

A meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS)** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **THURSDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2023** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

## **AGENDA**

### **APOLOGIES**

#### **1. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 18)**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) meeting held on 6th July 2023, and the Minutes of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 6th July 2023 and 10th August 2023.

**Contact Officer: B Buddle**  
**01480 388008**

#### **2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary and other interests in relation to any Agenda item.

**Contact Officer: B Buddle**  
**01480 388008**

#### **3. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS (Pages 19 - 26)**

A copy of the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions is attached. Members are invited to note the Plan and to comment as appropriate on any items contained therein.

**Contact Officer: R Leighton**  
**01480 388169**

#### 4. **ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES** (Pages 27 - 56)

The Panel is to receive and comment on the Engagement Principles Report.

*Executive Councillor: S Ferguson*

**Contact Officer: M Hann**  
**01480 388463**

#### 5. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME** (Pages 57 - 60)

- a) The Panel are to receive the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme
- b) Members to discuss future planning of items for the Work Programme

**Contact Officer: B Buddle**  
**01480 388008**

30 day of August 2023

***Oliver Morley***

Head of Paid Service

**Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests.**

Further information on [Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests is available in the Council's Constitution](#)

**Filming, Photography and Recording (including Live Streaming) at Council Meetings**

This meeting will be filmed for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's YouTube site. The whole of the meeting will be filmed, except where there are confidential or exempt items. If you make a representation to the meeting you will be deemed to have consented to being filmed. By entering the meeting you are also consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If you have any queries regarding the streaming of Council meetings, please contact Democratic Services on 01480 388169.

The District Council also permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with [guidelines](#) agreed by the Council.

**Please contact Mrs Beccy Buddle, Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny), Tel No: 01480 388008/e-mail [Beccy.Buddle@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Beccy.Buddle@huntingdonshire.gov.uk) if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Committee/Panel.**

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the [District Council's website](#).

### **Emergency Procedure**

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

This page is intentionally left blank

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS) held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 6 July 2023.

PRESENT: Councillor J E Kerr – Chair.

Councillors T Alban, M J Burke, S Bywater, S Cawley, S J Criswell, J E Harvey, N J Hunt, M Kadewere, C Lowe, S R McAdam and D J Shaw.

### **12. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8th June 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **13. RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The Panel noted the responses to questions arising from previous meetings.

### **14. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No declarations were received.

### **15. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book) which has been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st July 2023 to 31st October 2023.

### **16. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was presented to the Panel.

Chair

This page is intentionally left blank

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY JOINT PANEL held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 6 July 2023.

PRESENT: Councillor J E Kerr – Chair.

Councillors T Alban, A M Blackwell, M J Burke, S Bywater, S Cawley, S J Corney, S J Criswell, I D Gardener, C M Gleadow, J E Harvey, S A Howell, N J Hunt, A R Jennings, M Kadewere, C Lowe, R Martin, S R McAdam, Dr M Pickering, D J Shaw, R A Slade and G J Welton.

APOLOGIES: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor N Wells.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors M A Hassall and B A Mickelburgh.

### 1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED

that Councillor J E Kerr be elected Chair of the Panel for the ensuing meeting.

**Councillor J E Kerr in the Chair.**

### 2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED

that Councillor C M Gleadow be elected Vice-Chair of the Panel for the ensuing meeting.

### 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MEETING

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting will be discussed at the September meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) Panel.

### 4. MEMBERS INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

### 5. HOUSEHOLD GARDEN WASTE SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE

By means of a report by the General Manager for Operations (a copy

of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Panel discussed the Household Garden Waste Subscription Service.

Councillor Criswell expressed his anger over the report and proposed subscription, giving his reasons as due to;

- the way that the proposal had been received by members of the public;
- failure to use Overview and Scrutiny to help develop the proposal;
- introduction of a charge on an existing service;
- charging residents who are trying to do the right thing by recycling green waste;
- disproportionately affecting elderly residents who enjoy gardening but may be on a low income;
- no consultation with residents on the proposed subscription charge;
- concern that the make up of the joint administration politically is not one that residents had voted for; and
- that Executive Councillors are not owning the proposed subscription introduction and suggesting that the decision to introduce had been made by Officers.

The Panel were assured that whilst the proposed fee of £57.50 had been modelled by Officers, the proposed subscription had been proposed by the Joint Administration.

Councillor Gardener observed that the report and Executive Councillors had highlighted that the fee was being introduced for those who used the service, and enquired if that meant that residents could request refunds for those services which their Council Tax pays for but that they do not use. The Panel heard that the Joint Administration were aware that this would not be a popular decision but that it was necessary to protect the service for those residents who wished to continue to use it. The Panel heard that garden waste collection is a non statutory collection and that the Council is no longer able to deliver this service free of charge. The proposed changes would also allow local business opportunity and innovation in opening up opportunities for alternative waste collections.

Concern was expressed by Councillor Cawley that the figures within the report were scare tactics and may be working to fund a shortfall that may not happen. He also queried the quoted reduction in CO2 emissions given that many residents may choose to dispose of their garden waste at local recycling centres by private car instead of subscribing to the service.

In response to these questions, the Panel heard that;

- the shortfall figure of £8.3 million was a worst case scenario but that without action there would be a shortfall which would accumulate year on year; and
- that the predicted CO2 emissions reduction was due to a reduction of refuse vehicles on the road, due to reduced collections and also reduced waste to be reprocessed.

Councillors Cawley and Lowe enquired how it was anticipated that residents would create less green waste should they not have a green bin. The Panel were advised that analysis of other Councils who have



undergone the same process, showed that those without a garden waste receptacle generated less green waste. It was further advised that residents also had the option to compost, to use their garden waste as mulch or alternatively to dispose of it at their local recycling centre.

Following an observation from Councillor Cawley that home composting of food waste would generate more methane emissions, the Panel heard that current analysis of waste within each of the three bins currently provided by the Council showed that more food waste was disposed of between the grey and blue bins than the green bin, therefore a change in this behaviour was not anticipated.

Councillor Shaw observed that whilst he believed all Councillors were unhappy with the decision to introduce the subscription service, the reality was that it would be a viable way to address the gap in the finances. Furthermore the Panel heard that the Section 151 Officer would be unable to sign off the accounts without the introduction of the subscription and the continuation of the service.

The lack of public consultation on the proposed subscription service was queried by Councillors Alban and Lowe who observed that an ongoing consultation on Electrical Vehicle Charging had already been met with a good response from the public. The Panel heard that there is no option to continue the service free of charge therefore a consultation would be immaterial and unreasonable, however it was stressed that public consultation would be held following approval of the recommendations to gauge public opinion on other aspects of the proposed changes. Councillor Alban expressed pride over the good recycling rates achieved by residents in the district to date and shared his concerns that the poorest residents would be disproportionately affected which he claimed was at odds with the ethos of the Joint Administration. The Panel heard that by introducing the proposed subscription service on a non statutory service, the Council would be able to refocus spending on statutory services. The Panel were further appraised that the report had been brought through the democratic cycle of meetings followings concerns expressed at the Council meeting in February 2023.

Following a further enquiry from Councillor Alban regarding the Saturday working detailed within the report, the Panel were advised that this had been budgeted for as overtime and that this work would assist those residents not subscribed to the scheme. The alternative options available under this part of the scheme would form part of the proposed consultation to residents.

It was observed by Councillor Pickering that this was not an easy decision to make and he empathised with those who had had to make the decision, and enquired whether there was potential to offer assistance for those who are in receipt of Council Tax Support.

Councillors Harvey and Hunt expressed concerns over the impact of the proposed subscription to poorer residents and enquired around alternative payment options aside from annual payments. The Panel heard that the proposal would be to collect the annual fee during the annual break in Council Tax payment collections but that further work would be undertaken to investigate alternative payment options.

Councillor Hunt also observed that he had seen press reports stating that the Council was in a good financial position, however the Panel heard that there were not sufficient reserves to cover the projected deficit without cuts to statutory services if this service were to continue without a subscription charge.

Councillor Hunt proposed to add an additional recommendation to the Cabinet report, this recommendation was seconded by Councillor Harvey and the Panel voted in favour of forwarding the proposed recommendation to Cabinet.

g) to agree to complete a review of the impact of the introduction of a household waste subscription service on lower income residents.

Councillor Bywater stated that he could not support the proposal and shared his comments and concerns on the proposals within the report including;

- observation that the budget deficit had been present for the past 12 years therefore was not a new issue;
- residents are struggling financially at this time, therefore unreasonable to put further strain on household budgets;
- proposed subscription service undermines the Council's commitment to protect it's residents and to support them in combating Climate Change;
- affecting residents without transport;
- encouraging fly tipping or burning of garden waste;
- encouraging vermin through food waste in garden compost;
- lack of environmental impact assessment;
- opposition from residents; and
- affecting the ability to form a sustainable and inclusive community across the district.

Councillor Bywater further stated that he would not support the proposal as there was no financial data to support the cost of this proposal and how this would affect the projected financials within the report, he also queried how Cabinet could make an informed decision on the recommendations without the full data to support them. The Panel were assured that a quality impact assessment had been developed and analysed alongside available census data to give best estimates but that until the approval of the recommendations within the report, the team were not in a position to progress, however this impact assessment would be added as a further Appendix to the report when it progressed to Cabinet. The Panel were advised that research showed few authorities offering financial support with garden waste subscriptions but that this would be fully investigated in order to prove due diligence. It was also advised that residents could share bins with their neighbours thereby sharing costs.

The Panel heard that the Council were still waiting on information and clarification from DEFRA surrounding the introduction of food waste collections. It was also stated that the Joint Administration had inherited good services from the previous administration and wanted to improve upon them, which the introduction of a garden waste subscription would support.

Following a question from Councillor Gleadow, the Panel were assured that the team were happy to update on progress of projects

and had an open door policy to discuss this.

Councillor Corney observed that the Panel had heard a lot about what other Councils were doing but that it would be advisable to focus on Huntingdonshire. He further observed that recent flooding in Ramsey had been caused by the fly tipping of garden waste and expressed concern that the removal of the free collection service would exasperate this problem. In response to Councillor Corney's concerns around fly tipping, the Panel heard that the team worked hard to manage this issue across the district with increased intelligence. It was also advised that data obtained from Fenland District Council, showed a recent reduction in fly tipping despite having a chargeable garden waste service. Councillor McAdam expressed concern that fines for fly tipping were not prohibitive and that garden waste tipping would be harder to trace back to its origin than household waste.

In response to a question from Councillor Blackwell, the Panel were advised that an alternative option of a three month suspension of the service had been considered over other time period suspensions as current data showed that due to the seasonal nature of the demand, there were three quiet months over the winter where demand for collections is low.

Following a further comment from Councillor Corney on what alternative options had been considered, the Panel heard that the alternatives considered had not made the necessary financial impacts required, therefore the proposal within the report had been put forward. The Panel were further advised that despite this being an unpopular proposal, no viable alternatives had been proposed.

Councillor Jennings stated his concerns about the proposal, including that;

- although Council Tax may be seen as regressive, nothing is more aggressive than a flat rate fee applied across the district;
- he felt the member briefing had been more to gauge reaction and how Councillors would support the proposal to their residents despite being prior to the report being available;
- the language of the report gave conflicting implications – namely that the assumed subscription fees generated would be more than the cost to run the service, therefore it was suggested that they would be subsidising other services;
- the Council Tax comparison table would benefit from the addition of which Councils current charge for their Garden Waste service;
- it is common to have a budget gap within the MTFs and that the immediate financial pressures had already been addressed, therefore a proposed delay in implementation would not affect this;
- the assumptions in Table 3 do not stand up to scrutiny due to conflicting detail;
- there was not enough rigour in the financial modelling;
- there was a query whether the impact on the grey bin collections had been considered; and
- there was worry that people would resort to hard landscaping their gardens to avoid production of garden waste.

Following which, the Panel were advised that;

- the costs to run the service within the report did not include service wide factors such as vehicle acquisition and insurance;
- the MTF5 only has certainty for year 1 and that following that it would be in jeopardy;
- Table 3 has been worked from the bottom up, but that the proposed development of 12,000 new homes within the district by 2025 has not been included as they have not yet been constructed;
- the finances had been robustly tested; and
- the issue of how to protect vulnerable residents had been considered, however it was unfair to assume that those in lower Council Tax Bands used the garden waste service less than those in a higher band.

Councillors Cawley, Jennings, Martin and Lowe all expressed concern over the timing of the proposal and suggested that it be postponed to 2025 when it was hoped that the current economic crisis may be alleviated. Councillor McAdam observed that whilst the timing was of concern, postponing implementation could result in higher charges to households to compensate for the delay. Councillor Jennings proposed an additional recommendation be added to the Cabinet report;

h) to pause progress for 12 months to take time to take advantage of detailed reports and financial implications before bringing the scheme back into the democratic cycle.

However this motion was not supported by the Panel.

Assurance was sought from Councillor Gardener that should the scheme go ahead, there would be no redundancies or cuts to staff. The Panel heard that whilst it was difficult to make assurances with the unknown variables of take up, it was anticipated that a reduction in the use of agency staff and natural turnover would ensure the proposed staffing finances within the report would be met.

Councillor Martin expressed his opinion that there were compelling reasons why the report should be looked at again and again questioned whether the local recycling centres would be able to cope with the demand. He felt that the report had a lot of detail missing and that it was hard to scrutinise the detail due to its absence.

The Panel heard, in response to further questions from Councillors Gardener and Pickering, that an impact assessment had been done to cover the anticipated impact on the local recycling centres and that this would be monitored and assessed as the proposals moved forward.

Following a question from Councillor Shaw, the Panel were advised that residents would be able to keep their current green bins, however only those who subscribed to the service would have them collected.

Councillor Lowe stated that she was aware of residents who were maintaining verges and disposing of that waste in their green bins, the Panel heard that all Council mowing schedules were on time at present and that Councillors could submit details of such occurrences

to the Operations team for further investigation.

The Panel were assured that a robust contract was in place to ensure the current recycling of the waste into compost by Amey would be maintained.

Concern was expressed by Councillor Alban that there may be teething problems should the scheme go ahead and enquired about a Plan B. The Panel were assured that the team would work to optimise the route to ensure best value for money as well as the expected reduction in CO2 emissions, this would be constantly under review to ensure it best fits the needs of residents and the Council.

The Panel were further assured of the capability of the Officers in devising and delivering a scheme which would fit the needs of the Council whilst still delivering for residents and that the report contained all the information needed for Cabinet to make an informed decision.

Following the discussion, it was

#### RESOLVED

that Cabinet be encouraged to consider the comments from Overview and Scrutiny when making a decision upon the recommendations within the report; and;

that Cabinet be encouraged to add the proposed recommendation g to the report;

g) to agree to complete a review of the impact of the introduction of a household waste subscription service on lower income residents.

Chair

This page is intentionally left blank

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY JOINT PANEL held in the Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 10 August 2023.

PRESENT: Councillors T Alban, A M Blackwell,  
S Bywater, S Cawley, S J Corney,  
I D Gardener, J E Harvey, S A Howell,  
N J Hunt, A R Jennings, M Kadewere,  
J E Kerr, C Lowe, S R McAdam,  
Dr M Pickering, D J Shaw, R A Slade and  
N Wells.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors M J Burke, S J Criswell, R Martin and G J Welton.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors S W Ferguson and M A Hassall .

### 6. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED

that Councillor C Gleadow be elected Chair for the duration of the meeting.

**Councillor C Gleadow in the Chair.**

### 7. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor D Shaw declared an Other Registrable Interest in Minute No 9 by virtue of the fact that he had recently taken up employment as an Environment Officer with the Environment Agency's Waste Team.

### 8. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED

that Councillor J Kerr be appointed Vice-Chair for the duration of the meeting.

### 9. HOUSEHOLD GARDEN WASTE SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE CALL-IN

Pursuant to Minute No 05/23 of the meeting of the Joint Panel held on 6th July 2023, Members gave further consideration to the proposed Garden Waste Subscription Scheme, the introduction of which had been approved by the Cabinet on 18th July 2023, but which had been called-in by Councillors Alban, Bywater, Cawley, Corney, Criswell, Gardener, Jennings, Lowe, Martin and Welton. The Joint Panel's deliberations were assisted by an updated report by the General Manager for Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute

Book).

In response to a question by Councillor Alban, the Interim Managing Director confirmed that legal advice had been obtained on the options available to the Joint Panel, which were to refer the matter back to the Cabinet for further consideration or to allow the Cabinet's decision to be implemented immediately. The Constitution did not allow reference to the Council as the decision was in accordance with the Council's policy and budget framework. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services confirmed this opinion in her capacity as S151 Officer.

The main reasons given for the call-in coalesced around finance and consultation. Following a question by Councillor Jennings the Joint Panel discussed changes that had been made to Appendix 5 since the original report was published. It was established that the MTFS contained assumptions, but information had been received from the County Council that meant the figures should be revised. It was suggested that the changes that have been made, the reasons for them and the implications for the Council should be reported to the Cabinet when it considered the outcome of the call-in.

Councillor Jennings asked a further question about the evidence obtained from other local authorities on uptake of their garden waste schemes. The General Manager for Operations referred to the Charity WRAP, which contained information on 60 local authorities.

Councillor Alban asked a question about how the proposal had emerged. A process had been established involving Joint Administration political groups to identify and examine options to improve the Council's financial position. The proposal to introduce a subscription service emerged from that process. The process did not identify any other options, so without the subscription service it would be likely the Council would have to make service reductions and Executive Members preferred not to do this. Councillor Alban pointed out that it had been identified by officers as a potential option a number of years previously.

Councillor Corney expressed the view that the proposal was of such significance that it should be subject to public consultation. It was suggested that the consultation should seek views on alternative configurations of the service such as putting longer periods between collections. It was further argued that given the absence within the Council of ideas for other ways to improve the Council's financial position suggestions also should be requested in this respect.

Councillor Cawley drew attention to the environmental impact of the proposal. Members were informed that it was foremostly being put forward for financial reasons. Information on environmental matters had been obtained but a full analysis would be highly complex and the impact in the particular circumstances in Huntingdonshire would not be known until the scheme had commenced operation. 70% of waste management authorities in the Eastern Region had already introduced similar schemes so comparison data should be readily available. It was, therefore, been suggested that the environmental impact of the scheme was monitored and formally reported on.

Further on consultation on the proposal Councillor Ferguson pointed



to Executive Councillors' legal obligation to give weight to the likely outcome of any consultation and, instead he was of the view that they were elected to take difficult decisions such as the one under consideration.

Councillor Pickering related an extract from a letter from a Member of the previous Administration which, in 2013, put forward an argument in support of introducing charges for emptying second green bins.

Councillor Gardener asked a question about how garden waste would be collected. Following discussion on the operation of collections, it was established that further engagement would take place with Town and Parish Councils. This provided Members with some reassurance over its public impact in the first instance and subsequently for the evolution of the scheme through an iterative process.

After questions asked by Councillor Bywater, it was confirmed that the financial projections did not include salary inflation but took into account other inflation. Income from the garden waste scheme would help to put the Council in a position where it could consider future salary increases.

Further discussion established that the sensitivity analysis did not include figures for lower rates of uptake of the service as experienced at many other councils. It was suggested that the table in the report should be revised to include uptake rates from 15% so the Council was aware of the full financial implications of the proposal.

Councillor Jennings asked a question about the 'breakeven point'. It was explained that the service sought to cover its own costs so if there were significantly lower levels of subscriptions than expected, proportionately fewer officers would be required and vehicles, fuel and insurance costs would be lower. The service could be scaled up and down as determined by the numbers who subscribed. The cost of delaying the introduction of the service by one year would be £2m. Even if the uptake was lower than expected, there would still be a contribution to the MTFS.

Having stated he understood a petition was being prepared for submission to the Council, Councillor Bywater suggested that the Council should assess the impact of the proposal on those residents whose income only just exceeded the level that meant they were classed as vulnerable.

At the conclusion of the discussion it was recognised that the Joint Panel had received a considerable amount of detailed information to assist the call-in process had provided robust challenge in relation to proposal.

A Motion for a recorded vote having succeeded, a proposal was made by Councillor Alban and seconded by Councillor Bywater that the Cabinet be recommended not to proceed with the introduction of the Garden Waste Subscription Scheme owing to a lack of comparison data from other local authorities and insufficient evidence on which to base the decision. On being put to the vote Councillors Alban, Bywater, Cawley, Corney, Gardener, Jennings Lowe voted in favour and Councillors Blackwell, Gleadow, Harvey, Howell, Hunt

Kadewere, Kerr, McAdam, Pickering, Shaw, Slade and Wells voted against it. The motion was, therefore, declared to have been lost.

At the conclusion of the deliberations, the Cabinet were requested to take into account the points made during their consideration of the outcome of the call-in and, in particular, the following were emphasised:

- the change to Appendix 5 should be identified and an explanation for it provided;
- the Council should monitor and formally report on the environmental impact of the scheme;
- the Council should consult on the principle of charging and on alternative ways of organising the service and also seek suggestions that might help to improve the Council's financial position, and
- the sensitivity analysis should be revised to include lower rates of uptake (suggested 15%) up to 2028.

Chair

## NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS INCLUDING THOSE TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

**Prepared by:** Councillor Sarah Conboy, Executive Leader of the Council  
**Date of Publication:** 23 August 2023  
**For Period:** 21 August 2023 to 31 December 2023

Membership of the Cabinet is as follows:

Councillor Details		Councillor Contact Details
Councillor S J Conboy	Executive Leader of the Council and Executive Councillor for Place	Cloudberry Cottage 9 Earning Street Godmanchester Huntingdon PE29 2JD  Tel: 01480 414900 / 07831 807208 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Sarah.Conboy@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Sarah.Conboy@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>
Councillor L Davenport-Ray	Executive Councillor for Climate & Environment	73 Hogsden Leys St Neots Cambridgeshire PE19 6AD  E-mail: <a href="mailto:Lara.Davenport-Ray@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Lara.Davenport-Ray@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>
Councillor S Ferguson	Executive Councillor for Customer Services	9 Anderson Close St Neots Cambridgeshire PE19 6DN  Tel: 07525 987460 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Stephen.Ferguson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Stephen.Ferguson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>

Councillor M Hassall	Executive Councillor for Corporate & Shared Services	Care of Huntingdonshire District Council St Mary's Street Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 3TN  Tel: 07825 193572 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Martin.Hassall@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Martin.Hassall@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>
Councillor B Mickelburgh	Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources	2 Grainger Avenue Godmanchester Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 2JT  Tel: 07441 392492 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Brett.Mickelburgh@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Brett.Mickelburgh@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>
Councillor B Pitt	Executive Councillor for Community & Health	17 Day Close St Neots Cambridgeshire PE19 6DF  Tel: 07703 169273 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Ben.Pitt@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Ben.Pitt@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>
Councillor T Sanderson	Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Planning	29 Burmoor Close Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 6GE  Tel: 01480 436822 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Tom.Sanderson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Tom.Sanderson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>

Page 20 of 60

Councillor S Taylor	Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste & Street Scene	66 Wren Walk Eynesbury St Neots Cambridgeshire PE19 2GE  Tel: 07858 032076 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Simone.Taylor@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Simone.Taylor@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>
Councillor S Wakeford	Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing	4 Croft Close Brampton Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE28 4TJ  Tel: 07762 109210 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Sam.Wakeford@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Sam.Wakeford@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>

Page 21 of 60

Notice is hereby given of:

- Key decisions that will be taken by the Cabinet (or other decision maker)
- Confidential or exempt executive decisions that will be taken in a meeting from which the public will be excluded (for whole or part).

Notice/agenda together with reports and supporting documents for each meeting will be published at least five working days before the date of the meeting. In order to enquire about the availability of documents and subject to any restrictions on their disclosure, copies may be requested by contacting the Democratic Services Team on 01480 388169 or E-mail [Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk).

Agendas may be accessed electronically at the [District Council's website](#).

Formal notice is hereby given under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 that, where indicated part of the meetings listed in this notice will be held in private because the agenda and reports for the meeting will contain confidential or exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. See the relevant paragraphs below.

Any person who wishes to make representations to the decision maker about a decision which is to be made or wishes to object to an item being considered in private may do so by emailing [Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk) or by contacting the Democratic Services Team. If representations are received at least eight working days before the date of the meeting, they will be published with the agenda together with a statement of the District Council's response. Any representations received after this time will be verbally reported and considered at the meeting.

**Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) (Reason for the report to be considered in private)**

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the Financial and Business Affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations that are arising between the Authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of or office holders under the Authority
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings
6. Information which reveals that the Authority proposes:-
  - (a) To give under any announcement a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
  - (b) To make an Order or Direction under any enactment
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

Huntingdonshire District Council  
Pathfinder House  
St Mary's Street  
Huntingdon PE29 3TN.

Page 22 of 60

- Notes:-
- (i) Additions changes from the previous Forward Plan are annotated \*\*\*
  - (ii) Part II confidential items which will be considered in private are annotated ## and shown in italic.

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Sawtry Neighbourhood Plan ***	Cabinet	19 Sep 2023		Frances Schulz, Senior Planning Officer Tel No: 01480 388432 or email: frances.schulz@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		T Sanderson	
Community Chest Grant Aid Awards 2023/24	Grants Panel Grants Panel Grants Panel Grants Panel	20 Sep 2023  18 Oct 2023  15 Nov 2023  20 Dec 2023		Claudia Deeth, Community Resilience Manager Tel No: 01480 388233 or email: Claudia.Deeth@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		B Pitt & M Hassall	Environment, Communities & Partnerships

Page 29 of 60

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Market Towns Programme - Autumn Update	Cabinet	17 Oct 2023		Pamela Scott, Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager Tel No: 01480 388486 or email: Pamela.Scott@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		S Wakeford	Performance & Growth
Electric Vehicle Charge Strategy	Cabinet	14 Nov 2023		George McDowell, Parking Services Officer Tel No: 01480 388386 or email: George.McDowell@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		L Davenport-Ray	Environment, Communities & Partnerships
Redesign of Council Tax Support Scheme	Cabinet	14 Nov 2023		Katie Kelly, Revenue and Benefits Manager Tel No: 01480 388388 or email: Katie.Kelly@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		S Ferguson	Environment, Communities & Partnerships

Page 24 of 60



Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Non-Domestic Rates Rural Settlements List***	Cabinet	12 Dec 2023		Katie Kelly, Revenue and Benefits Manager Tel No: 01480 388388 or email: Katie.Kelly@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		S Ferguson	Environment, Communities & Partnerships
Infrastructure Funding Statement***	Cabinet	12 Dec 2023		Clara Kerr, Service Manager - Growth Tel no: 07810 637540 Email: clara.kerr@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		T Sanderson	Performance & Growth
Market Towns Programme - Winter Update ***	Cabinet	12 Dec 2023		Pamela Scott, Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager Tel No: 01480 388486 or email: Pamela.Scott@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		S Wakeford	Performance & Growth

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Approval of Council Tax Base 2024/25***	Cabinet, Chair of Corporate Governance and Section 151 Officer	15 Dec 2023		Katie Kelly, Revenue and Benefits Manager Tel No: 01480 388388 or email: Katie.Kelly@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		N Wells	Performance & Growth

**Public**  
**Key Decision - No**

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Title/Subject Matter:** Engagement Principles

**Meeting/Date:** Overview & Scrutiny (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) 7 September 2023

**Executive Portfolio:** Executive Councillor for Customer Services

**Report by:** Strategic Communications Manager

**Ward(s) affected:** All

---

### **Executive Summary:**

This paper presents a new set of Engagement Principles for the council. The council's Corporate Plan outlines a commitment to engaging with and listening to people who live, work and visit Huntingdonshire.

The principles include a flow chart outlining the steps to ensure that the council's approach to information, engagement, consultation and empowerment meets the needs of the local community. The toolkit within the Engagement Principles document provides guidance and techniques to support officers deliver engagement activity.

### **Recommendation(s):**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is

### **RECOMMENDED**

- To approve and adopt the Engagement Principles attached at Appendix 1.

## **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The Engagement Principles set out the council's approach to enabling residents and stakeholders to be informed, involved, share their opinions and play a meaningful role in decision making.
- 1.2 The principles are underpinned in consultation and engagement best practice and are aligned with the council's Corporate Plan. They follow the Do, Enable, and Influence approach within the Corporate Plan.
- 1.3 Informing, engaging, consulting and empowering are distinct and specific activities. At certain times the council will need to inform the community and at others it will consult need to consult or engage. The Engagement Principles consider these distinctions to enable officers to select the approach that works for the community and the relevant project or service area.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The council's existing [Consultation and Engagement Strategy](#) is dated from 2014-2017.
- 2.2 In March 2023, the council adopted a new Corporate Plan which outlines a commitment to engaging with and listening to people who live, work and visit Huntingdonshire.
- 2.3 The proposed Engagement Principles align with the new Corporate Plan and take into consideration current engagement best practice.

## **3. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN**

- 3.1 Subject to approval, the Engagement Principles will be communicated and shared with council officers. Where possible, the Communications Team will also provide guidance and support to those service areas looking to undertake some forms of engagement activity.

## **4. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES**

- 4.1 The Engagement Principles is a key element of the Corporate Plan, and address how the council will engage with people who live, work and visit Huntingdonshire.

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Engagement Principles takes into consideration the Local Government Associations '[New Conversations](#)' guide to engagement.
- 5.2 In addition, other specific legislation, including the Local Government Act 1999 and the Equality Act 2010 must be considered where appropriate.

- 5.3 Certain functions of the council, including planning, housing and community safety have statutory requirements to consult. Statutory consultations are bound by legal requirements and can have strict rules surrounding how they should be conducted.
- 5.4 Guidance from the Local Government Association states that there are a number of situations where a consultation would not be required. This includes where a council's room for manoeuvre is limited (for example by statutory or budgetary restrictions) and as a result, any consultation would not change the final decision.

## **6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. However, having a set of Engagement Principles will help the council better understand the needs of residents which will enable the development of more relevant, coordinated and appropriate services, which are generally more cost effective.

## **7. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 7.1 Having an agreed set of Engagement Principles enables the council to meet some of the outcomes in the Corporate Plan.
- 7.2 By listening to residents and stakeholders and recognising different needs, the council will be better placed to design and deliver appropriate, coordinated and relevant services to the communities it serves.

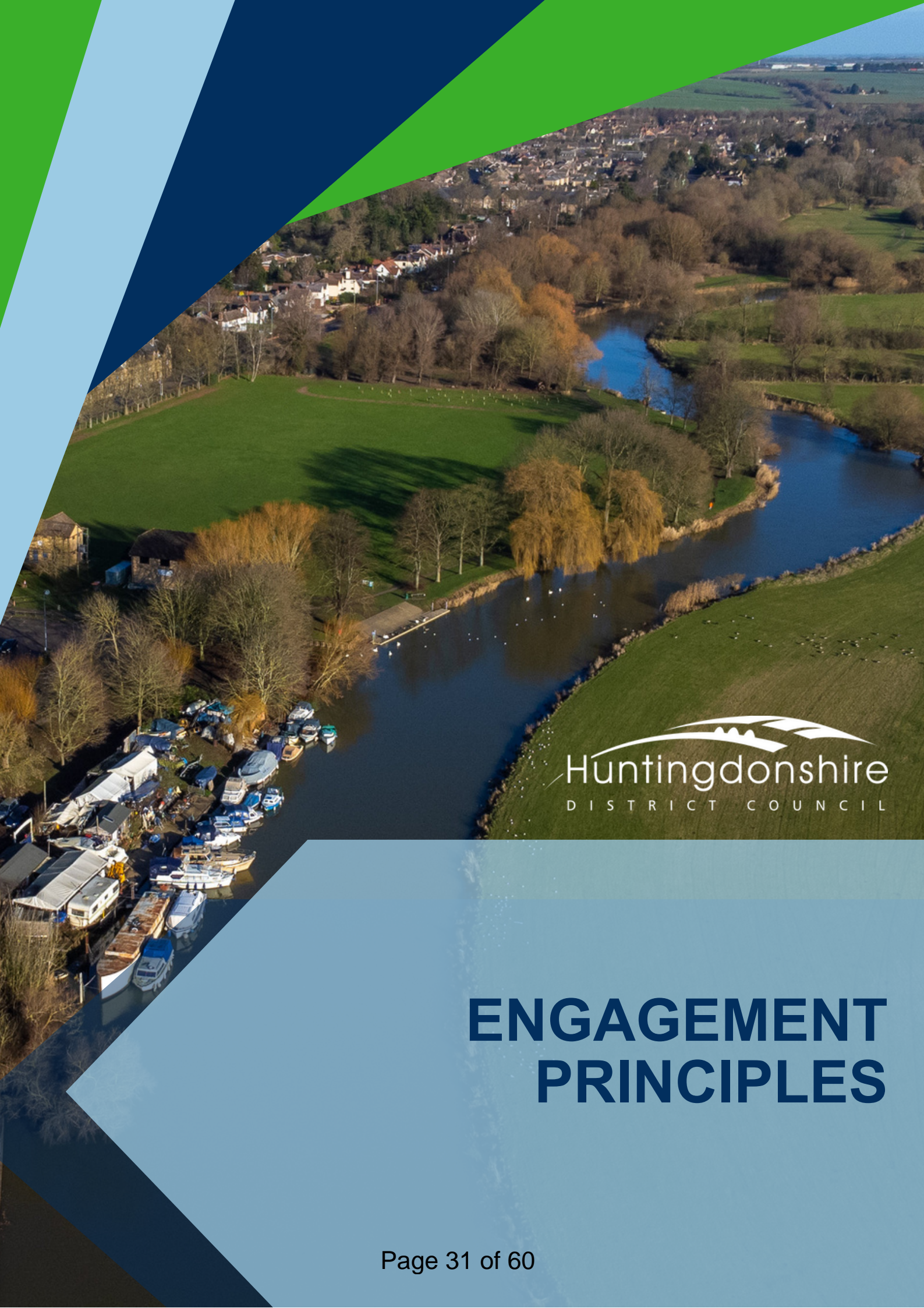
## **8. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED**

Appendix 1 – Huntingdonshire District Council Engagement Principles

### **CONTACT OFFICER**

Name/Job Title: Michael Hann, Strategic Communications Manager  
Email: [Michael.Hann@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.Hann@huntingdonshire.gov.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank



# ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

## INTRODUCTION

The Corporate Plan sets out that:

*“We all want to live in a place with the highest possible quality of life. A place people are drawn to, where they feel included and can aspire to something. A place people are proud to call home. “*

This aspiration is supported by three priorities:

- 1.Improving the quality of life for local people.
- 2.Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations.
- 3.Deliver good quality, high value for money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations.

To achieve these priorities, we need to listen to and work with our community. Huntingdonshire District Council is committed to engaging with and listening to the people who live, work, study and visit our district.

We want to ensure that local people are informed about the work we’re doing and why. That when local people can play a role in informing decision making they are enabled to. That when local people can co-design or co-produce services or projects with us, they are empowered to.

Moving forward, “how we engage, listen and respond, and more importantly share and involve our residents in developing solutions to local issues will be critical” ([The Community Strategy – Transition Plan 2021 to 2023](#)).



This document follows the **Do, Enable, Influence** approach in the Corporate Plan.

- When you should inform, engage or consult, and how you can **do** that.
- How you can **enable** local people, businesses, organisations and stakeholders to be involved.
- How and when you should support the community to **influence** decision making.

The principles provide you with a road map to ensure our approach to information, engagement, consultation and empowerment meets the needs of our community.



The principles are underpinned in consultation and engagement best practice and aligned with the council's Corporate Plan.

A supporting toolkit provides details of techniques and approaches you could consider to engage the community to support and inform your decision making.

If you're unsure about whether you need to engage and / or how to approach a conversation with the community please seek guidance from your line manager, or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

It is also a publicly accessible document so that our community can understand our approach to engagement and hold it to account.



# WHEN SHOULD WE ENGAGE?

The first question is should you engage? An engagement process should only be undertaken if the community can play a role in shaping an outcome or decision.

The flow chart overleaf will:

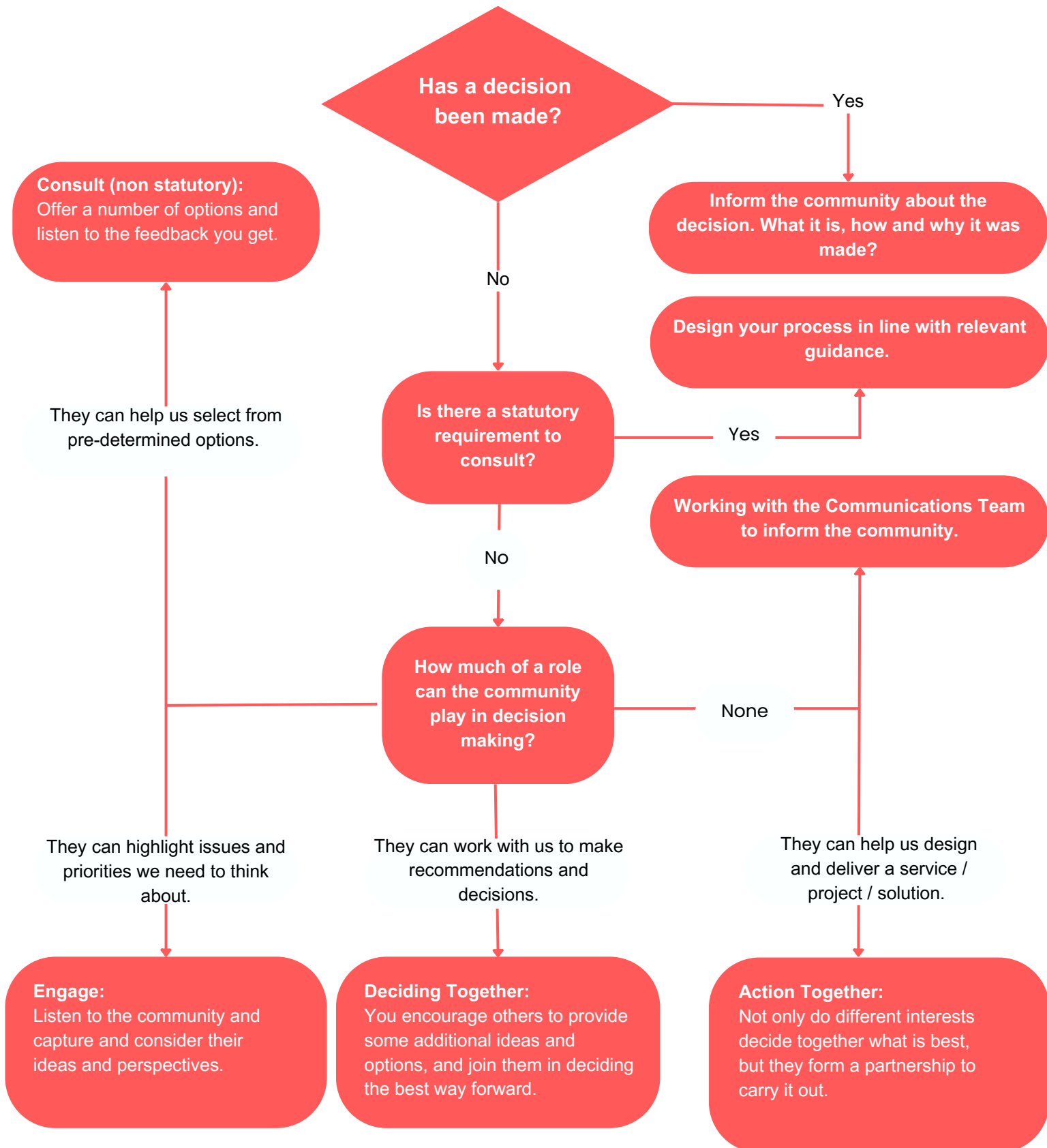
- Let you know if you should engage.
- Identify what type of engagement meets the needs of your project or service design.

In addition you should also seek advice from your line manager and / or a member of the senior leadership team.

The supporting engagement toolkit provides further guidance on ways to engage, stakeholder mapping and monitoring and evaluation.



# FINDING THE RIGHT OPTION



# MEETING THE NEEDS OF LOCAL PEOPLE

These principles set out how you should approach engagement. All engagement activity should be in line with these principles.

## **Principles:**

It is important that any conversation with our community meets a standard. Our Principles draw on the [Consultation Institutes: Consultation Charter](#) ensuring we are aligned with best practice. Embedding our principles into every dialogue will enable us to deliver a quality approach that meets the needs of our community and decision-making processes.

## **Open and honest:**

As a council we will also ensure that local people are informed about what we are doing and why. When local people can influence decision making they will be engaged. As a council we will be open and honest, explaining what process is taking place and why. We will share the information we can share and explain when there is information that cannot be made public. For example, if it is commercially sensitive. We will ensure that our communities will be engaged and consulted with before decisions are made.

## **Visible:**

When engagement is taking place, we will work to ensure that people who it will impact and who are interested know where they can have their say. By being open and honest we will build trust in the process.

## **Vision**

Our community is enabled and empowered to influence our decision making. They are informed about what we do and how and why we do it.

## **Accessible:**

Engagement will always take place in a way that is accessible. This means thinking about which tools and approaches will work for the people you need to work with. It means thinking about where and when to enable as many people as possible to take part.

Depending on the target audience for your project / service you should think about how you engage seldom heard voices. For example, young people, people with additional needs and disabilities, and people living in areas of deprivation.

Will the people you're engaging need help to participate for example captions during online meetings, sign language, translation. Think about what people will need to enable them to take part.

# MEETING THE NEEDS OF LOCAL PEOPLE

You should also think about how you will make sure the language you use is accessible. It is important for language to be clear and simple to understand. Any use of acronyms will be explained, and jargon will be avoided to ensure everyone can understand the information we are sharing and the questions we are asking.

## **Transparent:**

It should be clear how the results of the engagement will shape decision making. Anyone thinking about and / or participating in the process should understand how what they tell us will be used. This transparency is vital to our community trusting the process and believing it is worth their time to participate.

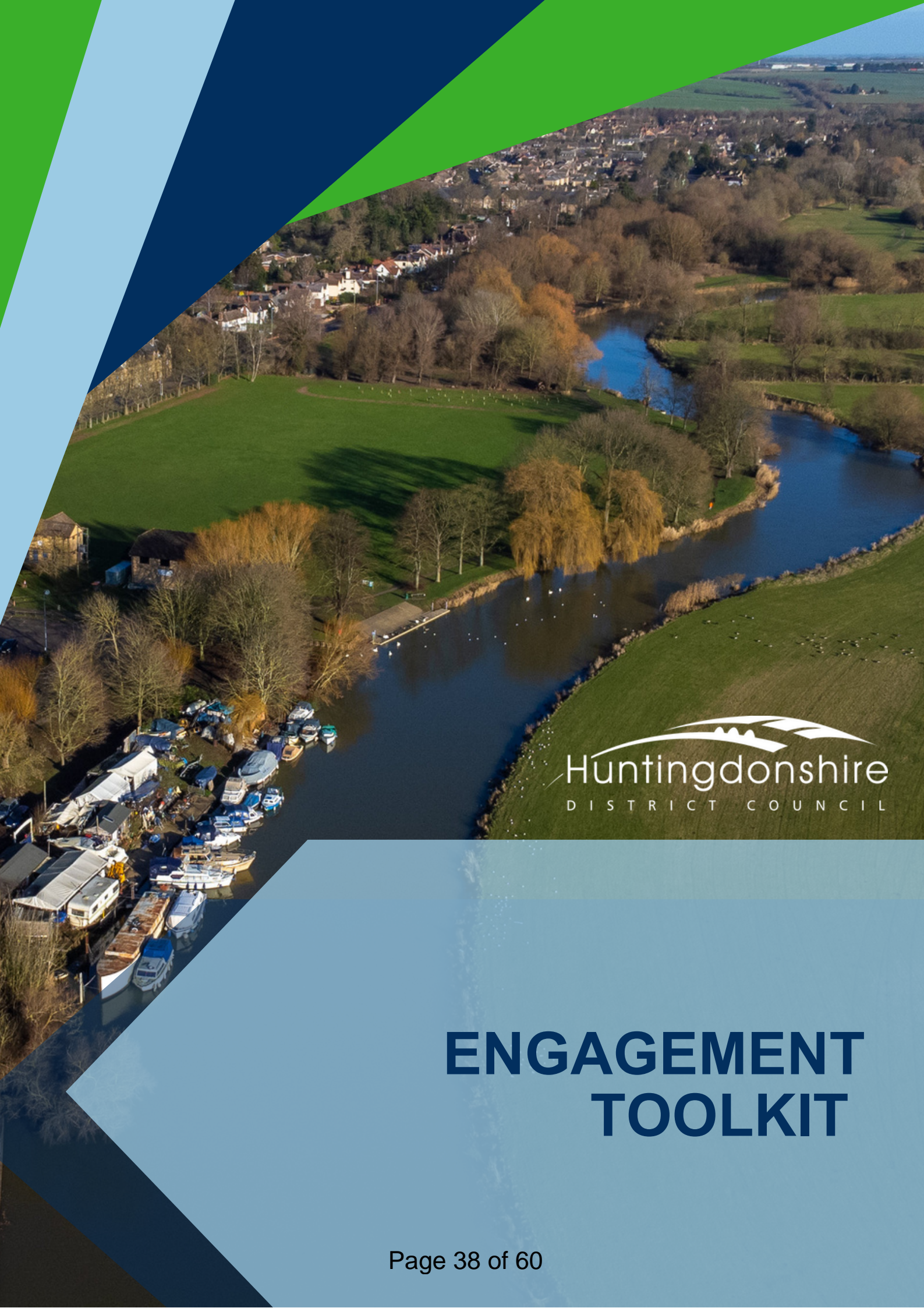
## **Fair:**

Anything anyone tells us in a community engagement or a consultation exercise will be treated equally and fairly. Information and viewpoints gathered will be analysed promptly and objectively. Participants and the wider community should be able to understand how the analysis has taken place.

## **Feedback:**

Participants and the wider community must be able to see the outputs and the outcomes of the process. This means sharing feedback in a way that is clear and accessible to anyone who is interested.





# ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

## INTRODUCTION

This toolkit provides guidance and techniques to support you to plan and deliver an engagement plan in line with Huntingdonshire District Council's Engagement Principles.

Informing, engaging, consulting and empowering are distinct and specific activities. At certain times we need to inform our community and at others we will consult or engage. It is important to consider these distinctions and select the approach that works for the community and your project or service.

There are numerous definitions. For the purposes of this document, and our approach, we are using the definitions detailed overleaf.



# INFORM, ENGAGE, CONSULT OR EMPOWER

Engagement is an overarching process by which we have a conversation with our community. Essentially it is about involving local people in decisions that will impact them.

There are different levels of engagement, for different projects / services and different participants. Consultation and engagement best practise is based around five types of participation:

## Inform

The least you can do is tell people what is planned.

## Consult

You offer a number of options and listen to the feedback you get.

## Deciding Together

You encourage others to provide some additional ideas and options, and join them in deciding the best way forward.

## Action Together

You encourage others to provide some additional ideas and options, and join them in deciding the best way forward.

## Supporting Independent Community Initiatives

You help others do what they want – perhaps with a framework of grants, advice and support provided by the resource holder.



# INFORM, ENGAGE, CONSULT OR EMPOWER

## Inform

There are times when local people, our community, cannot influence a decision. It may be that a decision has already been made and asking for opinions that would not be taken into consideration would lack integrity. It may also be that for a range of reasons local people cannot shape a decision-making process. In these circumstances we will inform our community.

If you need to inform the community, you should refer to the council's Communication Strategy. This strategy sets out:

- How to bring the council's priorities to life.
- How to enable better communication across the council.
- How to build stronger relationships with the community.

The council's Communications Team can support you to inform local people.

## Consult

Consultation is about a choice between pre-determined options, not an opportunity to purpose alternatives. There are two distinct types of consultation.

### Statutory Consultation:

[The Local Government Association Guidance Consulting Residents](#), explains that "Councils sometimes have a statutory requirement to consult their residents, and this is especially true for issues such as planning, or



redevelopments. Statutory consultations are bound by legal requirements, such as Best Value legislation, and can have strict rules surrounding how they should be conducted. If you fail to run a statutory consultation in line with those rules you could be liable for a judicial review.

Therefore, it is important to make sure that you check the guidelines surrounding your specific consultation plans. If you are undertaking a statutory consultation it is important to consider the relevant guidance.

# INFORM, ENGAGE, CONSULT OR EMPOWER

## Non-Statutory Consultation

There are a wide range of reasons that we might want to consult our community. Non-statutory consultations have no legal status, and are a way to involve a cross-section of the population. A Government [Code of Practice on Consultations](#) is available online.

## Deciding together

There are times when the community can play an active role in making a decision. For example, co-design is a process which enables people to work with the organisations that make decisions that affect their lives. It gives people the power to shape the decisions that affect their lives and communities. Other mechanisms such as a Citizen's Assembly enable local people to work directly with decision makers and find consensus around recommendations for the future.

## Acting together

Sometimes the solution is to act together, for the community to actively participate in both the decision and the delivery. Co-production refers to "the joint delivery of projects and services between community members and decision-makers." [Making the Case for Co-Production: \(Future of London, March 2023\)](#) "for co-production to be genuine, there are three key principles that underpin the process: sharing power, sharing knowledge, and being inclusive. Trust will help to get these things right and getting these things right will generate trust."

## Supporting independent community initiatives

There may be occasions when the best solution is for the council to support a community initiative. It maybe that the decision to take this approach is reached through community engagement.

## Conversations with local people

There are times when we need to listen to the community to understand their challenge, ideas and perspectives, and have conversations with them about the change they would like to see.

## How to decide

The way to work with the community, in relation to your project or service is dependent on a number of factors. The key questions are:

- Do you need to tell the community about a decision that has been made?
- Can you enable local people to choose between options?
- How much influence can the community have over decision making and service delivery.

The Huntingdonshire District Council Engagement Principles contains a flow chart for identifying which approach you should use.

# INFORM, ENGAGE, CONSULT OR EMPOWER

The table below shows the approaches in relation to the types of engagement approach. You can use tactics across table, but in line with our principles you must take an open and honest approach.

For example, you should only do a co-design when the community can be equal in the process. Details of each approach can be found in section three.

Type of Engagement	Communication, Engagement and Consultation Approaches
<p><b>Inform</b> The least you can do is tell people what is planned.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local media</li> <li>• Social media</li> <li>• Website content</li> <li>• Local influencers and networks</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consult</b> You offer a number of options and listen to the feedback you get.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop up exhibitions</li> <li>• Surveys and questionnaires</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• One-to-one interviews</li> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Collaboration with community groups and organisations</li> <li>• Walk and talks</li> </ul>
<p><b>Deciding Together</b> You encourage others to provide some additional ideas and options, and join them in deciding the best way forward.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-design</li> <li>• Citizen's Assembly</li> </ul>
<p><b>Action together</b> Not only do different interests decide together what is bet, but they form a partnership to carry it out.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-production</li> <li>• Asset based community development</li> </ul>
<p><b>Supporting Independent Community Initiatives</b> You help others do what they want – perhaps with a framework of grants, advice and support provided by the resource holder.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grants and funding programmes</li> <li>• Commissioning community-based programmes</li> </ul> <p>Page 43 of 60</p>

# INFORM, ENGAGE, CONSULT OR EMPOWER

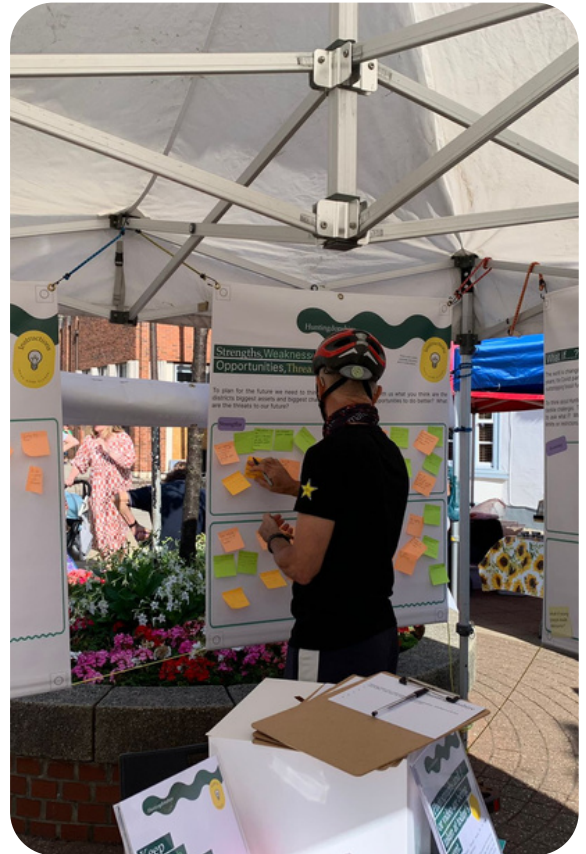
## Case Study: Huntingdonshire Futures

Huntingdonshire Futures is the Place Strategy for the District. It sets out a shared vision for the future of the district for the next 30 years, with a focus on the economy, health, the environment, travel, and pride in place.

To inform the place strategy we need local people to tell us what issues and priorities we should think about. As well as what approaches they want the council to take. We therefore need to deliver an engagement approach.

A two phase engagement approach was designed and delivered to enable local people to inform the place strategy. In phase one, pop up events, focus groups, visits to community groups and schools and online activities were organised to understand what local people valued about Huntingdonshire, what change they wanted to see, and their priorities. This informed an outline strategy.

In phase two, we tested the proposed strategy with focus groups, schools and colleges, and with community groups. Enabling the local community to raise gaps in the strategy and priorities they thought had been missed. On adoption of the strategy all participants were contacted to ensure they knew how to find and view the strategy.



# TARGET AUDIENCE

## Who Do You Need To Listen To and How Can You Reach Them

Community is an all encompassing phrase. The community you need to engage with will depend on the service / project you are developing. Some projects will require an engagement process that is open to every person living, working and studying in Huntingdonshire. Others will have a more targeted community that you need to reach.

But how do you identify the community in the context of your work?

The Consultation Institute recommends using the 'six tests method' for identifying who should engage. The people and organisations you identify using the six tests are your stakeholders.

**Test 1:**  
Who is **directly** impacted by this decision?

**Test 2:**  
Who is **indirectly** impacted?

**Test 3:**  
Who is **potentially** impacted?

**Test 4:**  
Whose **help** is needed to make the decision work?

**Test 5:**  
Who **knows** about the subject?

**Test 6:**  
Who will have an **interest** in the subject?

When using the six tests you should think about individuals and organisations. For example, as a District Council, you should think about which of the six tests applies to Parish, Town, and County Councils and the Combined Authority.

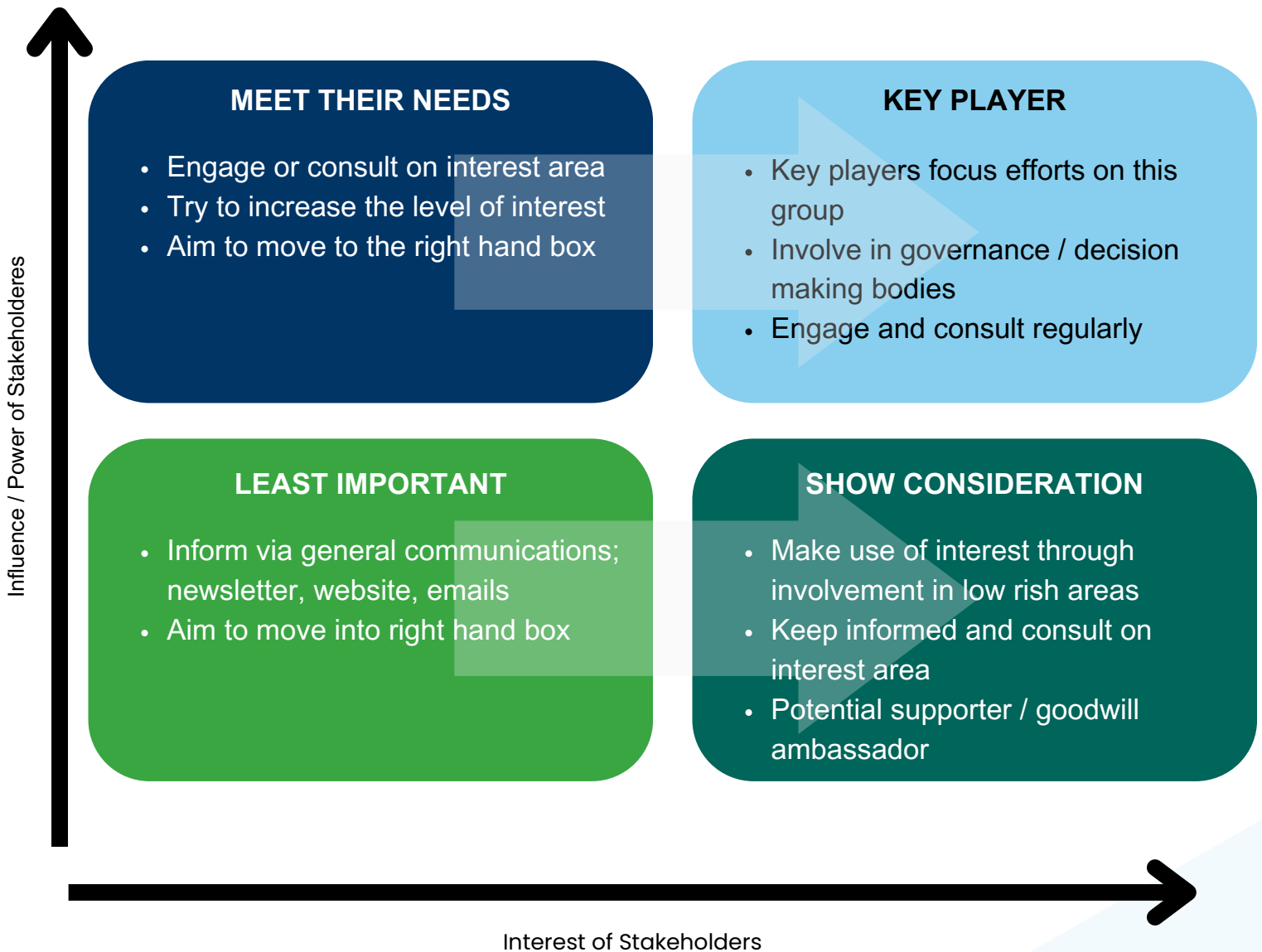
It is useful to think about the demographics that make up your community in relation to the six tests. Are there specific demographics that are directly impacted? As a result are their organisations or groups whose help is needed and / or know the subject. Spend time thinking about how you need to engage as this will be key to defining which tactics you use.

Once you have used the six tests to identify who you should engage, you should use a power-interest matrix (shown overleaf) to start thinking about how you should develop your plan.

# TARGET AUDIENCE



## Stakeholder Mapping

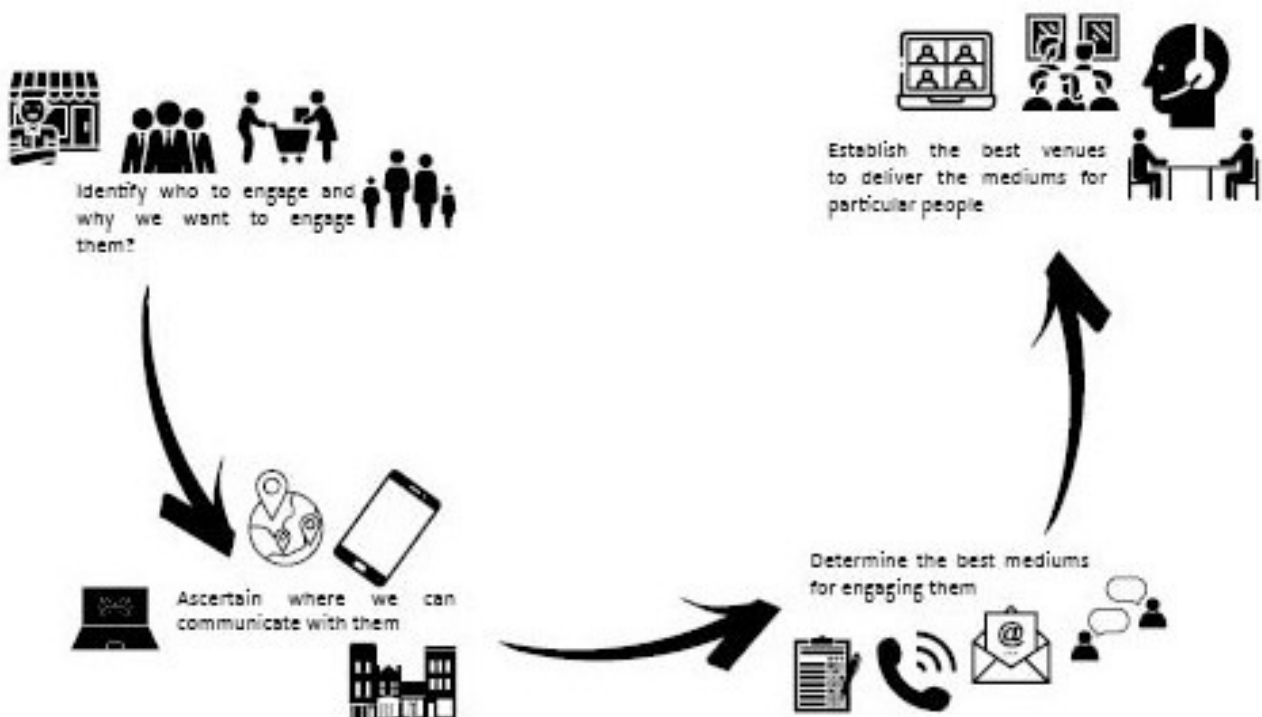


# TARGET AUDIENCE

As shown in the power-interest matrix those with the highest interest and influence / power are your key players. These are the stakeholders that you should listen to and work with throughout.

Using the matrix will enable you to think about how you can make the best use of the resources and capacity available to you.

The diagram below shows the relationship between who you want to engage and how to engage them.



# TARGET AUDIENCE

## **Tactics**

There are a range of tactics you can use to enable the community you have identified to participate. When thinking about tactics, you need to consider four key elements:

1. The people you need to engage.
2. The type of engagement you're doing.
3. The influence the community can have.
4. How will you analyse what comes out of the conversation.

## **Identify who to engage and who we want to engage them?**

The six tests and interest and influence matrix will enable you to identify who to engage.

You also need to think about why you want to engage them and what you need to ask them. What do you need to learn from your stakeholders?

Different types of conversations are a better fit for different types of engagement. For example, focus groups and one-to-one interviews are a good way to explore peoples lived experiences. Bringing people together in workshops can help build consensus and shared recommendations. Questionnaires are an efficient way of collecting of obtaining large amounts of information.

## **Ascertain where we can communicate with them?**

Different target audiences will need to be reached, communicated with and engaged in different ways. You should think about where the people you need to engage are, who they listen to, and who they work with.

Who are the 'influencers' that they will trust and respond to. Which groups or organisations might they be a member of? Which social media channels might they use? What events might they attend, for example could they be park runners? Or shop at St Ives market? Or play cricket in Ramsey?

You also need to think about the language you will use. Different audiences will understand and respond to language in different ways.

## **Determine the best mediums for engaging them**

Later in this document you'll find a range of mediums / tools you can use to engage. You need to think about which ones your audience will respond to, what processes they will trust and want to participate in.



# TARGET AUDIENCE

## **Establish the best venues to deliver the mediums for particular people**

Huntingdonshire District Council is committed to a digital first approach. A digital approach to engagement can be beneficial, for example online surveys save time and resources in regards to data entry.

However, it is important to consider if a digital only approach is the best fit for your engagement and audience. Is it accessible for everyone you need to talk to? Is it the right medium for the type of questions you want to ask?

## **Equality Impact Assessment**

If your engagement and / or decision making process will have an impact on people with protected characteristics you should complete an Equalities Impact Assessment. This process will enable you to identify any barriers to engagement and ensure people are able to participate.



Photo by Alexander Dummer on Unsplash

# DESIGNING YOUR ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Before you start engaging with the community you should take the time to create an engagement plan.

The plan should take into account the capacity, resources and timescales you have available. You should also think about what team you have available to deliver the engagement and the skills they have. This plan should lay out the following:

**About the project:** A summary of the project / service you are engaging on.

**Why engage:** An explanation of why you're engaging. As well as the type of community engagement you'll be doing and how this has been selected.

**Objectives:** What are the objectives for your engagement programme? Is there anything specific you need to achieve through the engagement process.

**Target audience:** How you have applied the six tests to identify who you need to engage. How the power and influence matrix has been used to identify priorities.

**Engagement Principles:** The Huntingdonshire District Council Engagement Principles and how you will apply them.

**Tactics and engagement activities:** How you are going to engage with your target audience. A list of potential activities can be found later in this section.

**Analysis:** How you will analyse and use the information and data you collate through the engagement process.

**Monitoring and evaluation:** How you will understand who has participated and ensure it reflects your target audience.

**Project programme:** When you will undertake the engagement, in the context of the wider project. This should show that your conversations with the community take place at a time when they can influence the project.

The engagement plan is a flexible document, you should keep it updated throughout the lifetime of the project. For example, if you're not reaching a key audience you may need to adapt your tactics, this should be reflected in your engagement plan.



# DESIGNING YOUR ENGAGEMENT PLAN

**Pop-up exhibitions:** In any community engagement approach it is important to go to the community, do not expect them to come to you.

Pop-up exhibitions in high footfall areas, or at popular events can be a good way to engage local people. Displays and tools can be used to capture people's thoughts and ideas. Members of the project team can talk directly to local people.

**Focus groups:** These groups bring together a small group of people to answer questions in a moderated setting. They are a good way for people to share their experiences. They can also be used to explore ideas and test recommendations. Their value is in people coming together to have a conversation and sharing their perspectives on the same issue. Differences of opinion can tell you as much as a consensus.

**One-to-one interviews:** Not all people are comfortable in a group situation. Not all conversations are suitable for a group situation.

One-to-one interviews provide an opportunity for people to speak openly about their experiences and ideas.

**Workshops:** Can enable you to work with bigger groups of people, using tasks and activities to obtain their opinion. Group work enables people to work together and build consensus.

**Embedded engagement:** Spending time with people in settings like schools, colleges, community groups and other activities can enable you to reach new audiences.

Working with organisations, you can design an approach to engagement that works for their group. For example for Huntingdonshire Futures: Place Strategy we worked with schools to design activities that could be delivered in the classroom for groups of up to 35 students.

**Walk and Talks:** If an engagement is about a specific place or location, it can be useful to visit that place with the community. Walks and Talks or site visits can enable a discussion about a place in a place, enabling people to share perspectives and ideas in situ.

**Citizen's assembly:** A citizen's assembly is a group of people who are brought together to discuss an issue('s) and reach a conclusion about what they think should happen. The people who take part are selected to reflect the wider population / target audience.

They give participants the time and opportunity to learn about and discuss a topic with experts, before reaching conclusions. They ask people to work together, to build consensus and arrive at shared, workable recommendations.

# DESIGNING YOUR ENGAGEMENT PLAN

**Co-Design:** Co-design is a process which enables people to work with the organisations that make decisions that effect their lives. It gives people the power to shape the decisions that effect their lives and communities.

By definition it requires stakeholders to be actively involved in the design of the process. The community are therefore equal partners in the process.

**Co-Production:** Co-production goes beyond co-design in that it involves the community working with decision makers to design and deliver solutions, and service of a project. [Future of London Making the Case for Co-Production](#) (March 2023), focuses on how and why to co-produce in the built environment. It is a useful summary of what it means to co-produce and why it is critical to share power, share knowledge and be inclusive.

**Asset Based Community Development (ABCD):** Nesta's report [Asset-Based Community Development for Local Authorities](#) explore how Local Authorities have used this approach. It also suggests how to put it into practice.

Within the report, Mike Ward of Leeds City Council (now retired) explains how he and his team understood the ABCD approach:

*“Asset-based community development and asset-based approaches begin by finding out what the people living in a community care enough about to work on together to change, develop and/or sustain.*

*It recognises and celebrates the uniqueness of neighbourhoods and the interdependencies of communities.*

*Central to the approach is finding and recognising the assets of an area; anything from a patch of unused land, a neighbour who knows the local baby groups, a local business who is happy to share their office space, a fast-food restaurant where young adults meet or a retired teacher looking to meet new people.*

*They will be different in every area, but whatever they are these community assets are the building blocks of sustainable community building efforts.”*

# INFORM, ENGAGE, CONSULT OR EMPOWER

## Case Study: Huntingdonshire Climate Strategy

Huntingdonshire District Council's Strategy sets out the priorities to achieve the commitment of a net zero carbon council by 2040.

Local people will have a role to play in getting to the net zero carbon target. Therefore, we needed to engage local people. Firstly, a questionnaire was used to understand residents priorities, identify actions already been taken and understand the impact of climate change.

This was followed by a programme of online focus groups and working with schools and colleges to check and challenge the proposed priorities for change. Focus group participants were paid to take part, helping us engage a more diverse range of people.



# DESIGNING YOUR ENGAGEMENT PLAN

## Analysis

As well as thinking about what mechanisms are right for your audience and project, you need to think about how you will collate and analyse what comes out of that process.

When designing engagement events and activities you need to think about how you will record what people tell you. For example if you're doing a focus group you should record and transcribe the session. When planning pop up events you should think about what displays and activities can capture what local people think.

## Quantitative

As previously discussed quantitative data is data that can be counted and measured.

Questionnaires are an example of a quantitative engagement tool.

This data can be analysed using a two step process.



## Stage 1. Tabulation Analysis

In essence, tabulation analysis involves laying out data in an easy to understand summary table. For example, you could use a frequency distribution analysis, which will communicate the number of respondents who gave each possible answer to a question. This enables an understanding of the number and percentage of respondents who gave answers to each question and provides an overview of the pattern of responses.

You can then further analyse the data through a cross-tabulation process which will enable you to cross-reference responses to one question relative to responses from one or more questions.

This could provide invaluable insight to inform your understanding of the community and shape your recommendations.

## Stage 2. Statistical Analysis

The next stage of the analysis could be to undertake statistical analysis to examine the data further and identify or confirm patterns to determine if they are statistically significant e.g. *“if a particular difference is large enough to be unlikely to have occurred due to chance or sampling error, then the difference is statistically significant”* (Marketing Research: An Integrated Approach).

# MONITORING & EVALUATION

## Have you delivered the engagement principles?

Earlier we set out how you should think about and identify your target audience. How stakeholder mapping should enable you to understand which groups, organisations and communities you need to prioritise.

Throughout this engagement and communication you should consistently monitor all activity to ensure that you are reaching your target audiences and ensure you are providing equal and appropriate opportunities for participation.

It is through monitoring and evaluation that you will be able to learn lessons and gain insight into the community's perceptions and aspirations, in so doing inform recommendations.

A communication log should be created to record all activities including participation by demographic characteristics to ensure that you don't exclude any groups. Examples of what you can monitor include:

- Media and social media monitoring and listening.
- Stakeholder feedback.
- Community feedback.
- Equality monitoring – based on your Equalities Impact Analysis.
- Registration for events like focus groups should collate EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) data.
- Scrutiny and challenge from your team.

Monitoring who is, and is not, participating in your engagement will enable you to understand if you need to redesign or change your approach to meet your audience. It will also ensure that your approach is transparent and acknowledges the challenges you may have faced.

**The Principles:** Throughout your engagement process, you should be thinking about delivering the principles outlined in this document and how you will evidence that your approach has delivered these principles.

# THINK ABOUT

There are other factors you should also consider when developing your engagement plan.

## **Capacity and Resources**

Part of community engagement is managing expectations and being clear about what project or service is or is not. Part of engagement planning is also managing expectations. It is important to prepare a plan that is deliverable. You need to consider the capacity, resources, and budget you have available to engage.

## **Skills**

You also need to consider if your team has the skills to undertake the engagement. Listening to and working with people is a skill. Is your team best placed to work with your community.

## **Timescales**

For engagement to meet our principles, it needs to take place at the right time in the wider project. You need to think about what you are asking and what influence the answer can have.

For example if you're consulting on options, you need to do so before the decision is made, so that the feedback on those options can inform the decision.

You also need to take into consideration how long different processes take.

Approaches like co-design and co-production take time to arrange and facilitate.

## **Test Your Approach**

Before going out to engage you should test your tools and approaches. For example, if you've designed a questionnaire you should ask members of the team to complete it to make sure it makes sense. Display materials, workshop plans, focus group discussion guides and other tools should all be tested.

## **Promotion and Inform**

If you're doing an engagement exercise you need to think about letting people know it is happening and how they can get involved. The council's Communication Team can help you with this.

## **GDPR**

Firstly you should ask if you need to collect participants personal identifying data. If you do please seek advice from [infogov@3csharedservices](mailto:infogov@3csharedservices).



## Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24

### Performance and Growth

#### In Progress

Topic	Membership & Scope	Lead Officer	Progress
Review of External Appointments to Outside Organisations	Cllrs S Cawley, S J Corney, I D Gardener and S A Howell	TBC	<p><b>Summer 2022:</b> Terms of Reference have been established. Questionnaire has been sent to all relevant boards and organisations. Regular meetings are established from September.</p> <p><b>September 2022:</b> Evidence and information gathering underway.</p> <p><b>November 2022:</b> Information gathering completed.</p> <p><b>February 2023:</b> Report presented to O&amp;S Panel and Cabinet</p> <p><b>March 2023:</b> Cabinet response to the report received by the Panel.</p> <p><b>July 2023:</b> Communication to be sent to all Councillors who are representatives on outside organisations to advise the new reporting progress.</p> <p><b>Next steps:</b> Plan regular review to monitor implementation of recommendations.</p>

Market Towns Programme	TBC	TBC	<b>February 2023:</b> DSO to ascertain viability for a working group to be established in line with the existing project or as a standalone.
------------------------	-----	-----	--

## Environment, Communities and Partnerships

### In Progress

Topic	Membership & Scope	Lead Officer	Progress
Climate	Councillor T D Alban Councillor J Kerr Councillor C Lowe Councillor D Shaw	Neil Sloper	<p><b>November 2022:</b> Initial Meetings held to establish Terms of Reference for the group.</p> <p><b>April 2023:</b> Regular meetings established. Evidence and information gathering to be progressed. Group to be involved in the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy Development.</p> <p><b>Next Steps:</b> Ongoing dialogue with the team to review a proposed work plan for the current municipal year for the group.</p>
<b>Climate Subgroup</b> Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy Development	Councillor T D Alban Councillor J Kerr Councillor C Lowe Councillor D Shaw	George McDowell	<p><b>February 2022:</b> Initial meeting held</p> <p><b>May 2023:</b> Regular meetings established. Residents survey agreed.</p>

			<p><b>July 2023:</b> meeting to review the outcome of the survey.</p> <p><b>Next Steps:</b> further meetings planned to progress the strategy development</p>
Flooding	n/a	Oliver Morley	<p><b>Autumn 2022:</b> The Panel requested an update on how effective the measures which were put in place in July 2021 following a Flooding Task and Finish Report have been.</p> <p><b>Autumn 2023:</b> An update will be presented to the Panel.</p>
Roman's Edge Lettings Plan	n/a		<p><b>TBC:</b> An update will be presented to the Panel.</p>

This page is intentionally left blank