



Consultation & Engagement Strategy

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose & Background

This strategy outlines how we will work together to inform, consult and involve local people in decision making and improving public services in the Newark and Sherwood district. It is for everybody who has a role to play or who wants to get involved in influencing Newark and Sherwood's future and enhancing the quality of life for people across the district.

1.2 Council Priorities

The Council wishes to ensure that:

- Residents should have a say in decisions that affect their lives;
- Care should be taken to consult with those most affected by certain matters, and those whose voices are not usually heard;
- Consultation should be worthwhile, and regard should be had to outcomes when decisions are made;
- Consultation should be relevant and appropriate;
- People should be informed where appropriate of relevant information, of both a statutory and non-statutory nature.

1.3 Strategy Format

The strategy will set out to answer a number of key questions, which are set out below:

- What is Community Engagement?
- Why is Community Engagement important?
- Who are we engaging with?
- How will we engage/consult?
- How will we make use of our findings?

2 What is Community Engagement?

A community is a group of people who have things in common. Communities can be defined by location (such as a street or a neighbourhood), race, ethnicity, age, occupation, a shared interest (such as local businesses or hobbies) or affinity (such as religion, faith or belief) or other common bonds.

Essentially, community engagement is about making sure that people can get involved and take part in a range of ways in the planning, development and delivery of services. It goes further than informing and consulting local people by seeking to enable communities to take an active part in influencing decision-making and service delivery. The main levels of community engagement are:

- **Communication/Informing** – providing information about services policies and decisions (communication strategy);
- **Consulting** – providing opportunity for people to have their say about decisions, services and plans through consultations, surveys etc;
- **Involving** – providing opportunities to get involved over and above informing and consulting to give greater influence over delivery.

3 Why is Community Engagement important?

Everyone should be involved in making Newark and Sherwood a great place to live, work and play. If you live in Newark and Sherwood borough, you know what is happening in your community and how it can be improved. If you are a local group or business in the district you will have information and ideas that can help shape the future of your area. By taking part you can make sure that decisions being made are the best for you and your locality.

It is important for us to use many different methods to engage and consult with people, so as to receive as broad and representative response as possible. For example in Newark and Sherwood has a higher proportion of 50+ year olds, and significantly fewer numbers of 15-19 and 20-29 year olds. These groups are likely to communicate and respond in different ways, so a number of approaches are needed.

There are certain areas on which we are statutorily required to provide information, such as council meetings and finances for example, due to their high importance and relevance to the public. These are an obvious priority on which to report, but so as to provide the best overall service we will aim to engage on a wide variety of areas, allowing us to correctly gauge public demand and desires.

4 Who are we engaging with?

We want to engage with anyone affected by Newark and Sherwood's future, in a variety of ways. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Residents – the local population are affected on a day to day basis by decisions made by the council, and therefore they have the right to have a say on how those decisions are made, and what they should look like;
- Town & Parish Councils – the district is a large area, and it would not be possible to make relevant decisions without asking those who know individual areas best;
- Businesses – many aspects of council decisions affect businesses directly, and we want to ensure that, through our decision making, the district remains an attractive prospect for businesses and encourages growth;
- Visitors – with a strong tourism offer, it is important for us to ensure that we are keeping up with current demand, and we continue to attract visitors to our district;
- Community & Voluntary Groups – these groups often have a great impact on their local residents and areas, and should be consulted on matters affecting them, and how they would like to see things in the future;
- Hard to reach groups – it is vital that consultation and engagement reach all those within the districts, including those groups that may be harder to reach such as:
 - ~ Older people;
 - ~ Young people;
 - ~ Ethnic minorities;
 - ~ People with disabilities;
 - ~ Travellers;
 - ~ Faith groups.

4.1 Barriers to Engagement

When planning an engagement process it is vital to recognize diversity, identify any potential barriers and design the process to minimize these barriers where possible.

We will therefore make every effort to ensure that we do not exclude anyone from any engagement, and that all relevant groups are consulted.

5 How will we engage/consult?

When we set out to engage with the local community, we will do this in three main ways, which form the basis of community engagement. When consulting and engaging with the public we will refer to our [Communications Strategy](#), which sets out an objective to maintain consistently high-quality communications and improved outcomes against a backdrop of diminishing resources in the public sector.

The Council also has a [Statement of Community Involvement](#) which sets out how Newark and Sherwood helps individuals, groups and communities with an interest in the district to participate in the planning system.

The [Nottinghamshire Citizens' Panel](#) provides an opportunity for people to have a say on services provided within Nottinghamshire, and is eligible to residents over the age of 18.

5.1 Communication/Informing

Here we provide information about services, policies and decisions. The core of what is happening now in the community around certain issues.

- Social media – Facebook, Twitter etc. (See also the [Digital Strategy](#)).
- Local newspaper press releases, publications, radio and TV interviews.
- Newsletters, letters, leaflets or summaries.
- Information stalls/open days/roadshows/exhibitions.
- Public and specific meetings, presentations, briefings.
- Website updates.
- Email, text alerts.

5.2 Consulting

Here we will provide the opportunity for people to have their say about decisions, services and plans – we will use this feedback to improve and influence future decisions.

- Written consultation through letter or email.
- Questionnaires and surveys, structure feedback form, polls, surveys.
- Online surveys and e-consultation (via the internet).
- Face to face interviews/telephone interviews.
- Residents', citizens', user panels and community groups.
- Discussion/focus groups/forums/e-forum.

- Consultation events/workshops/exhibitions/festivals.
- Public, neighbourhood or specific meetings or surgeries.
- Documents or information available in offices, public buildings or online.
- Consultation with community representatives.

5.3 Involving

We provide opportunities to get involved over and above informing and consulting to give greater influence over delivery – encouraging people to put forward ideas, options and actions.

- Ballots and referenda.
- Public or specific targeted discussion meetings with interested parties
- Public or stakeholder workshops to identify issues and shape options.
- Public visioning events, ideas competitions, interactive displays.
- Online discussion forums.
- Participatory appraisal (undertake own assessment, analysis and planning).
- Community led plans (e.g. parish plans/neighbourhood plans)/community action plans.
- Comments and complaints.
- Interaction with Members of Parliament, elected Newark and Sherwood District Councillors and Nottinghamshire County Councillors, Town and Parish Councillors and our employees.

6 How will we make use of our findings?

When we have engaged and consulted with individuals and groups on issues, it is important that we then use this information in the correct manner, and that those who have been consulted know how their involvement has made a difference.

With findings from consultation we will:

- Make them as freely available as possible;
- Share the collected information to the appropriate audiences;
- Provide evidence as to how it has informed decisions;
- Provide evidence as to the guiding and development of policies and strategies;
- Provide feedback to services in order to make improvements.

Results from consultation exercises will be used alongside advice from experts, officer recommendations, Council strategy and priorities, and member opinions to shape finalise decisions or future plans.

6.1 Timetable Action Plan

A timetable action plan will be provided that sets out current and future plans for consultation on specific issues. It shall clearly show the topic to be discussed, methods in which it can be accessed, and timeframes for feedback and responses.