

Engaging Communities Framework - Draft

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main purpose of this report is to present the Draft Engaging Communities Framework (Framework) for approval. This Framework is a resource for staff and elected members to assist with finding, in the one place, information on methods of engagement; tools to engage; and the case studies and contacts to assist with supporting engagement to be relevant and inclusive.

Development of the Framework was led by the council's Engagement and Communities Lead, and included a review of best practice for engagement frameworks nationally, alongside engagement with officers through the council's Community Engagement Strategy Group, staff consultation, focus groups and senior management meetings of Council and HSCP.

The Framework will be reviewed annually to support learning and development of best practice. Promotion of the Framework and training on its content are in development.

The Draft Framework is included at Appendix one.

There are no financial implications.

The Framework supports the Council aims of a one council approach and better engagement with communities.

Recommendations:

Policy & Resources Committee are recommended to approve the content of the Engaging Communities Framework, as a corporate resource, following a process of development and consultation to inform the content of this final draft.

Policy and Resource Committee are recommended to endorse the development of staff training, promotion of the Framework to officers, elected members and producing information on the Council's approach to engagement for communities also.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Following on from Best Value recommendations and the Council's **Connect for Success** approach, one council one place principle, a need to develop a corporate framework on engagement (Framework) was identified. The process started with a Senior Leadership forum session in late 2023.
- 2.2 The aims are to develop skills and confidence for staff and elected members; develop a consistent approach across council services; share good practice, examples and case studies; and have the tools to support an inclusive approach in the one place.
- 2.3 Consultation on the draft Framework was carried out over the summer in 2024. This included an online survey and focus groups, and consultation with senior officers in the Council and HSCP. There have also been opportunities for key stakeholders and peer groups to input to the draft Framework. Research and comparisons to strategies produced by other local authorities and public sector bodies also informed its development.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy & Resource committee are recommended to:

- 3.1 Approve the content of the Engagement Framework.
- 3.2 Note that the Framework will be produced in a user friendly format, reviewed annually to support learning and development of best practice, and promotion of the Framework and training on its content for staff and elected members is in development.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 Staff were encouraged to give their views on what an Engagement Framework should contain through a short survey. Key themes emerged from this and focus groups were ran in which there were quality conversations with staff, with high levels of interest, expertise and involvement in engagement. Participants came from a range of services across the council and HSCP.

4.2 The process to inform the Framework led to inclusion of:

- Practical examples and case studies
- Tools specifically for engaging with young people.
- The role of social media in promoting engagement;
- How to deal with conflict and reluctance to engage

Further to this, membership of the Officer Community Engagement Group grew and strengthened and this group will continue as a community of practice on engagement.

4.3 The Framework includes a range of tools, contacts and practical examples of engagement. It signposts to existing resources such as the Council's Consultation Toolkit, the Consultation and Engagement App , and Service Design guidance. It also signposts to national tools such as Place Standard and contains practical materials for monitoring equalities.

4.4 In addition, the Framework includes links to online platforms for engagement, such as CONSUL Democracy, which is being piloted for use as part of Aspiring Places. Further use of CONSUL will be considered, where it enhances the functionality available on the Council's website, as part of the corporate approach to engagement.

4.5 The content of the Engagement Framework will be in a user friendly format, accessible and web based to ease access to all the materials. It will be reviewed annually to support learning and development of best practice.

4.6 Promotion of the Framework and training on its content for staff and elected members is in development to be available from the launch in January 2025.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 In conclusion, the Engaging Communities Framework brings a range of tools and resources into one place to support officers and elected members to prepare and undertake engagement.

5.2 It will be regularly reviewed and updated. Training for staff and elected members will be available, and support will be promoted to encourage use of the tools, techniques and guidance for carrying out engagement, linking with resources available within the council and digital platforms.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy

This Framework provides a corporate strategic approach to engagement.

6.2 Financial

There are no financial implications. The Framework will be delivered within existing resources and budgets.

6.3 Legal

There are references and links to legislation included within the Framework.

6.4 HR

There are no personnel implications.

6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:

6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics

6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty

6.5.3 Islands

There is an equalities section in the Framework and a draft EqSEIA has been developed.

6.6 Climate Change

There are no implications for climate change.

6.7 Risk

There is a risk in not having a corporate approach to engagement which is fully adopted across the Council.

6.8 Customer Service

There are links with Customer Services which have been reference in the Framework.

6.9 The Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

There is a section on UNCRC in the Framework.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Draft Engaging Communities Framework