

Community engagement briefing paper

Community PDG May 2018

Introduction

The Council has a duty to consult and engage effectively with residents, partners, employees and other stakeholders when deciding about future changes to services and new developments.

As a council we must offer value for money and customer satisfaction, therefore engagement is an essential part of a service review in order to meet this criteria.

Within the Council there are a number of good examples of consultation and community involvement. We wish to continue to engage and to work more closely with the communities we serve, our partners and other organisations (such as the voluntary sector, health, police, fire and other agencies) to develop services.

However, as a council we must ensure we are using resources effectively and ensure the level of engagement should be proportionate to the impact it will have on the community, and help to inform changes or implementation of new service provision.

Current strategies and policies

The community engagement strategy 2013-2016 is now overdue for review. Due to changes in staffing in the Communication Team this review will now take place by September 2018.

The Community Engagement Action plan for 2017-18 is detailed below.

| Action | Timescale | Responsible Officer | Update |
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| Ensure surveys are carried out each year as detailed in Business Plans. | 2017-18 | Service Managers | To be reviewed in full report in Sept 2018 |
| Ensure Customer Services is aware of all consultations and can assist as appropriate ie with completion, encouraging take up, signposting etc. | 2017-18 | Service Managers | To be reviewed in full report in Sept 2018 |
| Engage equality groups / voluntary sector appropriately in Council consultations on all major projects or changes to service delivery. | 2017-18 | Service Managers | To be reviewed in full report in Sept 2018 |

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| <p>Build relationships with the business sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate Mid Devon Business Forum • Strategic Employers Programme • Co-ordinate a Business Rates Consultative Group | <p>Bi monthly on-going – Feb 2017</p> | <p>Economic Dev Manager Director of Finance</p> | <p>MDDC has continued to support the Mid Devon Business Forum and is a paid member of this forum which now has around 70 members. Speakers at the forum have included Tim Smit from the Eden Project, Rob Holmes, co-founder of the Gro Company and Guy Watson of Riverford Organic Farms</p> |
| <p>Promote dialogue with Town and Parish Councils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review parish charter • Provide two meetings at Phoenix House | <p>monthly on-going 2017-18</p> | <p>Member Services</p> | <p>The revised Parish Charter approved by the Cabinet in January 2018</p> <p>The Town and Parish Clerks meeting took place in the autumn. Code of Conduct Training for parishes took place in Oct in Tiverton and at Crediton</p> <p>Monthly newsletter distributed to Parish and Town Councils</p> |
| <p>Widely publicise consultations and community engagement activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a variety of communication channels e.g. Facebook, Newscentre, Twitter, to publicise current | <p>on-going 2017-18</p> | <p>Service Managers Communications Officer Service Managers</p> | <p>Followers to the MDDC Facebook page has increased from 884 in Jan 2017 to 1145 in Dec 2017</p> <p>MDDC Twitter</p> |

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| consultations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use WIS to inform members of consultations • Use Gov.delivery to send newsletters and updates on service changes. | | Web contributors | account now has 3099 followers. WIS is sent out weekly to members |
| Provide feedback after all consultations, update the website, use a “you said we did” model. Use social media and Gov.delivery to publicise the outcome of consultations. | on –going 2017-18 | Service Managers Communications Officer Web contributors | Feedback from the resident’s survey, carried out in December 2017, will be published shortly. |
| Implement Gov.delivery to engage with a wider audience over the website, and enabling citizens to choose the information they receive. | project started April 2017 | Head of Customer Services | 2455 people have now signed up to the Council’s GovDelivery email alert system |

Additional consultations may be identified during the year to respond to any changes in service provision.

GovDelivery

The Council implemented GovDelivery in April 2017.

This a simple means of customer engagement with the Council via our website. This enables individuals to receive updates on services they are interested in, receive newsletters and take part in consultations. This, in addition with the planned consultation and engagement activities identified in service plans, will ensure that we continue to listen to our citizens and get their views on service delivery.

The Council now has 2455 subscribers to Gov Delivery.

Looking forward

Community engagement will continue throughout 2018, this will reflect the Council’s need to:

- Engage with the relevant stakeholder over a service or policy change and identify the level of involvement required in proportion to the impact.
- Involve residents in designing services to meet changing needs.
- Improve the range of information available to residents and the methods we use.
- Only consult if the results will be influential.

- Conduct meaningful engagement that will reduce disruptive legal challenge.

Now that there are two members of the Communication team we are looking at further ways to consult with the community. We have also recently advertised for a Communication Officer to join the team.

A full update will be provided in the Autumn.