

Talking with the People of Conwy

*Conwy County Borough Council's
Community Involvement Strategy*



Introduction

The people of Conwy have told us what they want for themselves and their communities. We have listened and acted upon this and are committed to ensuring that the people of Conwy:

- OUTCOME 1:** Are educated and skilled
- OUTCOME 2:** Are safe and feel safe
- OUTCOME 3:** Live in safe and appropriate housing
- OUTCOME 4:** Are healthy and independent
- OUTCOME 5:** Live in a county which has a thriving economy
- OUTCOME 6:** Live in a sustainable environment
- OUTCOME 7:** Live in a county where language, culture and heritage thrive
- OUTCOME 8:** Are informed, included and listened to

Achieving these eight outcomes is at the forefront of everything we do as a Council. We have used this to form the basis of our main working documents within the County - the Corporate Plan 2012-2017 and One Conwy 2012-2025.

However, we cannot achieve this in isolation and we want to make sure that we provide opportunities to the people of Conwy to be informed, included and listened to (Outcome 8 above). Conwy County Borough Council aims to be customer focused and this is reflected in its values, which represent the beliefs and expected behaviour of everyone working for Conwy County Borough Council:

- To be customer focused
- To be respectful and fair
- To be reliable and accountable
- To be innovative
- To support and develop our team

We are committed to listening and responding to our customers, communities, staff and partners when shaping decisions, services and policies that affect them, and that this is seen as an essential part of the decision making process within the Council. The involvement and engagement of the people of Conwy will form a very important part of the information considered to make a decision. Other sources of information will also be used from specialists or experts, research studies, national or local guidance, professional opinions, local knowledge, facts and circumstantial or related influences.

A guide has been produced for the public to explain the importance of becoming involved in the work of the Council - How To Have Your Say : Statement of Community Involvement - which can be found on www.conwy.gov.uk/haveyoursay. A staff guide has also been produced providing guidance on how to involve and engage with our communities.

We look forward to working alongside the people of Conwy to make sure that we achieve the aims of this strategy together.

Iwan Davies
Chief Executive

Cllr Dilwyn Roberts
Leader of the Council

A Commitment to community involvement

We want to make it as easy as possible for the people of Conwy to become involved in the decision making process. To help us achieve this, we have signed up to the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales. In Conwy, the term 'Public Engagement' used here refers to:

- Communication
- Consultation
- Co-Production
- Engagement

NATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN WALES



1 Engagement is effectively designed to make a difference

Engagement gives a real chance to influence policy, service design and delivery from an early stage.

2 Encourage and enable everyone affected to be involved, if they so choose

The people affected by an issue or change are included in opportunities to engage as an individual or as part of a group or community, with their views both respected and valued.

3 Engagement is planned and delivered in a timely and appropriate way

The engagement process is clear, communicated to everyone in a way that's easy to understand within a reasonable timescale, and the most suitable method/s for those involved is used.

4 Work with relevant partner organisations

Organisations should communicate with each other and work together wherever possible to ensure that people's time is used effectively and efficiently.

5 The information provided will be jargon free, appropriate and understandable

People are well placed to take part in the engagement process because they have easy access to relevant information that is tailored to meet their needs.

6 Make it easier for people to take part

People can engage easily because any barriers for different groups of people are identified and addressed.

7 Enable people to take part effectively

Engagement processes should try to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence of all participants.

8 Engagement is given the right resources and support to be effective

Appropriate training, guidance and support are provided to enable all participants to effectively engage, including both community participants and staff.

9 People are told the impact of their contribution

Timely feedback is given to all participants about the views they expressed and the decisions or actions taken as a result; methods and form of feedback should take account of participants' preferences.

10 Learn and share lessons to improve the process of engagement

People's experience of the process of engagement should be monitored and evaluated to measure its success in engaging people and the effectiveness of their participation; lessons should be shared and applied in future engagements.

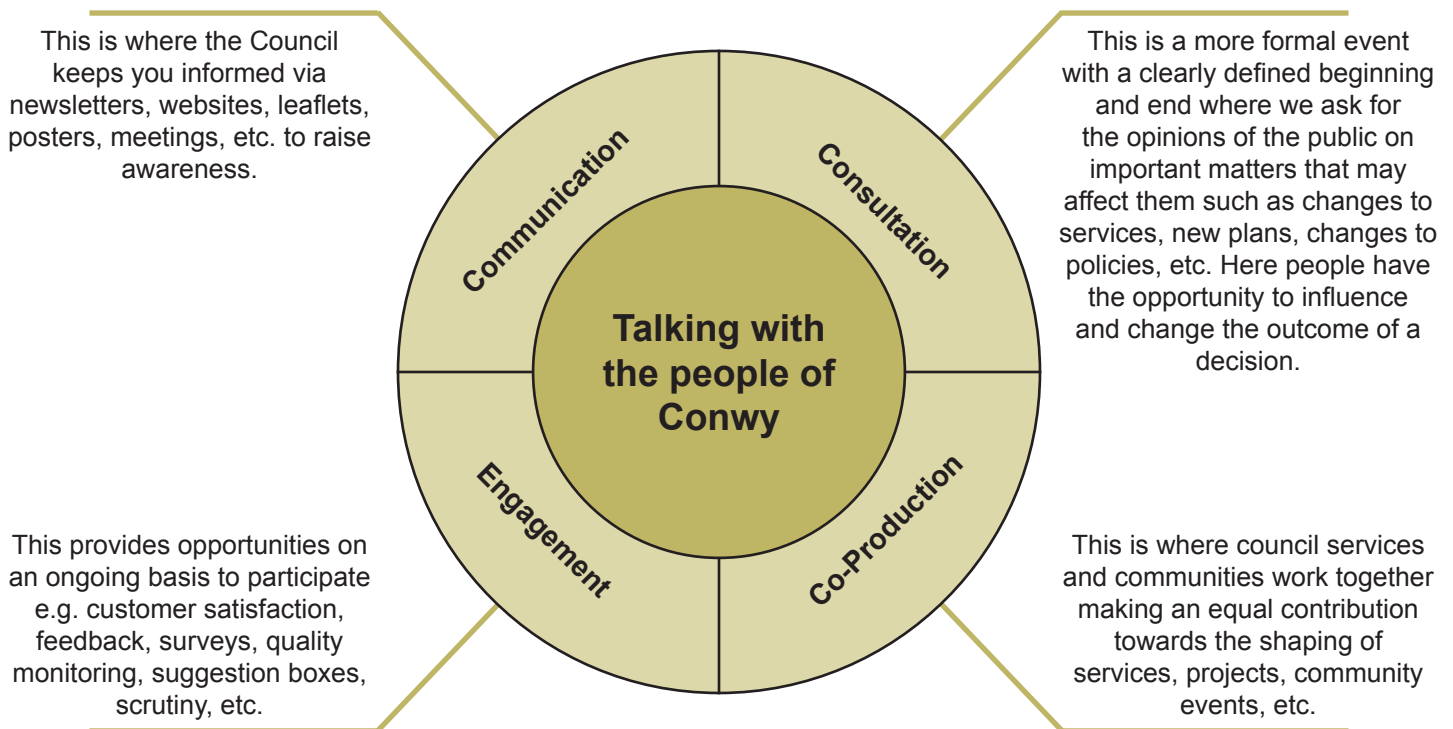
These Principles were developed by Participation Cymru working with TPAS Cymru, under the guidance of the Participation Cymru partnership. Endorsed by The First Minister of Wales, The Right Hon. Carwyn Jones AM on behalf of the Welsh Government.

Further guidance on the National Principles can be found at

www.participationcymru.org.uk

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What is community involvement?



Why is community involvement important?

There are many reasons why community involvement is important:

- **Rights** - the people of Conwy have a right to tell us what services they need and how they should be delivered.
- **Decisions** - the people of Conwy can provide the facts and opinions to inform our decision making, so that we make the right decisions.
- **Voice** - the people of Conwy's views are important and we want to listen and respond.
- **Resources** - resources are limited and we want to ensure that we are doing our best to meet the needs of the people of Conwy.
- **Change** - the people of Conwy **can** make a difference.
- **Confidence** - we can work together so that the people of Conwy have more confidence in what the Council does.

Benefits of involving the people of Conwy

Community involvement is an essential part of our work and is valuable. There are numerous benefits to the Council, to the community and to the individuals taking part:

Benefits to Individuals

- Personal, social and political development.
- Practical experience, learning and practising the skills of communication, negotiation and problem-solving.
- Shaping the development and improvement of council services.
- Understanding group and democratic processes - other points of view, the need for compromise and responsibility for group decisions.

Benefits to the Community

- Provides assurance to the people of Conwy that the Council is actively seeking and valuing their views.
- Enables local communities to be involved in identifying local needs and identifying solutions.
- The people of Conwy are empowered as active citizens to hold the council and its partners to account.
- Having young people taking part gives them a voice and promotes a positive image of children and young people.
- Promotes inclusion, equality and social cohesion across the county borough.

Benefits to the Council

- Ensures that we are open and responsive to the views of the people of Conwy.
- Offers us a wide variety of perspectives, improves relations with the general public.
- Helps us plan services to give users what they need.
- Helps us prioritise services and make better use of limited resources.
- Increases public participation in the decision making process.
- Improves our ability to achieve outcomes.

Who we will involve

We want to provide opportunities to involve people in the way we deliver local services and make local decisions. We feel that, where practical, it is important to involve those who are most likely to be affected by changes to services/policies. This may be people who live or work in the County Borough or visitors.

The consultation database record for a particular consultation will specify if the opinions of certain groups are being targeted under 'who we're talking with'.

We will ensure that the diversity of our community is taken into account when we engage with people, that we are sensitive to different cultures (religion, ethnicity, etc), communication methods (language, alternative formats) and access needs (access to physical environment), and that we seek out voices that are seldom heard and take steps to ensure they are heard.

When we will involve people

We involve, communicate and engage at appropriate times with people through our Services within Conwy.

We will hold formal consultations with the public when there is a:

- Statutory requirement - a legal requirement to do so.
- Policy commitment - changes to services, policy changes etc. that will directly affect people.

How we will involve the public

There are many ways in which we will aim/offer to involve the public:

- ✓ **Daily contact** - Councillors, Staff - for example social workers, youth workers, refuse collectors, teachers, box office assistants, etc.
 - ✓ **Website** - www.conwy.gov.uk/haveyoursay - All the consultations we do will be included on our Have Your Say Register.
 - ✓ **Social media** - We'll always be looking at using the latest **ways to inform people** about opportunities to become involved, including social media. We have various Facebook and Twitter sites which enables us to do this.
 - ✓ **Newsletters, posters, leaflets** - information about community involvement opportunities will also be advertised via these methods.
 - ✓ **Formal Consultations** - when we need to seek views on specific issues, particular service developments, or to comply with our statutory obligations. We have a public consultations database online - www.conwy.gov.uk/haveyoursay - which:
 - Registers all ongoing and historical consultations within the authority.
 - Advertises consultations that are ongoing within our partner organisations.
 - Contains Conwy County Borough Council's responses to various external consultations.
- Consultations will also be carried out/advertised using various formats such as Large Print, Braille, Audio CD, Audio Cassette or Easy Read as suitable to reach the intended audiences.
- ✓ **Customer feedback** when we ask people how happy they are with our services and how we could do things better - e.g. surveys, suggestion schemes, feedback forms.
 - ✓ **Comments, compliments or complaints** - when people tell us their views on things or tell us when we are doing really well or when something has gone wrong www.conwy.gov.uk/haveyoursay
 - ✓ **Committee meetings** - all our committee meetings are open to the public and the public are welcome to attend to listen to the debates (with the exception of those items on agendas which we are obliged to class as exempt). Agendas can be found here: www.conwy.gov.uk
 - ✓ **Planning** - our Planning Committee is a public meeting and provides the public with an opportunity to take part in meetings. www.conwy.gov.uk/planningcommittee
 - ✓ **Scrutiny** - Anyone who lives, works or studies in Conwy can give suggestions for future topics for consideration - www.conwy.gov.uk/scrutiny
 - ✓ **Other meetings** - e.g. workshops, community meetings, groups - people may be asked to have their say as an individual or as part of any groups they are involved with, like residents' associations or support groups.
 - ✓ **Youth Council** - Conwy Youth Council is about children and young people having a voice and having a choice in decisions that affect them - conwyouthcouncil.org.uk

- ✓ **Staff Council** - This internal council supports open and constructive dialogue between staff and the Senior Leadership Team. The Staff Council acts in a consultative capacity to give staff the opportunity to take part in the development of corporate policies and procedures.
- ✓ **Town and Community Council Forum** - quarterly meetings are held between the Council and its colleagues in town and community councils. This opens up dialogue with people who are in closer contact with their communities on a daily basis.
- ✓ **Local Service Board** - we work closely in partnership with other public services such as the police, fire service, health services, higher and further education establishments, the third sector, business sector, industry, etc. All these partners contribute towards shaping the work of the Council and the services provided in the County Borough of Conwy. www.conwy.gov.uk/lsb
- ✓ **County Borough Councillor** - Councillors may well be a first point of contact when someone has a question, issue or concern and can bring these to the attention of the Council on their behalf. Councillors play a very important part in the delivery of this Strategy. As the 'public's representatives' and 'community champions' they play a vital role as the organisation's community leaders. They can also make a huge impact in helping the Council to deliver its key messages to the public. Councillors have an important role in helping to ensure that the core messages are communicated and that ultimately, services delivered make a difference to the people of Conwy.
- ✓ **Town and Community Councillor** - we work closely in partnership with town and community councils who are able to feedback to us on matters of interest within communities.
- ✓ **AM/MP/Euro MPs** - these are the County's representatives in central government within the Welsh Assembly, the UK Government and in Europe and can take issues to a higher level.

How we will use the results of community involvement

The results of community involvement activities will be considered and used as appropriate to inform decisions taken by the County Council and we will also consider ways in which these results can influence the way that we work with partners, for example, by informing integrated plans.

It is expected that responses from members of the public to consultations, whether positive or negative, will be made in a constructive manner that assists the authority to shape its policies and services. Vexatious responses will not be considered and will not be subject to feedback.

To show that we have listened after a formal consultation we will:

- Publish a summary of feedback received and our response to it in the form of a You Said, We Did, We Didn't table.
- Show how the results have been considered to influence final decisions.
- Feed back the results and the decisions to those who took the time to get involved (which will be provided in appropriate formats such as Braille, large print, easy read and audio tape as necessary).

- Evaluate the consultation exercise(s) in line with the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales via a Review Group or similar process and report back on findings and lessons learnt to colleagues and partner organisations to ensure continuous improvement in public consultation processes.

A Corporate Community Involvement Assessment Group will meet at least once a year to review the impact and effectiveness of the significant consultations and will report its findings and recommendations in an annual report. The annual Community Involvement Performance Report will be reported through SMT, Customers Scrutiny and Cabinet.

Where issues that are not directly relevant are raised and therefore cannot be taken into account in making the decision, we will consider whether they should be taken into account in making other council decisions or whether they need to be referred to an appropriate partner.

Data protection - personal details

When we deal with feedback, we will keep to relevant data protection laws. We will not disclose personal information to third parties for marketing purposes. In all our dealings with the public, we are committed to following the Human Rights Act 1998.