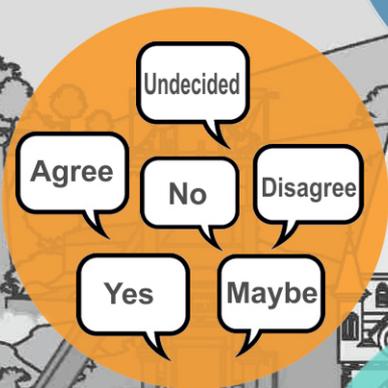


Involving NPT

Involving you in creating a better life in a better place for a better future

Neath Port Talbot Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2018-2020





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Neath Port Talbot Consultation and Engagement Strategy

1. Introduction

The Council’s vision is to create a Neath Port Talbot where everyone has an equal chance to get on in life – a place where people want to live, learn and work and bring up their families.

Key to this is giving everyone the opportunity to be involved in decisions that affect them. Equally important is the need to update them on how their views have influenced these decisions.

‘Involving NPT’ sets out how, at a time of rapid social and technological change, the Council will improve its understanding of people’s needs, views and experiences and how we will use this feedback, alongside other evidence, to inform decisions on policy and service change.

It is based on the premise that through clear communication and effective consultation and engagement, we can help manage public expectations, as well as understand people’s views on the way forward so that they can influence the shape of local services now and into the future.

This strategy underpins the Communications and Community Relations Strategy 2018-2020 and thus supports the delivery of ‘Shaping NPT’, the Council’s Corporate Plan. It will be regularly reviewed and its aims and objectives will be implemented through annual action plans.

2. Context

Involving people in the planning, design and delivery of services helps to build partnerships with communities, recognise local issues and identify areas for service improvement.

Continual and open dialogue builds a culture of transparency and trust, which is a critical element of what we want to achieve. Likewise, being open about the challenges facing the Council and involving local people, staff and other stakeholders in identifying solutions are fundamental building blocks in delivering high quality, safe and sustainable services that meet local needs.

The rise of digital technology presents new opportunities to involve and engage with our communities. Equally, we are aware that digital media is not the preference of all citizens, so we need to ensure that there is a choice of ways to engage.

In September 2017, Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board published its Citizen Engagement Scheme to support partners who are leading an engagement activity to collaborate more effectively and identify crucial stakeholders, as well as focus on resources and avoid duplication.

The Council already consults and engages with its stakeholders in a number of ways and whilst there are examples of good practice across the authority there is a need for more consistency and a more joined up and coordinated approach.

In July 2017 a decision was taken to move away from the Council's consultation portal (Objective) in favour of Snap Survey software. Snap is a more user friendly option, offering opportunities for tailored analysis and reporting and a webhost solution where all consultations are stored. Prior to the decision, officers in IT determined that Snap met all the Council's security requirements and the company has given assurances that all of the data collected is hosted on servers based within the United Kingdom, an important consideration in terms of our data holdings being covered under EU Law.

'Involving NPT' will provide a framework for how we will improve the way we provide information, carry out consultation and engagement and bring together feedback from consultations across the Council to form a more rounded picture of what people in Neath Port Talbot think, need and want. It will show how, over time, we will strengthen and develop our approaches to collaboration and empowerment.

2.1 Our duty to engage

All public services in Wales have a duty to engage and consult with citizens. This has been strengthened through a range of UK and Welsh Government policies and legislation.

Effective involvement of people is one of the five ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Section 5 of the Act states that a public body must take account of:

- (b) the importance of involving other persons with an interest in achieving the well-being goals and of ensuring those persons reflect the diversity of the population of –
 - I. Wales (where the body exercises functions in relation to the whole of Wales), or;
 - II. The part of Wales in relation to which the body exercises functions.

The SPSF1 Core Guidance of the Well Being and Future Generations Act highlights why we need to work in this way and states that:

Effective involvement of people and communities is at the heart of improving well-being currently and in the future. It recognises the importance of involving people in decisions that affect them. This builds on the Citizen-Centred Governance Principles, National Principles for Public engagement and the National Participation

Standards for Children and Young People. Within the existing legislative context, for the most part, there are already specific provisions for community and citizen engagement and consultation on certain activities carried out by organisations.

The Act is clear that you must ensure that the people you involve reflect the diversity of the population that you serve. This entails involving the people and communities whose well-being you are seeking to improve.

The Welsh Government's 2004 policy document *Making the Connections* emphasised the need for putting the citizen at centre stage, arguing for "greater participation by citizens, communities and businesses in the way that services are designed and delivered".

The Equalities Act 2010 requires us to consider ways of eliminating discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and explore potential impacts on protected characteristic groups. These groups are based around: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation. The Act also requires us to undertake robust Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to ensure that any negative impacts on protected groups because of our policies or service changes are identified and addressed.

The Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act (2014) changes the way people's needs are assessed and the way services are delivered, giving people more of a say in the care and support they receive. It also introduces a duty on local authorities and health boards to be proactive in promoting people's involvement in the design and delivery of services. Section 16 of the Act clearly states that a local authority:

Must promote the involvement of persons for whom care and support or preventative services are to be provided in the design and operation of that provision

Consequently, our consultation and involvement activities need to be undertaken in the most appropriate and effective way so that they are inclusive and reflect the diversity of the populations of Neath Port Talbot, including vulnerable or marginalised groups, children and young people.

The Welsh Language standards clearly state that any public participation must be available in Welsh, including general correspondence, advertising materials, invitations, promotional items and provision of translation services must also be available if requested

2.2 GDPR

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was approved and adopted by the EU Parliament in April 2016. The regulation came into force in May 2018. All organisations that process data about individuals in the context of selling goods or services to citizens in other EU countries need to comply with the GDPR, irrespective as to whether or not the UK retains the GDPR post-Brexit

Under GDPR, people have new and enhanced rights over how organisations process their personal data. This includes being able to withdraw consent in situations where it has to be explicit and freely given, and organisations will no longer be able to rely on implied consent.

All of our consultation and engagement activity must be GDPR compliant.

2.3 Survey Software

The official survey software provider for all of Neath Port Talbot Council is 'SnapSurveys'; other than 'Objective' which is used for the Local Development Plan. Other platforms should not be used.

3. Aims and Objectives

Aims:

To gain a better understanding of the views, wants and needs of people, communities and organisations in Neath Port Talbot through effective, accessible consultation and engagement, so as to involve and empower them to influence planning, decision making and service delivery.

Objectives:

1. To determine whether residents of the county borough, partners and wider stakeholders are supportive of and have a consistent understanding of the Council's vision and priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan 2017-2022;
2. To strengthen the Council's approach to consultation and engagement so that people can express their views and opinions about the Council's work and feel that their voices are heard
3. To encourage as many people as possible to respond to our consultation and engagement activities so that decisions are based on reliable feedback.
4. To develop a central repository for feedback collected from around the Council as a source of secondary research and build a reliable, robust and comprehensive picture of what people in Neath Port Talbot think, need and want

4. Principles of Engagement

We will embrace a rights-based approach to our consultation and engagement work, following the principles of empowerment, participation, non-discrimination and accountability.

This strategy also reflects the National Principles for Engagement produced by Participation Cymru (Appendix 1).

Our engagement activities will be:

- Sustainable – not just based on 'one-off' meetings
- Practical – not too bureaucratic
- Honest – so people can give their feedback about their experiences and share ideas
- Responsive – so people will know they have been listened to and taken seriously
- Creative – so people can help design improvements to services

Our engagement model will be:

- Transparent and well communicated – to help build a trusting environment

- Empowering to all leading to meaningful change – making sure the public feel part of our process and able to influence our plans Creative – we will need to adapt what we do to different audiences and use technology and innovation wherever appropriate
- Accessible – we must go to people rather than expect them to come to us
- Inclusive – we must give everyone the opportunity to participate

5. Audiences

Our main audiences are:

- Residents and customers;
- Businesses and investors;
- The community and voluntary sector;
- Special Interest Groups;
- NPTCBC employees and their representatives;
- Elected Members;
- Suppliers;
- MPs, MEPs and AMs;
- Welsh Government and UK Government; and
- Government agencies
- Visitors;

6. Our Strategy

We will make it easy and appealing for our residents, partners and wider stakeholders to give us feedback on our work and to contribute to decision making by:

- a. Having due regard for Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board Citizen Engagement Scheme in all of our consultation and engagement activities
- b. Developing effective and inclusive consultation and engagement exercises that set reasonable expectations about what can and cannot be changed as a result
- c. Establishing a Citizens panel made up of residents from across Neath Port Talbot (including Council staff) who are willing to share their views by completing surveys and occasionally taking part in other activities such as focus groups, workshops, or forums.
- d. Creating a single 'Have your say' landing page on our website for current and closed consultation exercises
- e. Making the most of the opportunities presented by digital technology, whilst ensuring all of our activity is inclusive by identifying and utilising the most appropriate ways to engage with specific stakeholder groups and those without digital access
- f. Letting people know how their feedback helped influence decisions e.g. 'You said...we did'
- g. Identifying opportunities to increase our reach into communities through partnership working

We will embed a culture of consultation and engagement across the Council by:

- a. Ensuring that when important decisions are made, robust and reliable information and stakeholders' feedback is made available to decision makers. This will ensure decisions are based on insight

- b. Establishing a network / community of practice from across the Council (the Corporate Engagement Group) to ensure a coordinated approach to consultation and engagement
- c. Ensuring officers are adequately equipped with the necessary skills and tools to design consultations, collect feedback in a timely way and accurately interpret the results
- d. Developing a Consultation and Engagement Toolkit to ensure a corporate and consistent approach to all activities
- e. Developing systems and processes for collating all consultation and engagement feedback from across the Council in a central resource, to form a reliable, robust and more comprehensive picture of what people in Neath Port Talbot think, need and want
- f. Developing a forward planning process/consultation calendar
- g. Improving analysis, interpretation and sharing of information to inform decision making, utilising the agreed technology (i.e. Snap Software)
- h. Keeping up-to-date with any relevant changes in legislation and exploring examples of innovation and good practice

7. Measuring impact

Evaluation allows us to assess our performance in delivering on our objectives and helps us improve going forward. The measurement and evaluation of our engagement activity needs to be outcome focused, robust and consistent. We will seek to improve evaluation capability and standards in line with industry best practice.

There is little benchmarking information available at the time of preparing this Strategy. Therefore, a priority action over the remainder of 2018/19 will be to agree a set of performance metrics and then, in 2019/20 put in place the means to report on them.

Initial performance metrics include:

- The number of people on the citizens panel
- The number of consultations conducted
- The number of responses per consultation
- The number of hits to the 'have your say' webpage

NATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN WALES



- 1 Engagement is effectively designed to make a difference**
Engagement gives a real chance to influence policy, service design and delivery from an early stage.
- 2 Encourage and enable everyone affected to be involved, if they so choose**
The people affected by an issue or change are included in opportunities to engage as an individual or as part of a group or community, with their views both respected and valued.
- 3 Engagement is planned and delivered in a timely and appropriate way**
The engagement process is clear, communicated to everyone in a way that's easy to understand within a reasonable timescale, and the most suitable method/s for those involved is used.
- 4 Work with relevant partner organisations**
Organisations should communicate with each other and work together wherever possible to ensure that people's time is used effectively and efficiently.
- 5 The information provided will be jargon free, appropriate and understandable**
People are well placed to take part in the engagement process because they have easy access to relevant information that is tailored to meet their needs.
- 6 Make it easier for people to take part**
People can engage easily because any barriers for different groups of people are identified and addressed.
- 7 Enable people to take part effectively**
Engagement processes should try to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence of all participants.
- 8 Engagement is given the right resources and support to be effective**
Appropriate training, guidance and support are provided to enable all participants to effectively engage, including both community participants and staff.
- 9 People are told the impact of their contribution**
Timely feedback is given to all participants about the views they expressed and the decisions or actions taken as a result; methods and form of feedback should take account of participants' preferences.
- 10 Learn and share lessons to improve the process of engagement**
People's experience of the process of engagement should be monitored and evaluated to measure its success in engaging people and the effectiveness of their participation; lessons should be shared and applied in future engagements.

These Principles were developed by Participation Cymru working with TPAS Cymru, under the guidance of the Participation Cymru partnership. Endorsed by The First Minister of Wales, The Right Hon. Carwyn Jones AM on behalf of the Welsh Government.

Further guidance on the National Principles can be found at

www.participationcymru.org.uk

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