

ANGUS COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 6 DECEMBER 2022

COMMUNICATION, ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

REPORT BY ALISON SMITH, DIRECTOR OF VIBRANT COMMUNITIES AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

ABSTRACT

This report presents and seeks approval for the new Angus Council Communication, Engagement and Consultation Policy.

1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Approves the Communication, Engagement and Consultation Policy attached at Appendix 1; and
- (ii) Notes the Framework approach for delivery of the Communication, Engagement and Consultation Policy detailed in paragraph 4.4.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN

This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Community Plan 2017-2030

- Angus is a good place to live in, work in and visit:
- Our communities are safe, secure, and vibrant:
- Individuals are supported in their own communities with good quality services.

And to the Angus Council Plan 2021-2024 priorities of

- Angus to be a go-to place for business
- To maximise inclusion and reduce inequalities
- Our communities to be strong, resilient, and led by citizens

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The council's Consultation Improvement Strategy was adopted in 2001. It has not been updated since. A review of current practice highlighted the need to bring together all engagement and consultation in Angus to avoid duplication and over consultation with our citizens and other stakeholders.

3.3 At its meeting on 24th June 2021 (Report no. 210/21), Angus Council:

- Approved the recruitment of the replacement post - Director of Vibrant Communities and Growth to bring together the previous Communities Directorate with the Economic Development service to drive economic and green growth, lead on climate change and create vibrant and sustainable communities across Angus.
- Approved recruitment for a new fixed term Service Leader post to lead the Vibrant Communities Service with a broad remit to:
 - Improve Angus Council's community engagement and empowerment by building this approach into our organisational culture.

- Reinvigorate and focus our work on demand management and the progression of Community Wealth Building and community empowerment and ownership.
 - Continue our journey of creating an organisational culture that is customer focussed, built upon collaboration and service integration, delivered through an empowered workforce.
- 3.3 The [Best Value Assurance Report](#) for Angus Council prepared by Audit Scotland, issued in July 2022, focussed on the council's approach to community engagement in the setting of its priorities; in delivering services; and the effectiveness and impact of public engagement. It was acknowledged engagement would continue with the understanding that a new Framework for consultation and engagement would be developed and embedded into the council's work going forward.
- 3.4 Internal discussion with services on council-led community engagement activity was undertaken at the beginning of this year. A significant amount of research was conducted regarding other current public sector community engagement strategies. An audit was carried out on all engagement software that services currently use to engage and consult with partners or the public. Other changes that have influenced the development of the policy and staff guidance include the introduction of the [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#), the refresh of [the National Standards for Community Engagement](#), the recent publication of [National Standards for Community Engagement for Recovery and Renewal](#), the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#), the Angus Council [Best Value Assurance Report](#), the development of the [Participatory Budgeting Charter for Scotland, place and well being outcomes](#), publication of the [principles for community empowerment](#), [Planning with People](#) and [Transforming planning engagement](#).
- 3.5 Staff consultation through Service discussions and through Yammer, the Council's internal social media tool, took place to ensure a wide reach to staff on this policy. The consultation has provided valuable feedback, which has informed the strategy and helped shape the final version.
- 3.6 A steering group of officers included Communications; Planning; IT; Community Planning, and Vibrant Communities was established to develop a new framework for communication, engagement, and consultation. This will enable the council to work with communities across Angus to ensure that they influence local decision-making structures and service delivery.
- 3.7 A preferred option for an online engagement platform that will underpin engagement activity has been identified after demonstrations from five suppliers; engagement with other councils in Scotland was carried out to review the systems they use and provide insights from their approach to public engagement; and an audit of all Angus Council engagement software has been carried out and reviewed with a view to consolidating these and making a financial saving and efficiency. The estimated 4-year expenditure for a new platform is below £50,000 and therefore is expenditure within Director's delegated powers. The internal steering group will assess all information and will make a recommendation to the Director, with the Procurement team's advice, as to whether to go out to tender or make a compliant call-off from a Framework.

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Angus Council is committed to adapt how we work and shift our focus to working more closely with our citizens, our communities, our businesses: putting them at the heart of everything we do for better outcomes. We want to increase our community engagement and work with the Angus Health and Social Care Partnership and our Community Planning Partners to do the same. As our budgets reduce significantly in real terms, our services change significantly and the demands on the council increase, we must work more closely with communities to target our resources. It will be vital to engage with our communities on how we shape the future. To achieve this, we must build and maintain closer relationships with communities and be better able to explain why changes to services are required. Therefore, there is a real and urgent need to improve the frequency and quality of our engagements to make them more relevant and easier to understand, as well as develop our engagement methods to encourage greater participation and provide better feedback to communities on the results and impact of engagements.

- 4.2 This Communication, Engagement and Consultation Policy has been developed to detail Angus Council's position, role, and commitments to ensure community engagement is integrated into Council activities to support decision making, build relationships and strengthen communities. This policy seeks to improve engagement processes and outcomes by encouraging a consistent approach and continual learning through evaluation and expanding the range of engagement methods used.
- 4.3 Community engagement is the responsibility of all Council service areas, teams, and employees. The Policy will direct the engagement and the framework will provide the monitoring, training and tools to ensure effective delivery.
- 4.4 The Policy ensures that key stakeholders across Angus have a voice to influence the development of Council services that will affect their lives and inform how services and developments in Angus are planned and implemented. This Policy forms part of an Engagement Framework and includes guidance, evaluation and monitoring processes, and links to other related strategies. The Policy will be supported and delivered by:
- Developing a portal for all engagement and consultation to be held and analysed in one place for the communities to have easy access
 - Developing a consistent approach to engagement and consultation
 - Developing a consistent approach to monitoring and evaluation
 - Utilising the expertise and the success of 'Ambassador roles' to build capacity within the organisation
 - Ensuring staff are fully informed and aware of the policy through launching the Communication, Engagement and Consultation Framework.
 - Facilitating awareness sessions to share learning
 - Allowing access to staff training modules in Always Learning

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Engagement and Consultation Portal will replace various current software, saving costs to Angus Council. A single policy approach to Angus Council's communication, engagement and consultation arrangements will create staffing efficiencies through the reduction of public engagement and consultations.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached.

9. CONSULTATION

All staff across the council have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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List of Appendices:

- Appendix 1 - Angus Council Communications, Engagement and Consultation Policy (separate Attachment)
Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment



Appendix 2

Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment Form

(To be completed with reference to Guidance Notes)

Step 1

Name of Proposal (includes e. g. budget savings, committee reports, strategies, policies, procedures, service reviews, and functions):

Communication, Engagement and Consultation Policy Framework

Step 2

Is this only a **screening** Equality Impact Assessment

No

(A) If Yes, please choose from the following options **all** reasons why a full EIA/FSD is not required:

(i) It does not impact on people

Yes/No

(ii) It is a percentage increase in fees which has no differential impact on protected characteristics

Yes/No

(iii) It is for information only

Yes/No

(iv) It is reflective e.g. of budget spend over a financial year

Yes/No

(v) It is technical

Yes/No

If you have answered yes to any of points above, please go to **Step 16**, and sign off the Assessment.

(B) If you have answered No to the above, please indicate the following:

Is this a full Equality Impact Assessment Yes
Is this a Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment No

If you have answered Yes to either or both of the above, continue with Step 3.

If your proposal is a **strategy** please ensure you complete Step 13 which is the Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment.

Step 3

(i)Lead Directorate/Service:

Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth

(ii)Are there any **relevant** statutory requirements affecting this proposal? If so, please describe.

This Policy is an outcome of the Angus Council BV audit to improve engagement and consultation in Angus

(iii)What is the aim of the proposal? Please give full details.

Communication, Engagement and Consultation Policy Framework

(iv)Is it a new proposal? Yes Please indicate OR

Is it a review of e.g. an existing budget saving, report, strategy, policy, service review, procedure or function? Yes/No Please indicate

Step 4: Which people does your proposal involve or have consequences for?

Please indicate all which apply:

Employees Yes

Job Applicants No

Service users Yes

Members of the public Yes

Step 5: List the evidence/data/research that has been used in this assessment (links to data sources, information etc which you may find useful are in the Guidance). This could include:

Internal data (e.g. customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).

An audit was carried out on all engagement software and engagements and consultations that services use.

Internal consultation (e.g. with staff, trade unions and any other services affected).

Internal discussion with services on council-led community engagement activity was undertaken at the beginning of this year. A steering group of officers from a range of services has been set up to move forward the proposals on the Portal.

External data (e.g. Census, equality reports, equality evidence finder, performance reports, research, available statistics)

A significant amount of research was conducted regarding other current public sector community engagement strategies. An audit was carried out on all engagement software that services currently use to engage and consult with partners or the public. Other changes that have influenced the development of the policy and staff guidance include the introduction of the [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#), the refresh of [the National Standards for Community Engagement](#), the recent publication of [National Standards for Community Engagement for Recovery and Renewal](#), the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#) the Angus Council [Best Value Assurance Report](#), the development of the [Participatory Budgeting Charter for Scotland, place and well being outcomes](#), publication of the [principles for community empowerment](#), [Planning with People](#) and [Transforming planning engagement](#)

External consultation (e.g. partner organisations, national organisations, community groups, other councils).

Consultation with Partners and engagement has been carried out with other local Authorities.

Other (general information as appropriate).

Step 6: Evidence Gaps.

Are there any gaps in the equality information you currently hold? No

If yes, please state what they are, and what measures you will take to obtain the evidence you need.

Step 7: Are there potential differential impacts on protected characteristic groups? Please complete for each group, including details of the potential impact on those affected. Please remember to take into account any particular impact resulting from **Covid-19**.

Please state if there is a potentially positive, negative, neutral or unknown impact for each group. Please state the reason(s) why.

Age

Impact

Positive impact as the policy will allow methods of engagement and consultation for all age groups. Statistically those who are older are more likely to face a digital barrier to participation, therefore Training will be given for staff to help reach the seldom heard and those that have no access to digital devices.

Disability

Impact

Depending on the nature of a person's disability, they may face additional barriers to digital participation, therefore additional support will be provided for them, along with alternative formats, as necessary.

Gender reassignment

Impact

Positive impact as the policy will allow methods of engagement and consultation for all

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Impact

Positive impact as the policy will allow methods of engagement and consultation for all

Pregnancy/Maternity

Impact

Positive impact as the policy will allow methods of engagement and consultation for all

Race - (includes Gypsy Travellers)

Impact

Positive impact as the policy will allow methods of engagement and consultation for all. Information will be provided in alternative languages as requested to allow full participation

Religion or Belief

Impact

Positive impact as the policy will allow methods of engagement and consultation for all

Sex

Impact

Positive impact as the policy will allow methods of engagement and consultation for all

Sexual orientation

Impact

Positive impact as the policy will allow methods of engagement and consultation for all

Step 8: Consultation with any of the groups potentially affected

If you have consulted with any group potentially affected, please give details of how this was done and what the results were.

If you have not consulted with any group potentially affected, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating action of any negative impact (Step 9)?

Step 9: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce potentially negative impacts?

No potentially negative impacts have been identified

Step 10: If a potentially negative impact has been identified, please state below the justification.

No potentially negative impacts have been identified

Step 11: In what way does this proposal contribute to any or all of the public sector equality duty to: eliminate unlawful discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between people of different protected characteristics?

The Engagement and Consultation Policy and delivery framework has been developed to reduce inequalities and to ensure that all citizens of Angus have a voice and can assist in the development of services and council decisions, thereby advancing equality of opportunity.

Step 12: Is there any action which could be taken to advance equalities in relation to this proposal?

Staff will be trained and the Vibrant Communities staff will assist in ensuring that those that have no access to digital devices still have a voice and can participate in the ongoing engagement.

Step 13: FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY

This step is only applicable to **strategies** which are key, high level decisions. If your proposal is **not** a strategy, please leave this Step blank, and go to Step 14.

Links to data sources, information etc which you may find useful are in the Guidance.

Step 13(A) What evidence do you have about any socio-economic disadvantage/inequalities of outcome in relation to this strategic issue?

Step 13(B) Please state if there are any gaps in socio-economic evidence for this strategy and how you will take measures to gather the evidence you need.

Step 13(C) Are there any potential impacts this strategy may have specifically on the undernoted groupings? Please remember to take into account any particular impact resulting from **Covid-19**.

Please state if there is a potentially positive, negative, neutral or unknown impact for each grouping.

Low and/or No Wealth (e.g. those with enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future.

Impact

Material Deprivation (i.e. those unable to access basic goods and services e.g. repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies).

Impact

Area Deprivation (i.e. where people live (e.g. rural areas), or where they work (e.g. accessibility of transport).

Impact

Socio-economic Background i.e. social class including parents' education, people's employment and income.

Impact

Other – please indicate

Step 13(D) Please state below if there are measures which could be taken to reduce socio-economic disadvantage/inequalities of outcome.

Step 14: What arrangements will be put in place to monitor and review the Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment?

The EIA will be monitored as the strategy develops

Step 15: Where will this Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment be published?

Alongside the committee report

Step 16: Sign off and Authorisation. Please state name, post, and date for each:

Prepared by: Audrey Michie, Service Leader, Vibrant Communities

Reviewed by: Doreen Phillips, Snr Practitioner (Equalities) 6/10/22

Approved by: Alison Smith, Director of Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth

NB. There are several worked examples of separate EIA and FSD Assessments in the Guidance which may be of use to you.
