

Meeting of:	CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	14 DECEMBER 2023
Report Title:	ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION STRATEGY
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHIEF OFFICER, FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE
Responsible Officer:	ZOE EDWARDS, CONSULTATION, ENGAGEMENT AND EQUALITIES MANAGER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	<p>There is a commitment to engage effectively and this is underpinned by a range of legislation including the:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 2. Equality Act 2010 3. Welsh Language Measure 2011 4. Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 <p>The Engagement and Participation Strategy will set out the Council's corporate approach to engagement with the citizens of Bridgend.</p>

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Bridgend County Borough Council has a duty to engage effectively with the citizens of Bridgend, and believes that good engagement is the responsibility of everyone who works for the Council. Communication is two-way and it is important that, as well as giving out clear information, the public are heard. The draft Engagement and Participation Strategy sets out how this will be done. The purpose of this report is for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the draft Strategy and provide any comments to Cabinet.

2. Background

- 2.1 Part 3 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 focuses on promoting access to local government. The Act establishes a duty to encourage local people to participate in decision-making and a requirement that local authorities publish, consult on, and regularly review a public participation strategy.

The Act stipulates that the strategy must address:

- Promoting awareness of council's functions

- Promoting awareness of how to become a councillor
- Facilitating access to decisions made or to be made
- Promoting and facilitating processes for local people to make representations to the Council about a decision

2.2 A draft Engagement and Participation Strategy, attached as **Appendix 1**, has therefore been produced to identify how the Council will meet its legislative requirements under the Act and to set out how it will improve public participation for citizens within the county borough.

2.3 Additionally, there is a commitment to engage effectively and this is underpinned by a range of legislation including the:

1. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
2. Equality Act 2010
3. Welsh Language Measure 2011

2.4 Best practice and national standards will also be followed, for example the Children and Young People's National Participation Standards and the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales. This Strategy will set out the Council's corporate approach to engagement with the citizens of Bridgend.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 The Strategy covers the need to engage with key stakeholders across a variety of areas:

- Geographical communities - all relevant communities of interest where people have a shared characteristic, experience, or interest for example carers, or those with specific expertise
- Protected characteristics by the Equality Act 2010 – capturing communities' lived experiences to better inform the impact of the Council's actions
- Equality Impact Assessments – to consider the impact any policy change will have on citizens
- Accessibility – ensuring all residents in Bridgend can access information and have an opportunity to share their views
- Stakeholder analysis – help identify key stakeholders and their levels of influence, ensuring that engagement is inclusive across the diverse make up of all communities
- Engagement with Elected Members – leaders within their communities and provides important links to engage with a wide range of people.
- Engagement with staff – wide base of experience and background diversity
- Evaluation, Feedback, Drawing Conclusions and Making Recommendations
- Equality and Inclusion Team – supporting and advising all council services on engagement and participation
- Digital Platforms – developing the integration of the two platforms, i.e. GovDelivery (communication) and EngagementHQ (engagement), to create a cohesive series of engagement using key tools i.e. surveys, ideas sharing, forums, quick polls etc.
- Measuring Success by developing key indicators i.e. site hits, number of responses, top projects etc.

- Timescales for feedback – publishing feedback in a suitable place within a suitable timescale, including publishing of reports, providing direct feedback.

3.2 On 17 October 2023 Cabinet approved the commencement of a public consultation on the draft Strategy and noted that following the consultation period the final Strategy will be reported back to Cabinet for approval. A full public consultation will be undertaken for the duration of 12 weeks to seek the views of citizens and stakeholders on the proposed Strategy. An engagement plan has been developed to support this.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 It enables the effective implementation of the Council's statutory duties in relation to promoting access to local government as set out in Part 3 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

4.2 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been used to formulate the recommendations within this report:

Long-term – Ensuring that the Council is encouraging local people to participate in the making of decisions by the Council now and in the future.

Prevention – Public participation and engagement can be used to prevent discrimination, promote equity and address any social injustices.

Integration – Integrating people from diverse backgrounds is a key aspect of building inclusive communities and organisations. An Engagement and Participation Strategy can also be utilised to promote integration.

Collaboration - Partnership working assists the Council in collaborative decision-making: By Involving individuals from different backgrounds, with different needs in decision-making processes and encourages their input and perspectives.

Involvement - Publication of the Strategy ensures that the public and stakeholders can review the work that has been undertaken. Involving residents in decision-making, encourages their active participation and fosters a sense of ownership and pride in their cultural background.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 There is a commitment to engage effectively with local communities to help protect and sustain the environment over the long term and in line with our climate change ambitions.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 Where there is a safeguarding concern, all engagement will be managed under Bridgend County Borough Council's Safeguarding Policy. This will safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people and adults at risk of abuse or neglect and to ensure that effective practices are in place throughout the Council and its commissioned services.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The development of a strategy and the public consultation will be met from within existing resources.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the draft Engagement and Participation Strategy as **Appendix 1** and provides any comments.

Background documents

None