



## **CABINET – 8<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023**

**SUBJECT: PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2023-2027**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR- EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES**



### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 Local authorities in Wales must, under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, publish a Participation Strategy that sets out the ways in which local people are encouraged to participate in decision making by the council.
- 1.2 The council's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025, adopted in February 2020, as well as the council's constitution confirms the commitment to ensuring high quality, citizen focussed services for the communities that comprise our county borough. In future-proofing public services, the council recognises the need to ensure effective engagement is central to decision making - involving residents in the design of local services and the things that affect them.
- 1.3 This strategy, in reaffirming this commitment in line with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, seeks to build further on this work, ensuring the council is open and responsive to the needs of its communities.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 The Act places a number of duties on local authorities regarding participation. These are to:
  - 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 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.
- 2.3 In February 2020, the council's Consultation and Engagement Framework was adopted, which set out an approach for a common understanding to further improve engagement. It set principles and standards for how the council will engage to build clear, shared expectations and two-way engagement that enables a focus on what can be achieved.
- 2.4. The Participation Strategy, supplementary to the existing framework, reaffirms the council's commitment in line with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and seeks to build further on this work, ensuring the council is open and responsive to the needs of its communities.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That members comment on the principles and objectives as outlined in the draft Participation Strategy 2023-2027.
- 3.2 That further community engagement through the council's ongoing engagement programme 'The Caerphilly Conversation' continues to help shape the strategy's delivery, evolving over time as the benefit of new conversations and national best practice become evident.

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To ensure the council has a robust Participation Strategy in place which is supported by the council's existing and well-established Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025.
- 4.2. To reaffirm the commitment to active participation in line with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and seeking to build further on outcomes to date, ensuring the council is open and responsive to the needs of its communities.

### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1. Local authorities in Wales must, under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, publish a Participation Strategy that sets out the ways in which local people are encouraged to participate in decision making by the council.
- 5.2. The council's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025, adopted in February 2020, confirms the commitment to ensuring high quality, citizen focussed services for the communities that comprise our county borough. In future-proofing public services, the council recognises the need to ensure effective engagement is central to decision making - involving residents in the design of local services and the things that affect them.
- 5.3 The Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-25:
- Highlights the importance of effective consultation and engagement and the clear strategic link to the decision making process

- Demonstrates the key role that engaged, empowered communities have in supporting the future-proofing public services.
  - Provides a clear definition of engagement and outlines the spectrum of engagement.
  - Outlines the principles and standards that underpin meaningful engagement and consultation to enable a consistent, transparent and high-quality approach to the planning and undertaking of community engagement.
- 5.4 The Participation Strategy, in reaffirming these commitments in line with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, seeks to build further on this work, ensuring the council is open and responsive to the needs of its communities.
- 5.5 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a number of duties on local authorities regarding participation. These are to:
- 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 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.
- 5.6 The draft Participation Strategy reaffirms the council's commitment to listening, conversing with and responding to the needs of our communities - building clear, shared expectations and two-way engagement, and clearly demonstrates how the participation duty is being fulfilled.
- 5.7 In developing the draft strategy, an in-depth audit of existing resources and activity was carried out by, and engagement with communities through the council's ongoing engagement programme 'The Caerphilly Conversation' has highlighted some key areas that have shaped the objectives within this strategy.
- 5.8 It is anticipated that further community engagement will continue to help shape the strategy's delivery, evolving over time as the benefit of new conversations, ideas and national best practice become evident.
- 5.9 Each objective within the strategy includes a set of measurements to support the evaluation process. Consultation and engagement is currently reported through the council's annual self-assessment report and it is proposed that this would be extended to include the actions within the draft Participation Strategy.

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 There were no assumptions made in the development of the draft Participation Strategy 2022-2027. Its development is in line with the participation duty placed upon local authorities through the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

## **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 The Participation Strategy 2023-27 will positively impact upon members of the

community, including those seldom heard and those with protected characteristics in line with the principles and engagement with stakeholders through the council's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025. The rollout of the council's digital engagement platform will not adversely impact upon those who are not digitally enabled; the platform will be an additional tool in the council's suite of engagement mechanisms and will not replace any engagement that would otherwise be conducted face to face. Throughout the strategy's action plans, traditional methods of communication remain a key focus as well as embracing new technologies.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

10.1 The views of all consultees to this report and the appended draft Participation Strategy 2022-2027 have been included.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

11.2 Equality Act 2010 and Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. One of the specific duties covers matters of engagement.

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