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## 1. Introduction

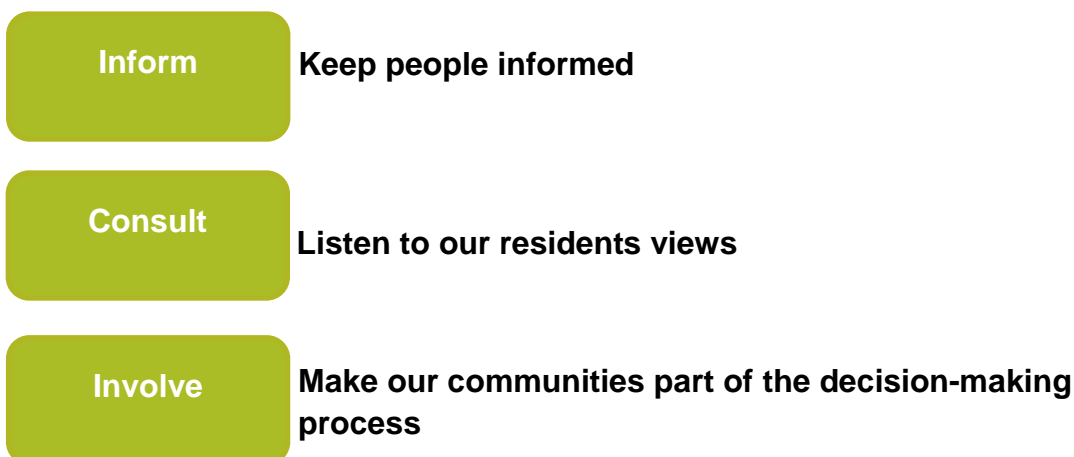
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During the summer of 2012 Lincolnshire County Council talked to Lincolnshire residents about the concept of the Big Society, ie local people take control of local issues and services. This strategy is based on feedback from communities and partner organisations. It builds on the Council's 2009 Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy and other engagement strategies from across the country.

As a Council, we want to make sure communities can influence, control and own decisions and services that shape the county in which they live and work. This means we can ensure services work better and are based on communities' needs; protecting lifestyles whilst promoting community wellbeing and resilience.

This strategy identifies how effective community engagement can achieve this and underpin the key areas of joint work with partner organisations. It is supported by a series of other documents for staff to use that helps to plan engagement and chose particular consultation and engagement tools to suit the needs of the audience.

For the purposes of this strategy, community is defined as a group of people who have something in common. They might live in the same area or share an interest, characteristic or belief. Community engagement is defined as an on-going, regular dialogue. It differs from consultation, which is a one off exercise used to exchange views on a particular subject. Below are the different levels of community engagement the County Council uses:



## 2. Aims and objectives

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At Lincolnshire County Council, we think it's important for everyone to have the opportunity to engage and have their say on local issues that affect or interest them. For that reason we have produced this strategy to explain how our staff will be supported to engage communities in the best way possible. It identifies our priorities and outlines how the County Council will engage with communities.

As a council, we want to build on our strengths, protect your lifestyle and be ambitious for the future so we want to make sure that our community engagement follows this vision too. Our priorities are to make sure our engagement is effective, inclusive and has genuine influence. Our commitments are explained in section four of this strategy.

By 2019 we want to be a council that ensures consultation and engagement activity is a fundamental part of all service planning. We will undertake coordinated, robust and appropriate engagement with only an occasional need for one off consultations because activity will be well planned in advance, in line with the Quality Assurance Process (see appendix 2, page 11). We believe this approach to engagement will further build meaningful relationships.

To check that we are achieving what we set out to do, we will review a random sample of engagement activities to see how effective and inclusive they were and evaluate the advice we have given by asking staff to feedback what they thought about it.

This strategy is aimed at the individuals, communities and organisations who want to engage with Lincolnshire County Council and the staff who engage people in what they do.

If you want to get involved or know more about how you can involve others, please contact us via [consultation@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

### 3. Community Engagement team role

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Lincolnshire County Council has a specialist Community Engagement team that supports staff in the planning of consultation activities and provides funding to voluntary sector organisations to help communities build the capacity and confidence to drive improvements in their quality of life and influence decisions affecting them.

The team will process queries from the public relating to consultation or engagement activity, these are detailed below:

**Contact point** - help individuals and external organisations contact the relevant member of staff

**Raise an issue** - on behalf of an individual or external organisation with the relevant member of staff, by such methods as forwarding e-mails or setting up a meeting

**Community-led plans** – receive plans produced by communities and forward them to the relevant teams/directorates to be acted upon and responded to

**Facilitate queries** – make contact with a member of staff if they do not respond to an individual or external organisation

However, the team cannot resolve issues directly, or guarantee individuals or external organisations will get the response they want.

The team also offers support to staff, which has direct benefits to the community by ensuring good quality engagement occurs. These activities will prevent consultation fatigue in communities and duplication of effort and can help to inform people directly what engagement is taking place. Before starting, to ensure a consistent and appropriate approach to consultation, it is recommended that services within the Council discuss any consultation /engagement activity with the team. For more information about how we do this, including details of the consultation calendar, database and work with partnership boards, please see appendix one.

#### 4. Lincolnshire County Council Commitments

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In order to achieve the aims of this strategy the County Council will:

Commitment	Activities	Benefit
Widely advertise consultation and other engagement opportunities	Media releases and promotional material via partner organisations  Implement the consultation calendar  Ensure all LCC staff involved in consultation are aware of the mandatory obligation to upload relevant activities to the calendar	Increased uptake in engagement, especially with those who previously have not participated in consultation  People have a greater stake in local decision-making process
Use clear language whenever we inform, consult or involve you	Information to assist with this to be shared via the Community of Practice  Advice to be shared with teams undertaking consultation  Provision of guidance booklet  Signposting to LCC Corporate Communication team, where relevant	Easy to read, fit for purpose documentation  Improved accessibility of information as jargon free  Improved engagement via use of range of consultation methods  Information available in a variety of formats, for example in hard copy as well as electronically, ie website and social media

Have widely accessible engagement events	Information to assist with this to be shared via the Community of Practice  Advice to be shared with teams undertaking consultation  Provision of guidance booklet	Events run at times suitable for the general public to attend, not just in 'normal' location, during working/peak hours  Improved opportunity to be involved
Feedback on all consultation and involvement undertaken	Implement the 'you said, we did' table and publish in same format as consultation activities	Those who gave ideas feel more valued  Greater understanding of rationale behind decisions being made
Work through local councillors to share information and seek feedback	Mechanism in place to ensure local councillors are updated on consultation responses/ feedback	Enhanced relationships between councillors and constituents  Easier access into council systems  Increase profile of local councillors
Produce a toolkit that outlines different techniques to engage people	Produce and promote different methods of engagement and consultation in a simple format	Consultors can choose from a 'toolkit' which approach(es) to use  Appropriate methods are used with different audiences
Be involved in key partnership groups, for example partnership boards and the Lincolnshire Association for Local Councils (LALC)	Attend meetings  Bring action points back to Council to be addressed  Feedback action undertaken	Dialogue into and from Council  Named individual to work with  Issues actioned
Work with town and parish councils (and urban equivalent body), in line with agreed Communities Scrutiny action plan	Liaison between LALC and County Council  Champion town/parish council role and their needs	Issues raised  Voice for local councils/neighbourhood management group

Work with infrastructure organisations to provide support so communities can develop and be actively involved	Design services with experts  Monitor support quality	Information, advice and practical help is fit for purpose  Communities have the support they need to play an active role
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## 5. Useful References

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There are a number of national and local policies that influence the way we work and as a result, this strategy is related to the following:

**Cabinet Office Principles** - [www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance)

**Gunning Principles** - [www.adminlaw.org.uk/docs/18%20January%202012%20Sheldon.pdf](http://www.adminlaw.org.uk/docs/18%20January%202012%20Sheldon.pdf)

**Customer Charter** - [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/local-democracy/how-the-council-works/key-plans-and-strategies/customer-service-charter/49249](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/local-democracy/how-the-council-works/key-plans-and-strategies/customer-service-charter/49249)

**Big Society Strategy** - [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/big-society](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/big-society)

**Parish and Town Council Final report** - <http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/local-democracy/how-the-council-works/overview-and-scrutiny/general-information/completed-scrutiny-reviews/56555.article>

**Scrutiny** - [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/local-democracy/how-the-council-works/overview-and-scrutiny/the-scrutiny-committees](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/local-democracy/how-the-council-works/overview-and-scrutiny/the-scrutiny-committees)

**Community of Practice** - [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/communityofpractice](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/communityofpractice)

Useful documents available on request from [consultation@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@lincolnshire.gov.uk) include:

**Community Engagement team toolkit** - a variety of consultation methods, including a template

**Community Engagement team guidance** – advice and best practice on which to base consultation planning

## 6. Glossary

Term	Explanation
Community	A group of people who have something in common. They might live in the same area or share an interest, characteristic or belief
Consult(ation)	The opportunity to have a say on a specific issue at a given time using different methods
Co-production	A plan, policy or service jointly designed by a number of interested parties to ensure it meets everyone's needs
Engage(ment)	An on-going dialogue with individuals, groups and organisations to ensure they influence decisions that affect them
Gunning Principles	A set of five principles, used in case law to explain how consultation should be done
Inform(ation)	Facts and figures provided to help people understand an issue
Involve(ment)	The opportunity to ensure people have genuine influence over decisions, services and outcomes
Quality Assurance Group (QAG)	A group comprising the directorate/team's activity lead and the community engagement representative who has been advising who attend meeting(s) to sign-off consultation, and amendments to it, if required

## 7. Action plan

The following plan will help us to achieve the goals laid out in this strategy:

Activity	Benefits	Responsibility	Start date	End date
Promote Engagement Strategy, including use of corporate communication tools and engagement strapline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff and public aware of strategy, our commitments within it and how it can help them influence the council</li> </ul>	Strategic Communications team  Community Engagement team	14/02/14	30/09/18
Develop council-wide plan of future engagement in line with service planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement is planned and co-ordinated</li> <li>Public aware of what is expected</li> </ul>	Community Engagement team  All service areas supply directorate forward plan	30/04/14	30/04/18



Promote Community Engagement team offer and templates internally, including staff and councillor training and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People aware of support and practices (public, staff and councillors)</li> <li>• Better quality engagement</li> <li>• Approved process to ensure quality and consistency</li> </ul>	Community Engagement team Strategic Communications team Democratic Services	02/01/13	31/12/18
Provide guidance to teams undertaking engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better quality engagement</li> <li>• Better quality feedback</li> </ul>	Community Engagement team	2011	31/12/18
Review and evaluate engagement advice and support service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better quality engagement</li> <li>• Enhanced reputation</li> </ul>	Community Engagement team Advice recipients	30/09/14	30/09/18
Promote and support co-production when designing council services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better quality engagement</li> <li>• Better quality services</li> <li>• Three co-designed services by year two</li> </ul>	Community Engagement team	02/01/13	31/12/18
Grant aid voluntary sector support in line with Big Society Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality support to community groups</li> <li>• Effective co-produced services</li> </ul>	Community Engagement team District councils	01/04/13	31/03/16, then review annually
Lead implementation of Parish and Town Council action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved engagement with councils</li> <li>• Public better informed at very local level</li> </ul>	Community Engagement team LALC Scrutiny	2011	On-going
Review involvement mechanisms and support partnership boards and similar involvement groups, using the outcomes star to feedback the progress they make to councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic, effective approach to group support</li> <li>• More empowered, independent and consistent services with a broader reach</li> <li>• Greater influence and involvement</li> <li>• Feed in to process and receive direct feedback</li> <li>• Councillors better informed of their role</li> </ul>	Adult Services Community Engagement team Partnership Board and Groups Excellent Ageing Partnership	2011	31/12/18

	and benefits of them			
Develop community hubs via brokerage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities supported</li> <li>• Communities create local services</li> </ul>	Community Engagement team	01/04/14	31/03/16

## 8. Appendices – information for Lincolnshire County Council staff:

### Appendix 1 Community Engagement Team Core Offer

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Lincolnshire County Council has a specialist Community Engagement team that advises staff in the planning of consultation activities (process below) and 'grant aids' selected voluntary sector organisations, in line with set criteria, to help communities build the capacity and confidence to drive improvements in their quality of life and influence decisions that affect them.

The team offers a range of support to staff, laid out in this document. This benefits the community by ensuring good quality engagement and consultation occurs. These activities (detailed below) will prevent consultation fatigue and duplication.

**Consultation calendar** - all planned County Council consultation activities are recorded so staff and the public are aware of what they can influence, when and how

**Consultation pack** - details what to consider before embarking on consultation. It includes a checklist, template on which to base consultation planning and consultation methods from a toolkit of different options

**Consultation planning session** - advice in initial phase of planning, using the above guidance documentation

**Questionnaires and surveys** - advice on appropriate wording to ensure plain language is used and the document is fit for purpose

**Events** – We are able to attend a small number of engagement events to advise further, provide feedback on and evaluate the approach used

**Equality and diversity** - provide corporately approved equality and diversity monitoring questions and guidance on completing the impact analysis template, which will inform the engagement process

**Connect** - different groups who are carrying out similar consultations/working with similar audiences to enable joint working and sharing of results when possible

**Database of community groups and individuals** - provision of contact details of community groups and individuals in the county who wish to be consulted

**Training information** - disseminated to, or organised for, staff so they are able to deliver the activity themselves

**Community Engagement Community of Practice** – opportunity to join so experiences and ideas can be shared and lessons learned

**Partnership organisations and boards** - support the relationship between these and other representatives, in particular the Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils (LALC), Health and Wellbeing Board, Healthwatch, Carers Partnership (adults and young carers) Learning Disability, Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment and the Mental Health Partnership Boards

In return for the support and advice offered by the Community Engagement team, it is expected that staff will:

- Use the advice to ensure there is scope to influence decisions made and services delivered
- Contact the Community Engagement team at the beginning of any consultation process or engagement activity
- Log consultation on the online calendar
- Ensure engagement is consistent, effective and accessible
- Respond and feedback to the engagement needs of communities
- Promote the advantages of working with the Community Engagement team and the benefits of engaging effectively to other colleagues

The team will process queries from the public relating to consultation or engagement. It will do all it can to help ensure engagement is as good as it can be, but the team role is not to resolve issues directly or guarantee individuals or external organisations will get the response they desire. Some of the things we can do to help are detailed below:

**Contact point** - help individuals and external organisations contact the relevant member of staff

**Raise an issue** - on behalf of an individual or external organisation with the relevant member of staff, by such methods as forwarding e-mails or setting up a meeting

**Community-led plans** – we will receive plans produced by communities and forward them to the relevant teams/directorates to be acted upon and responded to

**Contact** - a member of staff if they do not respond to an individual or external organisation

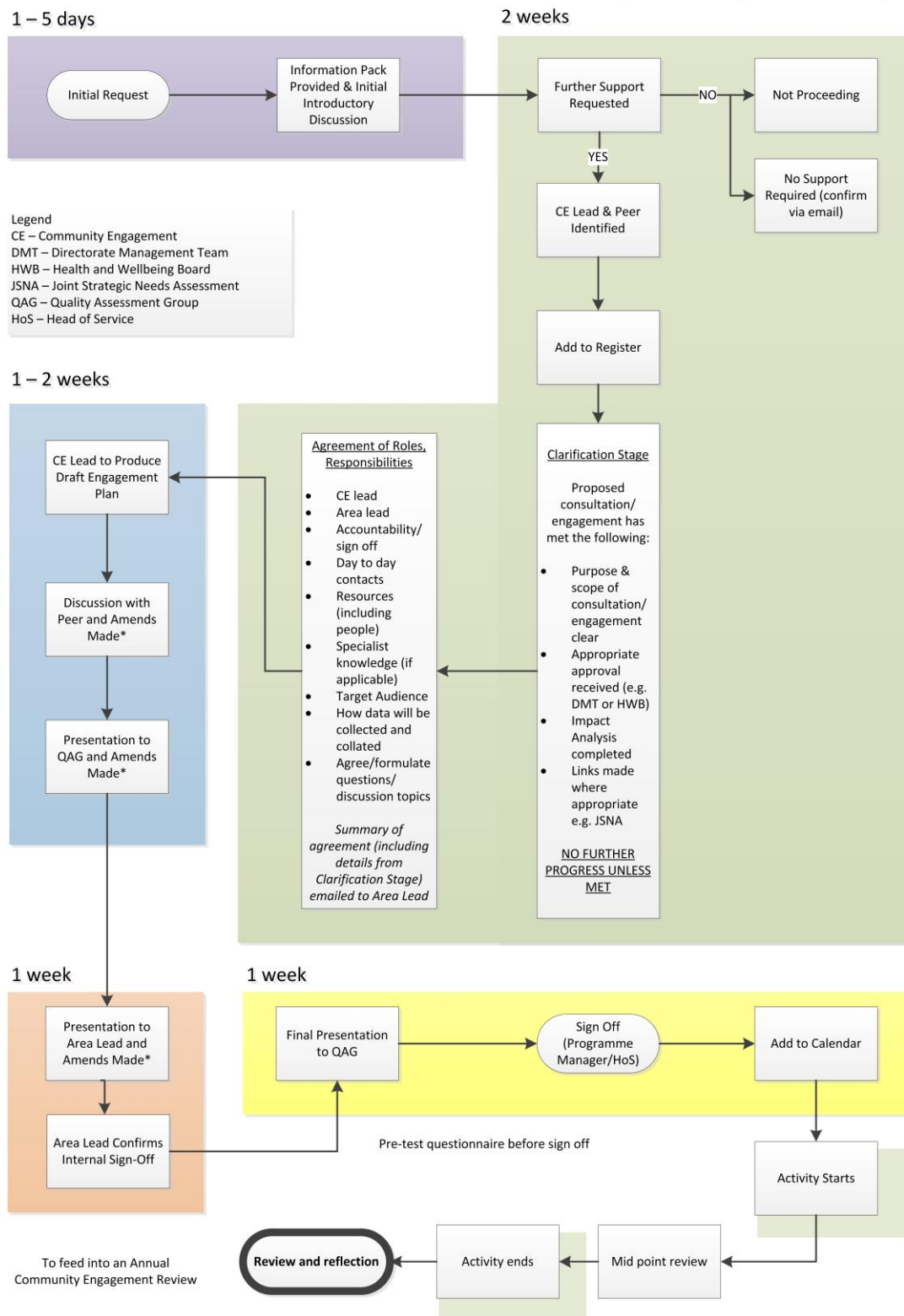
For more information contact them via [consultation@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

## Appendix 2 Quality Assurance Process

The Community Engagement team has developed this process to explain how activity should be developed and signed off:

### Community Engagement Quality Assurance Process

*The consultation/engagement activity can start up to 7 weeks after the initial request*



\* If amendments are required