

Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes, Head of Paid Service

Report to:	Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date:	11 June 2019
Subject:	Engagement and Consultation Activity Review 2018/19

Summary:

This paper provides an overview of council-wide consultation and engagement activity where the Community Engagement Team provided advice and support in the 2018/19.

Actions Required:

Members are invited to consider and comment on the report and highlight any recommendations or further actions for consideration.

1. Background

The Community Engagement Team (CET) provides support and advice to officers across service areas and to elected members on the planning and delivery of effective and legally sound engagement and consultation activities. The support and advice provided is designed to help services ensure that engagement activities are of a high standard, avoid duplication and contribute to improving community confidence in the Council. As part of this service the CET explains the important differences between communication and engagement and between engagement and consultation (summary provided at Appendix A).

The CET offers a wide range of experience and expertise on engagement to help officers to understand the approach that best suits a service area's needs. The CET is able to offer objective advice and support, with the service area (or Councillor) having the expertise on the Service and/or locality. By following a Quality Assurance Process (Appendix C) the CET helps ensure that engagement and consultation activities accord with legislation and best practice.

The CET continues to support a wide range of engagement and consultation activities across all director areas, all of which are captured in an Engagement Register. The Engagement and Consultation Activity Review 2018/19 (Appendix B) provides a summary of the data gathered through the Register; key findings from this review are provided below.

2. Summary of key findings

The Community Engagement Team was involved in the support of a wide range of engagement and consultation activities undertaken by all LCC director areas. In 2018/19 the Team supported 106 activities, providing 1046 hours of direct support. Of the engagement and consultation activities supported, 66 have concluded, 8 have been withdrawn and 32 remain open as work on them continues through to the following year.

In 2018/19 the Team supported development and delivery of 9 consultations, 31 engagement activities and 59 surveys across LCC director areas, as well as 4 Town & Parish Council engagement support. Of the engagement and consultation activities supported across LCC director areas 38 were within Children's Services, 24 within Adult Care and Community Wellbeing area, 15 within Finance and Public Protection and 21 within Environment and Economy director area. The Team also supported the Chief Executive Office and external organisations/partners such as Serco People Management, Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership and Town & Parish Councils.

Of the 66 activities that concluded in 2018/19, it can be seen that consultation activities required considerably greater officer support hours than other types of engagement activity. This is due to the complexity of formal public consultations and the due diligence required.

The review document at Appendix B provides further detail on the breakdown of engagement activities and support hours for each of the LCC director areas.

Through maintaining an Engagement Register for each of the last 3 years, the CET has been able to identify that the number of engagement activities supported has markedly increased across all director areas over this period. For example, in 2018/19 the number of engagement activities within Children's Services almost doubled in comparison to the previous year (the most significant increase). The number of engagement activities within Environment & Economy also increased considerably in 2018/19 compared to the previous year (62% increase), whereas activities within Adult Care & Community Wellbeing and Finance & Public Protection went up by 26% and 25% respectively.

As part of the CET's Quality Assurance Process, feedback is gathered on the quality of advice provided to colleagues and on the effectiveness of the engagement and consultation activity. In 2018/19 the response rate to this two stage evaluation request was 65% (CET evaluation) and 43% (Engagement evaluation). The Review document at Appendix B also includes data gathered through this evaluation process.

The comments captured for 2018/19 suggest that colleagues value the advice and support they received with 100% of service leads who took part in the evaluation rating the quality and the effectiveness of the advice as either 'very good' or 'good'; with all stating that they would recommend CET to a colleague.

The majority of service leads who responded to the Engagement Activity evaluation request rated their engagement activity as either 'very successful' or 'somewhat successful'. The services quoted a number of positive outcomes achieved through engagement which included - informed service design/redesign; evidence support for plans/initiatives; better change management; or informed commissioning intentions.

2. Conclusion

As a Council we want to make sure residents and communities have the opportunity to contribute to decision making processes and to service changes / improvements that shape the county in which we live and work. Providing robust advice and guidance on engagement and consultation activities ensures that these are delivered well. Capturing the activities supported in an Engagement Register enables the production of this annual review that effectively summarises the broad range of engagement activity provided.

Through cross team collaboration, sharing best practice and taking on board lessons learned, the knowledge and practice of community engagement and consultation continuously improves. Responses received in Evaluation Forms suggest that services value the support in achieving engagement objectives and, through ongoing development of the register, the Council can assess the benefit of engagement on an annual basis.

3. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

No

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Understanding the differences - Communication Engagement Consultation
Appendix B	Engagement and Consultation Activity Review 2018/19
Appendix C	Community Engagement Quality Assurance Process

5. Background Papers

This report was written by Kate Sobstyl, who can be contacted on 01522552228 or kate.sobstyl@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

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