partnership				Yes

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
	Will find out by: 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.			

5.2. Socio-economic Groups

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Low income				Yes
	Will find out by: 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.			
Low wealth				Yes
	Will find out by: 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.			
Material deprivation				Yes
	Will find out by: 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.			
Area deprivation				Yes
	Will find out by: 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.			
Socioeconomic background	Yes			

5.3. Positive Impacts

Impact Area	Impact
Age (Older)	The policy aims to improve reach and involvement for all age groups and monitor outcomes of engagement
Age (Younger)	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.

Impact Area	Impact
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
Socioeconomic background	<p>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</p> <p>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.</p>

5.4. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
Internal Data	corporate engagement activity	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 Data	Internal sources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
Other Evidence	Aberdeenshire Citizens' Panel	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>A range of methods need to be used to ensure community engagement opportunities are inclusive and suit individual needs.</p> <p>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.</p>

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Data	External studies	<p>Research published in the report 'Hard to reach' or 'easy to Promoting equality in community ignore'?</p> <p>engagement identified;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<p>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.</p> <p>Work needs to be done to understand the outcomes associated with this policy to understand how it has impacted communities and particular groups.</p>

5.5. Information Gaps

socio economic profile

5.6. Measures to fill Information Gaps

Measure	Timescale
<p>Detailed information on the demographic and socio economic profile of participants in engagement and consultation activity.</p> <p>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</p>	Ongoing

Measure	Timescale
Standardised equalities and socio-economic monitoring questions	Ongoing
Collect and share case studies demonstrating good practice in engaging including the experiences of people participating in community engagement exercises.	1st July 2022

5.7. Engagement with affected groups

- - CIA
- Citizens' Panel surveys
- Reputation Tracker
- Formal consultation
- Monitoring of corporate engagement

5.8. Ensuring engagement with protected groups

- Distributed through existing networks
- Translation of consultation into alternate languages
- Ongoing information gathering

5.9. Evidence of engagement

Feedback from formal consultation reviewed and changes to policy have been made

5.10. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Identified.

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.

5.11. Improving Relations

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.

5.12. Opportunities of Equality

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

6. Action Plan

Planned Action	Details
Standardised equalities and socio economic monitoring questions	<p>Lead Officer Daniel Greig</p> <p>Repeating Activity No</p> <p>Planned Start Friday September 10, 2021</p> <p>Planned Finish Thursday June 30, 2022</p> <p>Expected Outcome Standardised monitoring questions available for use by officers undertaking engagement activity.</p> <p>Resource Implications Officer Time</p>
Collect and share case studies demonstrating good practice in engaging at a distance, including the experiences of people participating	<p>Lead Officer Daniel Greig</p> <p>Repeating Activity No</p> <p>Planned Start Thursday September 09, 2021</p> <p>Planned Finish Friday September 30, 2022</p> <p>Expected Outcome A selection of case studies demonstrating best practise which are available to support officers undertaking engagement activity.</p> <p>Resource Implications Officer Time</p>