

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Pre-scrutiny of the Draft Community Engagement Strategy

Customer Focus is one of the Council's six priorities in the Corporate Plan.

Within Customer Focus, it states the following:

We want our customers to be at the heart of everything we do and will strive to improve access to our services further through stronger community engagement, developing more formal mechanisms of inviting customer feedback and comment and, where possible and practical, seek to deliver our services at a more local level through strengthening partnerships with local Town and Parish Councils. The Council will seek further to improve democratic engagement and participation by people of all ages, but particularly through working with schools and colleges to ensure that the voice of young people is heard and informs council decision-making.

The Community Engagement Strategy sets out a high level approach to meeting the statement above. It has been developed from what was considered best practice across a range of Community Engagement Strategies.

It should be noted that the Council already undertakes a significant amount of engagement activity in the work it does, however, the approach taken and how that engagement is used often lacks consistency of approach. The intent of the Strategy is to provide an understanding of what we mean by engagement and a consistent, corporate and agreed approach to how we engage and use the outcomes to inform our policies, strategies, procedures, service delivery and work with partner organisations.

Services will be expected to consider and apply the Strategy when undertaking service-specific consultation and engagement exercises and apply the principles when they work with residents, communities and customers.

As this document is externally facing as much as it is internal, the document includes a number of examples, within blue boxes, to aid the readers understanding.

The document has been developed to maintain the consistent look and feel of recent strategy documents such as the Quality of Life and Housing Strategies so far as is possible.

It should be noted that the document is not yet complete. In particular:

- In the Consultation with Stakeholders, on page 5, the list of consultation activities will be expanded to reflect the consultation activities undertaken.
- A number of the blue boxes are incomplete, as Management Team will be tasked with developing a number of examples to ensure that these are drawn from a range of areas of the Council's work. Wording within the blue boxes that do contain examples are subject to change and revision.
- The Action Plan is incomplete; this is deliberate as we are seeking input from Stakeholders on what should be included within the action plan.

Prior to wider consultation with stakeholders, we wanted to provide an opportunity for members of Overview and Scrutiny to provide views and comments to improve the document. This will allow us to refine our consultation with other stakeholders further.

Members of Overview and Scrutiny are asked to comment on any aspect of the Strategy document but with particular reference to the following:

- What we define as Community? Are the definitions used in the Strategy appropriate?
- The five-element model that we have chosen?
- The approach to each of those five elements around Goal, Approach taken and then further statements/pledges.
- How we will ensure transparency on our engagement activities; is this adequate and appropriate?
- Members views on the use of the blue boxes to provide examples relevant to the section they appear in and any examples that could be considered for inclusion.
- Any items for consideration of inclusion in the Action Plan section?