TITLE: **Community Engagement Strategy 2024-2028**

Committee: Operational Services Committee

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Report No: Y171

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1.0   ISSUE

1.1.   To approve the Council's Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan.

2.0   RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1   Members are requested to:

> (i) Approve the Council's Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan 2024-28, as found at appendix 1.

3.0   BACKGROUND/OPTIONS

3.1.   The Council approved the current version of the Council's Community Engagement Strategy in January 2019

3.2.   Much has changed which impacts on how the Council engages with the local community, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the formation of new cross-sector, multi-agency networks, and more people using digital methods of engagement, therefore an updated strategy is required to reflect this activity.

4.0   ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSION(S)

4.1.   The Council's Community Engagement Strategy has been updated and includes an Action Plan which sets out what the Council will do to achieve the aims of the strategy.

5.0   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS / EQUALITY IMPACT STATEMENT / CARBON IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1.   There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

5.2.   Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) completed. No adverse impacts of delivering the strategy and action plan have been identified. If the commitments set out in the strategy are not delivered, then the barriers listed on pages 16 and 17 may worsen and the statutory duties set out on page 8 and 9 may not be adhered to. EIA can

be found here: https://intranet.eastcambs.gov.uk/employee-self-service/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/equality-impact-assessments

5.3. Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) completed. In summary, the CIA concluded as follows: There are no positive or negative carbon impacts or arising. CIA can be found here: https://intranet.eastcambs.gov.uk/report-template

6.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan 2024-28

East Cambridgeshire
District Council

Community Engagement Strategy

2024 to 2028

Contents

Foreword

I am pleased to introduce an updated version of East Cambridgeshire District Council's (ECDC) Community Engagement Strategy, which sets out the council's commitments to the community of East Cambridgeshire.

The world is changing along with people's needs, opinions and priorities. Climate change, living with COVID and the cost of living crisis are just some examples of issues that affect everyone. Therefore, it is essential that effective engagement mechanisms are in place to enable people that live and work in East Cambridgeshire to have their say regarding the services and resources that they need and for the council to inform communities.

This strategy endeavours to ensure that community engagement remains at the forefront of all council services.

Councillor Julia Huffer

Chair of Operational Services Committee

Executive summary

The East Cambridgeshire Community Engagement Strategy has been developed to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to engage with the council and have their say regarding the services and resources that they need. This strategy endeavours to ensure that community engagement remains at the forefront of all council services and that effective engagement practices are in place.

Councils are at the heart of local democracy. It is, therefore, essential to ensure that the entire community can have their say on the services they need and use. Ensuring that communities are sustainable is a priority for the council as identified in its Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027. Effective engagement with the community is key to achieving this, so that the council understands what the residents of the district want and can communicate appropriately.

This strategy builds on the positive work currently being done and sets out what we mean by engagement, why we are committed to engaging with our communities and partners and how we plan to engage now and in the future. The strategy seeks to embed community engagement into everyday working practices as we recognise that engagement should not be a one-off activity but provide the fundamental basis of everything we do.

Introduction

Community engagement is a process with the specific purpose of developing a working relationship between identified groups of people.

The aims of the strategy

This strategy aims to ensure that the council is providing local people with appropriate and accessible opportunities to get involved, influence local decision making and have their say on the place they call home, so that they are informed about local matters and can provide feedback to the council on what they need and their views on council services.

The objectives of the strategy

The objectives of this strategy set out how the council intends to ensure that its engagement activity is appropriate, flexible and focused. The council will:

- seek to identify, consider, reduce and, where possible, remove any barriers that may prevent or reduce engagement

- ensure that a variety of appropriate, adaptable and accessible engagement practices are used and promoted to maximise participation

- raise the profile of community engagement both publicly and within the council and encourage involvement from communities, including those traditionally under represented

- maintain effective communication and information sharing with partner agencies, stakeholders and communities and ensure that the views and knowledge of partners, stakeholders and communities are considered when appropriate

Approach

The flowchart on the following page displays our approach to the development of this strategy and action plan.

Community

ECDC teams

Engagement

Why do we engage?

Methods of engagement

What are the barriers to engagement?

What are we doing to remove, prevent and overcome barriers?

Feedback from ECDC departments to inform Community Engagement Strategy

Community Engagement Strategy

Action Plan

What more could we do?

Context

This section sets out reasons why the council engages with communities and includes details of national and local requirements that the council must comply with, as well as the extensive benefits of engagement to both the council and communities.

National requirements

The Local Government Act 1999 (opens in new window) and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (opens in new window) places duties on local authorities to inform, consult or involve the public.

The public sector Equality Duty (created by the Equality Act 2010, opens in new window) requires councils to recognise the need to encourage people to take part in public life and other activities. The Equality Act requires the council to ensure that equality and diversity are embedded into all its functions and activities. This supports good decision-making by ensuring public bodies (and others providing public services) consider how different people will be affected by their activities, helping them to deliver policies and services which are efficient, effective, accessible to all and which meet different people's needs. Therefore, effective engagement is crucial to ensure that everyone's needs are considered as an integral part of developing and delivering services.

The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (opens in new window) encourages local communities to get involved in the development of Local Plans and planning decisions that affect their area. The council has a role in supporting this and helping to facilitate neighbourhood planning. The council also has a duty to cooperate with neighbouring councils and other public bodies. The council has encouraged pre-application consultation for large scale development for some time and now the Localism Act 2011 (opens in new window) formally requires this.

The government's revised Best Value Statutory Guidance Consultation Paper (for England) February 2015 (opens in new window) states that 'authorities are under a Duty to Consult representatives of a wide range of local persons; this is not optional. Authorities must consult representatives of council taxpayers, those who use or are likely to use services provided by the authority, and those appearing to the authority to have an interest in any area within which the authority carries out functions'.

The Best Value Duty applies to how 'authorities should work with voluntary and community groups and small businesses, when facing difficult funding decisions'. It states that authorities are to 'consider overall value, including economic, environmental and social value, when reviewing service provision.' To reach this balance, prior to choosing how to achieve the Best Value Duty, authorities remain 'under a duty to consult representatives of a wide range of local persons.' This duty to consult is not optional. Section 3(2) of the Local Government Act 1999 provides

details on those who should be engaged in such consultations.

The council's agreed ways of working with and consulting communities on new development and other aspects of the planning system is set out in its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (opens in new window). The Statement of Community Involvement covers consultation arrangements in respect of both planning applications and planning policy matters, such as the preparation of a new Local Plan.

The UK accessibility legislation, the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (opens in new window) states that public bodies must comply with the accessibility requirements for their website, Intranet, all published documents and apps.

In June 2023, the council agreed to endorse the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (opens in new window) and agreed to seek alignment of the council's policies and priorities, as and when these are updated, with the overall ambition of the Goals. This strategy contributes towards achieving the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Goal 3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Goal 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Goal 10 – Reduce inequality in and among countries.

Goal 11 – Make cities and human settlement inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

The Armed Forces Covenant (opens in new window) is a promise by the nation, founded on the unique obligations and sacrifices of those who serve, or have served, in the armed forces, that they and their families should be treated fairly. The further enshrinement of the Covenant into law is an opportunity to build upon work councils are already leading to help serving personnel, reservists, veterans and their families to have the same equality of access to public services as their civilian neighbours.

Local requirements

The Cambridgeshire Compact (opens in new window) is a partnership arrangement between statutory bodies and the voluntary and community sector, which has been designed to improve relationships and provide a framework within which to understand what to expect from each other.

The council has signed up to the [Community Covenant (opens in new window)](#) which is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local armed forces community. It is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the nation, the government, and the armed forces, at the local level. The purpose of this Community Covenant is to encourage support for the armed forces community working and residing in Cambridgeshire and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this armed forces community. This includes in-service and ex-service personnel, their families and widows/widowers in Cambridgeshire. For the council, the Community Covenant presents an opportunity to bring its knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on the provision of help and advice to members of the armed forces community.

Engagement and consultation activity are included within many of the council's service plans and policies such as the [ECDC Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy 2021 to 2024 (opens in new window)](#) The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2021 to 2024 is the council's commitment to meeting the duties placed upon it by equality legislation, including the Equality Act 2010.

This strategy will contribute towards achieving the council's priority to support our residents to live happy and healthy lives, as set out in the council's [Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027 (opens in new window)](#).

Local evidence and key drivers supporting the need for community engagement

East Cambridgeshire is a predominantly rural district located to the north-east of Cambridge within the county of Cambridgeshire. The district covers an area of 655 kilometres squared and has a population of approximately 87,800 which is estimated to increase to 98,200 by 2031. East Cambridgeshire is predicted to have the second highest level of proportional growth of any Cambridgeshire district between 2016 to 2036. The largest population settlements in East Cambridgeshire are Ely, Soham, Littleport and Burwell. Together, these comprise approximately 56% of the district's population, with the remaining population is spread between about 50 villages. It is important that residents in rural areas are connected and can access the information and support that they need as rural areas have a unique set of circumstances that can exacerbate the social isolation of older residents, leading to poor health, loss of independence and lower quality of life.

Almost 90% of the East Cambridgeshire population are White British, making this area less ethnically diverse than Cambridgeshire as a whole . In the 2021 Census, around 75,100 East Cambridgeshire residents said they were born in England. This represented 85.6% of the local population. The figure has risen from around 73,200 in 2011, which at the time represented 87.3% of East Cambridgeshire's population. Poland was the next most represented, with around 1,300 East Cambridgeshire residents reporting this country of birth (1.5%). This figure was up from around 1,000 in 2011, which at the time represented 1.2% of the population of East Cambridgeshire. People arriving in East Cambridgeshire

from outside the district need to know how to access the local information, support and services that they need which could improve cohesion and integration.

East Cambridgeshire has an aging population, despite predicted growth in the total sizes of all age groups by 2031. The proportion of children and young people that make up the population is forecast to decrease whilst the proportion of older people increases. There has been an increase of 27.2% in people aged 65 years and over, a decrease of 0.1% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and a decrease of 0.2% in children aged under 15 years. Approximately 29,000 people over 65 years old live alone in Cambridgeshire therefore engagement is important to reduce the risk of loneliness and isolation. Feedback from local young people has highlighted the need for a central suite of information ([Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#)).

Overall, socio-economic deprivation is low in East Cambridgeshire. None of its population are living in the 20% of the most deprived areas nationally. However, there are differences across the district. There are some areas that have higher levels of deprivation including Ely East, Littleport West, Littleport East and Ely North.

Engagement is central to improving community resilience therefore it is important that people living in areas with higher levels of deprivation are engaged.

Benefits of engagement

The council recognises that residents have a wealth of knowledge and information regarding their communities as well as a first-hand insight to the matters faced, solutions desired and services required. Many of the council's priorities will only be achieved if communities are engaged and contribute their knowledge and resources.

Good community engagement facilitates mutually beneficial, stronger relationships between the councils and community groups by:

- enabling a mutual understanding of topics and perception
- enabling involvement and influence in decision making processes
- providing a foundation for community-led actions
- promoting fairness and equality
- ensuring that issues, needs, concerns and aspirations are understood
- enabling communities to take some responsibility for design and outcome of services
- facilitating stronger relationships among and between community members

In addition to the mutual benefits of community engagement listed above, there are specific benefits to both communities and the council, as set out in the following.

Examples of benefits of community engagement to the council include:

- efficient, effective services, tailored to the needs of the community
- a better understanding and insight into what services need to change or develop and why
- higher levels of customer satisfaction
- improved local reputation
- job satisfaction for staff who can see that they are making a difference
- an understanding of any emerging needs
- an understanding of any gaps in service provision
- fulfilment of commitment to local democracy

Examples of benefits of community engagement to the community include:

- a sense of inclusion and of having a voice
- feeling empowered to shape their lives, community and the services they need
- the opportunity to express local needs and reduce community inequalities
- safer, stronger communities
- an attractive built environment that also meets community needs
- awareness of the services, support and resources available
- increased confidence when involved in decision making
- communities taking ownership of projects
- creating a sense of place where people feel they belong to a community

Who the council engages with

The council endeavours to engage with the entire community of East Cambridgeshire. Communities can be categorised as follows.

Communities of place

Groups of people can be connected by geography, for example, residents of a local village. These are often called 'Communities of Place.'

Communities of interest

Groups of people can also be connected by a shared characteristic, interest or an affiliation. Such as a sports group, a carers association or people who are concerned about specific issues, for example the environment or crime. These are often described as 'Communities of Interest'.

Communities of identity

A third group, 'Communities of identity' is defined by how people identify themselves or how they are identified by society, for example, young people, older people, faith groups, LBQTQ+.

People may be part of more than one identified community group related to where they live, how they identify themselves or how they spend their time.

Whilst the council recognises the different types of communities that make up the community of East Cambridgeshire, it also recognises that some groups have traditionally been harder to reach and/or under represented. This may include, but not limited to, non-English speakers, ethnic minority groups, travelling community, homeless people, people with disabilities, elderly and younger people, people in areas of deprivation and people that are digitally isolated.

Engagement practices and commitments

Forms of engagement

Community engagement can be done in many ways and can be split into the following 5 levels.

Level 1 – Inform

This level of public engagement is used to inform people and provide information. This could be using social media, newspapers or news releases.

Level 2 – Consult

A communities' feedback is obtained to inform decision making. The focus is listening to people's views and feedback on how their input influenced decisions. This could be through surveys, interviews, or questionnaires.

Level 3 – Involve

This form of engagement involves working directly with people to ensure their opinions, issues and aspirations are understood and considered, and that feedback is given on how their input influenced decisions. This could be in the form of public meetings, forum meetings or surgeries.

Level 4 – Collaborate

Working together in partnership on decision making, development of options and identifying solutions. Although the decisions are ultimately made by the council, the community contributes to the process. This could be through a steering group, partnership or focus group.

Level 5 – Empower

The community are able to act to improve quality of life in their area. This level of community engagement facilitates the community making decisions and outcomes for themselves, examples of which could be skills and knowledge development.

Each form of engagement is important to help the council with its decision-making and service provision. It may not always be possible to reach consensus around issues. However, greater involvement and participation will bring about better understanding of sometimes complex issues depending on the activity and the circumstances.

Using the example of youth engagement, social media may work better for engaging with older children, whilst utilising schools and parent communications may work better for younger children. A focus group at a youth club could also be held. All these methods have the same aim, but by using several approaches this can ensure that the council has a fair representation of the target group.

Flexibility of engagement methods can be key to ensuring participation. The use of the council's Community Engagement Toolkit can assist officers to decide which approach best suits their needs and outcomes. It can guide on the best way to engage with specific groups, if required, and what factors need to be considered. For example, reaching out to those who are digitally isolated by post, by phone or considering religious festival dates when booking public meetings.

The council recognises that different communities will have different needs that need to be balanced and taken into consideration when delivering services and initiatives. Community engagement is about having the mechanisms in place to enable people to get involved in the services they need.

The council has adopted the following consultation principles which complement the National Government's Consultation Principles.

Consultations should be clear and concise.

Consultations should have a purpose.

Consultations should be informative.

Consultations are only part of a process of engagement.

Consultations should last for a proportionate amount of time.

Consultations should be targeted.

Consultations should take account of the groups being consulted and use appropriate mechanisms to engage with people whose voices are not usually heard.

Consultations should be agreed before publication.

Responses to consultations should be published in a timely fashion.

The council uses many forms of engagement, both collectively and across its departments. The forms of engagement used are determined by the type of information being communicated or requested and to whom.

Table 1 below shows how people are accessing the council's website in the last 5 years.

Year	Desktop	Mobile	Tablet
2018 to 2019	48.07%	37.74%	14.19%
2019 to 2020	45.44%	42.91%	11.65%
2020 to 2021	48.12%	45.35%	6.52%
2021 to 2022	50.99%	44.37%	4.85%
2022 to 2033	49.43%	49.13%	1.43%

More people are using mobile phones to access the council's website, and less people are using desktop computers and tablets.

Table 2 below shows the methods people are using to contact the council via its Customer Service department and each method's popularity in the last 5 years.

Year	Phone	In person	Self service	Email
2018 to 2019	55%	30%	9%	6%
2019 to 2020	54%	29%	10%	7%
2020 to 2021	65.4%	8%	17.6%	9%
2021 to 2022	66.5%	6%	17.5%	10%
2022 to 2023	65%	12%	16%	7%

Phone method includes calls to 01353 665555 only.

Email method is to ContactUs@eastcambs.gov.uk only.

Since 2018/2019, the percentage of people that are attending reception in person has declined and the percentage of people using the phone and the self-service online system is increasing.

In August 2018, the ECDC Twitter account had 3,134 followers. In January 2024, the account had 5,007 followers.

In August 2018, the council's Facebook page had 529 likes. In January 2024, the page had 3,700 followers.

It is important that the council continue to monitor the ways in which people are accessing information and services, and be mindful of technological trends so that the council can respond accordingly.
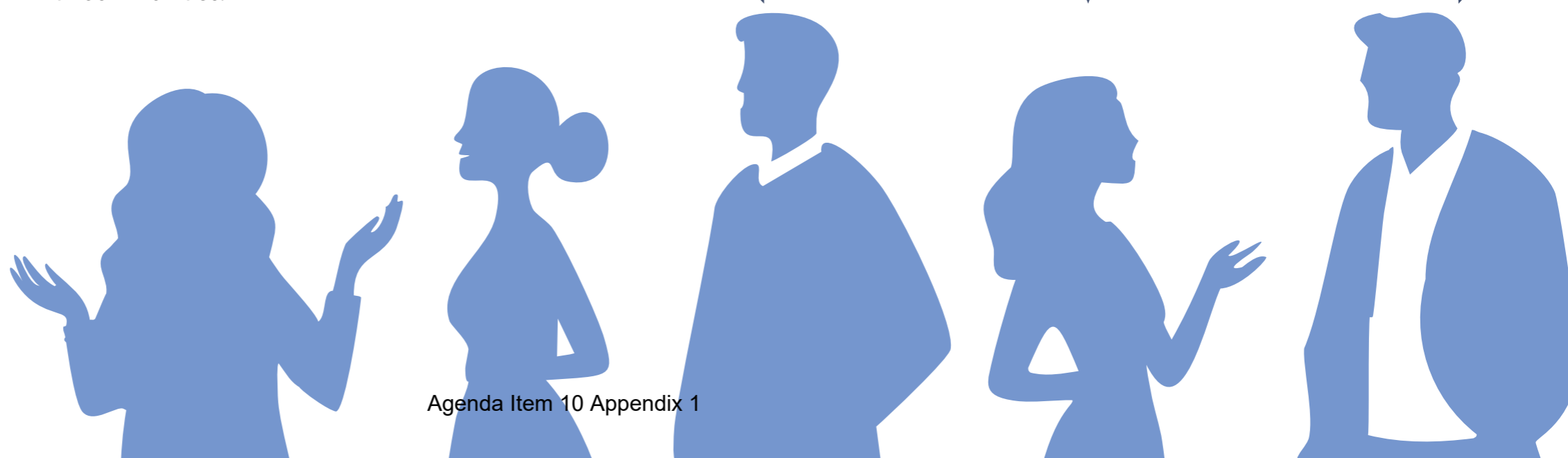
Barriers to effective engagement

There are challenges and barriers that the council must overcome to effectively engage with communities. Events over the past few years, specifically the coronavirus pandemic, have required the council to engage with as many people as possible and because of this increased engagement, more barriers have been identified. Council departments constantly engage with communities as well as working alongside partner agencies who do too. Therefore, as part of the development of this strategy, all council teams have been consulted and asked to provide details of the barriers that they face when carrying out community engagement, whether directly or via a multi-agency partnership. Specific council and partnership projects and programmes such as the Youth Strategy and the Care Together programme have been informed by direct engagement, which has also helped the council identify and understand barriers that it must overcome to ensure that it is engaging with communities as effectively as possible.

The following statements have been formulated to provide examples of the challenges and barriers that the council must overcome to effectively engage with communities.

'English is not my first language, so I find it difficult to understand'.

'Terminology, jargon and acronyms used can be confusing'.

'Misuse of pronouns can be very frustrating'.

'I'm only young therefore they're not going to care about what I think.'

'Please do not pigeon-hole or categorise me'.

'Why should we bother engaging, our community's views will only be ignored'.

'My community have experienced lots of discrimination'.

'I live in the middle of nowhere and have limited access to transport'.

'I have more important things to do than to answer your survey'.

'I cannot and do not use the Internet'.

'I am homeless'.

'I don't feel like I know enough about the topic to contribute'.

'Accessing the information that I need online can be difficult to find'.

'I don't fit into any specific category, and I don't attend any local groups, therefore my voice could be missed'.

'Sorry but I don't 'do' government or politics.'

'I owe the council money therefore it's best I do not engage'.

'I am not a charity and do not need any support or advice'.

'My disability can prevent me from getting involved'.

'I am dependent on drug and alcohol'.

'I care for my mother, but I wouldn't call myself a carer'.

'I have just moved to the area, and I doubt the local council knows who I am'.

'I get inundated with people wanting my opinion. Certain methods of engagement such emails can become just a steady stream of information and important messages can get lost.'

'We like to keep ourselves, to ourselves'.

'I am a member of the armed forces community, and the civilian way of life is so different to what I'm used to'.

'I cannot read or write'.

How we will overcome barriers and deliver effective community engagement

During recent years the council has worked to identify the most effective ways of engaging with local communities. Events, such as the coronavirus pandemic, have required the council to overcome barriers and diversify the approach it takes. Below sets out examples of what the council is doing to remove, prevent and overcome barriers.

Seek to identify, consider, reduce and, where possible, remove any barriers that may prevent or reduce engagement

Examples of what the council is doing to achieve this objective include:

- providing communications in languages other than English, if required, especially important information such as pandemic publications or for refugees (utilise translation services including Google translate)

- carry out engagement at locations where non-English are likely to frequent where there is somebody present that can translate, for example, at the Ukraine Hub

- promote ESOL courses, library services and language cafes

- utilising multiagency, cross sector networks to identify barriers and devising solutions to overcome them such as the East Cambs Wellbeing Team and the East Cambs Parish and Community Forum

- being considerate of what timings work best for potential attendees of events and meetings

- completing Equality Impact Assessments for all reports relating to potential changes in service delivery to demonstrate that the needs of all user groups have been considered

- signposting to raise awareness of transport options available including community transport schemes

- conducting home visits to those who do not/cannot respond or engage

- investing into the relevant accessibility training for the council's officers to ensure that all council's written and digital documents comply with the accessibility requirements

- consulting with the East Cambs Access Group, where appropriate

Ensure that a variety of appropriate, adaptable and accessible engagement practices are used and promoted to maximise participation

Examples of what the council is doing to achieve this objective include:

- providing communications in languages other than English, if required, especially important information such as pandemic publications or for refugees (utilise translation services including Google translate)

- carry out engagement at locations where non-English are likely to frequent where there is somebody present that can translate, for example, at the Ukraine Hub

- promote ESOL courses, library services and language cafes

- providing a range of engagement methods including telephone, face to face and online, including social media

- incorporating the accessibility requirements to all council's published information (applicable to font size, font type, text alingment, structured headings, capitalisation, document properties, lists, links, colour, contrast, tables, images and other visual elements)

- following the Plain English advice on presenting information in a clear and understandable content and making it accessible to people regardless of their background, familarity with the topic or disabilities (explaining technical terms and acronyms, avoiding jargon and replacing difficult words with simple alternatives, using active verbs instead of passive tense)

- using correct language and terminology and not to make any assumptions, including the use of pronouns and ethnic origins

- incorporating engagement with other activities, for example at events

- seeking feedback following engagement activities including events and parish conferences which will be used to inform future activities

- seeking feedback using customer satisfaction surveys, anonymous customer feedback forms, ECDC website feedback form and star rating system at the end of all online forms (negative feedback is followed up to seek improvement)

- enabling members of the public to participate in the council meetings either via public question time or public speaking at relevant committee meetings

- seeking opportunities to upskill relevant officers in alternative approaches to engagement that have proven successful in other areas, such as appreciative enquiry technique

- using information from communities to inform the council's Community Engagement Toolkit to ensure that appropriate and accessible methods of engagement are being used

- attending events and locations to engage with the community including market stalls, schools, community hubs and events

- translate publications, especially for migrant workers, work to be done to identify the most common non-English languages spoken in the district

- ensuring that questions asked are relevant and appropriate

- using pictures and visual campaigns where appropriate

- being considerate of terminology used, for example, 'advice' rather than 'support', 'help you' rather than 'you need', being mindful of phrasing and not to imply any assumptions

Raise the profile of community engagement both publicly and within the council and encourage involvement from communities, including those from traditionally under-represented

Examples of what the council is doing to achieve this objective include:

- building trust with communities, for example, flying of flags to support events

- promoting engagement opportunities on the council website, social media channels and via press releases

- considering the inclusion of targets in agreements with funded organisations, where appropriate, to ensure that they are contributing towards achieving the aims of the council's Community Engagement

Strategy to encourage alignment with the aims of the strategy

- supporting and participating in multiagency engagement activities such as the Police's quarterly community engagement events and parish council-led community safety forums

- promoting the council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy to all staff

- promoting engagement events in a timely manner

- proactively going into communities to carry out engagement, for example, attending events and specific locations

Maintain effective communication and information sharing with partner agencies, stakeholders and communities and ensure that the views and knowledge of partners, stakeholders and communities are considered when appropriate

Examples of what the council is doing to achieve this objective include:

- using feedback to inform agendas and future engagement activity

- adhering to the Cambridgeshire Compact agreement

- delivering parish council conferences with agenda informed by the needs of parish councils

- maintaining effective communication and information sharing with partner agencies, stakeholders and communities and ensure that the views and knowledge of partners, stakeholders and communities are considered when appropriate

- sharing information via press releases, parish magazine articles, newsletters, partnership newsletters, websites and social media

- support the delivery of parish council – led community safety forums

- managing the council's Register of Consultees to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to provide input into changes in council services

- acting on feedback from our inspections and external assessments of performance

- feeding back consultation findings to participants

- support and engage with refugees in East Cambridgeshire by attending Ukraine Hub

- maintaining appropriate frequency of contact, so to keep engaged, enthused and not overloaded

- sharing communications with appropriate partners, organisations and locations

- Licensing to hold taxi forums to discuss taxi related matters with relevant parties

- planning to hold agents forums to gather feedback and share information

- promoting of the council's Community Engagement Toolkit to all ECDC officers

- promoting the council's Register of Consultees to ECDC officers

- participateing in forums that provide opportunities to share and learn from best practice

- seeking to fill information gaps and add value to existing efforts, for example, development of ECDC youth webpages and Explore East Cambs visitor website

- identifing opportunities to have a presence at engagement activities provided by other organisations

Working together

The council recognises that it alone cannot achieve the ambitions in this strategy. Everyone has a part to play in making this Community Engagement Strategy work, including, but not limited to:

- East Cambridgeshire residents

- elected members

- other authorities and agencies

- local groups including community and voluntary sector organisations

- local businesses

- city, town and parish council

- partnerships

How decisions are made

The council's Constitution outlines which part of the council or individual has responsibility for making particular types of decisions or decisions relating to particular areas of functions. It outlines the principles that underpin all decisions made by the council, including:

- proportionality (that is the action must be proportionate to the intended outcome)

- due consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers

- respect for human rights

- a presumption in favour of openness

- clarity of aims and desired outcomes

- having regard to all relevant considerations and ignoring all irrelevant ones

- a realistic evaluation of any alternative

- due consultation through effective access for the public to decision-making and decision makers

Data protection

In line with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, East Cambridgeshire District Council is fully committed to protect the privacy of our constituents, staff and members. We ensure the safe processing of personal data through strict guidelines for collection, storage and retention of information. Where appropriate, data sharing protocols are entered into and robust security measures are in place. The council maintains its Public Services Network compliance, demonstrating its ongoing commitment to supporting best practice in the maintenance and handling of data. For further information contact the Data Protection Officer, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 4EE or email dataprotection@eastcambs.gov.uk.

Measuring success

When communities say the following, we will know that this strategy is proving successful.

'I felt involved right from the start'.

'In the past I have felt excluded, but now I feel very much involved'.

'I know that my opinion is valued'.

'I know of a variety of ways to engage with the district council'.

'I don't use the Internet but that I am able to engage in other ways'.

'I understand the reasons why the council engages as it is clearly explained to me'.

'English isn't my first language however I am still able to access the information that I need'.

'I was frustrated that my idea wasn't implemented but I accept the reasons why'.

'It's great that the council advertises it's engagement activities in plenty of time'.

'I'm new to the area and already know what services are available to me'.
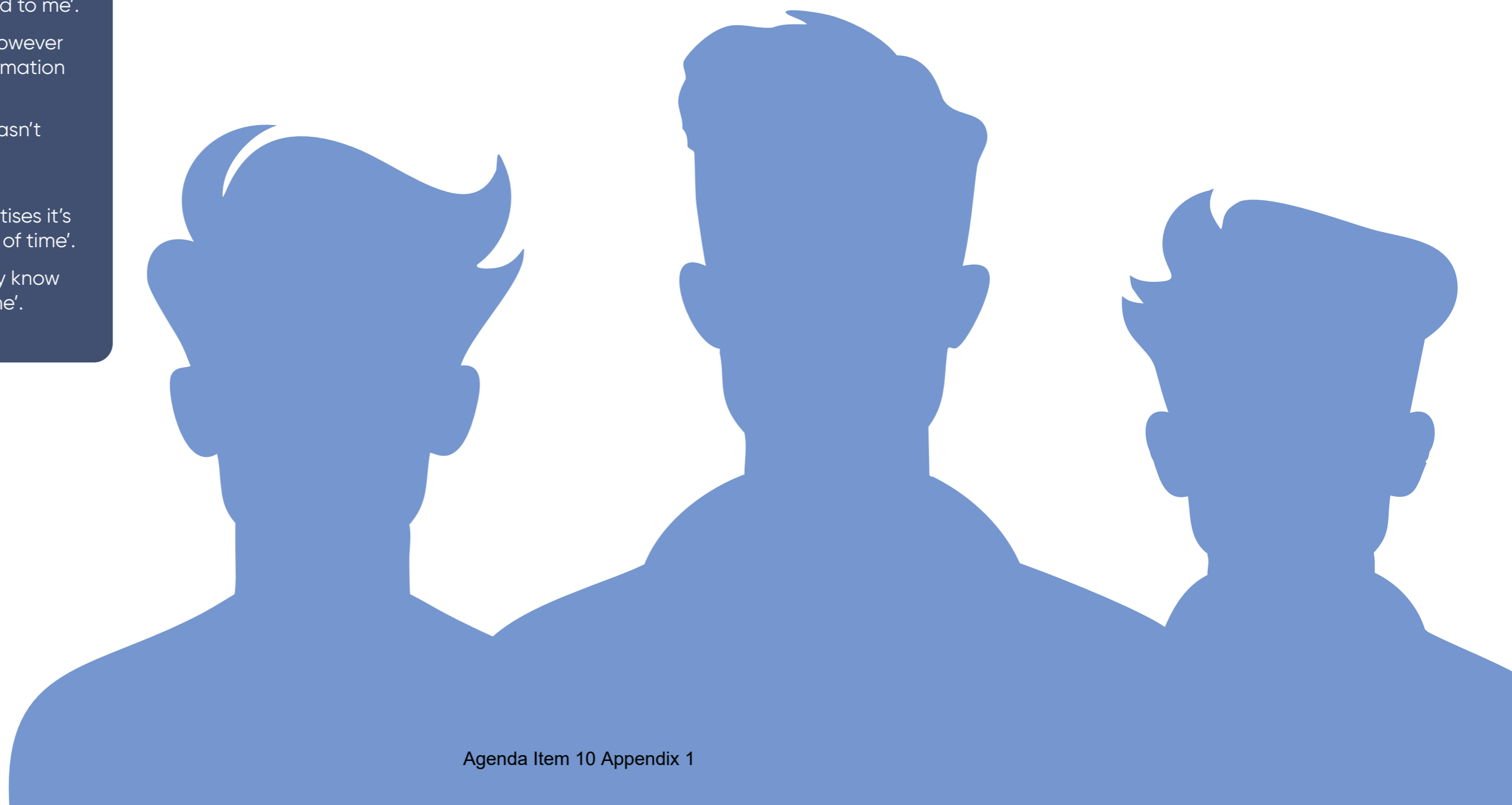
Community Engagement Action Plan

It is clear from this strategy that the council is already undertaking a breadth of engagement activity, however, a Community Engagement Action Plan has been produced to set out what more the Council will do to achieve the aims of this strategy.

Objective

Seek to identify, consider, reduce and where possible, remove, any barriers that may prevent or reduce engagement.

Target	Lead / Timescale
Target Identify the most common non English languages spoken in the district to inform translation services.	**Lead** Housing and Community Advice **Timescale** December 2025
Target Update the council's Community Engagement Toolkit to include Armed Forces Community and key faith and cultural events and dates and engage with residents, including communities that have traditionally been harder to reach to ensure that the toolkit is still fit for purpose.	**Lead** Communities and Partnerships **Timescale** December 2025
Target Map agencies already engaging with harder to reach groups so that utilise them as a means of engaging with that group for example ex-prisoners, people dependent on drug and alcohol, and include information in Community Engagement Toolkit.	**Lead** Communities and Partnerships **Timescale** December 2025
Target Identify registered houses of multiple occupation that could be engaged with for engagement with residents of houses of muliple occupancies.	**Lead** Environmental Health **Timescale** March 2027
Target Deliver a Digital inclusion project to provide digital inclusion initiatives to help improve people's digital skills so that they can use online services and address the main challenges that people face to going online.	**Lead** Economic Development **Timescale** March 2027
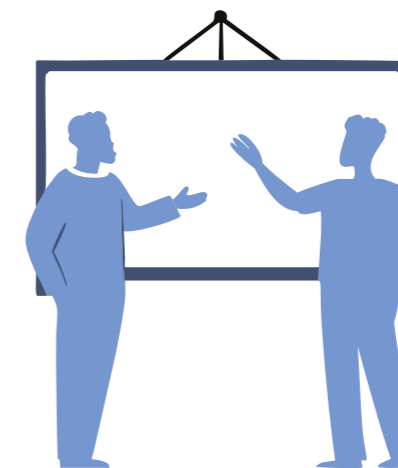
Objective

Ensure a that a variety of appropriate, adaptable and accessible engagement practices are used and promoted to maximise participation.

Target	Lead / Timescale
Target Develop, approve and implement East Cambridgeshire District Council Armed Forces Action Plan.	**Lead** Housing and Community Advice **Timescale** Approval during 2024 and 2025
Target Attend 2 community events to engage with the public.	**Lead** Public facing East Cambridgeshire District Council teams **Timescale** Annually
Target Carry out quarterly detached youth engagement to understand the views of local young people and provide feedback to relevant agencies, such as parish councils, to inform their plans.	**Lead** Communities and Partnerships **Timescale** 6 monthly
Target Through the Healthy You project engage with members of the community that may be inactive or looking to lead a healthier lifestyle.	**Lead** Leisure Services **Timescale** Ongoing
Target Develop a new ECDC website.	**Lead** Customer Services **Timescale** Decmber 2024

Objective

Raise the profile of community engagement both publicly and within the council and encourage involvement from communities, including those from traditionally under represented.

Target
Create a community engagement Communication Plan to promote the strategy and the council's engagement activities.

Lead
Communications

Timescale
June 2025

Target
Revitalize the council's Register of Consultee database, encouraging new residents to join, so they receive first hand all new consultations and engagement activities the council undertakes. Brand the database, so people become familiar with it.

Lead
Communities and Partnerships and Communications
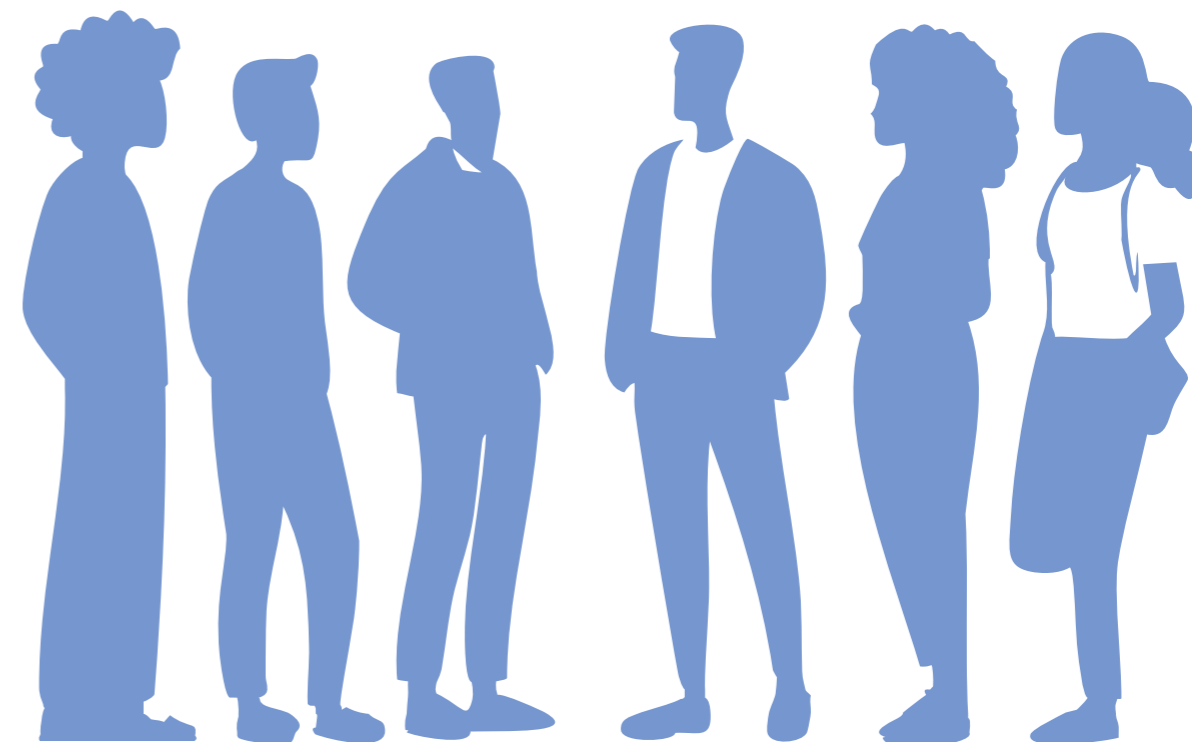
Timescale
March 2025

Target
Deliver at least 2 Youth Fusion events between 2024 and 2025.

Lead
Communities and Partnerships, Environmental Health, Housing and Community Advice

Timescale
March 2025

Target
Produce an online welcome pack for residents of new communities that includes information about the Council, its services and its objectives, and ways of engaging with the council.

Lead
Communications

Timescale
March 2027

Target
Produce poster to be displayed in customer access locations including stakeholder access locations which sets out how people can engage with the council.

Lead
Communications

Timescale
March 2027

Target
Create and maintain a central database of all departmental and corporate engagement activities.

Lead
Communities and Partnerships

Timescale
March 2028

Target
Produce a letter or a flyer to be sent to residents of new communities, signposting them to the online Welcome Pack.

Lead
Communities and Partnerships and Communications

Timescale
March 2027

End of document.