

Public Participation Strategy

Introduction

This Public Participation Strategy sets out how Conwy Council wants to make sure the people who live in, work in and visit Conwy County Borough are informed, included and listened to in the delivery of Council services, making lives better for our communities.

The Council has a legal duty to encourage people to participate in what it does, providing continual opportunities for people to have a say and input into how decisions are made and how services are delivered.

We want our decisions to deliver better outcomes for people within our communities, especially those living in less favourable social and economic circumstances. We want to hear and understand the views and needs of those impacted by our decisions, particularly those who suffer socio-economic disadvantage.

We are committed to ensuring that our engagement is a two-way process, including listening to the voice of our citizens, communities, staff, elected members and partners when shaping decisions, services and policies that affect them. We want to place citizens at the heart of our decision-making and ensure that all sections of the community have an opportunity to get involved at a level and in a way that suits them.

This strategy explains how the public can participate in decisions, along with our objectives and principles for delivering an effective and coordinated approach to public participation, including how we will monitor and achieve these.

We look forward to working with you in delivering this strategy, making decisions and delivering services that the people of Conwy need and value.

We are Conwy

Conwy County Borough has a population of about 114,741 people. The narrow coastal belt contains about 90% of the population with Llandudno and Colwyn Bay as the two main urban areas. Other significant coastal settlements are Abergel, Conwy, Kinmel Bay, Towyn, Llandudno Junction, Penmaenmawr, Llanfairfechan and Penrhyn Bay.

The population of rural Conwy is widely dispersed. The main settlements are the market town of Llanrwst and the scattered villages of Betws-y-Coed, Betws yn Rhos, Eglwysbach, Llanfairtalhaearn, Llansannan, Llangernyw, Pentrefoelas and Cerrigydrudion. With 105 people per square kilometre, Conwy County Borough has the seventh lowest population density in Wales. Although being overall rural in nature, the towns are important centres for the wider population.

Here's a snapshot of our population in numbers:

- **16%** of the population are children and young people under 16.

- **27%** of our population is over 65 this is one of the highest proportions in Wales.
- **96.9%** of our population is White, but in addition to British there are over 80 different nationalities represented in the County Borough.
- **55.5%** of people were born in Wales and **29.5%** of people are able to speak Welsh.
- **20%** of people are disabled (under the Equality Act).
- **10%** of people provide unpaid care.

Our participation objectives and principles

The objectives below identify how we will ensure our strategy delivers an effective and coordinated approach to public participation for the benefit of all citizens and local communities – in order to support strong, active and inclusive communities.

Our objectives are to:

1. Strengthen, develop and maintain opportunities for local people and groups to influence what happens in their communities as part of an on-going conversation.
2. Support opportunities for communities to shape and influence the development and delivery of quality services and policies that reflect local needs and priorities.
3. Better coordinate community engagement activities to ensure consistency, quality and partner participation to avoid duplication.
4. Encourage participation from all sections of the community, particularly people and groups that are often missed out of community engagement activities.
5. Improve feedback to participants about the outcomes of consultation and engagement activities.
6. Promote variety, flexibility and choice in consultation and engagement activities.
7. Develop a Forward Work Plan so citizens and local communities can choose how and when they want to participate.
8. Listen and learn from our own and others' experience and share community involvement skills and knowledge of putting the citizen at the heart of decision-making.

To achieve our involvement objectives we will strive to make it as easy as possible for the people of Conwy to make their voices heard.

Our principles are to be:

1. **Accessible and inclusive** - all people within our community have the choice and opportunity to get involved.
2. **Clear and professional** - establishing trust, reliability and credibility.
3. **Targeted** - the right people get the right information to participate.
4. **Open, honest and transparent** - having a clear purpose and that we are honest about any limitations.
5. **Timely and relevant** - giving people enough time and notice to participate.
6. **Sustainable** - to ensure on-going mutually beneficial relationships.
7. **Two-way** - we will have a conversation, listening, not just talking.

What is Participation?

Participation can mean different things to different people, and can cover a range of approaches depending on what people want it to achieve. The below outlines the different types of methods we might use to involve and ensure the voices of our people and communities are heard.

Levels of Participation

Information

We will give people information and keep them informed about local events, services, policies and decisions which might affect or interest them.

We will do this in various ways, including through our website, social media pages, newsletters, leaflets, group and forums.

Consultation

This is a more formal event or activity with a clearly defined start and end. We'll ask for the opinions of the public when decisions need to be made on important matters that may affect them (like changes to services, new plans or policies). Here people have the opportunity to influence and change the outcome of a decision.

Engagement

We will provide opportunities on an ongoing basis for people and communities to have a conversation to share their views and ideas. We call this the County Conversation. We want to engage and be transparent with stakeholders in the decision-making process. We want to learn about people's lived experience.

Developing Together

Council services and communities will work together making an equal contribution towards shaping and delivering services, projects and community events.

It's important to recognise that there are different types of communities and these communities can be defined by the different purposes that bring people together (see [Appendix 1](#))

Interest - Communities of people who share the same interest or passion.

Action - Communities of people trying to bring about change.

Place - Communities of people brought together by geographic boundaries.

Practice - Communities of people in the same profession or undertake the same activities.

Circumstance - Communities of people brought together by external events/situations.

Why is participating important?

By participating, you can share your lived experience which can help to improve your individual circumstance, and improve services for the wider community.

The current economic and environmental climate means that how and what we deliver over the coming years will change. That is why involving you and your community is vital to help us correctly identify local priorities and develop solutions that reflect what communities need and want.

Who will we involve?

We will involve a wide range of stakeholders, including:

- Residents
- Service users & families
- Community Groups
- Businesses
- Visitors
- Town and Community Councils
- Elected Members

- Commissioners for Wales
- Third Sector Partners
- Public Sector Partners
- Those with Protected Characteristics
- Government Agencies
- Other Stakeholders (e.g. Trade Unions, Professional Bodies)

How you can get involved

There are many ways in which you can get involved and participate, such as:

- [**Conwy Council Website**](#) - Our website provides the latest information on what's going on in the Council and how you can participate.
- [**Have Your Say**](#) - We have a dedicated webpage for you to share your views on specific issues, including formal consultations and how to submit a petition.
- [**County Conversation**](#) - This is one of the ways that you can share ideas to improve services and your local area.
- [**Committee Meetings**](#) - All our committee meetings (including Scrutiny & Planning) are open to the public (apart from exempt items). You can also watch them online.
- **Social media** - We're always looking to use the latest ways to inform people about opportunities to get involved – find us on [Facebook](#).
- **Community groups** - There are lots of community groups in Conwy, where people with an interest can get involved. To find groups in your area visit [Dewis](#) & [Conwy Community Well-being Team](#)
- **Daily Contact with Councillors & staff** - for example social workers, youth workers, refuse collectors, teachers, box office assistants, etc.
- **Youth Council** - Provides an opportunity for children and young people in the area to have their voice heard and have a choice in decisions that affect them. If you want to get involved, visit the [Youth Council Facebook page](#), or go to our [Youth Service website](#).
- **Customer Feedback** - Tell us when we are doing really well or what you would like to see improve.
- [**Town & Community Councils**](#) - These local councils serve their communities and act to improve the quality of life in their locality. Get involved & find out more about your local council.

- **Become a Councillor** - Be part of the team responsible for the future and well-being of the County Borough of Conwy and all the people that live, work and visit here.
- **Voluntary & Third Sector Organisations** - These are a good way people can get involved in their local community and provide feedback in a less formal route.
- **Public Services Board** - We work closely in partnership with other public services to improve social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being.

What do we do as a Council?

We understand that not everyone will be aware of the wide range of public services that we are responsible for. These services aim to support the everyday lives of our citizens of, and visitors to, the County Borough. We want to encourage citizens to learn more about these services by speaking with their local Councillors, following our social media channels, finding information on our website and reading our [Annual Report](#). There is also information about how we manage money, including our Annual Budget, Budget Report and Statement of Accounts at [Budget Information](#).

Here's an overview of the services we provide:

- **Education and Schools** - Education and school support, home to school transport and youth and family services
- **Social Care** - Community Well-being, Disability, Safeguarding, Youth Justice, Family support & intervention, Older people & hospital social work, Quality standards & commissioning, Supporting looked after children, Supporting vulnerable people, Community Safety
- **Environment, Roads and Facilities** - Roads and open spaces, Public Transport, Recycling and waste collection, Flood risk and infrastructure, Public Protection
- **Strategic Housing** – Housing Strategy, Housing solutions, Housing improvements, Development and Building Control, Housing, Strategic Planning, and Estates
- **Economy and Culture** - Business and Tourism, Culture and information, Leisure facilities, Venues, events and estate management.
- **Corporate Support Functions** - Audit & Procurement, Corporate Finance, People & Performance, Marketing and communications, Information Technology & Digital Transformation, Law & Governance

How do we make decisions?

We recognise that not everyone will understand how the Council works.

Our Constitution governs the way in which the Council, Councillors and officers working at the Council work together to deliver the Council's functions. We have designed a [Guide to the Constitution](#) to help people understand how the Council works to deliver services in your area. It provides an overview of the Council's Constitution and explains key sections in clear and simple language.

The Council is made up of 55 Councillors (sometimes called Elected Members) who are elected every five years to represent people living in different parts of the Council's area (commonly known as wards). Councillors are responsible for everyone living in the County Borough, but they have a special duty to people living in their ward.

All Councillors meet together regularly as the Council. The Council is responsible for setting the overall budget, policy priorities and overall policy framework.

It is the Council that appoints the Leader of the Council; the Leader then appoints the other members of the Cabinet and allocates Cabinet member responsibilities (portfolios). The Cabinet meets regularly to take collective decisions on those aspects of the Council's work which the Cabinet is responsible for.

Some of the Council's functions are carried out by committees. Committees are small groups of Councillors that meet to carry out certain of the Council's regulatory and scrutiny functions.

Scrutiny Committees advise on policies and hold the Cabinet to account on specific issues. Scrutiny Committees can also review areas of Council activity or matters of wider local concern.

The Planning, Governance and Audit, and Licensing Committees make the Council's regulatory decisions.

We want to be transparent about how our democratic decisions are made and the role of stakeholders in the process.

We want to encourage and make it easy for stakeholders to take part in the democratic decision making process.

How you can participate in decisions

We want to support people to express their views on decisions before and after they are taken. Here are the ways you can participate:

Contact your local Councillor

It's their role to represent you and your concerns and to lobby on your behalf. You can e-mail, write a letter or phone your Councillor. Find your [Councillors contact details](#) on our website.

Attend Public Meetings

You can attend Council and other Committee meetings in person. Or you can watch the livestream or the recording on our website. Prior to a meeting you can access the forward work plan, the agenda and any reports to be discussed. Some committees allow public speakers or you can submit a comment for the committee to take into consideration. After a meeting you can access the minutes and get updates. We also list all of the decisions made at these meetings. Visit our [committee webpages](#) to find out more.

Get involved in Scrutiny

Scrutiny helps the Council channel community intelligence into its improvement processes. It involves Councillors working with local people, community organisations, agencies that work in partnership with the Council and the public to provide effective and responsive services. We want you to have a say in how decisions are made and how services are delivered. All such meetings are held in public, and anyone is welcome to attend and register in advance to speak at the proceedings. By letting us know your views, you can help improve the services you receive. Visit our [scrutiny webpage](#) to find out more.

Take part in public consultations

We frequently hold consultations on proposals that may affect you, your community and the services we provide. They provide an opportunity for you to have your say and comment on the plans and proposals prior to any formal decisions being made. When completed, we report the feedback and how they informed the final draft of the strategy or plan. Visit our [consultation webpage](#) to find the latest consultations.

Take part in petitions

Creating or taking part in a petition is one way you can get involved in what the Council does. It allows people to raise issues of concern, giving Councillors the opportunity to consider the need for change. Check with your local Councillor first. Creating an [on-line petition](#) is easy, visit our webpage to find out more.

Become a Councillor

We want to promote a greater understanding of the role of the Councillor, not just to improve relationships and trust between decision-makers and the public, but to encourage more people to stand for local election, whether that be as a County Borough Councillor or a Town and Community Councillor. Encouraging greater public participation in the decision making process provides the foundation for that improved understanding.

Being a local councillor can be a very rewarding experience. It provides an opportunity to help the local community, make changes happen and be part of the team responsible for the future and well-being of the County Borough of Conwy and all the people that live, work and visit here.

The people of Conwy need local councillors who have a broad range of talents and interests that reflect the diversity of the county's population. It is important that councillors

are like the people who elect them - we need more diverse councillors – we need more women, more young people, more ethnically diverse people, more disabled people and more LGBTQ+ people to stand, so that they can represent all the different views in the community and take decisions that benefit everyone.

We have changed the way we work so Councillors can remote into meetings, helping to manage conflicting priorities, such as caring and/or work responsibilities.

We also provide support and training to help Councillors develop in their role.

What do Councillors do?

Councillors are elected by the people living in a particular ward to represent them on the Council. They are also accountable to the wider community and must act in the best interests of everyone living in the Council's area. They play an important role in developing policies - identifying community needs, setting objectives to meet those needs, deciding between the different demands on services and allocating resources.

Some Councillors also take on the role of a 'champion' to provide a voice for traditionally under-represented groups or champion a specific area of work. Often this is part of the Cabinet Member role if there is a clear link with their portfolio, for example, equalities, sustainability.

In other areas Councillors volunteer to take on this responsibility, for example, we have a Carers Champion, Mental Health Champion, Disability Champion, Age Friendly Champion, Welsh Language Champion, and Armed Forces Champion. Member Champions make sure that the issue or group that they are championing is considered when Council policy is being developed and decisions are made.

We want to raise the profile of these Member Champion roles, so they are effective within the Council and in the community, working closely with relevant stakeholders, and effectively promote the interest being championed.

It can be a demanding role, but Councillors are entitled to receive a salary in return for the commitment and contribution they make. Visit the Welsh Local Government Association website for more information on the role of a Councillor and how to stand for election.

Respecting diversity and being accessible

Our engagement needs to reflect the diversity and various lived experiences of our community.

- We will seek out voices from all backgrounds and we will take steps to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to have their say and are listened to.
- We will be sensitive to different cultures, languages, ethnicities, religions, preferred gender pronouns, sexual orientation, ages, socio-economic status, backgrounds (such as those experiencing poverty), communication methods and accessibility needs.

- We will consider the needs of people with additional requirements, and aim to reduce the barriers for those with sensory impairments (both hearing and visual) and learning impairments to get involved.
- Where appropriate we will consider the use of large print, easy read, audio, videos, braille and translation / interpretation services.

Visit our [**Inclusive Conwy plan**](#) to find out more about how we aim to adapt the way we work across all sectors of the community so that there are a variety of accessible and tailored options for local citizens to communicate, collaborate and engage with our services. By improving the way we work with communities, our aim is that the voice of Conwy citizens will be heard, and they will play an active role in what happens within their community.

Conwy Youth Council

Conwy Youth Council gives young people aged 13 – 25 who live or study in Conwy County Borough the opportunity to have their say and campaign together on matters that are important to them and other young people. We want young people to be a part of transforming their lives and be involved in decision-making processes.

Working together, we can help young people build connections with local councillors and make their voices heard. Members of the Youth Council are called upon for advice on issues affecting children and young people, for their opinions, insights and knowledge on whether a scheme, policy, or project will benefit their peers.

We ensure that Conwy Youth Council is inclusive and promotes participation across the county by working with schools and colleges, seeking representation from their students, and also including general youth groups and organisations. We hold both face to face and online meetings to increase participation further and eliminate travel issues as our young people are from across the whole of the county.

If you want to get involved, visit the [**Youth Council Facebook page**](#), or go to our [**Youth Service website**](#).

Feedback

Keeping people informed about what we have done as a result of their feedback and involvement is critical to making sure our engagement remains meaningful and effective. After each engagement activity, we will tell those who participated, what we did as a result of their feedback. Whilst we can't provide feedback on each and every comment, they are considered as part of our democratic discussions.

Engaging with your local Councillor is one way to get feedback on your comments. This may take several forms, from a personal visit, a phone call, a letter or e-mail or a comment on social media.

When public consultations have ended, we will publish the findings on our website. We will consider all the comments received during the consultation process and provide a summary of feedback.

You can also access our Council Committee's Forward Work Plans via our website, to see what items are being discussed in our various committees and when. This provides opportunities to get involved at an earlier stage in the decision-making process.

While getting involved in Overview and Scrutiny cannot promise that the Committee members form the same conclusions as you, your comments will be acknowledged and considered. Comments submitted in writing or online are passed on to the Chairman and the relevant Committee.

A staff guide and training programme has been produced providing guidance for our employees on how to involve and engage with our communities.

Review and Improvement

Evaluation, Feedback, Drawing Conclusions and Making Recommendations

We will feedback the results of our engagement promptly and in a format that is accessible. This includes publishing reports on our website and providing direct feedback to groups or organisations involved in our engagement. The feedback will summarise an evaluation of our engagement and also demonstrate how the engagement was considered in our decision making.

We will regularly review our public participation strategy and approach to engagement to ensure it remains appropriate, meets the needs of our communities and complies with our statutory requirements. Where improvements are identified, we will develop corrective actions to deliver these improvements and monitor their implementation.

How to contact us

Online

You can visit **The County Conversation** to share your views and ideas about the County or your local area.

www.conwy.gov.uk/The-County-Conversation

By post

Conwy County Borough Council
PO Box 1
Colwyn Bay
LL29 0GG

By email

- countyconversation@conwy.gov.uk

By phone

- 01492 574000
- BT Relay Service Customers with hearing or speech impairments can contact any Council service by dialling **18001** before the number they require.

British Sign Language users can contact Conwy County Borough Council using a Sign Language interpreter, through the InterpretersLive! Service, provided by Sign Solutions – visit www.conwy.gov.uk/signing

How will we achieve our objectives?

We will monitor our progress against the following actions:

1. Strengthen the County Conversation.
2. Deliver Officer and Member training on effective methods of engagement.
3. Develop our use of social media in the promotion of democratic meetings.
4. Support Councillors' awareness of the benefits and effective use of social media.
5. Bring all the Council's consultation activities together into a single, easily accessible online hub.
6. Inform and promote the role of the public in our consultation exercises and how it links to the democratic decision making.
7. Take steps to ensure that engagement is inclusive so everyone has an equal opportunity to have their say and are listened to, in line with our [Inclusive Conwy plan](#).
8. Promote greater understanding of the role and work of the Council in issues that affect residents.
9. Better promotion of how people can engage in these processes by identifying and showing where residents' opinions have affected the outcome of a consultation / survey.
10. Promote the role and prominence of Councillors.
11. Encourage a vibrant local democracy, promoting greater diversity.

Appendix 1 – Community Types

Community of Action

Definition: A community with a goal to use collective power to make change.

Example:

- Communities trying to go plastic free
- Communities taking over a community asset
- Communities twinning with foreign towns or villages

Community of Practice

Definition: A community for people participating in the same activity.

Example:

- Sport Clubs (e.g. football and rugby)
- Parkrun
- Fitness Classes

Community of Place

Definition: A community for people united by geography.

Example:

- Town and Communities Councils
- Community Clear up days
- Friends of Parks

Community of Interest

Definition: A community for people whom share the same common interest.

Example:

- Men's Shed
- Allotments
- Choir
- Amateur dramatics
- Flower Club