

## Appendix to Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025

### Foreword:

I am pleased to present this Participation Strategy 2023-2027 in accordance with the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021, and supplementary to our well-established Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025.

Through this framework and our own constitution, the council is committed to ensuring high quality, citizen focussed services for the communities that comprise our county borough. In future-proofing public services, we recognise the need to ensure effective engagement is central to our decision making - involving residents in the design of local services and the things that affect them.

This commitment to engaging with communities is captured in the framework, and this strategy seeks to build further on this work, ensuring we are open and responsive to the needs of those communities.

We have made much progress in this realm during the framework's lifespan to date. As well as building a continuous cycle of conversation with our communities on issues that are important to them, we have invested in initiatives that support and empower residents to identify, develop and deliver community-led projects that address identified need on a local level.

Caerphilly county borough has a vibrant and engaged voluntary and community sector, which offers significant opportunity to maximise community participation. This vibrancy really came to the fore during the dark days of the Covid-19 pandemic, and our Caerphilly Cares model has been instrumental in ensuring this unique relationship with our communities is nurtured and sustainable into the long term.

We have also made our democratic processes more accessible; through implementing the facilities needed for elected representatives to access council meetings from any location, which in addition to other such measures, is supporting greater flexibility in democratic participation across our area.

This strategy, which supports our already well-established Consultation and Engagement Framework, reaffirms our commitment to listening, conversing with and responding to the needs of our communities - building clear, shared expectations and two way engagement that enables a focus on what can be achieved.

Regards,

Cllr Sean Morgan  
Leader of Caerphilly County Borough Council

## **Introduction:**

Under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, local authorities in Wales must publish a Participation Strategy that sets out the ways in which local people are encouraged to participate in decision making by the council.

The council's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025 commits that:

- we will listen and understand
- Caerphilly county borough people will help inform and shape the decisions we make - and in turn we will keep people informed
- we will be inclusive and act with purpose
- we will make the most of what already exists in our communities

It is through this agreed approach that we will:

- Empower local residents to have greater influence over the issues that affect them
- Increase and strengthen the role of communities in how we live, work and visit Caerphilly county borough
- Help us to understand the needs of our communities which in turn, helps to ensure that the services we deliver best meet those needs and that available resources are used effectively and in line with agreed priorities
- Ensure people are involved in the democratic process and enable communities to have greater input on issues that affect them
- Support communities to take action by helping them identify needs and support them in developing community-led solutions
- Meet our statutory duties

This strategy outlines how Caerphilly County Borough Council's priorities for further encouraging participation in decision making through the implementation of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

## **Setting the scene – the Spectrum of Engagement:**

The council's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025 highlights the 'Spectrum of Engagement' by the International Association of Public Participation, which outlines five levels of engagement across a continuum that describe an increasing degree of engagement, participation and influence in the engagement process.

The spectrum can be used to help determine the level of influence required and sets the commitment to ensure transparency. The diagram below outlines the five levels of engagement and identifies increasing levels of public impact and levels of community influence over decisions at each level, along with our goals and promises.

Increasing the level of public impact →  
 Level of community influence over decisions →

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making and/or devolved budgets in the hands of the public.
PROMISE	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, hasten to acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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## Our participation duty:

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a number of duties on local authorities regarding participation. These are:

- Promote awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors
- Share information about how to go about becoming an elected member – or councillor – and what the role of councillor involves
- Provide greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the council
- Provide and promote opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations
- Promote awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to councillors

## What have our communities told us?

Our engagement with communities through the Caerphilly Conversation has highlighted some key areas that have shaped the objectives within this strategy.

In the council's far-reaching resident survey in 2021, respondents were asked to identify *how the council could provide services differently in the future* and how stakeholder groups could work alongside the council to achieve this.

Responses focussed primarily on:

- How the authority at all levels (including elected members) communicate and engage with residents
- Listen to communities and become more aware of what residents need
- Encourage volunteering and work with volunteers and local groups to deliver services
- Ensure that there is easy access to services – for all whether this be online, over the phone or face to face.
- Use existing buildings to co-locate services e.g. libraries as “hubs” where residents can access many services in one place in the community
- Carry out a review of services. As needs have changed, so service provision should change too
- Improve efficiency (using technology to do so) and reduce bureaucracy

## Direct responses:

Some direct feedback from respondents to the survey relative to participation and engagement include:

*“... Allow councillors and residents to have a greater say in decision making and have a more open democratic committee to run the council...”*

*“...Any service should be cost effective and communities should be consulted on what services they feel they need...”*

*“...Being open to ideas from the community...”*

*“...Continue to communicate with your residents and ask for opinions before making decisions...”*

*“...Councillors need to communicate with their voters more and be more available...”*

*“...Engage meaningfully with every local community. Listen to them and then act...”*

A full overview of the findings from the Caerphilly Conversation resident survey 2021 can be found here: [Caerphilly Conversation 2021](#)

## Our objectives:

The objectives identified within this strategy to reaffirm our commitment (through our objectives within the Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025) to encouraging participation and engagement through:

- Empowering local residents to have greater influence over the issues that affect them
- Increasing and strengthening the role of communities in how we live, work and visit Caerphilly county borough
- Helping us to understand the needs of our communities which in turn, helps to ensure that the services we deliver best meet those needs and that available resources are used effectively and in line with agreed priorities
- Ensuring people are involved in the democratic process and enabling communities to have greater input on issues that affect them
- Supporting communities to take action by helping them identify needs and support them in developing community-led solutions
- Meeting our statutory duties

Specifically in relation to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021:

**We will... promote awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors:**

Aim:	What we already have in place to build upon	Actions:	Measures
This objective is aimed at sharing information about the council's functions and services so that our communities are kept informed. Sharing this	Corporate Plan and associated strategies that are publicly available  Council website – <a href="http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk">www.caerphilly.gov.uk</a>	Periodically audit the council's website, using user groups where appropriate, to ensure easy	Website 'hits'  Number of views/attendance at meetings – in person and online

<p>information supports residents to digest and explore information before they are asked to give their opinion or views</p>	<p>Modern.Gov – democracy section of website where residents can access the agendas and minutes of meetings or look up decisions</p> <p>Streaming of council meetings/ability to attend council meetings – agendas and minutes can be freely accessed</p> <p>A clearly defined corporate communications strategy – including a strong digital media presence and GovDelivery digital news bulletins</p> <p>The council’s Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025 and various stakeholder engagement activities year-round</p>	<p>access to information</p> <p>Continue to ensure the council's forward plan supports the principles of public engagement by being accessible, timely and user friendly</p> <p>Seek guidance from WLGA on availability of teaching resources to promote the council’s functions among young people</p>	<p>Feedback from the ongoing Caerphilly Conversation</p>
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**We will... share information about how to go about becoming an elected member – or councillor – and what the role of councillor involves:**

Aim:	What we already have in place to build upon	Actions:	Measures
<p>This objective is focussed on encouraging people to become councillors, representing the people in their own community and making decisions on their behalf.</p>	<p>A comprehensive section on the council’s website on how to become a councillor, council and democracy pages</p> <p>Regular member seminar programme</p> <p>Allowances and declarations of interest are posted on the CCBC website</p> <p>Full training programme to support members, including on induction and throughout the term</p>	<p>Continue to review CCBC website to ensure it remains fully up to date with relevant information</p> <p>Continue to signpost to other relevant information from partners e.g. WLGA</p> <p>Consider an events programme/open evening in the lead up to the next local</p>	<p>CCBC website data</p> <p>Feedback from potential/new elected members</p> <p>Attendees at events programme/open evening</p> <p>Equalities and monitoring data for elected members</p>

	Role descriptions for members within the constitution	election to support/encourage those who may be interested in standing as an elected member  Build a cyclical communications campaign into the engagement process	
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**We will... provide greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the council:**

Aim:	What we already have in place to build upon	Actions:	Measures
<p>This objective is about encouraging and enabling people to be involved if they would wish to be.</p> <p>People affected by an issue or change are included in opportunities to engage as an individual or part of a community, with their views respected, valued and incorporated into the decision making process</p>	<p>The council's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025</p> <p>CCBC website – <a href="http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk">www.caerphilly.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Regular cyclical programme of community engagement activity</p> <p>Consultations and surveys which inform proposals, including data from external sources and partners where appropriate</p> <p>A clearly defined corporate communications strategy and suite of communication tools</p> <p>Close working with all stakeholder groups on key corporate decisions – e.g. budget setting, council priorities, medium term financial plan</p>	<p>Continue to build a cyclical communications campaign into the engagement process</p> <p>Continue to move along the 'spectrum of engagement' to empower communities to become more involved in issues that may impact upon them</p> <p>Roll out of online engagement platform</p> <p>Continue to build upon the Caerphilly Conversation – ensuring data/insight is fed back at regular intervals to help influence decision making and service planning</p>	<p>Participation rates in surveys/consultations</p> <p>Number of members of the public engaged with through the Caerphilly Conversation</p> <p>CCBC website data</p> <p>Usage figures for digital engagement platform</p> <p>National Survey for Wales data/data from local surveys on how people feel about being able to influence decisions/their opportunities to have their say</p>

	Mechanisms for engaging with groups such as youth forum, 50+ forum, Caerphilly People First and groups representing residents with protected characteristics		
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**We will...provide and promote opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the council, including petitions, comments, complaints and other types of representations:**

Aim:	What we already have in place to build upon	Actions:	Measures
<p>This objective focusses on participation, which is much more than simply getting people's views on a particular topic. Participation, as seen through the Spectrum of Engagement, is about encouraging people to take part in activities using different approaches and methods of engagement</p>	<p>The council's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025</p> <p>CCBC website – <a href="http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk">www.caerphilly.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Regular cyclical programme of community engagement activity</p> <p>Comments, compliments and complaints procedures</p> <p>Petition scheme</p> <p>Consultations and surveys which inform proposals, including data from external sources and partners where appropriate</p> <p>A clearly defined corporate communications strategy and suite of communication tools</p> <p>Close working with Caerphilly Cares team and other internal departments to maximise opportunities for seldom heard groups to get involved</p>	<p>Continue to build a cyclical communications campaign into the engagement process</p> <p>Promotion of petition scheme</p> <p>Continue to move along the 'spectrum of engagement' to empower communities to become more involved in issues that may impact upon them</p> <p>Roll out of online engagement platform</p> <p>Continue to build upon the Caerphilly Conversation – ensuring data/insight is fed back at regular intervals to help influence decision making and service planning</p> <p>Ensure residents know the process</p>	<p>Participation rates in surveys/consultations</p> <p>Number of members of the public engaged with through the Caerphilly Conversation</p> <p>CCBC website data</p> <p>Usage figures for digital engagement platform</p> <p>National Survey for Wales data/data from local surveys on how people feel about being able to influence decisions/their opportunities to have their say</p> <p>Consultation/engagement is reported through the council's annual self-assessment report</p>

	Mechanisms for engaging with groups such as youth forum, 50+ forum, Caerphilly People First and groups representing residents with protected characteristics	for putting forward suggestions for items for scrutiny	
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**We will... promote awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to councillors:**

Aim:	What we already have in place to build upon	Actions:	Measures
This objective recognises that social media has the potential to further improve democracy by facilitating greater opportunities to have a say on issues that are important to residents.	<p>CCBC website – <a href="http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk">www.caerphilly.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Various well-established social media channels and an in-depth digital media plan linked to the corporate communications strategy</p> <p>Dedicated session on effective use of social media in member induction programme</p> <p>WLGA’s ‘Guidance for New Councillors – Improving Digital Citizenship – Research and Best Practice’</p>	<p>Roll out of online engagement platform</p> <p>Continue to build upon the Caerphilly Conversation – ensuring data/insight is fed back at regular intervals to help influence decision making and service planning</p>	<p>Attendance at member induction session on effective use of social media</p> <p>Participation on engagement activity through rollout of online engagement platform</p>

**Links to strategy/relevant legislation:**

Caerphilly County Borough Council Constitution – Rules of Procedure: [constitution-procedure-rules.aspx](http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/constitution-procedure-rules.aspx) ([caerphilly.gov.uk](http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk))

Caerphilly County Borough Council’s Corporate Plan: [Caerphilly Corporate Plan](http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/corporate-plan)

Team Caerphilly – Better Together Transformation Strategy: [Team Caerphilly Better Together](http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/team-caerphilly-better-together)

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021: [Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/14) ([legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk))

Caerphilly County Borough Council’s Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025: [consultation-and-engagement-framework.aspx](http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/consultation-and-engagement-framework.aspx) ([caerphilly.gov.uk](http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk))



See Consultation and Engagement Framework for further information on:

- National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales
- The Consultation Institute Charter
- National Standards for Children and Young People's Participation
- The 'Involvement' and 'Collaboration' principles – Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- The Equalities Act 2010 and Wales specific duties