



# Community Engagement Policy

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## Executive Summary

This policy aims to describe how Denbighshire County Council involves its communities in decision-making.

The policy will be a public document, and Council staff will be supported with an Engagement Framework and further resources to enable them to carry out their duties in accordance with this policy.

## Purpose and scope of this policy

Denbighshire County Council aims to create a culture of engagement whereby:

Staff and contractors working for Denbighshire County Council know and understand what is expected of them in terms of involving communities in decisions which affect them

Communities in Denbighshire are engaged with the Council and understand how and when the Council will be able to involve them in decision-making

This policy will cover all forms of community engagement, across all service areas and across all geographical regions of the County. This policy is in line with legal duties around consultation and engagement, however it will not provide legal definitions or set out legal guidelines for engagement as these may be subject to change, and will aim instead to provide a broad overview of the principles and standards by which the Council expects engagement to be managed from a strategic perspective.

It is also important to note that some statutory processes such as Planning processes, the creation of Traffic Regulation Orders, granting of some licences etc. come with their own statutory guidelines for consultation which are set out by authorities other than Denbighshire Council, but to which the Council must adhere. The intention of this Policy is to be supplementary to other guidance and where legal guidance on statutory consultations exists this Policy will not override or supersede it.

## Definitions

### The Council

Denbighshire County Council, or 'The Council' – a county council and unitary authority performing local government functions in the county of Denbighshire

### Communities

Communities are groups of people who hold a shared identity based on a range of factors.

For the purposes of this policy, Communities will be loosely described as sharing one of three common factors:

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Communities of Place	Communities of Interest	Communities of Circumstance
<p>Communities of place are those communities which exist within geographical borders.</p> <p>Most people identify with a range of place-based communities at any given time.</p>	<p>Communities of interest are communities that people identify with based on shared common interests, and where people have a choice about being active in that community. There can be a lot of overlap between communities of interest and communities of circumstance or communities of place</p>	<p>Communities of circumstance are communities that people belong to or identify with because of who they are as people. For many, there is significant overlap between their circumstances and their interests, and most people are proud to identify with the communities they belong to.</p>
<p>Some examples of Communities of Place include:</p> <p>A residential building or workplace; a street or a housing estate; a village, town or city; the county of Denbighshire</p>	<p>Some examples of Communities of Interest:</p> <p>Businesses; environmental action groups; sporting communities; arts/crafts communities; volunteering communities; veterans groups; interest groups based on place; interest groups based on circumstances</p>	<p>Some examples of Communities of Circumstance:</p> <p>Young people; older people; disabled people                      People of different nationalities; people with different ethnic backgrounds; people who are carers or young carers; parents and people who are pregnant; people who identify as LGBTQA+ and people who identify as transgender or non-binary</p>

The Council understands that most people will identify with multiple communities, and that the strength of their identity with any particular community is context-dependent and subject to change.

## Our principles for engagement

Following the participation spectrum model allows the Council and communities to understand what types of engagement can be used, as well as when they are appropriate.

In addition to understanding these types, the Council also has some principles by which it will aim to engage with communities.

These are similar to Participation Cymru's [National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales](#) and are as follows:

- We will ensure that our communities understand what we are doing and why we are doing it
- We will help our communities to understand what they can expect from us
- We will encourage and enable our communities to take part in an appropriate way
- We will ensure that any engagement is timed and planned in an appropriate way
- We will make it as easy as possible for our communities to take part
- We will support our engagement activities with appropriate resources, support and training
- We will ensure that communities understand what difference their involvement will make
- We will learn from our engagement activities and foster a culture of continuous improvement

## Understanding what we mean by 'engagement'

'Engagement' and 'consultation' are not the same thing, although consultation **is** a form of engagement.

The Council should always aim to engage communities in the most appropriate manner for the activity at hand, however consultation is not always appropriate because the Council may have limited powers to consider the outcomes of a consultation, for example during an emergency response or due to legislative limitations.

With this in mind, the Council will work to a model known as a *participation spectrum*. This model treats all mechanisms of engagement equally and requires that the Council and communities understand what is most appropriate under the circumstances of the project/activity at hand. Several different mechanisms for participation from the spectrum model are likely to be employed over the life cycle of a project.

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A full copy of the participation spectrum model is on the next page, however in brief the model revolves around:

**Inform** when the Council is unable to (for whatever reason) involve a community in a decision, the Council will ensure that the community is well-informed

**Consult** when the Council has to make a decision, but could benefit from community input, it should carry out a consultation

**Involve** when a Council needs to work with a community more closely than a consultation will allow, but the community are not or cannot be equal partners in the design/development of a project/activity/service

**Co-produce** when the Council and the Community can be equal partners in the design and development of a project/activity/service

**Empower** when the Community is in control of the decision-making and the Council is there as an enabler

The table on the next page sets out a range of activities which officers may wish to consider undertaking when planning or managing a programme of public participation. Prior to engaging in any public participation programme (and the suggested activities outlined for each type of participation), Officers should consider:

- Undertaking stakeholder mapping activities which demonstrate that Officers have considered who may be impacted by a decision the Council makes and/or may wish to have a say in it
- Ensuring that appropriate consideration is given to the best ways to reach any identified stakeholders, with a focus on 'digital first' where possible, in accordance with the Council's objectives towards in reducing carbon emissions and preventing nature's decline. Where digital engagement is not possible or not appropriate, Officers should be able to demonstrate they have considered the Council's environmental obligations in any print or procurement processes associated with public participation activities



	Inform	Consult	Involve	Co-produce	Empower
Our participation Goal	We will aim to provide balanced, bias-free information which will help our communities to understand: - What is going on - Any opportunities for community involvement - Any solutions available to us (the Council)	We will aim to obtain community feedback or analysis that we can use to help us decide what to do next. We may combine community feedback with other research/feedback to help us make the right decision	We will aim to work with communities on some aspects of the design and delivery of services, so we can better understand what matters to them	We will work with communities as equal partners to design, develop, deliver, monitor and evaluate services together	We will work with communities to support them to design and develop their own services, using their own assets and resources, and only becoming involved if requested
Our promise to communities	We will keep you informed at all times	- We will keep you informed at all times - We will listen to and acknowledge your concerns - We will let you know how your feedback has influenced our decision	- Your contributions are valuable to us - We will provide opportunities for you to get involved and we will let you know how your contributions will help us	- We will work with you to build a partnership based on trust, with mutual benefits and a common goal - We will work with you to design, develop and deliver services, and you will monitor them	- We will have the flexibility to assist you when you need us to - We will do what we can to help you realise your own potential as a community
How we'll do it	Press releases, social media posts, fact sheets or leaflets/flyers, public drop-in meetings or sessions, letters	Focus groups, open forums, public drop-in meetings or sessions, questionnaires/surveys	Workshops, focus groups or knowledge-sharing networks, peer support groups and participatory budgeting	Advisory committees comprised of community members, workshops, participatory decision-making, community networking	Facilitate and encourage community-led initiatives, sharing of best practice / lessons learned, provision of assets/resources



## Measuring and monitoring engagement

Where possible, the Council will aim to make sure that the engagement it is carrying out with communities is effective. Depending on the nature of the work being undertaken, we may:

- Monitor the number of people we who are engaging with us including:
  - on social media
  - on our website/via a mobile app
  - via the telephone or by post
  - physical footfall at events and activities
- Measure the extent to which people who are engaging with us understand what is happening. Amongst other methods of measurement we may use:
  - Surveys
  - Focus groups/workshops
  - Telephone calls
  - Pop-up shops/drop-in surgeries

## Staff responsibility towards engagement

Where decisions are being made by the Council that are likely to impact communities in Denbighshire, it is reasonable for those communities to expect the Council to engage with them in an appropriate way.

Responsibility for ensuring that appropriate engagement happens will primarily lie with staff with decision-making powers (i.e. Middle Managers and above), although they may take a coordinating rather than a participatory role.

Engagement is listed a specific consideration in the Council's **Wellbeing Impact Assessment** (WIA) process, meaning that Council staff with decision-making powers should generally be considering how they can engage with target communities as part of their project-planning objectives.

## Resources and support for this policy

For communities, additional information about how the Council aims to facilitate and practice engagement is available by contacting the Council's Public Engagement Officer.

Email: [public.engagement@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:public.engagement@denbighshire.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01824 708027

Write: Public Engagement, Customers and Communities, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, County Hall, Wynnstay Road, Ruthin LL15 1YN

For Council staff:

A wide range of resources can be obtained from the Council's staff intranet *Linc*, including:

- Further guidance, templates and resources
- Equipment for loan
- Access and training to the Council's *County Conversation* engagement platform

If you do not have access to Linc then please call 01824 708027 or email

[public.engagement@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:public.engagement@denbighshire.gov.uk)