

Appendix A: DRAFT Community Engagement Principles

Stroud District Council

Contents

1. Aim
2. What is community engagement?
3. Why good community engagement is important
4. How the VCSE Principles complement the Community Engagement Principles
4. Key principles of community engagement
5. Considerations for community engagement
6. Links to other engagement strategies and policies

1. Aim

The purpose of these Principles is to support Stroud District Council staff in the planning and delivery of different types of engagement, including the methods and techniques that can be used to effectively involve local people in decisions that affect their lives. The council has some really positive experience of good community engagement practice, which this guidance aims to build on.

2. What do we mean by community engagement?

A 'community' can be a group of people who share a common place (people in a geographical area), a common interest (people who share a particular interest or experience) or a common identity (demographic characteristics such as age). It is important to remember that individuals often belong to more than one community (source: West Lothian council).

Community Engagement covers a whole range of activities that encourage and enable individuals and communities to be involved, at the level they want, in what is going on in their area. This ranges from simply giving the community information, to working in partnership with the community in developing services in their local area.

3. Why good community engagement is important

By grasping what people need and what they can do for themselves, we can work better with communities and be more efficient. By bringing people in on decision-making, councils are more likely to get decisions right, manage expectations and improve relationships with residents. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been even more important to work closer with our communities and to support them engaging and connecting with each other.

By using these Principles, we will be better able to Make a Difference by placing the people in our communities at the heart of everything we do (this is one of the council's values and behaviours).

4. How the VCSE Principles complement the Community Engagement Principles

These two sets of principles are complementary but have key differences and targets. The VCSE Framework aims to provide the council and its partners in the VCSE with a set of commonly understood good practice guidelines for communication and support. It is designed to strengthen working relationship with a transparent and consistent approach.

The Community Engagement Principles are a toolkit for the council's officers and members across all their work with communities and individuals. The support an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach underpinned by consistency, respect and reliability, applicable in the many and varied interactions which the council has with its communities of place and interest.

5. Key principles of community engagement

These Principles are important to guide the council's engagement work and opportunities across all service areas, so that there is a consistent approach, and the impact of effective community engagement can be evaluated and celebrated.

Applying the Principles as 'One Council' will help us live an Asset Based approach to Community Development and help make it a more positive experience for communities to engage with us and will help the council reflect on what it has learned.

1. **INVOLVEMENT:** we will work with community stakeholders to identify and involve the people and organisations who have an interest in the focus of the engagement, ensuring accessibility, inclusivity, diversity and equality
2. **SUPPORT:** we will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement
3. **PLANNING:** we will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this evidence to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken
4. **METHODS:** we will implement and use methods of engagement that are effective
5. **WORKING TOGETHER:** We will implement and use clear procedures that enable people to work with one another effectively and efficiently
6. **SHARING INFORMATION:** we will ensure that necessary information is communicated with the participants of community engagement, in line with Data Protection legislation.
7. **WORKING WITH OTHERS:** we will collaborate with energy, respect and effectiveness with others with an interest in the engagement like stakeholders, statutory partners and third parties.
8. **IMPROVEMENT:** we will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of our people so that they can engage with communities more effectively
9. **FEEDBACK:** we will feed back the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected
10. **MONITORING AND EVALUATION:** we will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement achieves its purposes, and we will use our learning to improve our engagement.

6. Considerations for community engagement

1. Scope of the engagement

What is actually open to change, and have you made that clear to the community and/or public?
Which of the following levels of engagement are you aiming to achieve?

- inform: provide information to the public or feedback after formal decisions have been made
- consult: ask for feedback from them and feed back to them
- involve: work with them to answer a pre-set question
- collaborate: define the question together and share each aspect of decision-making
- empower: communities are involved in decision making from beginning to end

2. Purpose

Be clear on the purpose of the engagement. What are you trying to achieve with the community?
What do you intend to do with the results or outcome?

3. Outcomes

What specific outcomes, linked to the purpose, are you looking for? And how about secondary outcomes, like increasing mutual understanding or developing contacts that might be useful later?

4. Outputs

What should the engagement process produce? e.g., a report to communicate a decision and the process leading to it.

5. Participants

Who needs to be involved to make the answers to the above possible and how do we identify who is 'missing'? e.g. use a stakeholder map.

6. Budget

How much money is available and who will be involved in deciding how it is spent?

7. Timescales

When do you hope to achieve the outcomes by? Are there any other time constraints?

8. Organisational response

When and how will the relevant decision-makers review the results of the engagement process and respond, and provide feedback to the community?

9. Monitoring and evaluation

What information would it be useful to collect about the project (e.g., performance against desired outcomes, successes, learnings etc)? How are you going to go about it?

10. Learning and improvement

How will you identify and record good practice and lessons learned? Do you have ideas about how the learning might benefit other service areas or communities?

7. Links to other engagement strategies and policies

1. Community engagement methods – mini site to be developed including case studies and good practice examples (in development)
2. Performance management framework.
3. Communications and Engagement Strategy
4. Tenant Engagement Strategy <https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/1874703/tenant-engagement-strategy-april-2022.pdf>
5. Hear by Right accreditation
6. 2030 Strategy and Masterplan
<https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s607/Item%209%20-%20Appendix%20B%20-%20The%202030%20Strategy%20Master%20Plan.pdf>
7. Consultation strategy (in development)
8. Asset based community development policy (to be developed)
9. Statement of Community Involvement <https://www.stroud.gov.uk/environment/planning-and-building-control/statement-of-community-involvement>
10. Town and parish council charter <https://hub.stroud.gov.uk/resources/parish-and-town-councils>
11. VCSE Principles
12. Cultural Strategy
13. Youth Engagement Strategy