

Consultation and Engagement Strategy

2013 - 2017

Our Vision

'An organisation that seeks to understand people's experiences, needs and preferences, listens and considers what they have to say, and uses what they learn to help shape Council services, so people have a say in local decisions that affect them'

Our Strategy

This strategy is about improving our understanding of people's needs, views and experiences, through consultation and engagement, and using this information alongside other evidence, to inform the design and delivery of effective and efficient services, within current financial constraints.

The financial challenge heightens the need to involve citizens, to increase public understanding of the rationale for change and why difficult decisions have to be made. Through clear communication, consultation and engagement we can help manage public expectations, as well as understand their views on the way forward, so they can influence the future shape of local services.

Our Activities

We consult and engage with citizens in a number of ways. We will improve the way we provide information and carry out research and consultation, and overtime strengthen and develop our approaches to collaboration and empowerment.



Why?

- To enable citizens to influence decisions and increase public engagement and confidence in local government
- To provide evidence to inform decision making and promote better use of resources and more efficient, cost effective services
- To increase public understanding about the difficult decisions that need to be made in the current financial climate and involve citizens in shaping the future of local services

Welsh Government - The Welsh Government Wales Measure (2011) and other key Welsh Government policies¹ emphasise the importance of placing public engagement at the core of what we do and giving every person the chance to contribute to local decision making.


Our Wrexham Plan - The Wrexham Local Service Board Single Integrated Plan sets out a commitment to ensure 'more people are consulted and influence how local services are delivered' under the priority 'making Wrexham a place that is safe and where everyone feels included'.

Our Council Plan - The 'engaged and satisfied customers' outcome of our Council Plan (O1) sets out a commitment to 'engage with local people and use what we learn to make significant changes the services we provide'.


Our Single Equality Plan - Sets out a commitment 'to reduce inequalities in representation and voice'

Where are we now?


- The 2012/13 National Survey for Wales found that only 25% of respondents in Wrexham feel they can influence decisions affecting the local area. The Wales average was 24%.
- The same survey also found that 50% of respondents in Wrexham would like to be more involved in decisions affecting the local area. The Wales average was 47%.
- The Wales Audit Office recommends that 'the Council should improve the effectiveness of public engagement and develop a more coherent approach'
- The Welsh Local Government Association Peer Review (June 2011) also recommends the Council 'develops a community engagement plan and more effective community engagement processes'



Only 25% of people in Wrexham feel they can influence decisions affecting the local area



50% of people in Wrexham would like to be more involved in decisions affecting the local area



"The Council should listen to [local people] and take notice of what they hear"²

¹Shared Purpose, Shared Delivery 2011, Communities First – The Future 2010, Social Services (Wales) Bill (forthcoming), Future Generations Bill (forthcoming), The National Standards for Children and Young People's Participation (2007), Single Equality Act 2010 (Wales) regulations 2011

²Respondent feedback from a local survey - 'What are the key issues for Wrexham survey 2012'

What will we do?

- Embed a culture of consultation and engagement across all Members and Officers
- Develop a coherent and coordinated approach to consultation and engagement across the organisation
- Ensure effective and inclusive consultation and engagement exercises that set reasonable expectations about what can and cannot be changed as a result
- Improve analysis, interpretation and sharing of information to inform decision making
- Increase the impact of findings on decision making to shape services based on need and promote better use of resources
- Improve evaluation and feedback on consultation and engagement activities so people understand how views have influenced decisions and if not why not
- Collaborate with partners across Wrexham and North Wales

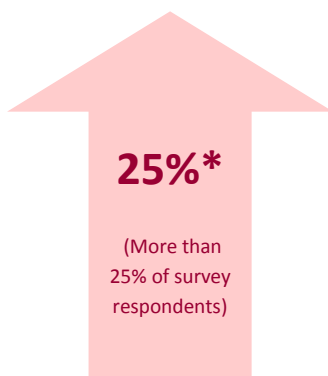
The delivery plan³ supporting this strategy sets out how we will achieve this.

National Principles

Our improvement will also be guided by the [national principles](#)⁴ for public engagement:

- Engagement is effectively designed to make a difference
- Encourage and enable everyone affected to be involved, if they so choose
- Engagement is planned and delivered in a timely and appropriate way
- Work with relevant partner organisations
- The information provided will be jargon free, appropriate and understandable
- Make it easier for people to take part and enable people to take part effectively
- Engagement is given the right resources and support to be effective
- People are told the impact of their contribution
- Learn and share lessons to improve the process of engagement.

What will success look like?



- ⇒ A key measure of success will be an increase in the percentage of local people responding to the National Survey for Wales who feel they can influence decisions affecting the local area (currently 25%*)
- ⇒ A related measure in the same survey is the percentage of local people who would like to be more involved in decisions affecting the local area (currently 50%)
- ⇒ Further measures are set out within the delivery plan for this strategy.

Monitoring Progress

Progress will be monitored by the Lead Strategic and Performance Director and Lead Member on a quarterly basis and reported against the 'engaged and satisfied customers' outcome of our Council Plan (O1).

³The Delivery Plan was informed by feedback from the Wales Audit Office Review of Public Engagement in Local Government (2012), the Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Reports 2012, 2013, the WLGA Financial Peer Review for Wrexham (June 2011), Departmental Engagement Strategies and feedback from Officers, Elected Members and the public

⁴The National Principles for public engagement were developed by Participation Cymru and have been endorsed by the Welsh Government in 2011 and apply to all public service organisations in Wales

Our Progress in 2013/14

- An improvement objective has been established, officers are in place to lead and support improvement, and a strategy and delivery plan has been developed
- A robust customer satisfaction survey is being rolled out across all channels and services
- A consultation and engagement toolkit has been produced
- Equalities monitoring guidance has been developed for consultation and engagement activities
- A comprehensive consultation programme was carried out to inform the reshaping services agenda
- A reshaping services equalities impact assessment group has been set up covering all protected characteristics
- Monthly Twitter Q and A sessions are being carried out by Lead Members on key local issues
- A regular newsletter 'random sample' is produced to share research, statistics, consultation and engagement information
- Key statistics from the 2011 Census have been published on the Council website including detailed ward profiles
- The new 'Big P' strategy for participation with children and young people has been published and the Senedd Yr Ifanc led consultation to inform the review of youth and play services
- A range of tenant engagement groups have been set up in housing to support service improvement following a survey to find out how tenants would like to get more involved
- The 'Getting Engaged Strategy' sets the framework for engaging with service users to improve the planning and commissioning of services across adult social care
- The Western Gateway project was highly commended by CEEQUAL for the level of community engagement carried out
- Customer feedback from Contact Wrexham continues to be used to make improvements to services such as bank holiday bin collections
- An annual '[we're listening](#)' report summarises consultation and engagement activity carried out across the organisation throughout the year and the impacts on service design and delivery

**Consultation
Toolkit**



**Twitter
Q & A**

Our Priorities for 2014/15

- Continue to strengthen support for and involvement in consultation and engagement across Strategic Leadership and Management Team, Executive Board and Scrutiny
- Webcast Executive Board, Planning Committee and Full Council meetings to provide more opportunities for the public to see the Council at work and increase public engagement in those meetings through the use of social media
- Produce an annual programme of consultation and engagement activities across the organisation
- Develop a mechanism to plan, coordinate, share, analyse, evaluate and feedback on consultation and engagement
- Roll out the Council's consultation and engagement toolkit
- Continue consultation to inform the development of the reshaping services agenda to meet the budget cuts
- Review the People's Voice citizens panel and improve corporate consultation tools
- Develop more methods for engaging the seldom heard
- Develop key contacts for each protected characteristic to facilitate further consultation where Equalities Impact Assessments indicate this is necessary
- Develop a mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness and impact of engagement based on the national principles
- Develop 'You Said - We Did' style feedback to explain the impact of engagement findings on services, policies and decisions
- Establish an LSB engagement officer group and inform the development of the forthcoming LSB engagement strategy

**LIVE
Webcasts**



**You Said...
We Did...**

Appendix: Roles and Responsibilities

Performance Improvement and Partnerships Service

- Advise, support and challenge services on consultation and engagement
- Deliver corporate consultation and engagement exercises such as the reshaping services/budget consultation
- Ensure local Members are involved and part of the process
- Develop and maintain a mechanism to plan, coordinate, share, analyse, evaluate and feedback on consultation and engagement
- Share and promote best practice and lessons learned across the organisation
- Update the understanding and responding to citizens strategy
- Lead the roll out of the understanding and responding to citizens delivery plan

Services

- Follow the national principles for public engagement
- Inform Performance Improvement and Partnerships of planned engagement activities for advice and guidance and to find out about any relevant previous exercises or opportunities for joint working
- Ensure local Members are involved and part of the process
- Deliver high quality, effective, inclusive engagement activities
- Use findings to inform and influence service design and delivery
- Evaluate and feedback on the findings and impacts of public engagement and share best practice and lessons learned

Members

- Engage with the local community and feedback the views of constituents
- Participate in engagement exercises as appropriate and ensure the views of constituents are captured and understood
- Take account of the results of public engagement exercises when making decisions
- Bring the voice of the citizen to the scrutiny table

Corporate Communications Team

- Advise and support on communication during the engagement process

Equality and Diversity Team

- Advise and support on engaging with specific community groups in particular seldom heard communities

Partners

- Participate in engagement exercises as appropriate
- Join up consultation activities with the Authority as appropriate

Public

- Participate in engagement activities and be open and honest about opinions
- Suggest particular issues of public concern for engagement exercises