

Draft Corporate Engagement Strategy

1. Introduction

North Tyneside Council is a high performing authority that is recognised for our achievements and the quality of our services. We have a commitment-and a vision- to continue to be a council that delivers for its residents and its communities by involving them in decision-making.

In response to consultation with our residents we have set ourselves clear priorities, against the themes of 'Our People', 'Our Places' and 'Our Economy'. These are the foundation of the North Tyneside Council Plan and the focus for delivery of our services.

The Council, in common with all local authorities, has had to respond to increasingly severe national austerity measures. In responding to these financial challenges, together with the increased demand for services from a growing population, a new approach to service delivery is being implemented to create a brighter future for residents focused around the Council Plan deliveries

Effective engagement with residents is essential to the successful delivery of this approach.

This Engagement Strategy sets out the framework within which we will deliver a more joined up approach across the organisation that meets both the legal requirements and gives a voice to residents and service users in influencing policy decisions and re-shaping services.

Our offer will cover a wide spectrum of different ways to communicate with you and give residents, service users and other stakeholders the opportunity to feedback and be involved in decision making. It will span from customer service approach and the increased use of digital communications and social media provides new opportunities to enhance the approach to reach residents and other stakeholders more easily.

2. Objectives

The Engagement Strategy will deliver a co-ordinated two-way communications approach that informs, but also engages and involves residents and other important stakeholders in providing feedback, to help shape decisions that contribute to creating a brighter future for North Tyneside - its residents, communities and businesses as well as for those who work in, or visit the borough.

The approach will meet statutory requirements, be accessible, and offer a broad range of different ways to give feedback and get involved. This will ensure that everyone will have a choice in deciding whether, and if so how they can be more involved.

We will help people to understand when it is not possible for us to involve people in decision making. This is likely to be in the following circumstances:

- Emergency situations. There are times when we will need to act for safety reasons and may not be able to engage. We will, as soon as is reasonable, explain our need to do this.
- Legislative occurrences. There may be situations where we locally have to respond to a directive from central government. In these situations we will engage with residents on any opportunities that may arise where we can shape things locally.
- Operational decisions: The engagement strategy will help set the policy direction of the council. The way these policies are implemented, i.e. how the council allocates its staff to deliver services, or deals with specific issues relating to individual customers is an operational decision.

3. Core principles

These are the ways that we will make sure all our staff work with residents regardless of how we engage

- Inclusive: Making sure that everyone will be able to engage in the process
- Clear: Being clear on our aims of each engagement activity from the outset, and the extent to which residents will be involved.
- Integrated: Ensuring, that what we do at whatever level, is joined up with decision making processes.
- Tailored: Understanding our audience and using different methods appropriately to enable and encourage them to be involved.
- Feedback: We will give feedback, through agreed channels, when we have completed our activity.
- Timely: we will ensure that we give, where we can, sufficient notice to make opportunities available to all. We will take into account those times when it is more appropriate to engage depending on our target audience.

4. The approach

The aim is to deliver a wide range of activities and opportunities that enables everyone to easily access information to help them understand what we are doing as a publically funded organisation, and why, but with additional opportunities that, if they wish to, can enable the public to hold us to account by giving feedback to inform decision-making and shape services.

At each level of engagement we will explain the offer and what people can expect from being involved.

The different opportunities to access information and get involved are brought together under four categories:

-**Informs** by actively promoting/signposting residents and other relevant stakeholders, to information about North Tyneside Council services (and how to access them), our decisions and the delivery of our [Council Plan](#). This will include helping people understand how we are addressing the challenging economic position by doing things differently in the interests of our borough's residents and its communities.

When we **INFORM** people about our services or changes to our services we could use our social media platforms or our resident's magazine. There may also be information in the form of an annual report, for example from our housing service aimed at letting tenants know how we are doing.

-**Consults** with our residents and service users when significant changes or new approaches are being considered, so we can ensure that we listen to their thoughts in a timely and efficient way before we reach that decision. When we consult we will make it clear what questions we are asking and how the responses will be used. Some of the consultation will relate to statutory process, including planning and licensing issues.

When we need to make changes to or develop new services we may need to **CONSULT**. Times when we have done this have included our annual budget consultation. Through this, residents have helped us to make decisions about how and where to spend our funding.

-**Involves** residents and service users in a creative and innovative way, ensuring equity of access to opportunities which arise.

We work with our Young Mayor and Youth Council to make sure that we **INVOLVE** children and young people in the services they receive now and in the future. Through this mechanism we have used creative ways to ensure that they are able to work with us to design and develop services.

-**Collaborates** with service users, working together in a more in depth way which takes into account the individuals' interest and expertise on the issue. Some of these activities will focus on **empowering** our residents to create solutions that arise in their communities through using methods such as social action, ensuring that their voices are central in driving agendas.

Through our Adult Social Care services, service users are able to **COLLABORATE** on co-production of some of our services.