

**Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills,
Executive Director for Environment and Economy**

Report to:	Executive
Date:	04 April 2018
Subject:	Draft Engagement Strategy 2018 - 2023
Decision Reference:	I014208
Key decision?	No

Summary:

This report presents a draft strategy that outlines plans for how Lincolnshire County Council will engage over the next five years. It has been created following a workshop with 16 councillors and feedback from them. It has also been informed by the Community Engagement Team's experience of providing engagement advice and working with communities for many years. It includes aims, objectives, commitments and an action plan to ensure it provides context and influences real change.

Executive is invited to recommend the draft Strategy attached at Appendix A to the full Council for approval as part of the Council's Policy Framework.

Recommendation(s):

That the Executive:-

- 1) Approve the draft Engagement Strategy attached at Appendix A to be recommended for approval at Full Council and adoption as part of the Council's Policy Framework
- 2) Specifically support an amendment to the Community Engagement Policy to reflect the Strategy that all teams carrying out engagement activity and consultation must approach the Community Engagement Team.

Alternatives Considered:

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| 1. | Extend dates on the current Engagement Strategy. However this is no longer fit for purpose. |
| 2. | Continue without an Engagement Strategy. The Engagement Strategy is part of the Council's Policy Framework. Not to have an Engagement Strategy would leave all parties unsure of standards and expectations. |

Reasons for Recommendation:

- 1) Brings previous practice and context up to date, while strengthening current policy
- 2) Makes clear what all parties should do and expect
- 3) Includes and highlights the role of councillors in engagement
- 4) Requiring teams carrying out engagement activity to approach the current Community Engagement Team before embarking on this type of activity will strengthen the current policy advice and ensure expert advice is obtained and there is consistency in approach and compliance with the Council's Strategy commitments

1. Background

An Engagement Strategy was produced in 2013 which summarised how communities would be able to participate in County Council business and influence decision making. This document is now due to be reviewed and refreshed.

Following conversations and learning from previous projects, it was suggested that a workshop be held to allow councillors an opportunity to inform the development of a revised strategy. The workshop was held on 9 January 2018 with 16 councillors and two officers in attendance. What engagement is, priorities, recommendations and ideas were discussed at the two-hour session and the feedback received, along with input from members of the public and experiences from officers who work with them, formed the basis of an initial draft. This draft was sent to 18 councillors who had expressed an interest in the document and comments were invited. The comments received led to the re-shaping of the strategy, and it is this draft (attached at Appendix A) that is being presented to the Executive.

The document is more informal than previous strategies to reflect what engagement is and how we want to engage with people who live in, work in and visit the county. It maintains links with the Council's business plan and the Community Engagement Team's service area commissioning plans. It also makes connections to around 15 other strategies, policies, pieces of legislation and initiatives to ensure it is nationally and locally relevant.

It contains the following clear commitments ('you' refers to the public and 'we' refers to officers and elected members of the County Council):

- We will involve you when making significant changes to your services – this will usually be directly with you and can be done in a number of different ways. Sometimes we will also work with other organisations that represent you, such as supporting organisations, advocates, town or parish councils, networks and forums

- We will work within the law and regulations set out by courts and [Government](#), with specific reference in this context to our [equalities](#) duties, [consultation](#) and using your [personal information](#)
- We will share our knowledge and expertise through training, advice and support to councillors, council staff and volunteers so engagement is as good as we can make it
- We, particularly the Community Engagement Team, will participate in project work that helps communities come together, celebrate achievements and enhance your sense of belonging and value
- We will also share and/or transfer resources, ideas, funding information and facilities so you can do things for yourselves if you wish to
- We will keep you informed so you know what is happening, how it will affect you and how you can be involved. When you've taken time to give us feedback we will 'close the loop' and feedback to you in a clear way, for example using a 'you said, we did' approach to check our understanding and so you know what action has been taken or have an explanation as to why something hasn't happened
- Communication is key to any relationship, so we will always try to be clear, concise and approachable. The Community Engagement Team and equalities champions throughout the Council will promote and encourage the use of formats and methods that make sure people are included, regardless of age, ability, gender or ethnicity for example. We'll aim to resolve any queries or complaints as efficiently and fully as possible, and within the guidelines set out, so you know what to expect

The Community Engagement Policy is part of the Policy Framework. The Executive is therefore asked to recommend the draft Strategy at Appendix A to the full Council for approval and adoption as part of the Policy Framework.

2. Legal Issues:

Equality Act 2010

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- * Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- * Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- * Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- * Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic

* Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it

* Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low

The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to tackle prejudice, and promote understanding

Compliance with the duties in section 149 may involve treating some persons more favourably than others

The duty cannot be delegated and must be discharged by the decision-maker. To discharge the statutory duty the decision-maker must analyse all the relevant material with the specific statutory obligations in mind. If a risk of adverse impact is identified consideration must be given to measures to avoid that impact as part of the decision making process

An Equality Impact Analysis has been carried out to ensure all protected characteristics have been considered. The EIA is attached at Appendix B to this Report. Potential impacts were identified which could affect some age groups, people with disabilities and those from different racial groups who do not confidently speak or understand English. Rural residents and prisoners are also highlighted as groups that might require additional support if engagement was carried out with them. The strategy already addresses issues raised by providing different methods of engagement to suit different needs, for example Appreciative Inquiry is inclusive of people with all needs and avoiding reliance solely on an online survey for those affected by slower broadband speeds.

Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS)

The Council must have regard to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Joint Health & Well Being Strategy (JHWS) in coming to a decision

Adoption and implementation of the Strategy should improve engagement with the people of Lincolnshire thereby improving understanding of their needs and issues and enabling services to be better attuned to meeting those needs and ensuring health and wellbeing.

Crime and Disorder

Under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Council must exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those

functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment), the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area and re-offending in its area

Section 17 matters have been taken into account and the Engagement Strategy is not considered to have any direct implications.

3. Conclusion

The Engagement Strategy has been co-produced to ensure it is relevant, up to date and inclusive. It makes connections to other policies and strategies, both national and local. It has an action plan, which will deliver enhanced engagement with local people and, as such, is considered to be fit for purpose.

Executive are asked to recommend the Strategy for approval by full Council as part of the Policy Framework.

4. Legal Comments:

The Council has the power to adopt the Strategy proposed.

As the Community Engagement Strategy is part of the Policy Framework its approval is a decision for the full Council on the recommendation of the Executive.

5. Resource Comments:

Accepting the recommendations within this report to approve the Engagement Strategy and action plan, should have no material impact on the Council's budgets.

6. Consultation

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

n/a

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

Yes

c) Scrutiny Comments

The Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the Draft Engagement Strategy 2018-2023 on 13 March 2018 and agreed to support the recommendation to the Executive.

The Committee endorsed the approach of the Council developing effective working practices to involve officers, members and the voluntary sector to effectively manage community resources in the future.

The Committee endorsed that all engagement activity and consultation carried out by Lincolnshire County Council should be focused through the Community Engagement Team.

d) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

Yes

e) Risks and Impact Analysis

Potential impacts on groups and individuals who might be affected were highlighted and mitigated against. The Strategy includes reference to, and the use of, different engagement methods that are inclusive of those who could be negatively impacted.

7. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	2018 - 2023 Draft Engagement Strategy
Appendix B	EIA for 2018 - 2023 Draft Engagement Strategy v0.1
Appendix C	Community Engagement Policy v0.1

8. Background Papers

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Community Engagement Strategy 2013-2018	Community Engagement Team

This report was written by Sarah Moody, who can be contacted on 01522 552539 or sarah.moody@lincolnshire.gov.uk