



VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

Public Engagement Framework 2017 – 2020

OCTOBER 2017

Strong
Communities
with a Bright
Future

Ambitious

Open

Together

Proud

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Foreword

Public engagement is an important part of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's everyday business. As such, it is one of the core values set out in the Council's Corporate Plan, 'to work **together** as a team that engages with our customers and partners, respects diversity and is committed to quality services'. The Corporate Plan sets out how the Council will deliver its vision for the Vale of Glamorgan. Effective engagement is essential to successfully delivering the ambitious programme of activities set out in the Corporate Plan.

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 in a way that suits them.

We hope you will all want to play a part in ensuring that citizens and communities have a bigger say in the services they receive and the places where they live so that we can work together to deliver the Council's vision of 'Strong Communities with a Bright Future'.

What is Public Engagement?

Public engagement is the process by which organisations invite citizens to participate in deliberation, dialogue and action in relation to issues that they care about. When done well, it allows our residents to have a meaningful say in the decisions that affect them and provides us with a wealth of information that enables us to take important decisions. Effective engagement means better services.

Engagement: An active and participative process, that includes a wide range of different methods and techniques, by which people can influence and shape policy and services.

Consultation: A formal process by which policy makers and service providers ask for the views of interested groups and individuals.

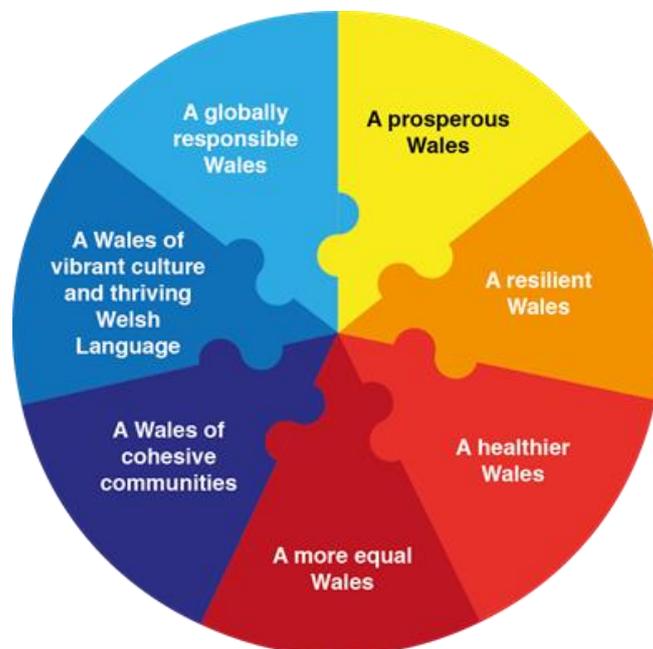
Participation: People being actively involved with policy makers and service planners from an early stage of policy and service planning and review.

Drivers for Improving Public Engagement

The Vale of Glamorgan Council is committed to continuously improving the way in which we engage our residents, partners and other key stakeholders in decision making.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act

The Council has welcomed its duties under the Well-being of Future Generations Act which is a unique piece of legislation to Wales. The aim of the Act is to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act sets out seven national well-being goals which the Council and other public bodies must contribute to.



In accordance with the Act the Council 'must act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by taking account of the

sustainable development principle.’ To enable us to do this we need to engage with local residents, organisations, the business community and visitors to the Vale.

The Act details five ways of working which are essential to ensuring we are being more sustainable and this includes involvement. We need to reflect the diversity of the area and utilise the knowledge and experience of those living and working in the area. The five ways of working are:

-  **Long term**
The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
-  **Prevention**
How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.
-  **Integration**
Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.
-  **Collaboration**
Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.
-  **Involvement**
The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

In summary, the Act is intended to make public bodies improve all aspects of well-being. To think more about the long term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined up approach.

The Council's Public Engagement Framework is essential to ensuring that we are contributing to the goals and meeting our duties under the Act.

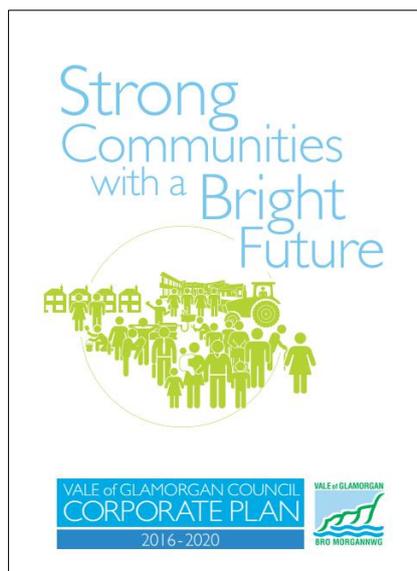
Corporate Plan 2016-20

The Council has agreed four Well-being Outcomes and eight Well-being Objectives which provide a framework for our Corporate Plan and sets out how we will contribute to the national well-being goals in an integrated way.

Our four well-being outcomes are for:

- An Inclusive and Safe Vale
- An Environmentally Responsible and Prosperous Vale
- An Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale
- An Active and Healthy Vale

By delivering these outcomes we will achieve our vision of ‘**Strong Communities with a Bright Future**’.



The Council has also made a commitment to ‘*co-ordinate work across the Council to ensure consultation and engagement activities are effective and give residents a meaningful voice*’. The Engagement Framework is an essential tool to help make this happen.

Public Services Board

The Council is a member of ‘Our Vale’ the [Public Services Board](#) which was also established by the Well-being of Future



Generations Act and brings public bodies together to improve well-being and work in partnership to contribute to the national well-being goals.

The PSB has identified four well-being objectives including '***To enable people to get involved, participate in their local communities and shape local services***' These provide a framework for the PSB's Well-being Plan 'Our Vale – Our Future' and have been informed by a Well-being Assessment. In relation to this particular objective the PSB has set out what it wants to achieve by 2050 and this includes:

'Everyone across the Vale has their voice heard, has the opportunity to get involved in shaping local services and is confident that they are listened to and can see the difference that their involvement has made. Public engagement is joined up People find it easy and convenient to communicate with us ... People from all backgrounds and of all ages take part in designing and delivering solutions to local issues and are empowered to work together to identify and prevent issues ... The wide-ranging benefits of being involved in community life are realised with increased involvement helping to improve health and well-being, make communities more cohesive and reduce loneliness and social isolation.'

Actions have been identified for the next five years as the first steps to achieving this and contributing to the PSB's overall vision for the Vale in 2050. Relevant actions within the PSB's Well-being Plan are:

- Adopting the [National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales](#).
- Researching best practice in engagement and community participation within Wales, the UK and internationally to develop new approaches suitable for local implementation
- Producing a toolkit for partners to make sure our engagement activities are more joined up.
- Working with the local community to identify and develop a project within one of our most deprived communities which involves the

community right at the start to determine what is needed and the best solution.

- Developing our understanding and knowledge about our local communities and how we can encourage more people to get involved in their community.

As a member of the PSB the Council will work with its partners to deliver these actions which are consistent with the commitments in the Council's Corporate Plan and the Public Engagement Framework. They help to illustrate the five ways of working and the importance of working collaboratively, joining up our work and the importance of involving the local community and other stakeholders in shaping our services so they are the right services now and into the future.

If we are to successfully achieve the wellbeing goals and improve environmental, economic, cultural and social well-being then the involvement of our local communities is essential.

The National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales

To ensure that all of the information gathered when conducting engagement projects is reliable and that all engagement work undertaken is of a high standard, all projects should be conducted in line with the *National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales*, developed by Participation Cymru, and the Vale of Glamorgan Council Corporate Standards for engagement.

The *Principles* set out what good quality public engagement work should look like. The Corporate Standards represent best practice and so set out the basic parameters within which meaningful engagement can be achieved.

National Principles	Corporate Standards
Engagement is effectively designed to make a difference	Have clearly defined aims and objectives – these make clear to participants exactly what they can

	change. If nothing can be changed then there is no need to engage
Encourage and enable everyone affected to be involved, if they so choose	Be promoted to a range of identified stakeholders. It is important that the right people are aware of the consultation and given the opportunity to reply, so effective stakeholder analysis is needed
Engagement is planned and delivered in a timely and appropriate way.	Be promoted effectively and proportionately prior to the start of the consultation period and where practicable as the consultation progresses.
Work with relevant partner organisations	Seek opportunities to collaborate with partners across the organisation and PSB partners.
The information provided will be jargon free, appropriate and understandable	Be written in plain language. All of the information presented to residents must be easily understandable and free of jargon.
Make it easier for people to take part	Allow responses to be made through a variety of methods
Enable people to take part effectively	Provide stakeholders with a realistic timeframe within which to respond. The nature of the exercise and the identified stakeholders will determine an appropriate consultation period. In some cases there may be a statutory process and/or official guidance prescribing the length of an appropriate consultation period and this should be observed.
Engagement is given the right	Be conducted in line with the

resources and support to be effective	Council's values and the PSB's vision.
People are told the impact of their contribution	Have a clearly defined feedback process. Both those who participated in the process and the public in general must be made aware of what has happened as a result.
Learn and share lessons to improve the process of engagement	Finish with a process of evaluation

Engaging with different people in the community

The Equality Act (2010) places a duty on public bodies to consult with protected groups. The Council welcomes this duty and as such one of the core values set out in the Council's Corporate Plan is, 'to work together as a team that engages with our customers and partners, respects diversity and is committed to quality services'. It is essential that the views of protected groups are represented and considered when making changes to services.

There are 9 protected characteristics under the Equality Act, they are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

There is also a legal obligation to collect and analyse equality data, to take account of issues that are important to protected groups and take necessary

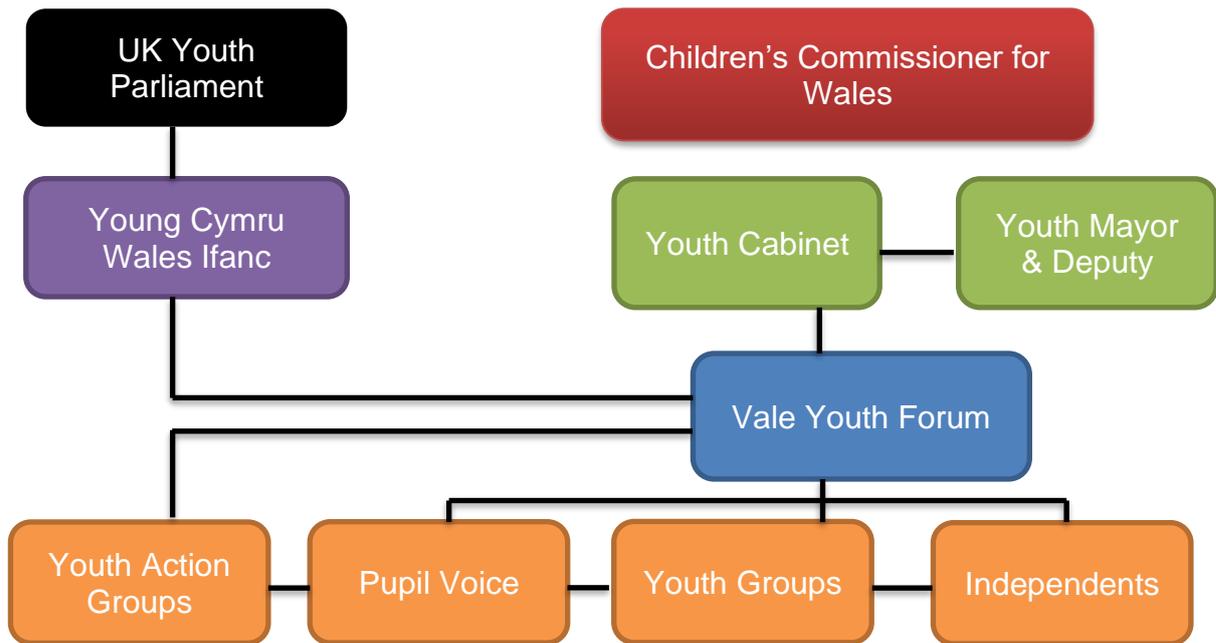
action. The Council takes steps to engage with protected groups, these are described in more detail below.

Engaging with Children and Young People (0-25 year olds)

There are National Participation Standards for engaging with Children and Young People. As a Council, we will ensure that when working with people aged 0-25 we will adhere to the following Standards, which are consistent with the National Principles for Public Engagement and the Council's corporate standards.

1. Information – provide information that is good quality, clear and accessible; and inform participants of who is going to listen to them and what difference their involvement could make.
2. Choice – give children and young people enough time and support to choose if they want to get involved.
3. Discrimination – challenge discrimination; and provide a range of opportunities and support meet the needs of children and young people.
4. Respect – listen to young people's views, experiences and ideas and take them seriously; work with them on things that they say are important; and value what they have to offer.
5. Getting something out of it – work with young people in safe, fun and enjoyable ways; make the most of what they know and do things that help build their confidence and skills.
6. Feedback – always ensure you provide feedback in an agreed time; tell young people how their ideas have been used and why; and tell them what happens next.
7. Working better for young people – work with them to learn how we can do things better; and ensure their views make a difference to the way we make plans and decisions.

The model below shows the various youth groups and forums operating in the Vale of Glamorgan.



There are officers in the Youth Service who facilitate these forums to make it easier for young people to have their say on services and facilities in their community.

Engaging with Older People

The Vale of Glamorgan Council supports the well-established Vale 50+ Strategy Forum. The forum works both locally and nationally to support the different needs of over fifties in the Vale of Glamorgan. Officers work with the Forum to ensure that older people have a voice and have the opportunities to shape local services and give their views. The Forum are pro-active and work hard to ensure that older people in the Vale have the opportunity to give their views on various projects and services and organise meetings and events throughout the year.

Engaging with other protected groups

The Council has a directory of organisations operating in the Vale who represent protected groups. In some circumstances, officers will attend meetings to discuss proposals with these groups to gather their views. Alternatively, details of consultation projects are sent to these organisations requesting their feedback. There is also an Equalities Consultative Forum,

which meets quarterly, to discuss and challenge the Council's policies and equalities schemes.

Corporate Support

To ensure that all service areas are able to deliver consultation and engagement projects that meet the corporate guidelines, support is provided in a number of ways:

- The Communications Team is available to offer advice on issues relating to public engagement and consultation in the Vale and to provide support to departments that are undertaking any form of public engagement work.
- There's an internal network of officers involved in Public Engagement with representatives from a number of departments. These officers can also provide advice and guidance for engagement projects in a number of service areas, including:
 - Social services;
 - Youth service;
 - Housing;
 - Communities first;
 - Education;
 - Local businesses;
 - Rural communities and
 - Children and families.
- The directory of voluntary and equalities groups operating in the Vale provides access to the views of protected groups.

The consultation pages of the Council website and our social media channels provide excellent methods to promote public engagement activities and provide feedback at no cost.

In addition to the support mechanisms that are already in place, The Vale of Glamorgan Council Public Engagement Framework Action Plan (Appendix A)

sets out the work that will be undertaken in the near future to further enhance the level of support that is available for all service areas and to build on the good practice already established.

Shared Responsibility

Corporate standards will ensure that all service areas are making decisions that affect their service users in a way that meets our corporate obligations. However, while the corporate centre of the organisation can lead on major public engagement projects and provide support and oversight, the responsibility for ensuring that these standards are met must sit with every member of staff. The step by step guide below should provide practical advice on what to consider before you undertake a consultation or engagement project.

1. Draw up a consultation timetable – do the results need to be reported to Cabinet, full Council? If so, identify the relevant meeting and work backwards from then. Allow a minimum of 12 weeks for a statutory consultation or at least 6 – 8 weeks as a consultation period for other projects.
2. Think about the information that you need to gather and identify methods for capturing this information e.g. surveys, drop-in sessions, Q&As or one to one interviews. How will the information be analysed.
3. What do we already know – what has been done before.
4. Who needs to be involved – can this be undertaken without the help of the communications team or other engagement champions.
5. Resources – is there any budget available to pay for hire of venue for a drop-in session, can you provide refreshments or an incentive for people to complete a survey.
6. Feedback – think about how you will let participants know the outcome of the project.

Further Guidance

For further information or guidance on public engagement please see the links below.

- Children and Young People's [National Participation Standards](#)
- [New Conversations : LGA guide to engagement](#)
- National Assembly for Wales- [Public Engagement Toolkit](#)
- Vale of Glamorgan Council – [Community Mapping Toolkit](#)