

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
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Report of:	Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Culture and Communities - Councillor Mieka Smiles Director of Legal and Governance Services - Charlotte Benjamin
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Submitted to:	Executive - 10 August 2021
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Subject:	Engagement Policy 2021-22
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Summary

Proposed decision(s)

That the Executive approves the proposed Engagement Policy for 2021-22.

Report for:	Key decision:	Confidential:	Is the report urgent?
Decision	No	No	No

Contribution to delivery of the 2021-24 Strategic Plan

People	Place	Business
The proposed policy will ensure that public engagement undertaken by the Council is lawful and that its contribution to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan is maximised.		

Ward(s) affected

There is no direct impact on any ward from the recommendations of this report.
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What is the purpose of this report?

1. This report seeks approval of a proposed corporate Engagement Policy for 2021-22.

Why does this report require a member decision?

2. The Council's Scheme of Delegation gives the Executive collective responsibility for corporate strategic performance, together with associated action. This policy is an activity required under the Strategic Plan workplan approved by Executive in May 2021.

Report Background

3. The Council's corporate Consultation and Engagement Policy was last formally updated in 2016, with its scheduled review in 2019 delayed by the Council's OFSTED ILACS inspection and then the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. The existing policy is largely focused on providing a robust framework for undertaking formal consultations in line with statutory requirements and case law. However, the Council has acknowledged for some time that it needs to evolve its approach to more asset-based and deliberative approaches to engagement, keeping pace with the wider local government sector.
5. The Executive has noted in the past the extent of local opposition to some of the Council's proposed initiatives, particularly in respect of planning schemes, and how different engagement approaches could have been used to mitigate such opposition, reducing the considerable impact on the Council in terms of addressing complaints, statutory public information requests, and so on. This issue has also been identified in previous Peer Reviews of the Council commissioned via the Local Government Association and has been at the heart of social regeneration activity in recent years.
6. The proposed revised engagement policy (at Appendix 1) provides a framework further developing the Council's approach, building on work undertaken with communities prior to and during the pandemic, including the locality working pilots. It supports the 'Quality of Service' strategic priority of the Council's Strategic Plan and is aligned with the corporate value of collaboration.
7. The principal aim of this policy is for the Council's service to take an 'asset-based' approach to engagement, working with Middlesbrough's people and its communities and the Council's partners to recognise strengths and from these increase independence and self-reliance over time.
8. The policy will seek improvements in the following metrics:
 - volunteering numbers;
 - the split between consultation and deliberative, ongoing approaches;
 - number of community bodies and reference groups in place;
 - proportion of communities for which there is a clear plan in place;
 - complaints or public information requests regarding the Council's engagements;
 - satisfaction with the way the Council runs things;
 - satisfaction with the local area;
 - strong sense of belonging to the local area;

- people pulling together to improve the local area; and
 - people from different backgrounds get along well.
9. Such approaches have been adopted by other local authorities, most notably Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council, where its 'Deal' with local communities resulted in significant positive impacts on local health and social care, in particular.
 10. In implementing this policy, the Council will seek to work with communities to address the 'democratic deficit' and digital exclusion that exists within Middlesbrough (as it does within other deprived local authority areas), building the capacity of communities over time through training, support and appropriate investments.
 11. The ongoing development of the Council's engagement approach will be integrated with the delivery of the Community Governance review agreed by full Council on 28 July 2021, which will include consultation with communities on the following matters relating to this policy.
 12. In approving the Strategic Plan Progress Update – Quarter Three 2019/20 report (February 2020), the Executive noted that the planned Local Government Association (LGA) peer challenge focusing on the Council's engagement would be delayed to allow the Council to focus on the post-OFSTED improvement journey within Children's Services. The proposed policy is informed by the best practice guidance set out in the LGA's 'New Conversations 2.0' guidance and the Council will now commission its further support so that the ongoing development of this policy is informed by the experience of local authorities that have successfully implemented engagement approaches elsewhere.

What decision(s) are being asked for?

13. That the Executive approves the proposed Engagement Policy for 2021-22.

Why is this being recommended?

14. To provide an enhanced framework for public engagement that is coherent and effective, builds trust with communities, ensures that the voices of communities are heard in the Council's decision-making and that that Council complies with all legal duties relating to engagement and consultation.
15. This 'single policy' option provides the greatest level of assurance that the Council will continue to meet its statutory obligations, and achieve its own strategic ambitions in respect of public engagement, and is recommended on this basis.

Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended

Option 1: No policy

16. There is no legal requirement for a corporate policy on public engagement, however such a policy, its supporting procedures and guidance provide a clear framework under which the Council's officers can ensure that engagement is consistent, effective and complies with the law. As such, this option is not recommended.

Option 2: Status quo

17. The Council could decide to retain the current policy and approach, which has been stated focuses principally on formal consultations. This would maintain the current robust approach to consultation, but see more deliberative engagement activity evolve in an unplanned and unlinked manner, if at all. As such, this option is not recommended.

Option 3: Additional policy

18. The Council could decide to retain the existing policy and develop an additional policy in respect of deliberative engagement approaches. This would see such approaches develop in a more planned manner, but not provide for a consistent or joined-up approach across engagement activity overall. As such, this option is not recommended.

Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)

Legal

19. Effective implementation of the proposed policy and the associated supporting procedure will ensure that the Council continues to meet its various legal duties in respect of public consultation (as set out within the proposed policy) and so avoid legal challenge and potential sanctions.

Financial

20. Implementation of the proposed policy will require additional training and capacity building both within the Council and within local communities, however it is anticipated at this stage that all activities required by the policy are achievable within existing and planned budgets. Should consultation on the Community Governance Review demonstrate that additional investment is needed, a further report will be brought to the Executive if required.

Policy Framework

21. The development and implementation of the proposed policy as a key activity within the 'Quality of Service' priority of the Strategic Plan workplan approved by the Executive in May 2021. As such, the proposed policy underpins the delivery of the Strategic Plan and so does not seek to vary the Council's Policy Framework.

Equality and Diversity

22. The proposed policy has been subject to Level 1 (screening) equality impact assessment (at Appendix 2). This assessment found that implementation of the policy would have a positive impact on diverse groups and communities within Middlesbrough as it will recognise their strengths, build their independence and ensure that their voices are heard in the Council's decision-making.

Risk

23. Implementation of the proposed engagement policy mitigates a number of risks within the Council's strategic and information risk registers, including: (O8-054) Legal

compliance, organisational effectiveness and / or achievement of objectives is impacted by failure to operate an effective corporate governance framework and associated processes.

Actions to be taken to implement the decision

24. If approved by the Executive, the policy will be made available on the Council's Open Data site and staff intranet page. Supporting procedures and guidance will be developed and revised as appropriate, and the Council's privacy notices updated where required.
25. An officer working group will be convened to ensure that consultation and development in respect of the Community Governance Review, this policy and all associated activity is appropriately joined-up and set out within the Strategic Plan workplan, with the Executive updated on progress via scheduled quarterly corporate performance update reports.
26. It is anticipated that the proposed policy will change as a result of the planned engagement with communities and the LGA peer review, and as such it will be reviewed after one year and a revised version brought back to the Executive for approval.

Appendices

- 1 Engagement Policy 2021-22
- 2 Engagement Policy 2021-22 – Impact Assessment Level 1: Initial screening assessment

Background papers

09/09/16 Executive Member for Finance and Governance; Consultation and Engagement Policy

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Appendix 1: Proposed Engagement Policy 2021-22

	<h1>Engagement Policy</h1>
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Creator	Author(s)	Paul Stephens		
	Approved by	Executive		
	Department	Legal and Governance Services		
	Service area	Strategy, Information and Governance		
	Head of Service	Paul Stephens		
	Director	Charlotte Benjamin		
Date	Created	2021/07/01		
	Submitted	2021/08/02		
	Approved	2021/08/10		
	Updating Frequency	One year		
Status	Version: 1.0			
Contributor(s)	Governance and Information Manager.			
Subject	Public engagement			
Type	Policy			
	Vital Record		EIR	
Coverage	Middlesbrough Council			
Language	English			

Document Control

Version	Date	Revision History	Reviser
1.0	2021/07	First version	P Stephens

Distribution List

Version	Date	Name/Service area	Action
1.0	2021/08	Executive	Approval

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Summary

1. This policy provides a framework for the undertaking of public engagement by the Council, ensuring that all such activity is lawful and its contribution to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan is maximised.
2. The following sections outline:
 - the purpose of this policy;
 - definitions;
 - scope;
 - the legislative and regulatory framework;
 - roles and responsibilities;
 - policy detail;
 - supporting policies, procedures and standards; and
 - monitoring and review arrangements.

Purpose

3. Through the implementation of this policy the Council aims to:
 - take an asset-based approach to engagement, working with Middlesbrough's people and its communities and the Council's partners to recognise strengths and from these build independence and self-reliance;
 - provide clarity on its engagement offer to local communities, maintaining compliance with the law while broadening its practice over time into more deliberative engagement approaches, empowering communities more over time;
 - ensure that communities, officers and members are enabled to engage in this asset-based approach and maximise the opportunities it will provide; and
 - as a result of this bring about significant improvements in satisfaction with local areas and the wider determinants of health.
4. This will deliver the following benefits:
 - the Council will be able to demonstrate its compliance with the law;
 - communities will understand how they can engage with the Council, and how their voices will be heard;
 - the energy and resources of communities will be unlocked and mobilised;
 - the capacity of communities for self-help and self-management will be increased;
 - social isolation of individuals within communities will be reduced;
 - trust between the Council and its communities and between communities themselves will be increased;
 - the Council will make more effective, value for money decisions;
 - satisfaction with the Council and its services will be increased; and
 - local democracy within Middlesbrough will be strengthened.
5. Effective public engagement will also help the Council mitigate the following risks:
 - taking poor decisions based inadequate engagement;
 - community frustration at the Council's engagement;
 - the potential for legal challenge and decisions being overturned;

- the significant reputational and financial impact of the above.

Definitions

6. The key terms used in this policy are defined below.

Communities

7. A group of individuals that have commonality or are brought together by place, identity, interest, action, practice, circumstance, position, or other reason.
8. Individuals can belong to many communities and the communities to which they belong will change as their life changes.
9. Communities are largely self-defining and self-organising. The Council has a role in defining, establishing and supporting representative bodies of communities of place within Middlesbrough, particularly those which it may choose to empower to make decisions, or delegate the delivery of services.

Engagement

10. Any activity that involves dialogue between the Council and individuals and / or communities and offers the opportunity to strengthen relationships, whether formal or informal, time-limited or ongoing.
11. This covers everything from the provision of information to formal consultations to mechanisms that involve individuals and communities in, collaborate with them upon and empower them to take, decisions in relation to strategy, policy and service design and delivery.
12. The Council's approach to engagement will involve one or a combination of the below activities.

Informing

13. Providing individuals or communities with timely and accurate information to assist them in understanding an issue. This may support consultation and / or include an offer to become involved in, collaborate upon, or be empowered to take a decision.

Consulting

14. A formal process through which the opinion of communities will be requested, collated and analysed. The parameters around which consultations are undertaken are defined by case law and in some cases specific legislation.

Involving

15. Working with communities throughout the decision-making process to ensure that the views of communities are understood and considered, and how those views influenced the decision is in turn understood by those communities.

Collaborating

16. Partnering with communities on each aspect of the decision, using their experience and knowledge in the development of alternatives and identifying the preferred solution.

Empowering

17. A collaboration in which the final decision is in the hands of communities, supported by the Council as appropriate.

Asset-based community development

18. Working with local people and communities in a way that seeks to recognise strengths, and from these build independence and self-reliance, utilising deliberative engagement techniques where appropriate.

Scope

19. This policy applies to all public engagement undertaken by the Council, through any channel (e.g. face-to-face, online).
20. The policy applies to all Council employees and any other party undertaking public engagement on behalf of the Council by contract.
21. The policy applies to all those that are served by the Council, including residents (including children and young people), businesses, visitors and other customers, and (in respect of consultation) those delivering services on behalf of the Council.
22. While many of the key principles are the same, the policy does not apply to internal engagement with elected members, employees and / or trade unions.

Legislative and regulatory framework

23. The Council must comply with all legislation, both general and specific, pertaining to engagement, as outlined below.

Local Government Act 1999, Section 3(2)

24. To fulfil the Best Value Duty, the Council has a duty to consult those who use or are likely to use services it provides at all stages of the commissioning cycle, including the decommissioning of services. This includes specific regulations relating to consultation with the voluntary sector and SMEs.

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

25. This Act devolves powers to principal local authorities to undertake Community Governance Reviews in their areas i.e. determine parish councils and other arrangements, through engagement with its communities.

Equality Act 2010, Section 149 Public Service Equality Duty (PSED)

26. Consultation may be required to comply with the PSED. Consultation with people with different protected characteristics can provide an evidence base to assess the impact of decisions on those affected. The need for consultation is dependent upon the relevance and proportionality of the anticipated impact.
27. The PSED also requires the Council to have regard to the need to foster good relations between different groups.

Local Government Finance Act 1992, Section 65

28. The Council has a duty to consult representatives of non-domestic ratepayers on the Council's expenditure plans.

Local Government Finance Act 2011

29. The Council has a duty to consult on the introduction and revision of localised Council Tax reduction schemes.

Childcare Act 2006, Section 5d

30. The duty to consult before any significant changes are made to children's centre provision.

Children and Families Act 2014, Section 19

31. The duty to consult children, parents and young people in relation to reviewing educational, training and social care provision, when considering local priorities and outcomes as part of joint commissioning arrangement and EHC plans.

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 / Town and Country Planning Regulations 2009

32. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) required by the above sets out the Council's policy for involving the community in the preparation of local development plan documents and in the consideration of planning applications.

Health and Social Care Act 2012

33. The Council has a duty to consult and involve patients, the public and representatives in the planning of commissioning of local health services.
34. The Council may also decide to carry out consultations where there is no statutory requirement to do so, but there is an ethical and / or value for money imperative.

The Gunning and Moseley principles

35. As set out above, the majority of legislation applies to consultation. Once a decision to consult has been taken (regardless of whether it is specifically driven by a legislative requirement), the content of the consultation is governed by the common

law duty of 'fairness'. The principles of 'fairness' were decided in 1985 by the Supreme Court and are known as the 'Gunning Principles'. These are:

- consultation should occur when proposals are still at a formative stage;
- consultation should give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit intelligent consideration and response;
- consultation should allow adequate time for consideration and response; and
- there must be clear evidence that the decision maker given 'conscientious consideration' to consultation responses or a summary of them, before a decision is made.

36. In 2014, the Supreme Court advocated two further ('Moseley') principles:

- the degree of specificity of information provided should be influenced by those who are being consulted; and
- the demands of fairness are likely to be higher when the consultation relates to a decision which is likely to deprive someone of an existing benefit.

37. Essentially these two additional principles mean that in some circumstances, for a consultation to be considered lawful, the consultation document should not only refer to a 'preferred option', but also include other considered options and outline reasons why they may be unacceptable.

38. While there is practically no specific legislation pertaining to more deliberative engagement approaches as defined in this policy (e.g. collaborating, empowering), the Council will take the view that the common law duty applies also when such techniques are used in its public engagement activity.

Key roles and Responsibilities

39. Effective and lawful engagement is the collective responsibility of all members and officers of the Council. Appropriate training, guidance and support will be provided to members, officers and all others undertaking engagement on behalf of the Council.

40. The following services have specific responsibilities within this policy:

- Marketing and Communications will advise services on the effective provision of information to communities;
- Strategy, Information and Governance will advise services and commission training on consultation and other engagement processes and techniques, develop and maintain whole Council engagement activities and community and customer reference groups, and oversee the implementation of this policy, producing statistics and progress updates as appropriate;
- ICT Services support all services to implement digital engagement approaches;
- Democratic Services will promote engagement in local democratic structures, oversee member development and lead on Community Governance Reviews;
- Strategic Commissioning and Procurement will coordinate the Council's relationship with and oversee investment into the local voluntary and community sector;
- Community Learning will coordinate volunteering across the Council's services, linking with local community groups; and

- Stronger Communities will oversee the development of community plans, support the development of community structures and coordinate locality working and other joint working at a ward and sub-ward level.

Policy detail

41. The Council and its services must ensure that they understand what the communities they serve need, think and want. Wherever relevant, decisions made by the Council will be informed by effective engagement with local communities, and other parties as appropriate.
42. Traditional engagement methods (e.g. consultation) can often be disempowering, reinforcing views that local authorities are 'doing things to' communities, rather than working with them. The Council will therefore seek to develop an asset-based approach to engagement, working with Middlesbrough's people and its communities and the Council's partners to recognise strengths and from these build independence and self-reliance.
43. The Council will take steps to ensure that groups representing communities of place or identity that collaborate on or are empowered to take decisions on behalf of the Council are truly representative of the community that they represent, democratically constituted and appropriately governed.
44. The Council will in particular play a definitive role in determining parish councils and associated governance structures for communities of place in Middlesbrough through Community Governance Reviews, as set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement and Health (LGPIH) Act 2007. It is anticipated that the Council will undertake a Community Governance Review every fifteen years.
45. The Council's engagement with communities of place in Middlesbrough will align with electoral ward boundaries, enabling local ward councillors to play a key role. Service delivery may be planned and delivered on an area or multi-ward level, agreed with local communities. Current areas and wards of the town are set out below.

Area	Wards
East Middlesbrough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brambles and Thorntree • Berwick Hills and Pallister • North Ormesby • Park End and Beckfield
North Middlesbrough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central • Linthorpe • Longlands and Beechwood • Newport • Park
West Middlesbrough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acklam • Ayresome • Kader • Ladgate • Trimdon

Area	Wards
South Middlesbrough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coulby Newham • Hemlington • Marton East • Marton West • Nunthorpe • Stainton and Thornton

46. Decisions to transfer assets or devolve services to community groups or parish councils will be made by the relevant body of the Council.
47. The Council will identify and / or support the development of representative or reference groups for other communities to enable their effective engagement e.g. it will establish a children and young people's parliament and client reference groups for services.
48. The Council will build trust in local democracy by:
 - ensuring that engagement is integral to the way the Council does things;
 - being clear on how individual and communities can engage with the Council and its services, and the degree of influence on decisions on offer;
 - positioning local ward councillors at the heart of engagement with communities, seeking and helping to articulate community views and brokering compromise where needed;
 - involving local communities in co-producing outcomes, piloting and evaluating approaches such as citizens assemblies / juries; and
 - building on this, piloting and evaluating structured decision-making techniques with local communities e.g. in planning or budgeting.
49. The Council will publish a calendar of its statutory and other iterative engagements, setting out how communities can become engaged and what they will be able to influence. The latter will include 'Let's Talk' – the Council's annual conversation with local communities on key priorities for Middlesbrough, the Council's priorities and its annual budgets.
50. All engagements undertaken by the Council will comply with statutory requirements, where these apply, and all key principles for public sector engagement established through case law, including but not limited to, the Gunning and Moseley Principles.
51. Reports to decision makers will be written in a standard format that where relevant requires to views of stakeholders engaged to be clearly set out. While (unless otherwise stated consultations are advisory), the Council will make every effort to abide by the majority view and clearly explain when it cannot.
52. All engagements will be planned, delivered and evaluated in a systematic manner, across a range of channels, though it is expected that digital engagement will grow significantly during the period of this policy. The Council will provide feedback on how the engagement influenced decisions, in a 'we asked, you said, we did' format published on the Council's Open Data Site.

53. Wherever appropriate, the Council will work jointly with its partners in delivering engagement activity.
54. Activities to build trust in local democracy will take into account Middlesbrough's 'democratic deficit' – in common with other deprived local authority areas, turnout at national and local elections in Middlesbrough has historically been significantly lower than national averages and this also plays out local public engagement.
55. As such the implementation of more deliberative engagement approaches will require significant capacity building in local communities, alongside training on asset based approaches for elected members and officers, and it is expected the Council's approach will evolve over a number of years.
56. The Council will build trust in and between local communities by:
 - working with partners to promote, support and coordinate local volunteering to ensure that volunteers and communities derive the greatest benefit from the time contributed;
 - helping communities articulate, develop and monitor plans for their communities, including about how local services will be delivered to and within communities;
 - maintaining up-to-date lists of community and assets and supporting efforts to build capacity within communities for deliberative engagements;
 - work closely with communities to identify and address any local cohesion issues, ensuring that addressing such issues is central to community planning; and
 - ensure engagements are inclusive and representative of all communities by using a range of channels, techniques and support arrangements to engage the so-called 'hard to reach'.
57. The Council will work with local communities to develop a plan for those communities and publish these on its website. The Council will produce appropriate statistical analyses for those communities to support this work and track the progress of these over time.
58. These plans will outline arrangements for local public service delivery to or within that community, which will include:
 - an universal offer of locality working (e.g. officers in certain teams across the Council are allocated to a ward or non-geographic community and build a relationship with and work closely with the local community in improving outcomes); and / or
 - a mechanism for communities to request more intensive approaches in a particular ward or estate for a period to provide a greater visible presence where certain criteria are met (e.g. deprivation or long-standing anti-social behaviour issues).
59. Wherever appropriate, the Council will work jointly with its partners in delivering place-based services, maximising the impact on local communities.
60. The Council will build the trust of individuals and communities in its systems by:

- wherever practicable, building services around the citizen e.g. through personalisation and using this to build relationships within individual citizens and communities overall;
- using and developing digital e.g. via social media or online consultations in innovative ways to promote engagement;
- ensuring frontline staff see themselves as ambassadors on this issue and proactively encourage engagement; and
- maintaining an ongoing dialogue with communities that is marked in its predictability and consistency, developing a clear picture of community needs and ambitions.

61. The Council will ensure that there is a means for evaluating, coordinating and disseminating the intelligence and learning gained from its public engagement both internally and within local communities and partners as appropriate so that there is a shared understanding of community needs and aspirations and that this informs planning for those communities.

Supporting policies, procedures and standards

62. A supporting engagement procedure will be made available to Council officers in support of this policy, providing detailed guidance on how to plan, undertake and evaluate engagement. All engagement must comply with the standards set out within this procedure, alongside the Council's suite of equality policies and its data protection policy.
63. The procedure will be subject to impact assessment, including a data protection impact assessment, and the Council's privacy notices will be updated accordingly if needed.

Monitoring and review arrangements

64. The implementation and effectiveness of this policy and its supporting procedures will be reviewed on a quarterly basis by Corporate Governance Board, using the following metrics:
- volunteering numbers;
 - the split between consultation and deliberative, ongoing engagement;
 - number of community bodies and reference groups in place;
 - proportion of communities for which there is a clear plan in place;
 - complaints or public information requests regarding the Council's engagement;
 - satisfaction with the way the Council runs things;
 - satisfaction with the local area;
 - strong sense of belonging to the local area;
 - people pulling together to improve the local area; and
 - people from different backgrounds get along well.
65. Issues arising will be reported to the management team where required.
66. The outcomes and learning from engagement will be coordinated, evaluated and disseminated by Corporate Strategy Board, informing horizon scanning and strategy and policy proposals as appropriate.

67. Data relating to the Council's engagement activity (redacted as appropriate) will be published annually on the Council's Open Data site on a periodic basis.
68. The Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee is responsible for oversight of the Council's corporate governance processes. To ensure appropriate oversight of engagement is maintained and annual progress report will be presented to this committee.
69. In line with the Council's policy review schedule, this document will be reviewed in one year and revised in line with engagement with local communities on the development of the Council's approach.

Complaints

70. Complaints relating to the Council's public engagement will be investigated in line with the Council's corporate complaints policy.
71. If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the SRO's response they will if appropriate be advised to write to the Local Government and Adult Social Care Ombudsman and / or the Information Commissioner's Office as appropriate.

Appendix 2: Impact Assessment Level 1: Initial screening assessment

Subject of assessment:	Engagement Policy 2021-22			
Coverage:	Overarching / crosscutting			
This is a decision relating to:	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy	<input type="checkbox"/> Service	<input type="checkbox"/> Function
	<input type="checkbox"/> Process/procedure	<input type="checkbox"/> Programme	<input type="checkbox"/> Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Review
	<input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)		
It is a:	New approach:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Revision of an existing approach:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
It is driven by:	Legislation:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Local or corporate requirements:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Description:	<p>Key aims, objectives and activities</p> <p>The proposed policy provides a framework for the undertaking public engagement activities across the Council in compliance with all applicable laws and best practice standards.</p> <p>Statutory drivers</p> <p>A number of statutory duties, associated guidance and case law are relevant to the proposed policy, including the Best Value Duty to consult under Section 3(2) of the Local Government Act (1999).</p> <p>Differences from any previous approach</p> <p>The proposed policy provides a broader framework for public engagement than its predecessor, which focused largely on the approach to be taken to formal consultations.</p> <p>Key stakeholders and intended beneficiaries (internal and external as appropriate)</p> <p>Elected members, employees of the Council, local communities and businesses, partners, regulators.</p> <p>Intended outcomes</p> <p>To ensure that the Council's approach to public engagement is compliant with statutory requirements and best practice, and that the Council's decisions are informed by effective dialogue with local communities.</p>			

Live date:	As soon as the report is approved.			
Lifespan:	One year.			
Date of next review:	August 2022.			
Screening questions	Response			Evidence
	No	Yes	Uncertain	
Human Rights Could the decision impact negatively on individual Human Rights as enshrined in UK legislation?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No. The policy will not contravene human rights as identified in national legislation.
Equality Could the decision result in adverse differential impacts on groups or individuals with characteristics protected in UK equality law? Could the decision impact differently on other commonly disadvantaged groups?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No. Consideration of the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty has shaped the development of the proposed policy. The proposed policy would have a positive impact by ensuring that all relevant protected groups are appropriately engaged in decisions affecting them using an asset-based approach to build their capacity and independence. It is supported by detailed guidance that outlines that appropriate equality monitoring must be undertaken on all consultations.
Community cohesion Could the decision impact negatively on relationships between different groups, communities of interest or neighbourhoods within the town?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No. The proposed policy would have a positive impact on social cohesion by ensuring that are issues are identified through ongoing dialogue with communities and that addressing those issues identified are at the heart of planning for that community.
Assessment completed by:	Paul Stephens, Head of Strategy, Information and Governance			
Date:	19/07/2021			
LMT approver:	Charlotte Benjamin, Director of Legal and Governance Services			
Date:	19/07/2021			