

Meeting: Cabinet
Council

Date: 18 February 2021
25 February 2021

Wards Affected: All

Report Title: Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy

When does the decision need to be implemented? Immediately

Cabinet Member Contact Details: Councillor Christine Carter, Cabinet Member for Corporate and Community Services, christine.carter@torbay.gov.uk

Director/Assistant Director Contact Details:

Supporting Officer Contact Details: Kate Spencer, Head of Policy, Performance and Community Engagement, kate.spencer@torbay.gov.uk

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the approval and implementation of the Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

We want Torbay and its residents to thrive.

We want Torbay to be a place where we have turned the tide on poverty and tackled inequalities; where our children and older people will have high aspirations and where there are quality jobs, good pay and affordable housing for our residents.

We want Torbay to be the premier resort in the UK, with a vibrant arts and cultural offer for our residents and visitors to enjoy; where our built and natural environment is celebrated and where we play our part in addressing the climate change emergency.

- 2.1 The proposals in this report help us to deliver this ambition by supporting the objectives of making us a Council fit for the future.

This strategy underpins the Our Communities project (part of the Council Redesign Programme) – how we will reconnect with, and enable and empower, our communities. It provides clarity, direction and focus for our organisation and the people working within it. It also provides a ‘map’ for the plans and activities required to drive the changes required to support our vision of being a Council works with their community.

2.2 The reasons for the decision are that the Council's current Consultation, Engagement and Communication Strategy is out of date. We made a commitment at the first Community Conference that the strategy would be reviewed, based on the feedback we received at the Conference.

Following Cabinet approval in September 2021 we undertook a consultation on the draft strategy. The results from this consultation can be found in Appendix 1 & 2.

The outcome of the consultation has not required any changes to the draft strategy but did provide a wealth of feedback that should inform the implementation plan for this strategy.

2.3 There are no significant financial commitments as a result of the recommendations within this report.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

That Cabinet recommends to Council:

- (i) That the Policy Framework be amended to replace the Communication, Engagement and Consultation Strategy with the Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy.
- (ii) That the Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy set out at Appendix 3 to the submitted report be approved.
- (iii) That Head of Policy, Performance and Community Engagement, working as part of the 'Our Communities' project team, takes responsibility for implementing the plans required to deliver this Strategy.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy – Consultation Results

Appendix 2: Response to Consultation

Appendix 3: Proposed Community Engagement and Enablement Strategy

Background Documents

None

Supporting Information

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The report from the first Community Conference (2019) recommended that one of the elements required to translate the Council's determination to engage with communities more effectively into real change "on the ground" was a community engagement strategy that could become embedded in the work of all the Council's directorates and departments. It was felt that this (alongside other recommendations) would support the strong desire voiced by conference participants for a change in culture and mind-set within the Council.

The strategy sets out to our members, staff and community not only our plan of how we will address some of the key themes emerging from the conference but also clear statements about what our offers, commitments and actions will be. It also makes clear what we are asking the community to support this improvement and build more positive, trusted relationships.

The strategy outlines how the Council intends to meet its mission to be a Council that works in partnership with its residents, communities and partnerships.

The Strategy is split into 6 key domains that outline how we propose to improve our community engagement and how we want to work alongside and empower the community in Torbay. The proposed domains are:

- Working differently
- Keep you informed
- Ask what you think
- Decide together
- Act together
- Support independent community initiatives

The first domain outlines what our offers are to the community to facilitate this approach and what we ask of the community to support. It provides a narrative to explain the Council's new approach and proposals about how a partnership framework would look in Torbay.

The subsequent domains make clear statements about what our commitments are and what our planned actions are to meet these. Many of these commitments and planned actions were identified at the Community Conference in September 2019.

2. Options under consideration

- 2.1 The Strategy has been developed based on good practice in other local authorities and through using the feedback gathered during the Community Conference in September 2020.
- 2.2 Following the consultation through October – December 2020 a review of the Strategy was undertaken. The outcome of the consultation review is outlined in Appendix 1. There was some very constructive feedback and criticism of the Draft

Strategy document. However the analysis indicated that the feedback related strongly to the delivery and implementation of the Strategy rather to the actual strategy itself. This feedback will need to be incorporated into the delivery plan.

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

- 3.1 In agreeing to approve the Community Engagement and Enablement Strategy, there are limited financial implications. The costs of the implementation will be met existing budgets. Any costs associated will be factored into the Council Redesign programme.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications in approving this Strategy.

5. Engagement and Consultation

- 5.1 Consultation on this Strategy was undertaken online. Two surveys were conducted. One by Torbay Council which required participants to have read the full draft strategy. A second consultation was undertaken by Torbay Community Development Trust which did not require participants to have read the full document (it took participants through the key asks and offers contained within it).
- 5.2 The majority of feedback showed support for the Strategy in terms of its contents and ambitions. The consultations did illicit a range of useful information and feedback from participants that need to inform the implementation of this strategy. A summary of these can be found in Appendix 1.
- 5.3 There had been plans for the online surveys to be supplemented by face to face consultation sessions. However the second lockdown in November 2020 meant that we were unable to undertake these consultation activities and to consider extending the consultation period. However, a further lockdown in January 2021 has led us to continue with the proposal to adopt the strategy in its current form rather than to delay it further. Information from the second community conference and the online consultations has been consistent with the messages from the first Community Conference which informed the content of the Strategy.
- 5.4 There was not sufficient evidence to warrant any significant changes to the Strategy. Engagement and consultation will continue to form a key part of the implementation of this strategy – both internally and externally to the organisation.

6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services

- 6.1 The decision does not involve the purchasing or hiring of any goods or services.

7. Tackling Climate Change

- 7.1 The Strategy will form the basis of how we engage with our communities to tackle climate change.

8. Associated Risks

- 8.1 There is a risk to the Council of not having an appropriate Community Engagement and Enablement Strategy in that our commitment to better community engagement (within the Community and Corporate Plan) will not be met effectively.