

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

2.00 PM MONDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2023

MULTI-LOCATION MEETING - COUNCIL CHAMBER, PORT TALBOT & MICROSOFT TEAMS

Report of the Head of People and Organisational Development

Matter for Information

Wards Affected: All Wards

Draft Public Participation Strategy 2023-2028

Purpose of Report

1. To ask members of the Democratic Services Committee to consider the Draft Public Participation Strategy for 2023-2028 as part of the consultation process in line with the requirement the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 that the council must “consult with such other persons as it considers appropriate”.

Executive Summary

2. The draft Public Participation Strategy for 2023-2028 (attached at Appendix 1) outlines the council’s objectives, approach and mechanisms for encouraging and enabling public participation, together with information on how local people can influence decision-making.

It was developed following the Statutory Guidance on Public Participation Strategies, made under section 44 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and informed by the NPT Citizens’ Panel and the NPT Community of Practice on Involvement and Engagement.

3. Cabinet, on Wednesday 30 November 2022, approved a 12 week formal public on the draft strategy. This commenced on 5 December 2022 and is due to close on 26 February. A final version will be presented to Cabinet for consideration in March 2023.

Background

4. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires councils to encourage local people to participate in their decision making. This includes where councils are making decisions in partnership with another principal council or in conjunction with another individual or body such as a local health board.
5. The Act requires local authorities to publish, consult on, and regularly review a public participation strategy. These strategies are required to set out:
 - i. ways of promoting awareness among local people of the principal council's functions;
 - ii. ways of promoting awareness among local people of how to become a member of the principal council, and what membership entails;
 - iii. ways of facilitating access for local people to information about decisions made, or to be made, by the principal council;
 - iv. ways of promoting and facilitating processes by which local people may make representations to the principal council about a decision before, and after, it is made;
 - v. arrangements made, or to be made, for the purpose of the council's duty in section 62 of the 2011 Measure (bringing views of the public to attention of overview and scrutiny committees);
 - vi. ways of promoting awareness among members of the principal council of the benefits of using social media to communicate with local people.
6. Following the Statutory Guidance on Public Participation Strategies, made under section 44 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, we involved a number of stakeholders in developing the draft strategy, including:
 - An officer working group – for initial scoping, mapping of existing participation pathways and drafting key information for the strategy
 - NPT Community of Practice on Involvement and Engagement (NPT CoP) to further develop the baseline, identify what works well, gaps and aspirations for 'what we could do better'. The NPT CoP also contributed to the overarching objective and approach for the strategy.
 - The NPT Citizens' Panel were asked to complete a questionnaire to provide an indication of how much residents currently participate in the council's decision-making process;

which mechanisms for participation they are aware of; the level of interest in participation opportunities; to what extent those who have participated feel their involvement allowed them to have a genuine impact on the decision(s) made; and listen to any suggestions as to what the council could do more to improve public involvement in our decision-making processes. The feedback from this informed the action plan for the strategy.

Financial Appraisal

7. The cost of developing and implementing the Strategy will be met from existing service budgets and resources.
8. An enhanced approach may require the commitment of resources and officer time from other service areas in future.
9. The Strategy will ensure that the council complies with legislation avoiding a potential adverse cost implication for non-compliance or retrospective challenges to council decisions

Integrated Impact Assessment

10. A first stage impact assessment was undertaken to assist the council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The first stage impact assessment indicated that a more in-depth assessment was required, and this is attached to the report at Appendix 2, for the purposes of the meeting.

The IIA will be revisited in light of responses to the consultation and a final impact assessment will accompany the final decision report in due course.

Workforce Impact

11. The Public Participation Strategy will support officers involved in the decision-making process by ensuring a corporate and coordinated approach to participation, involvement and engagement.

By working towards shared objectives and embedding a consistent approach, we aim to ensure our public participation activities are of

a consistently high standard, leading to more robust decisions that have considered the needs and interests of stakeholders.

Legal Impact

12. The publication of the final strategy will meet the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 by setting out how the council encourages local people to participate in its decision making, the steps we will take to improve public participation, and how we will measure progress.

Risk Management

13. The Council's Corporate Risk Register will be updated with any risks associated with the delivery of the work outlined in the Strategy following its approval and adoption by Council.

Consultation

14. A 12 week formal public consultation commenced on 5 December 2022 and will close on 26 February 2023. A final version will be presented to Cabinet for consideration in March 2023.

Recommendations

15. Having had due regard to the Integrated Impact Assessment it is recommended that Democratic Services Committee:
 - a) note the contents of the Draft Public Participation Strategy 2023-2028
 - b) provide feedback on the draft Strategy as part of formal consultation

Reason for report

16. To bring the Draft Public Participation Strategy and consultation to the attention of Democratic Services Committee and invite members to provide feedback as part of the formal consultation process.

Appendices

17. Appendix 1 – Neath port Talbot Council Draft Public Participation Strategy 2023-28
18. Appendix 2 – Integrated Impact Assessment

List of Background Papers

19. Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (the 2021 Act)
20. The Equalities Act 2010
21. The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act
22. The Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act (2014)
23. The Welsh Language Standards

Officer Reporting:

Sheenagh Rees, Head of People and Organisational Development, Tel no: 01639 763315, Email: s.rees5@npt.gov.uk

Anita James, Corporate Policy, Performance and Engagement Manager. Tel: 01639 763842, Email a.james6@npt.gov.uk