

To the Mayor and Members of Cabinet

COMMUNITY ENAGEMENT FRAMEWORK: POLICY

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Cllr McGuinness: Portfolio Holder for Communities, Voluntary Sector and the Environment	All	Yes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Council engages with residents, communities and with businesses on a regular basis. The Community Engagement framework will ensure we bring consistency to our engagement activity cross the Council by;
 - a) Developing a policy that articulates what and why community engagement is important
 - b) Developing a Strategy which details how we will achieve what is important to us (the things we will do) – consulting with people in the process
 - c) Refresh the Community Engagement Toolkit so there are clear tools and techniques available to staff.
2. This report gives the detail on the Community Engagement Policy and the outline for consultation on the Community Engagement Strategy based around four key policy statements;
 - We will Listen and Understand
 - Doncaster people will inform our Policy and we will keep people informed
 - We will be Inclusive and act with Purpose
 - We need to make the most of what already exists in communities and where possible increase Community Capacity

EXEMPT REPORT

3. N/A

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. The recommendations arising from this report are;
 1. Cabinet approve the Community Engagement Policy (Annex A).
 2. Note the Community Engagement Strategy Consultation outline (Annex B) and Due Regard Statement (Annex C).

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

5. Good quality community engagement is key part of our conversations with citizens across the borough. The community engagement policy sets out what and why community engagement is important to the Council and begins to set expectations from citizens on how they can get involved, and when they do, the quality that should be expected.

BACKGROUND

6. Good community engagement activity has and is happening in across council services but there are areas we can improve and be more consistent. This framework provides a common approach to community engagement across the Council. The aims being to improve the quality and achieve better co-ordination of community engagement activity across the work that we do.
7. The Community Engagement Framework contains three key parts, firstly the Community Engagement Policy, which answers the question what is important and why. Secondly there is the Community Engagement Strategy which will consider how we can achieve what is set out in the Policy and finally the Community Engagement Toolkit which will contain key information for staff to support the implementation of the strategy.
8. The development of the policy has had key input from across the Council to create a set of policy statements which set out what is important or the 'ends' of our work on community engagement which are outlined in the Executive Summary section of this report. Agreement of this policy is the first key step in fully realising our ambitions for a common approach to community engagement as a Council.

THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

10. The Community engagement policy is the articulation of what is important to the council over the next four years. There is a clear ladder of activity for community engagement which starts at informing people right up to individuals and communities taking decisions about their area. We are clear that it is important to get the right people involved at the right time not necessarily all people involved all of the time. The policy sets out four key statements that will guide our engagement work;
 - a) We will Listen and Understand
 - b) Doncaster people will inform our Policy and we will keep people informed
 - c) We will be Inclusive and act with Purpose
 - d) We will make the most of what already exists in communities and where possible increase Community Capacity
11. These policy statements will also direct our approach to our programmes of activity of the next four years ensuring robust and consistent ways of putting people central in the development of our policies and decisions and maximising our success. The Community Engagement Policy in full is contained in **Annex A**.

NEXT STEPS

12. Once the Policy has been agreed the work to understand what we will do differently and how we will make those changes will be developed into a Community Engagement Strategy. In developing the strategy we will build upon what we have achieved in the past and use the policy statements (as described in Para 10) as a guide to develop new activity and ideas. We also need to acknowledge where we need to improve, for example, we need a better approach to co-ordinating the Voluntary, Community Faith (VCF) sector; although we will be appointing a VCF role within the Council to support this it is an area we will cover as part of developing the strategy.
13. Furthermore the development of the strategy should allow time to consult with people across Doncaster so that they can inform the strategy and the actions that we take and we aim to undertake this consultation late summer with a Strategy being available in autumn 2017. **Annex B** lists the examples of community engagement activity already taken and some areas of focus for the Community Engagement Strategy.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Option 1: Do nothing

14. This option is not recommended as it will not allow the co-ordination and improvement of engagement activity consistently across the council. There will be a continuation of the current system which is not fit for purpose as we embark on ambitious programme of reform, potentially minimising what we can achieve in the long term.

Option 2: Adopt the community engagement policy presented at Annex A and proceed with consultation on the Community Engagement Strategy, outline presented at Annex B

15. This is the recommended option. It provides the council with clear way forward to improve how we engage with people and a commitment to consult with people on how we achieve this.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

16. There are ambitious plans for the borough and the Council and part of that is having a modern and fit for purpose approach to engaging with local people, communities and businesses. This approach will put people at the centre of the solutions to the challenges that face the borough, and its public services. The draft Community Engagement Policy is the first step in this approach.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

17.

Outcomes	Implications
<p>All people in Doncaster benefit from a thriving and resilient economy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Be a strong voice for our veterans</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i> 	<p>Community Engagement is key to the achievement of all of our key strategic priorities.</p>
<p>People live safe, healthy, active and independent lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i> 	
<p>People in Doncaster benefit from a high quality built and natural environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i> 	
<p>All families thrive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i> 	
<p>Council services are modern and value for money.</p>	
<p>Working with our partners we will provide strong leadership and governance.</p>	

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

18. There are a number of risk and assumptions associated with the development of the Community Engagement Policy;

- The Community Engagement Policy sets out some expectations on quality and standards which effectively sets the bar for what we should achieve. If we do not meet these expectations there is a reputational risk and a future confidence risk in the work that we do.
- The need to be able to maximise our current networks with community groups to connect to the right people at the right time. This will also encourage further networks to be made with different groups and individuals.
- The need to provide quality information, resources and support to any engagement activity but specifically Elected Councillors as the

democratically elected representative for their local area

- Individuals and communities will need to get involved – the success of this framework will depend on people feeling that by being involved they can make a difference.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

19. There is no general statutory duty to consult communities, though the Council can consult where they consider it appropriate. By having a policy, the Council should ensure that it is complied with unless there are specific reasons not, to as failure to follow its own policy could make the Council vulnerable to a Judicial Review challenge.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

20. There may be financial implications arising from specific actions developed as part of the Community Engagement Strategy which will be considered as part of that report.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

21. There are no apparent HR implications as far as this report is concerned.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

22. There are no apparent technology implications as far as this report is concerned. Any implications that may form part of the Community Engagement Strategy will be considered as part of that report.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

23. The Due Regard Statement (DRS) contained within **Annex C** contains the Equalities Implications associated with the Community Engagement Policy.

CONSULTATION

24. There have been several discussions of this approach with key Heads of Service, Directorate DLTs, Directors, OSMC, portfolio holder for Communities, Voluntary Sector and the Environment and the partnership inclusion and fairness forum.
25. As we develop the Community Engagement Strategy we will need to consult further and wider on the key things that will enable us to achieve what is set out in the Community Engagement Policy, including the public and key partners. **Annex B** lists the examples of community engagement activity already taken and some areas of focus for the Community Engagement Strategy.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

26. None.

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