



NEWTOWN AND LLANLLWCHAIARN TOWN COUNCIL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY*

1. Introduction

1.1 This Policy is designed to make community engagement a priority that runs throughout the work of the Council

1.2 The Council believes that the people of Newtown & Llanllwchaiarn have a right to influence the service provision in their town.

1.3 The Council will encourage active engagement of the people who use our services, as well as with representatives and community organisations and other partners in all sectors.

1.4 Engagement is also a mechanism for the Council to tell local people about what it does, what services it can and cannot provide, and how its priorities and policies are determined.

1.5 This policy, therefore, links to other policies within the Council including policies relating to:

- Communications Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Whistle Blower Policy

2. Background

2.1 The Welsh Government has produced 'National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales'. These can be summarised in the following ten points.

- Engagement is effectively designed to make a difference.
- Encourage and enable everyone affected to be involved, if they so choose.
- Engagement is planned and delivered in a timely and appropriate way.
- Work with relevant partner organisations.
- The information provided will be jargon free, appropriate and understandable.
- Make it easier for people to take part.
- Enable people to take part effectively.
- Engagement is given the right resources and support to be effective.
- People are told the impact of their contribution.

- Learn and share lessons to improve the process of engagement

2.2 The Welsh Government requires the public sector in Wales to ensure that participation and engagement is an on-going and sustainable feature in the way services are delivered. This is where ‘citizens at the centre’ and ‘public engagement’ are the cornerstones to bringing Councils closer to the community they serve.

3. Definition of Terms Used

3.1 These are working definitions for the purposes of this Policy. It is recognised different organisation will use a variety of terminology to mean similar things.

- **Engagement** – An active and participative process by which people can influence and shape policy and services that includes a wide range of different methods and techniques.
- **Consultation** – A formal process by which policy makers and service providers ask for the views of interested groups and individuals and provide feedback
- **Participation** – People being actively involved with policy makers and service planners from an early stage of policy and service planning review

3.2 Communities can be defined in different ways. A broadly accepted definition is:

- **Communities of place** – the ‘community’ is defined by an area with discrete physical or legislative boundaries e.g. a housing estate or electoral ward
- **Community of interest or interest group** – the ‘community’ is defined by shared interest, experience or demographic characteristic e.g. young people, people with disabilities or the business community.

4. Policy statement

4.1 The Policy is :

‘To effectively communicate, consult and engage with our residents, employees, local businesses, visitors and the public sector.’

5. Engagement Toolkit

5.1 The development of an engagement plan is more of an art than a science. There are many models that could be used but most can be summarised as six steps and these are

Step One – Understanding the Community (how it works)

Step Two – Why are we working with the community (the reason for engagement)?

Step Three – Understanding the community (its people)

Step Four – Agreeing the best way of working

Step Five – Starting Work & Checking Progress

Step Six – Review – lessons learned and sharing experience

5.2 In appendix 1 the toolkit for Newtown & Llanllwchaearn Town Council is further explained how we will conduct an engagement process.

This Council adopted this Policy for Engagement at its Council meeting on

.....25/9/17.....

Review Date = Bi-annual

Amended or Reviewed	Date	Version No	Who
Approved	25/9/17	250917/1	Sue Newham

Appendix 1 –Toolkit for Engagement

Step one – Understanding the Community (how it works).

This is the step we should spend as much time as possible as it forms the basis for a lot of the communication planning and engagement later in the process. The aim is to produce one list for Newtown of all key contacts of groups and organisations. The list will include – all the main organisations, local authority, chamber of trade, voluntary sector, religious faith groups, special needs groups, pension groups, sports & recreation groups etc.

Resources needed for this – officer time (construct and populate a database or spreadsheet), councillor time and an engagement process to talk to others to get more contacts. A lot of information is readily available and just needs collating

To put this into context and to provide an example – in the strategy for change the council needs to know what people think about services and facilities that affect them and where improvements can be made - who from the list will help us do this?

Step two – Why are we working with the community (the reason for engagement).

During this process and it will be different for each topic/objective we are working towards (hence we need to know what the objectives of the council are). Things to consider here are the drivers behind it – e.g. is it for consultation, good practice, will it save time and money, gather ideas, promote civic pride, encourage people to help etc.

Resources needed for this – officer time

To continue with the example above – who do we need to consult about our services – residents, play park users, event users who else?

Step three – Understanding the community (its people).

Step one is the raw material. This step finds more about the people we should be working with. One way is to divide them up into different groups e.g. statutory, voluntary and sports & recreational. Having found the right groups its finding the right people – who might be for or against, who holds the senior posts etc. What could motivate them to take part?

Resources needed for this – officer time, councillor time

Continuing the example – the residents are the general population, play park users – no organised groups like wise for event users – who else should we be contacting here.

Step four – Agreeing the best way of working

Will we act alone or work with others or support external effort. Remind ourselves why we are working with the community, what resources are needed (budgets and time – also timescales), Have we included all the interested parties?

The ways of working could include -

Information Giving – leaflets, brochures, newsletters, advertising, exhibits/displays, newspapers, video, web, social media

Information Gathering – staffed displays, surgeries, interne, public meetings, surveys, questionnaires and interviews.

Consultation - workshops, focus groups, internet, post

Resources – officer time and any related costs to a particular topic/objective e.g. production and printing of a leaflet, hire of rooms

Continuing the example – Finding out what people think about the services we provide we have already planned:

- Questionnaire in town guide – going to all householders in area
- Survey Monkey – same questionnaire to run same time as town guide delivery
- Run questionnaire at food festival
- Press release for newspapers
- Posted on web, Facebook and twitter
- *Should try to capture feedback from users of playpark – onsite questioning?*
- *Should we to capture feedback about the feed festival users and participants?*
- Who have we missed?

Step five – Starting Work and Checking Progress

It depends what role we are doing – i.e. lead, partnership or participating. Whatever role we do we should be checking the progress of all the initiatives (maybe with others). What communications should be done during this process to keep people informed? (even if there is not a lot to say)

Resources – Officer and councillor time. Budget for activities.

Continuing the example – The questionnaire has been prepared for the town guide and survey monkey. This can easily be adapted for the food festival use. Press release to be written and will be adapted for social media use. Not assessed what other information/consultation needed for playparks – event users.

Step Six – Review – lessons learned and sharing experience

Need to look at results, how well the work carried out went. Was the objective fulfilled? What methods used and how well each one went. Statistics from communication/engagement. Overall costs. What communications should be used about the results and who should it go to.

Resources needed – Office time

Continuing the example – Time will be needed to analyse all the results. Different levels of feedback will be required for Council, any partners and the general public. What methods will be used to do this?