

---

**To: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee**

**Date: 6<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

**Subject: Consultation Process**

---

## **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To outline the current consultation process and activities used in the promotion of consultations

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee are recommended to
  - 1) Note the information provided within the briefing note
  - 2) Identify any further recommendations for the relevant Cabinet Member

## **3 Background and Information**

- 3.1 Consultation and engagement activities ensure that the Council makes decisions that are evidence-based and take into account the views and experiences of residents and service users. Listening and responding to feedback is fundamental to our work. Without these activities, we cannot be sure that our services are the right ones, are targeted in the most effective way, or make fully informed decisions.
- 3.2 Consultation is the dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based on a genuine exchange of views and with the objective of influencing and informing decisions, policies, or programmes of action i.e., there is a decision to be made.
- 3.3 Engagement are the actions or processes taken or undertaken to establish effective relationships with individuals or groups so that more specific interactions can then take place i.e., this is about fostering effective relationships.
- 3.4 The Council has a genuine commitment to improving consultation and engagement that is not driven solely by legislation. It is also be driven by the overriding duty of public authorities to act fairly in the exercise of their functions. The essential question is "what does fairness require in all circumstances?"
- 3.5 Whether or not there is a legal obligation to consult, if consultation takes place, it must be carried out fairly and comply with the following principles:
  - Consult when there is a legitimate expectation to do so

- Consult before taking decisions when proposals are still at a formative stage
- Provide enough information for intelligent consideration
- Allow enough time for responses to be made
- Decision makers to consciously consider the findings

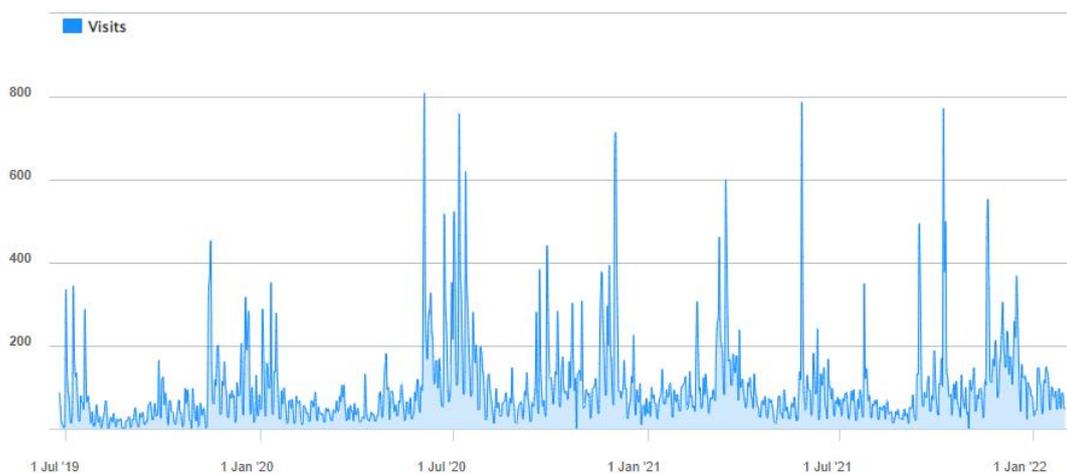
3.6 The Insight Engagement Team provides an oversight and advisory role across the Council and works with service area leads to ensure that methods used are fit for purpose, that we seek to engage with people that are most affected and involve stakeholders with an interest in the outcomes. (Appendix 1 Consultation Plan Template)

3.7 There is a dedicated Engagement Manager for Regeneration, Highway, and Air Quality schemes who is involved throughout the duration of the project and is a member of the Project Teams. (Appendix 2 for consultation process) Additionally, there is a Children’s Champion who focuses on consultations with young people.

3.8 All consultations involve working closely with the Community Resilience and Engagement and the Communications teams, as well as the service areas themselves. Discussions are held outlining possible online promotion, offline promotion, and community network engagement opportunities. In the case of large-scale citywide consultations, communication/engagement action plans are produced.

3.9 Whilst every endeavour is made to promote all our consultation/engagement opportunities as widely as possible, we cannot guarantee that people will want to engage and take part.

3.10 The graph below shows the interactions with Let’s Talk Coventry platform over the last few years. The platform has improved our online engagement offer using a variety of deliberative tools as well as surveys. The graph shows that throughout the Covid-19 pandemic it was particularly useful in gaining insights from the public.



3.11 However, as highlighted in the table below, consultations on strategies tend to get a lower participation rate than consultations on service changes/re-designs. This is not surprising as a major contributing factor in the decision to engage is the impact that the proposals will have directly or indirectly on the respondent. Therefore, specific local area consultations tend to result in higher number of responses.

3.12 We need to get better at developing the narrative about why people should want to get involved and build up trust that involvement in our consultation process will result in the ability to actively influence decisions being made.

	Visits to page	Engagement with documentation	Completed Surveys	Ratio visits: survey responses
Equality Objectives Consultation	70	24	16	23%
Budget Consultation	1,200	469	65	5%
Proposals to develop a dementia hub	873	257	151	17%
Improving Air Quality	2,300	910	269	12%
Review of Statement of Gambling Policy	43	26	2	4%

3.13 Below is a table outlining the current consultation process and the types of promotion available.

CONSULTATION PROCESS		
Consultation Process	Types of Promotion	Feedback/Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Know your purpose (a clear statement about the decision to be made)</li> <li>Define your objectives, what is in and out of scope and what can and can't be influenced</li> <li>Agree narrative and key messages</li> <li>Undertake a community and stakeholder analysis</li> <li>Determine appropriate tools and techniques</li> <li>Ensure you have Cabinet Member approval</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>ONLINE</b></li> <li>Press Release</li> <li>Let's Talk Coventry</li> <li>Social Media - Council Twitter/Facebook</li> <li>Locality based social media</li> <li>Special interest groups social media</li> <li>Newsletters</li> <li>Infographics/Videos</li> <li><b>OFFLINE</b></li> <li>Street News</li> <li>Posters/flyers key locations Family Hubs/ Libraries/Social Supermarkets/Community Centres - QR codes/phone number to get hard copy/translation</li> <li>Community Networks/Community Leaders/Peer Engagement</li> <li>Focus Groups/Drop in-sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build on FAQs on website and update during engagement process</li> <li>Formal feedback report</li> <li>You Said/We Did reports</li> <li>How successful was the engagement in terms of reach?</li> <li>What could we do better?</li> <li>What did we learn?</li> </ul>

## **4 Community Engagement**

4.1 The Community Resilience and Engagement Team has a number of networks and tools which support consultation. These include:

- A monthly newsletter which is sent to voluntary and community groups across the city – this always features a section ‘Get Involved’ where consultations are detailed.
- A network of community centres and places of worship which can be sent consultation details either citywide or geographically specific.
- Geographical stakeholder meetings in most neighbourhoods of the city which service staff plus consultation staff can present at or send consultations information to via the team.
- A network of community leaders called Community Messengers. This was established to help get messages into communities about staying safe during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The community messengers are still heavily involved with Covid work including vaccination take-up work but have helped get other messages out including vital community information around the drop off sites created as part of the ongoing bin lorry driver strike action. Work continues with the messengers to see how they want to be involved in other pieces of work which could include supporting consultation – however they have made it very clear that they are only happy to be approached where a real difference will arise from their involvement.

## **5 The Communications Team**

5.1 Levels of support from the Communications Team depends on the size, scale and importance of any consultation or engagement exercise. This can range from simple sharing of awareness information on all corporate channels and sharing with partner organisation’s comms teams for cascading, to creating digital content and social media assets in an attempt to increase reach and impact.

5.2 All consultations are shared on the Council’s corporate communication channels if requested, which are managed by the Communications Team. These include the social media channels which are:

- Twitter (66k followers)
- Facebook (47k followers)
- Instagram (5k followers)

5.3 Information can also be shared on other Council platforms such as the website, intranet for its circa 4,000 staff, weekly resident e-newsletter (more than 5,000 currently subscribed) and Citivision, the magazine delivered to around 140,000 households three times a year.

5.4 Depending on the budget available and importance of the consultation, paid-for media advertising may also be used. This includes targeted social media advertising through to adverts on commercial or community radio stations and adverts in newspapers or community publications.

5.5 Any assets created by the Communications Team can be translated into other languages if needed or requested.

## **6 Equalities and Inequalities Impact**

- 6.1 Health inequalities considerations will be taken into account when considering each individual consultation being undertaken
- 6.2 As part of the Public Sector Equality Duty, case law makes it clear that a public authority must have sufficient evidence on which to base consideration of the impact of a policy or decision. It will need to consider whether it has enough information about the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, and if it has an adequate evidence base for decision-making.
- 6.3 Consultation and engagement is an invaluable part of creating a sound evidence base in this respect. The Council's equality impact assessment process acknowledges the importance of consultation feedback in helping to determine the impacts of policies/projects on protected groups and health inequalities considerations; EIA forms must therefore be completed and made available as part of any consultation process and the results analysed alongside other data to determine equality impact.

Name of Author Valerie De Souza  
Job Title Consultant in Public Health (Insight and Communities)  
Organisation Coventry City Council  
Contact details [valerie.desouza@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:valerie.desouza@coventry.gov.uk)



### **CONSULTATION PLAN TEMPLATE**

- Know your purpose (a clear statement about the decision to be made)
- Define your objectives, what is in and out of scope and what can and can't be influenced
- Agree narrative and key messages
- Produce an Equality Impact Assessment if necessary
- Undertake a community and stakeholder analysis
- Determine appropriate tools and techniques
- Plan how you will report back and close the feedback loop
- Decide how you will know if your consultation was successful (evaluation)
- Ensure you have Cabinet Member approval to consult or at least make aware

#### Guidance

<https://coventrycc.sharepoint.com/Info/Pages/Engagement-and-consultation-support.aspx>

Project:

Prepared by:

Date:

Background Information:

Purpose

A clear statement that summarises:

- the purpose of the project,
- the opportunity to be explored, the problem to be solved, or the decision to be made
- the amount of influence the community can have on the project outcome

#### Consultation Outcomes

What are the changes we are expecting to see as a result of the consultation?

#### Narrative and Key messages

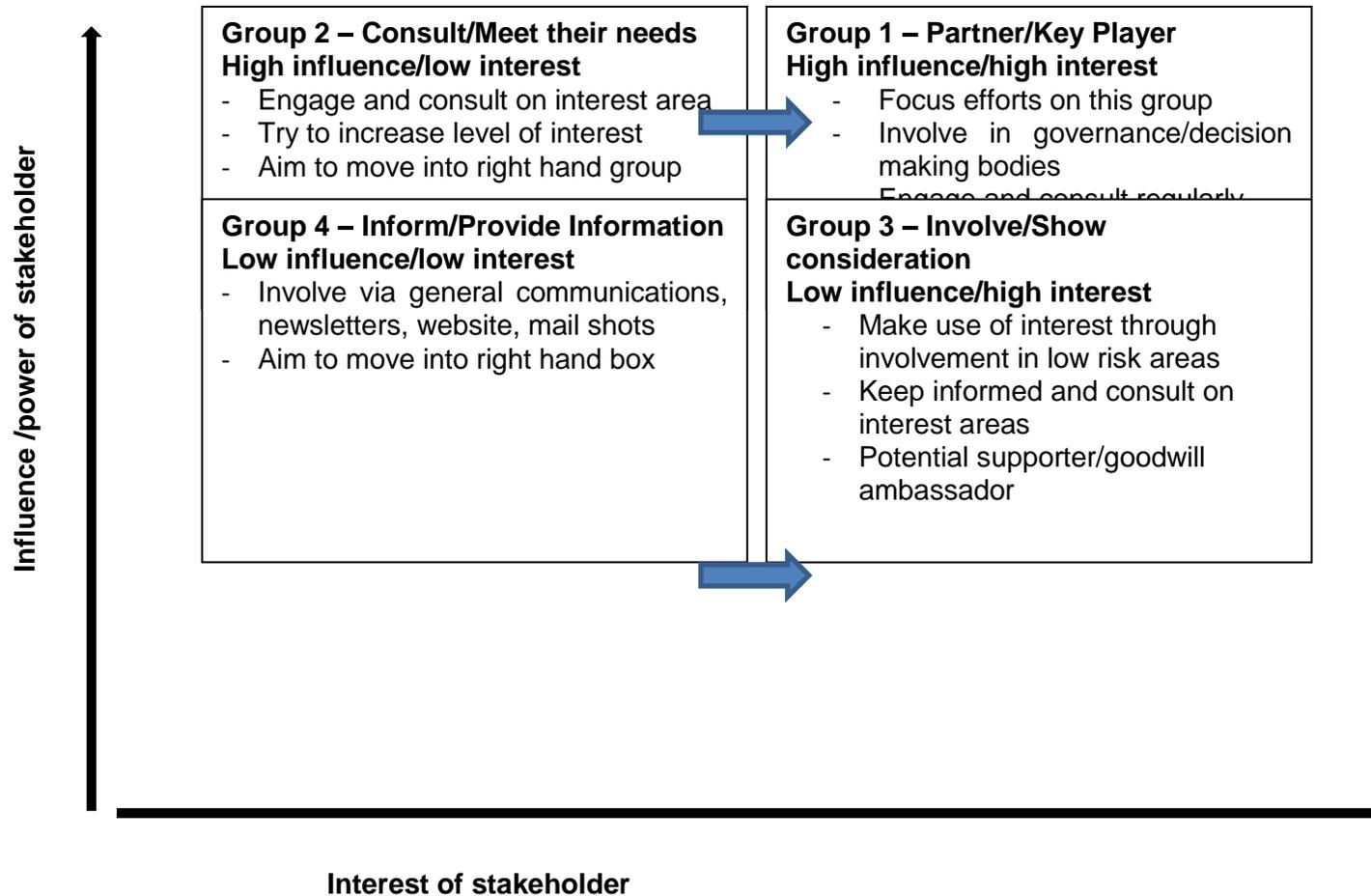
Be clear about which messages for which audience

#### Equality Impact Assessment

Ensure you have spoken to the Equalities Team

## Stakeholder Analysis

Power vs. interest, the matrix below illustrates that the level of impact / influence will help to determine the level of stakeholder engagement and communication required.



## Engagement/Consultation Methods

<b>Influence/interest Group</b>	<b>Type of engagement</b>
<b>Partner/Key player</b> Closely working together to deliver outcomes	Involve in decision making bodies Meet regularly One to ones Co-design workshops Staff briefings Public meetings Face to face briefings
<b>Involve/Show consideration</b> Active 2-way communication	Keep informed Presentations/briefings Staff briefings Focus groups Local Authority/CCG/Trust Engagement Forums Social Media
<b>Inform</b> Providing Information	Inform via general communications, newsletters, websites, mailshots etc. Social media Briefings Press Releases Try to increase level of interest
<b>Consult/Meet their needs</b> Actively influencing decisions	Engage and consult Public meetings Surveys Conferences/workshops

## Let's Talk Coventry

Don't forget we have a wide suite of engagement tools including mapping tools, forums, videos, Q+As, social media integration and surveys, Let's Talk Coventry provides the engagement practitioner with the full spectrum of online engagement tools.

## Stakeholder Identification and Interest

Need to identify stakeholders who may be impacted by the decision, those that will be interested and those that will influence the engagement process

<b>Stakeholder/ Group</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Vested interest</b>	<b>Influence/interest Group</b>	<b>Type of engagement</b>

## Reporting back

<b>How will you respond to your participants</b>	<b>Who will do it</b>	<b>When</b>
Phone call/email follow up as issues raised during survey process		
Build on FAQs on website and update during engagement process		
Formal feedback report		

## Evaluation

What does success look like?

<b>Evaluation measure</b>	<b>How we will measure</b>	<b>Who will do it</b>
How successful was the engagement?		
What could we do better?		
What did we learn?		

## Appendix 2

### Consultation process for Regeneration, Highway, and Air Quality schemes

