

Annexe A:

Draft Strategy

Listening, informing and working together: York's Community Engagement Strategy

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1 Aim of this strategy

The aim of this strategy is to make sure that Without Walls (the Local Strategic Partnership for York) and City of York Council can understand what people want and need from us. We will do this by making sure:

- our communities know about the services we provide and our decisions
- our communities can have their say, participating in decisions and shaping services through effective consultation
- all groups (who share an interest) and geographical areas in York are included in opportunities for consultation and engagement.

2 What we mean by 'engagement'

When we say 'engage' in this strategy, we use it in the sense of getting involved, so that to engage someone is to attract their attention, communicate with them, and work together for a shared purpose.

The government has set out a 'Duty to Involve' in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. This defines engagement in three ways.

- **Providing information**, which is more than standard information on services and should be provided in a way that can be easily accessed and understood by all.
- **Consultation**, which allows people to have a say about the decisions and services that affect them and that their views are acted upon.
- **Involvement**, which is the most interactive form of engagement and leads to more empowered individuals and communities. It can include direct participation in decision making and working with us in designing policies.

There are different types of engagement, which have varying levels of outcomes.

Some engagement is about having views heard, other types concern having views heard and acted upon, possibly changing policies and influencing decision-making.

Different aspects of work will require different approaches, with engagement being a spectrum, from communication and providing information over to the transfer of assets, commissioning and service delivery.

3 Principles of engagement - Informing

Communities need to be in a position to know how to access services, so that they can have their say and get involved in influencing those services, decisions and policies. They need to have accurate and comprehensive information relating to when and how the council makes decisions affecting services and future policy.

The key principles of good communications are that they should be:

- open and transparent
- as accessible as possible to everyone in the community
- easily understood and up-to-date
- a two-way process where possible, so we can hear and understand residents' views
- coordinated, so that Without Walls or the council can speak with one voice
- easily and instantly identifiable as coming from Without Walls or City of York Council.

4 Principles of engagement - Consulting

Consultation allows people to have their say about the decisions and services that affect them. It needs to provide genuine opportunities for people to take part and for their views to be heard and acted upon.

Consultation can vary from citywide surveys to direct dialogue such as focus groups and panels. The engagement strategy toolkit has good examples existing consultation.

The key principles of good consultation are it should:

- be meaningful, relating to a decision, service or policy that must be able to be affected by the results of the consultation
- have a clear purpose, saying why it is being carried out and how the results will be used, so that everyone understands what is being asked and why and how their involvement will influence the final decision.
- be well timed so that decisions are informed at the earliest stage possible
- represent a balanced cross section of the local community, including those who work, live, visit and study in the city, as well as groups,

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- organisations and businesses if that is appropriate be accessible in the way it is written and presented and in any venues used
- be co-ordinated and linked with other relevant services or partners to avoid 'consultation fatigue' and duplication of effort, time and cost
- be analysed and used to inform decisions, with clear feedback on what has changed as a result of the consultation provided to those consulted and the wider general public.

5 Principles of engagement - Involving

Involving is the most interactive form of engagement which is over and above being informed and consulted. It needs to give the ability for genuine influence over decision-making and delivery and can include influencing or directly participating in decisions, co-designing or commissioning services and working with the council to judge how good services are.

People can be involved through expressing an opinion at (for instance) council meetings (publicised in by the council's forward plan), working with us to design policies and services and actually carrying out some services - such as being mystery shoppers to assess how things are going or working with councillors through Scrutiny Reviews to look at services and policies.

The key principles of involvement are that it should:

- be the starting position rather than the exception, so that all services seek to include local people in the design of policies and services as matter of course
- encourage direct participation in decision making
- encourage aspects of services themselves to be delivered directly by the users of those services
- encourage individual to work with Without Walls and the council in assessing services
- be inclusive and accessible
- be transparent so that it is clear how the involvement has fed into the final decision-making.

6 An engagement toolkit

As mentioned above, a toolkit has been developed that outlines what the standards mean in practice. The toolkit provides practical information to

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council staff and any other interested person on best practice for community engagement. The toolkit is a cross-referenced online document.

We will continue to develop innovative ways to listen to and engage with the wider community, through developing best practice and harnessing new technologies. This will enable a greater influence and participation by young people in particular in the decisions that affect them, allowing the commissioning of services where possible.