Community Engagement Strategy

DRAFT

Community Engagement Strategy 2020 - 2023

1. Foreword

To be included

2. Overview & Vision

The Community Engagement Strategy aims to set out how we empower our citizens and communities to influence and shape the priorities and decisions we make about the areas they live in and work.

The strategy aims to create a more accessible, transparent and accountable council and promote a vision where:

"Citizens and communities are effectively informed, engaged and empowered by Stirling Council. They will work in partnership to define local priorities and design responses, deliver and evaluate services and inform council decision making."

Our Priority Outcomes

Outcome 1: **People**: Citizens and communities lead the way in making Stirling a place where people can prosper and grow

Outcome 2: **Place**: Citizens and Communities have the power to influence the decisions and issues that affect them

Outcome 3: **Community & Partnership**: Activities that engage citizens and communities have a clear purpose, are accessible and have integrity

Outcome 4: **Digital**: Methods of engagement are relevant, inclusive and promote digital literacy

Outcome 5: **Organisation**: Staff are supported to carry out community engagement effectively and consistently

Our Local Challenges

Our aim is to create an environment in which prosperous and confident communities can emerge, equipped to meet the challenges we face in the coming years.

The Community Engagement Strategy draws on the good practices that we already use, will introduce new methods of engagement and has at the heart of it the vital role our citizens and communities have to play in prioritising and planning our services.

3. **Our Purpose & Values**

Engaging with people and groups in our communities is strategically important for Stirling Council in order that we are accessible, responsive and accountable while building trust in our citizens and communities.

We should engage with our citizens, communities, businesses, partners and stakeholders and anyone who is involved in or influenced by our services and activities to ensure we are an inclusive organisation.

Engagement helps us understand the needs of citizens and communities and enables us to create services which meet these needs.

It provides a pathway for citizens and communities to shape services and influence decision making.

Evidence and insight from engagement gives us a foundation to identify practical solutions and determine changes required to meet local needs or demand.

Our Values
A meaningful and effective community engagement strategy has at its core;

- inclusion – we will include all those citizens and communities effected or influenced by our services in planning, delivery and evaluation

- open dialogue – we will consult effectively with our citizens and communities to understand their opinions, needs and solutions in ways that suit them best

- mutual respect – we will approach our communities with a respectful and inclusive attitude and expect the same in return

- integrity – we will be consistent and principled across our services

- transparency – we will work openly and honestly and share information

- accountability – we will be responsible for our decisions and actions

4. **National and local context**
Community Engagement is led by a number of National and Local policies that will influence how, why and where engagement should and will happen.

The Christie Commission	In 2011, the **Christie Commission** identified four key principles for public services reform. One of the key principles is that public service reforms must aim to empower individuals and communities receiving public services by engaging them in the design and delivery of the services they need and use.

The Community Empowerment Act	The **Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015** provides guidance and legislation which places duties on public bodies and provides rights for communities and groups being engaged in local authority matters.
Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy	In 2014, the **Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy** identified seven principles for developing a stronger democratic process in Scotland.
National Performance Framework	In 2018, the Scottish Government produced the **National Performance Framework** with a key outcome being: 'We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.'
Democracy Matters	Recently, the Scottish Government and COSLA have reviewed local governance to look at how local decisions are made and how local democracy is working (**Democracy Matters**). Reports were published in May 2019 following the initial consultation phase with an outline plan for the next steps.
The Stirling Plan	The **Stirling Plan** sets out how Stirling Council will engage with citizens and communities, groups and localities through the Single Outcome Agreement, Community Planning Partnership and through Locality Action Plans in the 8 priority areas.
Our 10 Year Plan and Target Operating Model	

5. **What is community engagement?**
   Community engagement is a process for developing working relationships between public bodies and local communities, groups and citizens.

   Effective community engagement will mean that Stirling Council, as a whole, can understand and act on the needs and priorities identified by our citizens and communities and work with them to bring about transformational change.
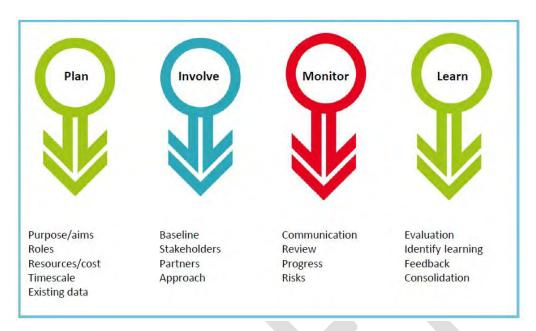
National Standards for Community Engagement

By implementing the National Standards in our practice and through the creation and adoption of our own Framework we will ensure that our citizens and communities are fully engaged in our decision making processes.

We recognise that:
- Working with communities and individuals will ensure sustainable solutions and provide long-term benefits for all.
- People and communities are diverse and we may need to work differently to be most effective.
- People are partners and contributors with knowledge and skills that can support our aims and should be given the opportunity to develop these further.
- Many aspects of this process will take time to develop and provide learning for everyone along the way.
- Communities and individuals are participating in a voluntary capacity, their time is valuable and we will respect they will have other commitments.
- All engagement and participation will be done in a fair, respectful and non-discriminatory way allowing different viewpoints to be heard and promoting inclusion.
- Everyone needs to be positive, open and honest in how they work with others.

6. How we currently Engage and Involve

Community Engagement will lead us towards a "Co-production" approach where we work in partnership with our citizens and communities.

We know from surveying and speaking to our citizens and communities that they would like us to be more open, available and responsive to their needs, aspirations and ideas.

Our Community Engagement Strategy and Framework will provide the opportunity for this to happen using the **Plan: Involve: Monitor: Learn** approach outlined in the framework.

Current areas for Community Engagement are;

Participatory Budgeting (PB)

Stirling Council has a responsibility to build capacity within local communities to ensure inclusive participation and sustainable shared benefits from PB processes. The Scottish Government and COSLA have agreed a joint framework to support councils to develop PB as a mainstream approach for people to participate in local decision-making.

Committing at least 1% of the council's overall budget through PB means that ALL council services have a responsibility to demonstrate how PB is considered in their planning, budgeting and spend. **Your Stirling; You Decide** has given us the opportunity to introduce mainstream PB, which allowed citizens and communities to decide on the priorities. This will enable the Council to works towards embedding PB in to service planning and delivery.

Community Planning Processes

Stirling Council is required to work with their community planning partners, engaging with community bodies, to improve local outcomes. Joint efforts and resources should be targeted on those areas of greatest need to reduce inequalities. Each Community Planning Partnership must prepare and publish a local outcomes improvement plan

(LOIP) and we have produced The Stirling Plan. The plan sets out priority areas for improving outcomes, the improvements it aims to achieve and the timescales. The resulting Locality Action Plans should direct and prioritise the allocation of resources, services and finance to these priority areas and outcomes.

Community Asset Transfer

Community bodies have the power to buy, lease, manage or use land and buildings belonging to the public sector. Community Asset Transfer is covered under Part 5 of the Act. Communities can and should be supported by Stirling Council to transfer assets where improvements to economic development, regeneration, health, social or environmental wellbeing, or the reduction in inequalities can be demonstrated.

Community Councils and Local Governance

Community Councils are required by statute and are the responsibility of the Local Authority. Democratically elected and run by local residents to act on behalf of its area it is the most local tier of elected representation. Community Councils play an important role in local democracy and community engagement.

Community Councils represent local people, provide a collective voice on decisions which affect them and work with us to improve services. A new process for engaging Community Councils will be developed alongside this strategy.

Digital Engagement

Increasingly digital platforms are becoming more common and effective in engaging communities, groups and individuals. Stirling Council already uses online surveys, questionnaires and forms to communicate and engage with our residents.

By building on this we can ensure that large sections of our communities can engage effectively and easily through digital platforms. As the younger demographic become more involved with the council this will become the expectation and norm – the council should invest in such facilities to ensure it is "ahead of the game" in digital communication.

There does however need to be a recognition that many of our most isolated and vulnerable communities and residents do not have access to or can afford the equipment associated with digital services. Investment in hardware and training should be included in any digital planning or roll-out.

7. Community Engagement - Defining our priority areas & communities
The Scottish Government has published the summary results for Scottish local authority areas from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) for 2020.

The SIMD identifies small-area concentrations of multiple deprivation across Scotland on an equitable basis. The system allows effective targeting of policies, interventions or funding here the aim is to tackle concentrations of deprivation and the multiple poor outcomes that result.

'Deprived' does not just mean 'poor' or 'low income'. It can also mean people have fewer resources and opportunities, for example in health and education. Multiple deprivation is made up of separate dimensions - or domains. The 2020 index is comprised of the following domains:

- Income – People and families above and below the national average
- Employment - Unemployment claimant count and working age benefits
- Health - hospital admissions, mortality, substance misuse
- Education - Pupil performance, attendance, destinations
- Access to Services - GP, PO, retail, schools
- Housing – Overcrowding, quality of home and utilities
- Crime - Recorded crime rates for key crimes

Guided by this data and other evidence we will ensure Community Engagement is inclusive of those citizens and communities with the most need and higher levels of social deprivation. However we recognise that all our communities and citizens have a role to play in shaping our services and decision making. (See Appendix 1)

8. Our Engagement Outcomes

Our 10 Year Plan will set out our priorities in what is a challenging time for the council. The six themes are People; Place; Public Contact, Engagement & Service; Digital; Organisation; Community & Partnership.

Community Engagement clearly sits under the theme of Public Contact, Engagement & Service, however we can align our community engagement objectives with the other themes to ensure we understand the context and relevance of this strategy.

Outcome 1: **People**: Citizens and communities lead the way in making Stirling a place where people can prosper and grow

Outcome 2: **Place**: Citizens and Communities have the power to influence the decisions and issues that affect them

Outcome 3: **Community & Partnership**: Activities that engage citizens and communities have a clear purpose, are accessible and have integrity

Outcome 4: **Digital**: Methods of engagement are relevant, inclusive and promote digital literacy

Outcome 5: **Organisation**: Staff are supported to carry out community engagement effectively and consistently

Outcome 1: Citizens and communities lead the way in making Stirling a place where people can prosper and grow

Our citizens and communities want a bigger say in the services they receive and in shaping the places where they live. By committing to co-production it offers us a way of

sharing our resources and decision making 'in an equal and mutual relationship, bringing together professionals, service users, their families and neighbours to design and deliver public services'. This approach has increasingly been adopted by public sector organisations who recognise that when power is shared, services are more agile and responsive and the outcomes meet the needs of citizens and communities more effectively.

Objective	Outcome
We will co-produce services with local people, including seldom heard citizens and communities, through effective engagement	Our services will deliver improved outcomes for citizens and communities and reduce inequality
We will develop council plans and services by involving citizens and communities in our decision making processes	Communities are recognised and valued as experts and given opportunities to lead on deciding priorities and shaping services

To achieve these objectives we will need to identify organisational barriers and poor practice and transform Stirling Council into an organisation that is open and comfortable with community engagement. This means we will commit to having the necessary training and support for our staff in place so that we can deliver these outcomes.

We will produce a Community Engagement Framework that will provide staff and services with a good practice guide and quality checks to ensure we are consistent and delivering best practice and meeting the National Standards for community engagement,

Outcome 2: Citizens and Communities have the power to influence the decisions and issues that affect them

By ensuring that we are transparent in our processes and accountable for our decisions we can strengthen the public's trust in the way we make decisions that affect them. To ensure we engage our citizens and communities in our decision making we need develop ways of working that encourage participation and inclusion.

To make best use of our resources and powers it is essential that our governance is open and effective. If we are to enable our citizens and communities to meet their needs and improve local outcomes we need to have community engagement at the heart of our decision making processes.

To engage our citizens and communities in setting our priorities we will provide more opportunities to work in partnership with us to ensure decisions are made at a local level.

Objective	Outcome
We will involve communities through elected representatives , Community Councils and local democratic processes	The views, opinions and needs of our citizens and communities is clearly reflected in the decisions we make
We will be transparent and accountable in our decision making processes	Council information is available, accessible and open to scrutiny by our citizens and communities
We will develop an engagement framework that will ensure our decision making processes engage our citizens and communities including the priority areas	People are given equal opportunity to influence decisions that affect them and their communities and co-design solutions to local needs.

To allow us to achieve these objectives we will need to ensure that we consider Community Engagement at the beginning of and throughout any activity that sets priorities for or decisions about our citizens and communities.

Guided by the National Standards and our Community Engagement Framework we will be confident about our responsibilities to be inclusive, transparent and accountable. We should see this as a process for being more effective and not as a threat or inconvenience.

By meeting these objectives we will build trust in our decision making and governance.

Outcome 3: Activities that engage citizens and communities have a clear purpose, are accessible and have integrity

Our services are required to meet the needs of a diverse range of citizens and local communities across the council area. Our population is diverse in terms of age, income, ethnicity, need and many other demographics. As we design and deliver these services, we must ensure that we engage the relevant people in appropriate activities that effectively support decision-making and the use of our resources.

Lack of or poorly planned engagement can lead to distrust and frustration. Community Engagement that fails to meet the required standards will often leave citizens and communities feeling excluded, marginalised and unimportant.

We will need to ensure our engagement is easy to access, targeted and specific in its purpose.

Objective	Outcome
We will ensure that citizens and communities fully understand the purpose of community engagement	Local people understand their role in local democracy and feel that they can make a difference

We will brand and promote our community engagement activities to our citizens and in our communities	Local people are aware of how and when they can have their views and contributions included in council decision making processes
We will be able to demonstrate the impact community engagement has had on our decisions, services and use of resources	Council reporting and reviews will articulate how community engagement has influenced our services

To ensure we meet these objectives we will need to clearly state the importance of and our commitment to community engagement in our documents, advertising, social media and branding. These messages will need to be consistent, recognisable and targeted. We will need to ensure our methods of engagement are appropriate, accessible and in a place and a time best suited to the participants.

We will need to express to our citizens and communities the difference they have made and the impact they have had through our community engagement activities. By following our framework and the national standards we will achieve this consistently across council services.

Outcome 4: Methods of engagement are empowering, educational and promote digital literacy

Community Engagement is not simply a consultation exercise. The process itself needs to be a learning opportunity for all those involved; citizens, communities, partners and us.

If we are to truly empower our citizens and communities then we must be willing to share the power we have in terms of opportunity, decision making and resources. We must be committed to Local Democracy.

Our responsibility will be to ensure our citizens and communities are fully informed of the subject matter, the process, the expected outcomes and the impact of their involvement. Where we need to provide materials, equipment and information we should do so.

Objective	Outcome
We will ensure that citizens and communities take ownership of community engagement by allowing them to design and lead the process in partnership with council services	Citizens and communities will have equal power to make decisions and influence services
We will ensure our citizens are supported to fully understand the issues and the impact their decision will have	Citizens and communities will be fully informed and have the resources they

	need to understand and contribute to the decision making process
We will promote and resource digital literacy as a primary form of community engagement	Citizens will be more digitally capable and the provision of and access to digital services will rise

To allow us to achieve these objectives we must be committed to the best way of doing things, not the easiest, cheapest or quickest. We must regard our citizens and communities as our equals and ensure they are given the rightful place in our decision making processes.

We will need to consistently remind ourselves of our value base and commitment to community engagement and be prepared to provide the appropriate level of resource to allow it to happen effectively.

Outcome 5: Staff are supported to carry out community engagement effectively and consistently

To fully understand the needs of our citizens and communities and be able to design and deliver the most effect services we can, we must engage them in our decision making processes.

To achieve this we will invest in our staff through training, resources and guidance. This will provide a consistent and effective approach to community engagement that results in more relevant and appropriate services, increased dialogue and accountability.

Done properly, community engagement will provide staff with a rationale and evidence base for designing and delivering their services and activities.

Objective	Outcome
We will create a toolkit, training and framework to enable staff to develop effective community engagement in their service	Staff will be confident in facilitating community engagement opportunities and able to express its purpose and benefits
We will create a leadership group to ensure community engagement is being consistently delivered across all appropriate services	Community engagement practice will be consistent, evaluated and improved. Staff will deliver community engagement in line with the national standards and the processes set out in our framework
We will review and measure the impact of community engagement on our services and processes	We will be able to express the impact community engagement has had on our service and meet our statutory obligations

To ensure we achieve these objectives we will need to create a culture and ethos of inclusion and empowerment across all council services and staff. To do this we will need to be clear in our expression of what community engagement is, how it is done and the benefit it brings.

Community Engagement will need to be a golden thread that runs through all our services and we will need to ensure it is at the heart of our decision making processes. The Leadership Group would ensure this consistency.

We will need to have a confidence and belief in the process and ensure we build trust in our citizens and communities to allow them to fully engage.

The crucial step will be to evaluate the effectiveness of our community engagement, the process and insights gained. We will then adapt our community engagement process to reflect these insights to make it more effective and have greater impact.

9. Summary

Effective Community Engagement supports people and communities to become active participants and to take control over the decisions and matters that affect their lives. It drives effective and permanent change and builds more able and resilient communities.

Where communities may already be driving change Stirling Council has a role in supporting and facilitating this. Other communities, including our most vulnerable, will need to be supported to participate more fully.

Stirling Council has a responsibility to empower communities by sharing and shifting power in decision-making and supporting local communities to make a difference. This is done through effective Community Engagement across all council services with the key principles and National Standards embedded in our culture and practice.

The Community Engagement Strategy and strategic guide to "Effective Engagement and Participation" provides a framework to ensure consistency across the Council relating to our responsibilities, methods and approaches for ensuring community engagement is at the heart of our service delivery and decision making. It also gives us a platform for communicating to our communities what they can expect from the Council, how to access services and how they can be included in the democratic process.

Appendix 1: Results for Stirling Council Area

Generally speaking, Stirling Council area is relatively affluent and data zones in Stirling are more concentrated at the least deprived end of the distribution on the overall SIMD. However, Stirling still contains data zones ranging from among the most deprived to amongst the least deprived in Scotland as shown in Figure 1 below. The number of Stirling's data zones in the first decile (i.e. the most deprived 10%) has increased by one between SIMD 2016 and SIMD 2020. However the number of data zones in the 3rd, 4th and 5th deciles has decreased by a total of 5 since 2016. The least deprived data zone is Stirling is Bridge of Allan North (Kennilworth & Beaconhurst) coming in at 6,921 of Scotland's 6,976 datazones – in the least deprived 1%.

When considering the most deprived 5-10% in Scotland, 4 datazones (Raploch South, Cultenhove, Cornton North and Cornton South) have been joined by St Ninians East. Having one additional data zone in the overall most deprived 10% increases the population from 4,170 in 2016 to 4,927 in 2020.

Three of Stirling's data zones were previously included in the most deprived 10-15% in Scotland in 2016. One data zone (St Ninians East) has moved into the most deprived 10%, one data zone (Plean East) remains in the most deprived 15% whilst the remaining data zone (Raploch West) has improved its relative deprivation from the most deprived 15% (at 12%) to the most deprived 20% (at 19%). Stirling's population living within the overall most deprived 15% has reduced from 6,653 in 2016 to 5,908 in 2020.

When considering the most deprived 15-20% in Scotland, Cowie (Hilton), Top of the Town,
Fallin South West and Hillpark East remain in the most deprived 20%. In 2020 these areas are joined by Cowie South and Cowie Central which were previously marginally outwith the 20% most deprived data zones. As mentioned above Raploch West, previously in the most deprived 15%, is now within the most deprived 20%. Fallin North West has also improved significantly moving from the most deprived 20% (at 17%) in 2016 to the most deprived 30% (28%) in 2020. Stirling's population residing within the overall most deprived 20% has increased from 10,150 in 2016 to 11,110 in 2020.

Summary of Changes 2016 – 2020 by Area

It should be noted that changes are relative and may not reflect actual changes in the neighbourhood. However some general points can be made:

Deep-rooted deprivation persists in Raploch with 2 data zones in the most deprived 5%. These data zones have consistently been among the 5% most deprived in Scotland since SIMD 2004. However Raploch West continues to show improvement moving from the most deprived 2% in 2012, to 12% in 2016 and 20% in 2020.

St Ninians East (Mayfield Court, Cornhill) has moved from the most deprived 15% into the most deprived 10%. In contrast St Ninians Central – Borestone Crescent has moved

from the most deprived 30% (at 21%) in 2016 to the most deprived 40% (at 37%) in 2020.

Cowie, which previously had 1 data zone in the most deprived 20% in 2016 now has 3 data zones in 2020. Two of these data zones were marginally outwith the most deprived 20% in
2016

Fallin North West (Woodside, Polmaise Cres) has significantly improved its relative deprivation moving from the most deprived 20% (at 17%) in 2016 to the most deprived 30% (at 28%) in 2020.

(Produced by Paul McNamara, Research Officer, Portfolio & Business People, Planning and Performance)