

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET EQUALITIES COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2017

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – OPERATIONAL AND PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

UPDATE REPORT ON CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to outline the council's approach to consultation and engagement, which committee members can use to help mobilise residents to get their voices heard, including through the Citizens' Panel.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives / Other Corporate Priority

Effective consultation and engagement forms an integral part of the council's decision making processes and, in some situations, is a statutory requirement. As such, it impacts upon the work of the whole council, features in the Strategic Equality Plan, is integral to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and links to the following corporate priority:

- Priority 3: Smarter use of resources

It also links to two of our core values, 'Citizen-focused - remembering that we are here to serve our local communities' and 'Fair - taking into account everyone's needs and situation', and to The Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015.

3. Background

Since 2010, Cabinet Equalities Committee has been receiving regular reports and presentations on topics relevant to equalities and diversity.

Effective consultation and engagement involves seeking out the views and opinions of individuals, groups and organisations, including hard to reach and/or seldom heard groups.

4. Current situation / proposal

Consultation is a process involving citizens, service users and other groups and individuals who contribute their views and suggestions as part of a review of policy, strategy and proposed budget reductions.

Engagement is a less formal and more participative process where, using a wide range of techniques, groups and individuals are able to influence and shape strategy and policy.

The council's Consultation and Engagement function, which sits within the Communications, Marketing and Engagement team, has developed an internal

“toolkit” to help staff understand when it is appropriate to engage and/or consult residents and to understand the range of methods and techniques available. It also ensures that consultation and engagement projects are consistent, robust and effective.

The toolkit is based on Participation Cymru’s National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales, which include:

- Working with relevant partners
- Providing information that is jargon free, appropriate and understandable
- Enabling people to take part effectively
- Telling people the impact of their contribution
- Learning and sharing lessons to improve the process of engagement

It also incorporates legal guidance:

- Consultation must take place when the proposal is still at a formative stage
- Sufficient reasons must be put forward for the proposal to allow for intelligent consideration and response
- Adequate time must be given for consideration and response
- The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account

Ineffective consultation can have legal implications for the council if equality of opportunity is not afforded to every individual wishing to participate.

Live consultations are featured on the council’s [website](#) and communications, marketing and social media channels are used to varying degrees in order to promote awareness and maximise participation. Consistency in approach and the use of various techniques have increased response rates in recent years, for example BCBC has had the highest response by % of residents in Wales to the MTFS consultation.

In addition to targeting the general public across the county borough, the Consultation and Engagement function is responsible for overseeing the council’s [Citizens’ Panel](#), made up of 1,584 residents. Since April 2015, the Citizens’ Panel has improved in number in all key demographics by an average of 199% with only 5 of the 39 wards having less than 1% representation (Caerau, Bettws, Sarn, Llangynwyd, and Maesteg West).

Members of the Citizens’ Panel receive up to three surveys per year on a range of topics such as street cleanliness, customer service and the local housing strategy, and updates through our newsletter ‘you said, we did’. The newsletter is released every other survey and shows panel members how responses have changed the way the council operates.

A breakdown of Citizens’ Panel membership can be found in appendix 1.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

The report has no direct effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules but is required to effectively implement the council’s statutory duties in relation to equalities and human rights.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

No equality impact assessment has been carried out as this report provides the committee with information that will positively assist in the delivery of the authority's equality duties through increased participation in the council's consultation and engagement activity.

7. Financial Implications.

None in this report.

8. Recommendation

That the Cabinet Equalities Committee receives and notes this report.

Andrew Jolley

Corporate Director - Operational and Partnership Services

Date: 13 November 2017

9. Contact officer

Claire Saralis

Customer Services, Communications, Marketing and Engagement Manager

Level 1, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB

Email: claire.saralis@bridgend.gov.uk

Telephone: 01656 642047