

**Meeting:** Cabinet **Date:** 22 September 2020

**Wards Affected:** All

**Report Title:** Draft Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy

**Is the decision a key decision?** Yes

**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

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

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## **1. Proposal and Introduction**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the endorsement and agreement for the Draft Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy to be shared with the community and our partners for consultation and feedback before the final strategy is put forward to Council for approval and implementation.

## **2. Reason for Proposal and associated financial commitments**

2.1 The Council's current Consultation, Engagement and Communication Strategy is out of date.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.

2.2 As part of the Council's ongoing commitment to engage with our residents and communities, feedback needs to be sought as the Strategy develops. The Strategy also forms part of the Council's Policy Framework and therefore a period of consultation is also required by the Constitution.

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

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## **3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision**

(i) That the draft Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy be published and that the views of the community be sought on how the Council can best engage with and empower its communities.

## Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy

### Background Documents

None

### Report Clearance

<b>Report clearance:</b>	<b>This report has been reviewed and approved by:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Chief Executive	Anne-Marie Bond	
Monitoring Officer	Anne-Marie Bond	
Chief Finance Officer	Martin Phillips	
Relevant Director/Assistant Director	Anne-Marie Bond	

## Section 1: Background Information

1.

### What is the proposal / issue?

The Council has made a strong commitment to improving partnership working and community based action within Torbay. At the Community Conference in September 2019 conversations began about how and what this might look like in Torbay. Four key overarching messages emerged from the conference discussions:

- There needs to be a change of culture in the Council and communities.
- Trusted relationships with communities need to be built.
- Communication with communities and individuals needs to improve.
- Celebration of the Bay's assets and civic pride need to be encouraged

The Council recognises and values the importance of a strong and vibrant voluntary sector in developing and maintaining a thriving Torbay. We value that people and communities want to be more involved, work together, improve our relationships, and have better on-going conversations with us. We agree that the private sector are also a vital part of our community and need to be part of these conversations.

2.

### What is the current situation?

The report from the Community Conference 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 draft 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:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Working differently</li> <li>▪ Keep you informed</li> <li>▪ Ask what you think</li> <li>▪ Decide together</li> <li>▪ Act together</li> <li>▪ Support independent community initiatives</li> </ul> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>What options have been considered?</b></p> <p>The draft 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.</p> <p>However, we want to make sure that the learning from across the community from the last twelve months, especially during the response to Covid-19, is captured within the Strategy. Hence the need to ensure that effective engagement takes place over the coming weeks.</p>
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>What is the relationship with the priorities within the Partnership Memorandum and the Council’s Principles?</b></p> <p>Once adopted, the Strategy will be key to ensuring that the Council works differently with its communities. This is central to the Community and Corporate Plan.</p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>How does this proposal/issue contribute towards the Council’s responsibilities as corporate parents?</b></p> <p>Our engagement and empowerment approach will include involving children and young people, including those who we look after.</p>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>How does this proposal/issue tackle poverty, deprivation and vulnerability?</b></p> <p>We want to work with our communities to ensure that together we tackle poverty, deprivation and vulnerability.</p>

7.	<p><b>How does the proposal/issue impact on people with learning disabilities?</b></p> <p>Our engagement and empowerment approach will include involving people with learning disabilities.</p>
8.	<p><b>Who will be affected by this proposal and who do you need to consult with? How will the Council engage with the community? How can the Council empower the community?</b></p> <p>Before the Council approves and implement this Strategy it is absolutely essential that the draft is socialised and consulted with our community - the Strategy is at the heart of our commitment to improve this so it is essential that we commit to our intentions by using both traditional and new ways of seeking the inputs and opinions to ensure we are working towards our intended goal.</p> <p>We plan to consult with the community on the Strategy through the following actions/activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Annual Community Conference - the format this year will be different this year due to Covid-19. In some ways this provides us with an opportunity to try a range of engagement approaches.</li> <li>▪ Sharing with our network of community groups and partnerships to invite their feedback and also to ask them to seek the feedback of their members and participants.</li> <li>▪ Use of our Web and Social Media channels to promote and invite feedback from both organisations and individuals in the Bay.</li> </ul> <p>In order to truly engage with our communities, we need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ be clear that the draft Strategy is based on the outcomes from the last Community Conference</li> <li>▪ recognise that there has been lots of positive work undertaken by communities and the wider community and voluntary sector during the Covid-19 pandemic</li> <li>▪ test whether our high level intentions still work for our community</li> <li>▪ test how our communities think those intentions would work for them and how they would want to get (and stay) involved.</li> </ul> <p>Prior to consultation being undertaken we plan to adapt the strategy into some infographics to engage with people in both written and visual formats.</p>

<b>Section 2: Implications and Impact Assessment</b>	
9.	<b>What are the financial and legal implications?</b>

	<p>In agreeing to consult on the draft Community Engagement and Enablement Strategy, there are no legal implications and limited financial implications. The cost of the engagement will be met from the existing budget.</p>
10.	<p><b>What are the risks?</b></p> <p>There is a risk to the Council of not have 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.</p> <p>The risk of not engaging during the development of the Community Engagement and Enablement Strategy is that our commitment to better community engagement is not demonstrated with actions.</p>
11.	<p><b>Public Services Value (Social Value) Act 2012</b></p> <p>Not applicable.</p>
12.	<p><b>What evidence / data / research have you gathered in relation to this proposal?</b></p> <p>The results from the Community Conference in September 2019 have been used to inform the development of the draft Strategy.</p>
13.	<p><b>What are key findings from the consultation you have carried out?</b></p> <p>To be completed once the consultation is completed.</p>
14.	<p><b>Amendments to Proposal / Mitigating Actions</b></p> <p>To be completed once the consultation is completed.</p>