COMMUNITY MATTERS – ONE PLAN, MANY VOICES

A framework for engagement

**A shared framework for engaging with communities**

**Foreword**

The Council is committed to engaging with communities. This Framework provides a creative, flexible and empowering approach which is crucial for the Council to work effectively and efficiently with our communities. It shows people what they can expect from us, builds trust and gives them something to hold us to account against. We welcome this and whole heartedly support the Framework’s use by partners, as well as community and voluntary sector groups.

Councillor Angela Campbell, Convenor of Youth, Equalities and Empowerment

**Introduction**

Working with communities is vital to ensuring that North Lanarkshire fulfils its ambition to be the place to live, learn, work, invest and visit. This framework sets out an approach to community engagement and empowerment that underpins delivery of the ambitious vision for North Lanarkshire set out in **The Plan for North Lanarkshire** and supports those who live here to contribute to successfully achievement its Outcomes. To unlock the potential that exists in North Lanarkshire, communities must be encouraged and supported to share that vision and be inspired to participate in a way that suits their own needs, aspirations and circumstances. There are great examples of community engagement and empowerment across North Lanarkshire. In many cases, local people are leading in the development and delivery of approaches to improving their own lives and the lives of others within their communities. We want to build on this to involve and work in partnership with communities to develop dynamic approaches on the journey to making North Lanarkshire the place to LIVE.

**Principles**

This shared framework for engaging with communities in North Lanarkshire sets out clear principles and standards underpinned by national legislative and policy guidance including **the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015** and **the National Standards for Community Engagement**.

North Lanarkshire is made up of a diverse range of communities from rural villages to large towns, each with their own unique characteristics, needs, strengths and assets. The North Lanarkshire approach will focus on working with local people, reflecting this diversity, to develop strong, empowered and engaged communities. We are fully committed to engaging our communities to help us plan and deliver the services that people need and that make best use of our resources. We also recognise that communities have individual strengths and assets in themselves and play an important role in co-designing services that meet people’s needs and aspirations. This framework has been developed to ensure that our communities continue to be fully engaged in our work. It has been designed as an overarching framework for the Council, Community Planning Partners and Community and Voluntary Sector Organisations who are involved in the process of community engagement. Providing a clear definition of community engagement, the Framework sets out guiding principles and standards for working with communities. The overall aim of the framework is to provide communities with the ways and means to influence and shape the way services are planned and delivered in North Lanarkshire.

**National Context**

The policy and legislative drivers for community engagement have evolved over recent years to reflect the growing need to engage communities in planning and delivering public services. **The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015** has been a key catalyst in improving approaches to engagement and participation seeking to empower communities, giving them more of a say in how public services are planned and delivered. The Act places a specific focus on the role that community engagement plays in driving change to ensure that there is greater control and influence by communities in decision making. It seeks to empower communities not only through the ownership of land and assets but also through strengthening their voice in identifying needs and achieving appropriate outcomes. Participation Requests, for example, represent a process which allows a community body to enter into dialogue with public authorities about local issues and local services on their terms. Communities might use the terms of the Act to enable discussions with service providers as to how they could better meet the needs of users, or even propose to lead in the delivery of the service themselves. A number of other key national drivers reflect or have been developed to better embed the ethos of the Act, these include: -

* The updated ***National Standards for Community Engagement*** reflect the developing policy and legislative context for community empowerment in Scotland. The detailed performance standards have been designed to support and inform the process of community engagement. There are seven key elements of the new Standards which are outlined within Appendix A of this framework. They describe effective community engagement and provide performance statements that can be used by everyone involved in community engagement to achieve positive outcomes.
* **Community planning** requires public agencies to work together with communities to plan and deliver better local services that improve people’s lives. Successful community planning is based on meaningful, sustained and effective engagement with local people and communities. Community Planning partners should build on the skills, capacity, knowledge and potential of communities so often evident in the commitment and passion of local groups and organisations.
* Integration of **Health and Social Care** legislation has sought to empower and support individuals, families and carers to have greater choice and control over the services they require. There is now a legislative requirement to involve and engage all partners and stakeholders in health and social care with the emphasis on local planning and delivery arrangements.
* The rights of children and young people to have their views listened to are enshrined in A**rticle 12** of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**. The participation rights state that children are entitled to the freedom to express opinions and to have a say in matters affecting their social, economic, religious, cultural and political life. These principles are embedded into the North Lanarkshire Children’s Services Plan.
* **Participatory Budgeting** seeks to involve local communities in decisions about the distribution of public service budgets. This is an empowering way for local people to have a direct say in how, and where, public funds can be used to address local needs.

**North Lanarkshire - The Vision**

The Plan for North Lanarkshire sets out an ambitious vision for the people **who LIVE, LEARN, WORK, INVEST** inand **VISIT** North Lanarkshire. The ambitions within the plan are big in relation to achieving Inclusive Growth via large scale regeneration and infrastructure improvements. We need to ensure that the opportunities that this brings puts local people first in order to maintain and improve facilities, services and supports. The Plan commits to ensuring that North Lanarkshire is the place where people are encouraged, supported, cared for and feel safe at each stage of their life. The focus will be on significantly improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all who choose to live, learn, work, invest and visit here. The plan recognises that achieving the ambitions and vision is not the sole responsibility of any one organisation. It will take significant collective effort to build on the innovative partnerships already in place as we work together. Our people and our communities have a significant part to play in developing and delivering the priorities within the plan and we need to ensure that they are involved in the decisions that affect them.

**Inclusion – Involvement – Influence**

**Community Engagement - Definition**

*‘Developing and sustaining a working relationship between one or more public body and one or more community group, to help them both to understand and act on the needs or issues that the community experiences’*

The National Standards for Community Engagement

**Defining Our Communities**

Community engagement is about building positive relationships with our communities, based on a shared understanding of local needs, issues and priorities. It involves respectful dialogue between participants to create the right environment to achieve positive outcomes. There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach for community engagement. All communities have their own unique characteristics and aspirations. Similarly, community engagement is not a single activity but rather a way of working based on; inclusion, involvement, and influence. It requires a shared commitment from all participants to ensure responsible, accountable and collaborative working. Community engagement therefore, involves a wide range of different approaches and activities that support the involvement of children, young people, adults and wider communities in how we plan and deliver services.

This framework focusses on our towns, villages and neighbourhoods and everyone who lives and works in North Lanarkshire and accepts that community can mean different things to different people. Communities can be defined in different ways. ‘Communities of place’ are defined by a geographic location with a physical boundary such as a village, town, neighbourhood or locality. ‘Communities of interest’, refers to a group of people who share a particular interest or experience. ‘Communities of identity’ are defined by those who identify themselves with, for example young people, older people, faith groups or equality groups. These definitions recognise that people may identify themselves with more than one community. Community engagement needs to be flexible, responsive to local circumstances and sensitive as to how people identify themselves, to ensure that everyone, particularly those whose voices are seldom heard, is able to contribute. People and communities are what bring investment in regeneration and aspirations around inclusive growth to life.

There are many different ways to describe community engagement. Community engagement is such a broad term it can lead to confusion and different interpretations. Within this Framework community engagement has been defined as incorporating a range of activity as set out in Diagram 1 below and local examples have been provided to illustrate each.

Diagram 1 – Community Engagement Definition

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of engagement** | **Informing** | **Consulting** | **Involving** | **Collaborating** | **Empowering** |
| **Definition** | *Providing balanced and objective information to communities to help them to understand decisions, opportunities and challenges* | *Obtaining public feedback on information, options and decisions* | *Working directly with communities throughout the process to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered* | *Partnering with communities in each aspect of decision making including development of ideas, options and preferred solutions* | *Placing final decision or implementation in the hands of the community or working with communities to develop skills to enable them to take action and deliver improvements* |
| **North Lanarkshire Examples** | NLC Communications strategy  Sharing information on campaigns and decisions online and social media | Public consultation meetings (major planning applications, schools consultations)  Consultation on budget setting proposals with communities | Discussion with communities to agree Local Development Programme (LDP)projects  Community Matters events to inform development of NLP engagement approach | Partnership between RASCALS, Culture and Leisure NL and NLC to pilot a holiday programme for children and Young People with complex needs and agree longer term actions to support  Participatory budgeting process and activity | Community Asset Transfer Process  Community Matters voting process to ensure community voice in decision making |

**Commitment to Communities – One Plan, Many Voices**

We are: -

* Committed to working with communities across a spectrum of engagement opportunities and approaches appropriate to need and circumstance underpinned by the National Standards for Community Engagement
* Inclusive in our approach to working with communities and promoting opportunities for individuals and groups from all walks of life to influence and participate in regeneration, service design and delivery. Particular efforts will be made to develop engagement opportunities with those experiencing inequality and deprivation whose voices are seldom heard.
* Approachable and transparent in all of our engagement activity. We will share and provide the fullest possible information and regularly review information we get back from communities
* Committed to Two-Way Communication, and will listen to what individuals, groups and networks have to say. We value and respect people’s opinions. We understand that a small number of people cannot fully reflect the views of an entire community, but are entitled to make representations on behalf of their wider community.
* Working in partnership to co-ordinate support for communities across North Lanarkshire with a strong focus in defined localities and local communities, communities of interest and strategic planning groups. We recognise the significant links, dependencies and overlaps between every group and how they relate to each other.
* Eradicating unnecessary bureaucracy from our engagement activity and focussing on people over structures. We will be responsive and flexible to the needs of localities and interest groups, recognising their differences.

**Principles**

Working with communities requires the use of a range of approaches and mechanisms depending on the circumstances and needs of a particular community based on: -

* dialogue with communities to encourage self-determination in terms of approaches and delivery
* identifying and supporting community assets
* empowering local communities to make, act on and take ownership of decisions of relevance to them
* promoting a culture of service delivery and decision making that is tailored to the needs and unique circumstances of communities
* building on relationships between the public and voluntary sector and their networks to ensure that those supporting delivery are best placed to do so dependent on the particular priority for that community of interest or geography
* maintaining focus on the vision for North Lanarkshire and meaningful outcomes for communities
* developing a relationship with people and communities as stakeholders based on trust, honesty and coproduction
* communities as a key partner in making North Lanarkshire the place to *Live, Learn, Work, Invest, and Visit*
* listening to people in our communities: Decision making that is based on use of information from stakeholders and available intelligence
* redistributing resource through ensuring that communities experiencing highest levels of inequality and deprivation have targeted opportunities to shape and benefit from investment

**Strategic priorities**

While the Engagement framework should be flexible enough to respond to need and feedback from communities efforts should be made to ensure that approaches reflect the strategic priorities for working with communities in North Lanarkshire

* assets for growth – use and creation of assets to support communities to thrive throughout their lifecycle. Understanding the assets that exist within communities and better coordinating use of these across services and sectors for community benefit;
* economic regeneration and inclusive growth building on community investment in housing, schools, town centres, parks and recreation opportunities;
* coordination of engagement with communities across key agencies to ensure information is used to inform decision making and service development;
* Place Based Missions – targeted and sustained engagement work to inform priorities and action through use of a targeted model in 16 priority communities through Locality Planning;
* working with young people to design and deliver economic regeneration approaches that meet the needs of future generations;
* building capacity of key stakeholders to ensure delivery of the shared vision;
* support services to engage with the right people, at the right time, using the right approaches and tools;
* ensure that capacity building and development prepares communities to benefit from digital approaches;
* Community Anchors - Enabling key Community organisations to support community engagement and networking to inform decision making, best use of community assets and community investment; and
* services for people – supporting development of services based on need, co-design and shared ownership and responsibility.

**The model**

Across North Lanarkshire and within geographic localities the focus on the delivery of the vision for North Lanarkshire will be supported by a set of engagement approaches to be deployed and developed in response to the circumstances coordinated through Community Matters. Community Matters is a coordinated approach to communicating, engaging with and using information from communities to target resource and inform decisions.

Following the Trust Dynamic Model secures an overarching community engagement focus that ensures:-

The engagement approach is **T**imeous

We involve and hear the voices of the **R**ight people

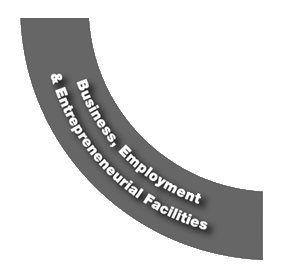
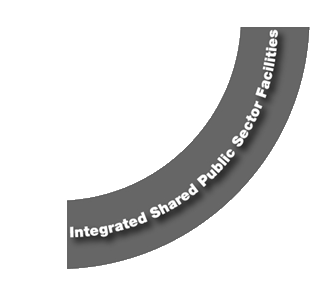
The purpose of the engagement is **U**nderstood

The engagement fosters a sense of **S**hared responsibility

The process is **T**ailored to circumstances

Figure 1 below illustrates the importance of building an engagement dynamic with communities to support core **Plan for North Lanarkshire** ambitions such as community hubs.

Figure 1 – Trust Dynamic – Community Hubs



X 6 Localities/Towns

Community Matters Online Engagement Portal

Participatory Budgeting

Citizens Panel

Community Capacity building

YouthBank

Community Lottery

Community Asset Transfer

Participation Requests

Service Prototyping

Crowd sourcing

Local Development Programme (LDP)

Community Matters

Strategic delivery

The Plan for North Lanarkshire (TPFNL)

Community Councils

Tenants and Residents Associations

Youth Forums

Community Forums

Public Partnership Forums

Equalities

Community Anchor Organisations

Community and Voluntary Sector

**Tools and approaches**

**Structures and Groups**

Locality Planning

Poverty

ERDP

Community Hubs

Community Safety

**TPFNL**

***Locality Partnership Delivery Group***

Priorities

Informed by Informing

Communities

gg

Priorities

Locality Partnership Networks

Online engagement portal

**Community**

**Matters**

**The Plan for North Lanarkshire (TPFNL)**

Achieving improved outcomes for communities and achieving the vision and ambitions within TPFNL is what drives engagement with communities as we need to listen to local people and stakeholders to ensure that that North Lanarkshire is the place to live , learn work invest and visit. TPFNL is the strategic force behind better ensuring better coordination of resource, efforts and action with communities and it is also at the heart of local delivery.

**Coordinating engagement**

A Community Matters Leadership Steering Group made up of key Council Officers and Community Planning Partners provides strategic direction and leadership for engagement activity across North Lanarkshire. This will ensure oversight, buy in and shared resource for approaches to improving engagement.

Across the 6 areas of Airdrie, Coatbridge, Bellshill, Motherwell, Wishaw and the North areas of North Lanarkshire a Locality Partnership Delivery Group will ensure coordination of engagement activity and action for a particular area. This should be the platform for ensuring that TPFNL informs and is informed by local communities particularly around matters of local interest which may include but is not limited to:-

* Community Safety;
* Inclusive Growth/Tacking Poverty;
* Locality Planning;
* Economic Regeneration Delivery (ERDP); and
* Development of Community Hubs.

**Community Matters**

There is a recognition of the need for stronger coordination of engagement activity, communication with and feedback from communities and use of intelligence from communities to inform decision making. Also acknowledged is the need for communities to have appropriate information to assist them to participate and influence decisions and lead on action within their community in support of the vision. **Community Matters is:-**

* Underpinned by community work and capacity building approaches, to support a shared approach to working with communities recognising the interdependencies that exist across a range of stakeholders and sectors;
* the link between key community stakeholders and key short, medium and long term approaches to achieving inclusive growth;
* an opportunity to coordinate engagement activity building on a range of existing approaches and structures and where appropriate developing new approaches to ensuring a two way flow of information and feedback between communities and key decision making processes. Community Matters is based around.

Community Matters - Online Engagement Portal

The Community Matters Portal provides an online resource for services, partners and communities to engage and to promote shared response, discussion and action linked to what local people are interested in and/or care about, The portal also provides an opportunity in line with the Digital NL Programme, to engage with those less likely to attend ‘traditional’ engagement activity such as meetings or events. This approach can also allow for quicker response to community issues. The main functions of the portal are as set out in the table below:-

Table 1 – Community Matters Online Engagement Portal - Functionality

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Citizen proposals | Participatory Budgeting | Collaborative Legislation | Debates | Voting |
| Anybody can submit a proposal to improve North Lanarkshire. Others can support the proposal, and if a certain threshold is reached, the proposal can then be put to vote to test community support to enable further discussion/ exploration as appropriate. | Local people can propose, influence or decide how part of the North Lanarkshire Budget is spent. | People can actively participate in preparing legislation and action plans - whether in debates, prioritizing measures, or commenting on specific texts. | Anybody can start a discussion thread and create an independent area where topics can be debated. | Voting is possible for both community led and organisational proposals. In addition, voting can be activated for all of a territory, or just certain zones or areas. |

The portal is also a vehicle for**:-**

* sharing and notifying of communication between users and services;
* setting parameters and phases for the different functions (above) to ensure they meet need and timescales;
* scalable systems for debates and commentary; and
* targeting of engagement and response through geographic localisation, intelligence filters and trends.

Used alongside other methods and approaches to engagement, the portal has the potential to make best use of information from communities to inform discussion, priority setting and decision making across services and sectors.

Locality Partnership Networks

Bringing together communities with key professionals, elected members and local organisations around themes, concerns, challenges and opportunities within their area is vital to encourage debate, agreement around community priorities and building capacity for self-determination. The format, style, focus for discussion and participation in Locality Partnership Networks will reflect the local circumstances and for example will be informed by:-

* discussion and trends highlighted through an online portal;
* local economic and physical development opportunities (ERDP);
* statistical information highlighting trends in an area or nationally;
* local or national campaigns;
* identified gaps in service; and
* identified gaps in participation and a need to target engagement (ie particular geographic communities, communities of interest).

Core Reference Group

A Core Reference Group made up of key council services, community planning partners and community. Community representatives from key local groups and structures will advise and support the organisation, setting agenda for the networks. Community representation will be made up of:-

* Community Councils;
* Community Forums;
* Tenants and Residents Associations;
* Youth Forum; and
* Community and Voluntary Sector.

The reference group will provide governance for council business that will be delivered locally including funding decisions and petitions process.

**The Tools & Infrastructure**

Communities are diverse. The Council will need to engage with them around a particular area, development or theme or may require to respond to a matter raised by a community. We need a flexible ‘toolbox’ of approaches and methods that can be used dependant on the situation.

In addition, across North Lanarkshire a number of groups and structures have been designed to engage with communities around localities, themes and interests.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Key structures and groups** | **Approaches** | **Methods** |
| * Community Councils * Community Forums * Tenants and Residents * Youth participation * Pupil Voice * Public Partnership Forums * Equalities Groups * Community Anchor Organisations * Local Voluntary Sector organisations | * Participatory Budgeting * Citizens Panel * Community Capacity building * YouthBank * Community Lottery * Community Asset Transfer * Participation Requests * Service Prototyping * Bespoke Activity * Local Development Programme (LDP) | * Sharing information or consulting via social media * Questionnaires * Community events * Focus Groups * Debates * Public meetings * Social listening * Story telling * Scenario building – Applying Lens of Life Events * Personas |

The Communities Team will provide a central coordination point for engagement approaches outlined within this Framework. The team will work with council services, partners, community and voluntary sector to support them to deliver quality engagement that meets intended outcomes. The team can work with services to:-

* understand the purpose of engagement and what they want to achieve from it;
* build the capacity of council services and communities to undertake engagement activity;
* advise on approaches, methods and timescales for engagement;
* understand resources require to engage effectively;
* make links with other engagement activity to avoid duplication make best use of information from communities; and
* ensure that information from communities is used and shared appropriately across services, teams and community planning partners.

Council services and teams are expected to adopt the engagement framework and associated action plan and embed throughout their work. E-learning will be developed to support the framework.

**Linked Strategies, Policies and Legislation**

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

Tenant participation strategy

Planning legislation

Health and Social Care

Housing Strategy development

Statutory role of community councils

UN Convention Rights of the child