



Cabinet

15 September 2021

Report Title:	Community Engagement Strategy 2021-26
Cabinet Portfolio	Cabinet Member - Wellbeing, Culture & Heritage
Cabinet Member	Councillor Anthony Burns
Exempt Report	No
Reason for Exemption	N/A
Key Decision	No
Public Notice issued	N/A
Wards Affected	All Wards
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Borough priorities	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	X
	Promote good health, independence and care across our communities	X
	Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all	X
	Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy	X
	Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture	X
	Be a responsible Council	X

1. Summary

Summary of key issues in the report

- 1.1 This report proposes the strategy for Community Engagement.
- 1.2 The strategy sets out our aims and objectives for a new relationship with communities, as stated in the St Helens Borough Strategy published in 2020.
- 1.3 The strategy will be delivered by a range of communications and engagement activities themed around three areas:
 1. Enabling and improving community capacity
 2. Strengthening our engagement
 3. Ensuring community engagement impacts on our policies, strategies and service delivery.

2. Recommendations for Decision

2.1 Cabinet are recommended to:

- i) **Approve the Community Engagement Strategy 2021-26.**

3. Purpose of this Report

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to introduce a new Community Engagement Strategy for the period 2021-26. The Community Engagement strategy supports the ambition set out in the St Helens Borough Strategy to develop a new relationship with communities, building on the relationships and collaboration established during the pandemic under the St Helens Together approach. The new Community Engagement Strategy aims to further develop consultation and engagement opportunities with residents, to recognise community assets and skills and to empower and enable communities to identify and deliver solutions to challenges across the borough.

4. Background /Reasons for the recommendations

- 4.1 The Local Government Association Peer Review in 2019 identified that the Council did not have a framework strategy or approach for effective Community engagement.

- 4.4 In order to develop a St Helens Community Engagement Strategy, a range of strategies from other local authorities and organisations were reviewed to identify key themes and best practice principles. The strategy was also informed by experiences of community engagement to date, including our mixed engagement model that was used successfully in 2020 to create the St Helens Borough Strategy. This included digital surveys, online workshops, face to face activities and paper survey. Member's feedback and contributions have shaped the strategy attached.
- 4.5 The strategy is an outline framework for community engagement and should be read in conjunction with the St Helens Borough Strategy and the Strategy for the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector. The strategy covers our aims, objectives, and aspirations for a new relationship with communities. Transformation activity will be supported by specific community engagement plans, for example, a community engagement plan is currently in development to support the emerging Waste Strategy.
- 4.5 The Community Engagement Strategy 2021-26 is attached at **Appendix 1**.

5. Community Impact Assessment

The Community Impact Assessment identified the following key implications

- 5.1 The strategy will support our objectives in terms of social value and health and wellbeing.

6 Consideration of Alternatives

- 6.1 An alternative option would be to not develop a strategy. The LGA Peer Review had already identified that a Community Engagement strategy is an area of strategic deficit for the council and therefore it was agreed to focus development in this area.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 A 5-year strategy for Community Engagement has been developed to provide a framework for the council's engagements with its residents.

8. Implications

8.1 Legal Implications

None at this stage.

8.2 Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Implications

As above

8.2.1 Social Value

The Community Engagement Strategy supports our social value agenda. Further engagement with communities contributes to social, economic and environmental outcomes.

8.2.2 Sustainability and Environment

No direct implications

8.2.3 Health and Wellbeing

None at this stage

8.2.4 Equality and Human Rights

Working more closely with the communities supports the reduction of inequalities.

8.3 Customers and Resident

The draft Strategy supports improved two-way communications and engagement with our customers and residents.

8.4 Asset and Property

None

8.5 Staffing and Human Resource

There are currently no community engagement roles within the council. The Phase 3 restructure reviews will consider how we resource this deficit to be able to deliver the desired aims and objectives of the strategy.

8.6 Risks

None at this stage.

8.7 Finance

There is no current community engagement budget. Funding will be required to undertake specific engagement activities identified during the implementation of the transformation plan. As an example, the single consultation and engagement exercise around the Borough Strategy cost approximately £2,000. There are also many digital tools that can be procured that support residents interaction and feedback in relation to plans and strategies. Resources required may include independent facilitation, communications such as promotional materials, venue hire, transport, childcare, translation costs, producing feedback and outcome reports, and potentially resourcing the community and voluntary sector to support people in understanding and reporting.

8.8 Policy Framework Implications

None

9. Background papers

None

10. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Community Engagement Strategy 2021-2026