
Resident engagement strategy

Summary

1. A new council-wide approach to engaging residents will better support delivery of the council plan, demonstrate how the council is “an open and transparent council” and inform the 10 year plan.
2. The term “engagement” in this report refers to both consultation – a statutory requirement on policies or schemes – and engagement that helps shape the policy approach from the outset with the ambition that joining up these conversations will better inform strategic development.
3. The term “resident” refers to residents, business owners, commuters, students, visitors, community groups and interested parties – those with individual perspectives. It does not refer to city partners or large businesses with a national or international market who represent many perspectives. Engagement plans are likely to cover both resident engagement (this approach) and stakeholder engagement.
4. To become more disciplined and consistent, resident engagement will become a single cohesive resident engagement programme supported by an in-house team that works across the organisation, consolidates emerging feedback, shares principles and assumptions, learns from previous engagement activity, reduces duplication and maximises available budget to ensure conversations join up and lead to a consistent strategic direction.
5. By taking a more disciplined approach, we will also ensure greater inclusivity by actively engaging with target communities, including those with protected characteristics (see **Annex 1A** – Better Decision Making tool).

Background

6. Over the next year, the council will continue to engage residents to deliver the council plan priorities, meeting the city’s major challenges; the climate emergency, the future of our city centre, a local transport plan and a new economic development strategy, improving emotional wellbeing and supporting early years to name but a few. Given the complexity of

issues to be addressed through public conversations in 2021, it is critical the council's engagement is consistent, accessible and reflects a joined-up approach to policy development.

7. By drawing on the principles established through the “my” engagement model, subsequent engagement activities have already informed Executive of public opinion and differing perspectives, for example: Castle Gateway, Footstreets, Groves, Woodlands and more recently Navigation Road.
8. Each of these projects, although self-contained, are not in isolation and involve capturing feedback that can and should inform development of council strategies and the 10 year plan. Resident engagement across the Place Directorate has been collated and detailed in a roadmap of engagement **Annex 1B**.
9. The People Directorate has successfully forged and established many engaging relationships at resident and community level. To ensure policy development draws on as many sources of feedback as possible, we will work with People to ensure where practical and possible feedback gathered through the People directorate informs Place policy direction.
10. Drawing on the LGA engagement framework “increasing levels of public impact” (see **Annex 1C**) our resident engagement will now become more strategic with the support of a disciplined programme approach.
11. By responding to the challenge of engaging residents (especially those with a declared interest) in multiple complex and cross-cutting themes throughout 2021, we will ensure policy better represents the needs of the city.
12. These themes inform future strategies, such as the Local Transport Plan, the latest Carbon Reduction Plan, the housing/council plan assets approach, health and wellbeing and the Economic Strategy to improve the city's longer-term recovery outcomes described through the 10 year plan.
13. By taking every opportunity to embed public health concerns and support community resilience we will ensure policy development focuses on wider city ambitions and not just those around built infrastructure. In addition, the feedback will influence and support third party plans for the city including housing developments, potential economic or infrastructure developments and health or social inequalities initiatives contributing to the 10 year plan.

14. There is a risk that by continuing to take a project by project approach and not following this strategy, resident feedback could lead to conflicting strategies with policy that does not align.
15. Taking a disciplined approach to resident engagement will also help with internal information sharing and identify delivery issues as different projects uncover different challenges. It will reduce duplication and surface potential tensions between projects that can then be resolved/mitigated through ongoing engagement.

Scope

16. This strategy covers both consultation and engagement. It draws on the Local Government Association framework for resident engagement - *New Conversations Guide*.

17. ¹The Local Government Association uses the below definitions:

- Consultation: “The dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based upon a genuine exchange of views with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action.”
- Engagement “Developing and sustaining a working relationship between one or more public body and one or more community group, to help them both to understand and act on the needs or issues that the community experiences.”

18. This approach will be used for:

- activities within the Place directorate which informs one of the three core strategies (transport, carbon reduction and economy). This will include certain statutory consultations such as for temporary road closures.
- drawing on consultation and engagement activities taking place in People that have the potential to inform these strategies, for example the Older Person forum which is currently defining what an age friendly city might look like.

¹ [New Conversations Guide refresh 11.pdf \(local.gov.uk\)](#)
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Aims

19. The aims of the resident engagement strategy are to:

- a) Collate resident feedback to contribute to the development of the 10 year plan through the development of the carbon reduction, transport and economic strategies, health and wellbeing strategy, and to inform the council's approach to built infrastructure.
- b) Identify gaps in our understanding of resident feedback, either by theme or by audience (such as younger people) to ensure engagement is inclusive and represents the views of as much of the city as possible.

Objectives

20. The objectives for the resident engagement strategy are:

- a) Develop and deliver ONE programme of resident engagement (**Annex 1B**) (called *Our Big Conversation*), that informs multiple strategies, projects and schemes taking a pan-organisation approach to break down internal silos and adhering to the LGA engagement framework (**Annex 1C**).
- b) Establish governance comprised of:
 - i) Portfolio decision sessions held in April/May will consider the strategic approach to resident engagement for economy, city centre access and transport that reflects this approach. A portfolio decision session to consider engagement for carbon reduction will be held later, although still reflect this approach.
 - ii) Challenge and steer will be provided via the Executive Corporate Recovery Group (CRG)
 - iii) An Executive update every other month at PH/CMT will share feedback and add perspectives
 - iv) Regularly meet with stakeholders to cross-share/promote feedback from other areas (for example the economic partnership would receive an update about feedback shared with the climate commission, the city leaders will receive an update to inform the 10 year plan, etc.)
 - v) A task and finish group comprised of officers will support technical delivery of the programme

- c) Build resident confidence by being clear, visible and open:
 - clear about the purpose of engagement – using a common language and approach to describing engagement.
 - visible about decisions that have already steered the projects to avoid undermining decision making
 - open about how feedback is shaping activities and moving policy forward.
- d) Identify target communities and join-up conversations to support more inclusive engagement through targeted engagement activities.
- e) Develop an engagement framework to support officers deliver activities that have a low environmental impact, are inclusive and can share feedback between projects.
- f) Publish thematic engagement plans for individual strategies that include community impact assessments and are aligned to this approach.
- g) Deliver a joined up communications campaign to encourage greater participation, across council and partner channels.
- h) Identify gaps in audience engagement, thematic understanding and inclusivity and find innovative ways to address these, including working closely with Community Voices programme and Human Rights Network where appropriate. An audience map with recommendations to address gaps is in **annex 1D**.
- i) Share insight and resolve tensions to inform multiple strategies, including the 10 year plan.

Resourcing options

21. There are three different options to deliver the resident engagement strategy through an annual engagement programme:

- a. Do nothing: Continue with the current approach, outsourcing engagement to different suppliers, with no common shared approach or framework. This will continue to duplicate effort and associated costs, with no clear oversight.
- b. Outsource: Outsource the engagement programme to an engagement agency. The cost of this is prohibitive particularly as much subject

matter expertise rests in the council which would still require capacity to support an external agency, duplicating costs.

- c. Blend in-house with external support: Deliver a blend of internal and external support. Increasing capacity in-house to provide strategic engagement expertise supporting project teams on key themes and supporting ward members and community teams to facilitate conversations that collate resident feedback from local areas. Outsource to agencies niche activities where it is appropriate to do so,

22. It is recommended we progress option c) a blend of additional in-house capacity with external support. This will retain subject matter expertise within the council and allow us to build capability within project teams to sustain the approach in the longer term. We will commission additional external support when required, for example to explore a deeper dialogue for in depth analysis of different transport models, to allow the council to explore subjects which might be better facilitated by a third party.

Budget

23. No additional budget is anticipated. This proposal recommends maximising agreed available capital budgets only.
24. Resident and stakeholder engagement funding is on a project-by-project basis. By consolidating available budgets, reducing duplication and working across the projects to deliver on the strategic intent, there is the potential to make better use of the available budget, increasing the ambition and influence of resident engagement with more opportunity for member involvement and engagement in the process.

Council Plan

25. The information contained above details how we will collate resident feedback to help set the right conditions for the city to recover and, in tandem, deliver the priorities set out in the Council Plan.
26. This report has the following implications:
- **Financial** - budget to fund activities is from approved capital budget initially set aside for 2021/22 engagement and consultations
 - **Human Resources (HR)** – recruitment of 12 month resource
 - **One Planet Council/ Equalities** – Each thematic engagement plan will include a published community impact assessment. The Better decision making tool for this strategy is attached in annex 1A. The key actions resulting from this are:

- Through the resident engagement framework describe activities that have the least environmental impact, preserve the natural environment and promote sustainability.
 - Collate data of residents taking part to better understand those community groups who have contributed and those who have not.
 - Develop an inclusive engagement toolkit in partnership with community groups with a declared interest/protected characteristic to make sure the engagement approaches used best meet the widest needs.
 - Map audience groups by characteristics to identify gaps and explore solutions to address.
- **Legal Implications** – statutory responsibility to consult on different projects such as the Local Transport Plan and Local Plan.
 - **Crime and Disorder** – no implications
 - **Information Technology** – appropriate online engagement platform
 - **Property** – not applicable
 - **Other** –

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Annexes

- 1A – Better Decision making tool
- 1B – Our Big Conversation – roadmap
- 1C – Local government engagement framework
- 1D – Audience map and recommendations