

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

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