

Public Participation Strategy 2023-27



Mae'r dogfen hwn hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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Introduction

We believe all our stakeholders, including residents, partners, and businesses should have opportunities to participate and engage with us, so their voices influence future decisions and service provision across Powys and we need to show that we are listening to this feedback. We may not always go forward with the public's preferred option but when we don't, we need to be clear and transparent, and explain why not.

In line with the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 sustainable development principles](#), we want communities to feel supported, have a say in what is provided for them locally and feel they play a key role in local service delivery, whilst ensuring that the diversity of the county is reflected in our work. This strategy centres on engaging and working with our community and other partners to promote and strengthen community relationships, development, and resilience to deliver our priorities.

Our aims

- We will embed a clear and consistent engagement approach that supports our vision for the future in Powys.
- We will empower staff and teams to build collaborative, trusted relationships with our communities, based on honesty, openness, and transparency.
- We will achieve a culture of participation with our communities by enabling people to voice their views, needs and wishes, and to contribute to plans, proposals, and decisions about services.
- We will use innovative accessible approaches to communicate and engage with stakeholders by using a variety of media and clear language to suit their needs while maintaining and improving existing channels.
- We will ensure that we are actively seeking views from groups who are 'seldom heard'.
- We will measure and evaluate engagement effectively and report on how feedback has been used to shape and improve services.

Legislative duty

This strategy has been developed to identify how we will meet our legislative duty in line with Chapter 2 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, see below:

Legislation	Duties and Responsibilities	Outcome
Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act Part 3 Promoting Access To Local Government	<p>Chapter 2, Section 39 - Duty to encourage local people to participate in decision-making by principal councils.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A principal council must encourage local people to participate in the making of decisions by the council (including the making of decisions in partnership or in conjunction with any other person).2. In subsection (1), a reference to the making of decisions includes a reference to the making of decisions by a person in relation to the exercise of a function delegated to that person by a principal council.	<p>A principal council must prepare and publish a strategy (“a public participation strategy”) specifying how it proposes to comply with the duty in section 39.</p>

Glossary of terms

The National Principles of Public Engagement in Wales, produced in 2011 under the guidance of the Participation Cymru Advisory Panel, uses the following working definitions:

- **Participation:** People being actively involved with policy makers and service planners from an early stage of policy and service planning and review, for example [suggesting a topic for discussion by the county council's scrutiny committees](#).
- **Consultation:** A formal process by which policy makers and service providers ask for the views of interested groups and individuals, for example [Statutory consultations for the Transforming Education in Powys 2020-2030 strategy](#)
- **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, for example [Living in Powys engagement exercise to inform the county's next well-being plan](#).
- **Co-production:** An asset-based approach to public services that enables people providing and people receiving services to share power and responsibility, and to work together in equal, reciprocal and caring relationships, for example our [Housing Services Group 100 \(HSG 100\) and Tenants Scrutiny Panel](#)

Principles of consultation and engagement

We are signed up to the following sets of principles to ensure conversations with our stakeholders are meaningful, timely and appropriately resourced to ensure consideration is given to public responses and opinions before a decision is made.

- [National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales](#)
- [The Gunning Principles](#)

Creating awareness of what we do

We have a variety of communication channels available to us which raise awareness of our services and promote opportunities for public participation and engagement, including our website; social media; local and national press; and our engagement hub.

Key messages are shared through a variety of channels, and all communications are:

- Relevant, accurate and up to date
- Clear, concise, and free of jargon
- Accessible
- Available bi-lingually in English and Welsh
- Available in different formats, when requested.

We also provide [guidance to councillors](#) (and internally to our staff) on the benefits of using social media to communicate with local people and how it compliments traditional communication channels and opens new ways to engage with the people of Powys. We also have an internal 'Use of Social Media' policy and information is available to staff and councillors regarding consent and copyright.

Generating interest in what we do

Understanding how we work, who does what and why we work in certain ways, can help the people of Powys with any issues they may face in their communities and inspire them to get involved with decision-making, and even generate interest in becoming a County Councillor.

Our [website](#) is a source of a information, that aids public participation, including (but not limited to):

- [The council organisation structure](#)
- [Council constitution and corporate governance](#)
- [Find my councillor](#)
- [Council Committees and meetings](#), including ways to comment on agenda items and to suggest a topic for discussion by a scrutiny committee
- [Public Participation at council meetings](#), including putting a question to a Cabinet Member or a Chair of a committee
- [Calendar of meetings](#), including dates of upcoming meetings, links to watch the meetings online and associated papers
- [Consultations in Powys](#), including our consultation hub, consultations by our partners and Powys People's Panel
- [How the council spends money](#)
- [How the council works in partnership](#)
- [Planning and Building Control](#), including searching, viewing, and commenting on planning applications
- [Statistics about your area](#), including census information and the interactive well-being information bank
- [Powys People's Panel](#)
- [e-Petitions Scheme](#)
- [How to become a Councillor and what is involved](#)
- [New Councillors' introduction to the Council](#)

A new one-stop '[Get involved](#)' section has been created on the website to make it easier for people to find out all the different ways they can get involved with decision-making and democratic processes in the council.

We must remember that not everyone uses online services, and/or has access to the internet to source the information they are looking for. We should promote how to access this information and how to get involved with our work without the need for the internet, whether that is through a phone conversation with our customer services team, providing the option to request hard copies/alternative formats of documents, and the opportunity to use public computers and loan iPads in our libraries.

Engaging and interacting with our services/work

For most members of the public, the connection they have with council services is mainly transactional, for example they pay their council tax and/or business rates and receive services in return.

Some, however, are interested in forming a stronger connection with our work and look to share their views and influence decision-making, etc. This might be individually by providing feedback or completing the occasional survey or consultation; starting a petition on a local matter; through a local group or organisation; or in some cases showing an interest in becoming a Councillor and representing their local community as a whole.

There are many levels of involvement in which people might participate with council services depending on their personal circumstances and interest. Whatever the level of public participation, it should be considered in all that we do.

Keep informed: The public should be kept informed of our actions, plans and decisions through balanced and objective communications. We will ensure that it is easy for the people of Powys to find out what, how and why we do things and explain our decision-making in an open, transparent way. For example: Media releases, website, social media, service specific letters/emails, posters/information sheets for local groups/organisations.

Actively Consult: The public should have the opportunity to formally feedback on proposals affecting them. Clear information should be provided for consideration and adequate time to respond should be provided. Decision makers must ensure they have taken into account all views and information before reaching their final decision. For example: Transforming Education, Powys Local Development Plan, Council Tax Premiums on Second Homes, etc.

Regularly Involve/Engage: Opportunities should and do exist for the public to share their views regularly on a variety of topics to influence and feedback on our projects and performance. When seeking feedback on a topic/project we should ensure that both on and offline methods are utilised and promoted. For example: service specific surveys, through customer services, feedback options on our website and social media channels, joining our Powys People's Panel, being involved in face to face/hybrid stakeholder groups and forums, utilising the petitions scheme, proposing topics for discussion at relevant meetings/scrutiny committees, in person through local councillors and town and community councils. An ongoing 'Get Involved' communications campaign will be launched in 2023 to highlight all the ways the public can participate with decision making at the council.

Collaborate: We will work with partners in the development of projects and services that benefit local communities. For example: Powys Public Service Board, Regional Partnership Board and Growing Mid Wales. We will use these networks to share our engagement work for wider dissemination and to help understand what the people of Powys think, for example with the help of PAVO's Community Connectors.

Planning our engagement activities

In planning participation and engagement activities, we will aim to engage with as many people as possible from the following groups:

- The people of Powys businesses, local community groups, and visitors
- Partner organisations, for example Powys Teaching Health Board, PAVO, etc.
- Town and Community Councils and County Councillors
- Council staff and trade union representatives
- Young people – through schools, youth organisations and the Young People's Voice Facilitator for Children's Services
- Powys People's Panel (3,700+ members who have signed up through their online account, to take part in surveys and other opportunities to express their views on our services and other issues related to living in Powys)

It is important that our participation and engagement activities represent the whole community including those of less vocal and 'seldom-heard' groups. In line with the [Social Model of Disability](#), we will establish new relationships (and maintain existing ones) with local groups and charities to understand access issues and ensure all our residents have equal opportunities to get involved with council services and decisions.

In line with the [Equality Act 2010](#) protected characteristics, no one should be excluded on the basis of any of the following; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. We will also ensure no one is excluded on the basis of their status, socioeconomic status, preferred language or any other individual characteristic (unless a project is itself characteristic-specific, for example an age specific survey for schools).

All engagement activities, on and off-line will be available in accessible formats. We will ensure our online content meets Level AA (with the aim to meet Level AAA) of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 - the international standard for accessible websites and content. Documentation, including reports, posters, surveys, etc. will be jargon-free and available in easy-read format where possible, including this strategy. Other accessible formats will be available on request, e.g. Braille, large print, audio, etc.

All imagery will have alternative text that can be read aloud to users by screen reader software and all video content will have narration and subtitles.

The views of Welsh language speakers must always be gathered, and engagement activities should involve and support those who wish to participate through the medium of Welsh including, but not limited to, the use of our Welsh language consultation hub.

When it is not possible to collect information from the whole population, we will use a sample of those whose key characteristics are representative of the target group. More information about Powys demographics can be viewed through our online [well-being information bank](#).

To ensure survey and consultation results are representative of the Powys population, we will aim to receive 384 responses to have a confidence level of 95% (with a margin of error of +/-5%).

An updated engagement guidance document will be produced in early 2023 to give staff and Councillors a checklist of everything listed above that they should consider before starting an engagement project.

Reporting back to participants

We need to show that we listen to any feedback that we receive through public participation. All views should be considered before a final decision is made. We may not always go forward with the public's preferred option and when we don't, we need to be clear and transparent, and explain why not.

Decisions made after public participation and engagement activities should be communicated through our main channels, for example media releases, website, social media, by letter or email and published as a follow up on the relevant project on our consultation hub.

Measures of success

We will monitor and report on all of our public participation activities. At the end of each quarter, data from our ongoing engagement project (which is in place to keep under review the extent to which the council is fulfilling the [Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act Part 6, Chapter 1, Section 90](#) performance requirements) will be collated and reported on as part of the Quarterly Performance Reporting to Cabinet. This report will include:

- Number of people who have engaged (taken part) in external engagement and consultation activities
- Percentage of people that are very satisfied to very unsatisfied that they have opportunities to have their say and participate in the Council's decision-making processes
- Percentage of people that speak positively and negatively about the Council (with or without being asked)

At the end of each quarter we will also report on engagement as a whole, including:

- Number of surveys and consultations published (target of 30 or more engagement and consultation activities undertaken each year to engage residents and staff).
- Number of people signed up as members of the Powys People's Panel.
- Number of visitors to the Powys County Council online engagement hub including how many of those completed a survey.

All engagement activities will have follow-up information published online to show how and where public participation has shaped our decision-making. Any decisions made by Cabinet

following public consultations will be shared through our main communication channels including local and national press, our website, and social media channels.

Document Control

Title of document:	PCC Public Participation Strategy
Type of document	Strategy
Owner:	Head of Transformation and Democratic Services
Public Consultation:	Wednesday 21 September – Sunday 18 December 2022
Approval process / approving body:	Democratic Services and Powys County Council Cabinet
Approval date:	
Publication date:	
Review arrangements:	<p>This strategy will be reviewed after each ordinary election (the first review year being 2027). A consultation exercise on any revisions to the Strategy will be undertaken as part of each review.</p> <p>To keep the strategy relevant and up to date, necessary minor changes will be made and approved by the Head of Transformation and Communications and Cabinet member for Communications & Engagement.</p>
Next review date:	June 2027

Version	Date	Brief Description of Changes	Comments