

Dialogue Moray

**Moray Council:
Community Engagement Scheme**

2012-2016

Foreword

As lead partner of the Community Planning Partnership we are committed to the Partnership's Community Engagement Strategy and this document outlines how the Moray Council will carry out its engagement as part of that Strategy. The Moray Council is committed to supporting the Community Plan.

The Council uses a wide range of techniques to gain the views of our diverse communities. Wherever possible we work along with other public sector partners and partner organisations to involve the citizens of Moray.

These strategies have been developed with input from the community and from a range of officers. It reflects the Community Engagement Strategy of the Community Planning Partnership which aims to:

“To develop, lead and sustain a working relationship between public bodies and communities to reach a shared understanding and act on the needs or issues in Moray”

The Community Planning partnership has a five point strategy which this scheme is based and that is as follows

1. Improve how partnership organisations engage with communities
2. Work together to identify and address local issues
3. Define the roles of key individuals across the community engagement process
4. Evidence the outcomes of engagement
5. Improve the quality of community engagement with minority groups

This scheme provides in more detail how the Council will carry out its contribution to this aim.

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Moray Community Engagement Scheme

1. Introduction

Why do we need a Community Engagement Scheme?

The Future of Local Government in Scotland is becoming more challenging and in order for services to be provided in an effective manner it is vital that these services are shaped and influenced by the people who live in Moray and use the services provided. To do this the Moray Council needs to:

- Coordinate our community engagement across services, ensuring a consistent approach and reducing duplication.
- Be clear with the communities of Moray about what community engagement means and how it will be carried out.
- Ensure that Council officers and community members have developed the required skills to carry out effective community engagement.
- Ensure officers of the Council and local communities develop the informed positive relationships needed to engage with one another.
- Reach the right local people and groups affected by service and policy changes.
- Make sure that local people understand how their views have shaped services and Policies.

It is clear that the National Government also expect that public services will engage in a more effective manner and, as outlined the Christie Commission into the future of the Public Sector in Scotland. Community Engagement will be a key priority for this Government and this will be reflected as priorities laid out in Single Outcome Agreements agreed between the Scottish Government and Community Planning Partnerships.

2. What do we want to achieve?

To help overcome these challenges facing the Council the Community Engagement Scheme will ensure that both corporate capacity and community capacity will exist in order that there is meaningful community engagement.

- The Council will ensure that Community Engagement activity in Moray is managed and co-ordinated to avoid duplication, that it is of a consistently high quality and to enable partners to work together when appropriate.
- The Council will ensure that staff are given the correct advice, guidance and accredited training which would allow them to implement high quality community engagement.
- The Council will ensure that staff can access and use a wide range of engagement techniques.
- The Council will work with community groups, service users and members of the public to identify opportunities available for people to influence what happens in their communities.

- The Council will make sure that community engagement activities are open to all members of the community.
- The Council will work with the wider community and its partners to monitor and identify what systems of engagement are appropriate
- The Council will work with community members to strengthen relationships and support them to take part in pro-active, positive community engagement.

3. Who is this Community Engagement scheme for?

The Council: for all staff, elected members and volunteers to ensure that a consistent, high quality approach to engagement is undertaken by us.

For local communities: it is important for individuals and community groups to be aware of the community engagement framework so that they know what to expect when they are asked to take part in any engagement.

Most importantly, we recognise that the Council alone cannot make changes as to how we engage with people. Everyone from officers, councillors, community members, voluntary organisations, and volunteers have a role to play in making engagement more meaningful for all. The Council will work with community members and voluntary organisations throughout the coming year to find out how we can work with them to progress relationships and strengthen their involvement in engagement activity.

Involved in this process will be Community Councils, Area Forums, Moray Equality Forum, Village Hall Committees, Community Associations, Tenants and Residents Associations, businesses, Third Sector and other charitable and voluntary organisations, service user groups, social enterprises, the Moray Youth Forum, youth groups and a number of other individuals and groups. It will also seek to engage with groups and individuals who have not been engaged or are hard to reach.

4. What is Community Engagement?

Effective community engagement involves an on-going dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders within our communities which informs our practices and service delivery. The National Standards for Community Engagement define the process as:

'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'.

Engagement can also be with individuals in communities (e.g. through mechanisms like the Citizens' Panel).

Even with this definition in place community engagement can be a complex term that can mean different things to different people, different communities and different services.

To help departments decide what form their engagement will take, it is stressed in 'The National Standards for Engagement' that we are clear with the community about the level of engagement and a more detailed definition of the types of community engagement that are possible are noted below.

- **Informing:** Keeping people informed about decisions and changes that will affect them through the Moray Council website, Facebook, Twitter, by e-mail or stories in local newspapers.
- **Consulting:** Working directly or through written or electronic methods with people as well as at events or series of events to discuss their views and ideas about a topic. The information gathered will be used to inform the final decision.
- **Engaging:** Working in partnership with people and involving them fully in the decision making process.

All types of engagement are important when working with people and it may be that you have to use more than one method when engaging on an issue or policy. The aim of the principles and the framework is that departments will be able to easily decide what type of engagement is most appropriate to them at each stage of the engagement process.

5. Our Principles

The community engagement principles set out how the Council will achieve its vision for community engagement. The principles inform all of the support provided through the community engagement scheme. By using these principles we will create a consistent standard of engagement activity across the Council making it more efficient, effective and meaningful for all involved.

They are intended to be used as an active tool by departments when they are planning community engagement and as a reference to let community members know what to expect when working with Moray Council.

Strategic principles

The Council will:

- Be open and responsive to the views of our communities.
- Involve local communities in identifying local need and creating solutions.
- Work towards sustained community involvement in the decision making process.
- Make clear our commitment to involving communities throughout Moray.
- Adhere to the National Standards for Community Engagement (Appendix 1).
- Ensure fairness, equality, inclusion and continuous improvement.
- Ensure actions are outcome focused and deliverable.
- Ensure actions taken are relevant to need

Implementation Principles:

The implementation principles highlight what should be considered when planning engagement activity. The Council will ensure that staff use Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement (VOICE), a planning and evaluation tool commissioned by the Scottish Government and used by public services across Scotland when carrying out community engagement. Using VOICE should ensure that the principle meet the National Standards of Community Engagement.

Clear and meaningful purpose: Any community engagement undertaken by the Council must be meaningful and have a clear purpose. Any person taking part in the engagement should be:

- clear on what outcome they are working towards;

- clear on what can be influenced and what cannot; and
- aware of what their role is within the engagement process.

Equality and Inclusiveness: Engagement should be accessible to all interested consultees and every effort should be made to remove any barriers to participation. This means:

- Consultees should be capable of representing the views of the community or groups that are affected by the issues being discussed.
- Where a venue is involved it must support the needs of every consultee to take a full part in the engagement (this may involve providing translation and interpretation services, sign language, mobility access sensory services such as hearing aid loops, or child care facilities for example).
- The method/s chosen for the engagement are suited to the capabilities and experience levels of the community you are working with.

Planning Community Engagement: The people who are to be engaged are involved as early in the process as possible – in some cases, where appropriate, local people may be involved in planning the engagement itself. This means:

- The time provided for any community engagement should be sufficient to enable participants to understand the issues, give their views and be provided with feedback.
- The resources required for engagement events are considered when planning a project.
- The roles of those delivering any engagement are agreed at the start.
- The consultees are informed and agree with, the engagement methodology.
- The communication and feedback methods for the engagement will be agreed before beginning the engagement. Where appropriate consultees are informed of and agree with the communication and feedback methods.
- The use of VOICE should ensure the above bullet points are addressed.

Measuring the success of the engagement: When planning any engagement activity, staff must be clear about how the success of the engagement will be measured. This includes capturing how a service or policy has changed as a result of the engagement or how local priorities identified by the engagement have influenced service providers. This means that:

- The engagement has a desired outcome that is understood and agreed by all Participants
- Information gathered is used to demonstrate what changed and how it was changed as a result of the consultees being involved.
- Where the engagement did not achieve the desired outcome, information gathered is used to illustrate the reasons for this.
- People taking part in the engagement have an opportunity to state whether they got what they wanted from having been involved.

- Types of information/evidence gathered should include:
 - number of people participating (with analysis of representation on the basis of
 - disability, age, gender, ethnicity, faith, where they live etc.
 - number of people participating (percentage of the target group for the engagement)
 - levels of satisfaction with the engagement process
 - information on whether participants are regular consultees or are new to involvement
 - information on whether participants felt their voices were listened to in the process
 - following engagement, capture what changed as a result
 - The use of VOICE should ensure the above bullet points are addressed.

Feedback: The results of engagement must be fed back to participants and the wider public, choosing from a range of methods as appropriate to the engagement activity.

- Methods and timescales for feedback are agreed by all participants when beginning the engagement (give thought to maximum time limit for engagement).
- Feedback is provided according to the agreed timescales and in the agreed format.
- Feedback clearly shows the impact of community influence on the related piece of work
- Feedback also explains when it has not been possible to accommodate views expressed by consultees.
- Participants are given the opportunity to express their views on the engagement and this information should be used to review the chosen methods and timescales, if appropriate.
- Methods for feedback could include the Media (press radio , community Newsletters) Council website, social media, screens in Council offices, direct written feedback to participants, posting information in public buildings and facilities e.g. libraries, halls, sports centres

6. How will we do this?

To help meet the aims of the community engagement framework the Council and the work of the Council can be seen in two key areas

1. CORPORATE CAPACITY BUILDING; Ensuring that Council services and officers are committed to and trained to a high standard in community Engagement

- **Designated Staff:** Across all services, officers will be designated as Community Engagement Coordinators They will be responsible for ensuring their services apply the Community Engagement Scheme and that their service is enabled to undertake community engagement. All officers will have a community engagement responsibility
- **Accredited Staff Training:** Training will focus upon developing an understanding of the key skills and techniques required to run community engagement activities. Training will be provided across services to all staff with an engagement remit.
- **Engagement Monitoring and Evaluation:** Performance indicators for engagement activity will be developed to allow the Council to assess the efficiency and effectiveness

of engagement activity. Indicators will be built around a range of engagement topics including confidence levels of staff against key engagement skills, community satisfaction with their experience of engagement and the impact of community input to service decisions. All engagements will be evaluated using the VOICE tool.

- **Engagement Network:** An internal network of officers with a remit for community engagement will exist. The network will be responsible for ensuring engagement activity from each department is part of the engagement database and calendar. The network will also give officers a chance to discuss and share their experiences of community engagement. It is anticipated that this network will meet to strengthen the principles and share good practice as outlined in this strategy.
- **Resource Audit.** The Council will undertake a comprehensive audit of resources required to carry out effective engagement. This will include staffing required to support communities to engage, ensure that the correct equipment is available and identify suitable venues for Council engagement across Moray.

2. COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING: Ensuring that local communities groups and individuals are supported through training, information and other support to make the best contribution to the community engagement process

- **Online Planning Support:** The establishment of an online community engagement site within the Council website which will provide information and advice about community engagement. It will also feature access to VOICE a preplanning and evaluation.
- **The Moray Community Engagement Manual:** Will be available from the Community Planning Partnership which will provide a directory and it will contain a range of information, a tool kit for people involved in carrying out community engagement and information relevant to all stages of an engagement process. Information will include data on community groups, suitable venues for engagement techniques and evidence of previous engagement activity.
- **Corporate Engagement Calendar:** A corporate calendar of engagement activity across The Moray Council which will be hosted on the intranet and internet. The calendar will be used to co-ordinate engagement activity, identify potential partnership working and inform members of the community about opportunities to get involved. There will be opportunities for the wider community to feed into this process.
- **Engagement Structures:** The Council will work with its staff, community groups and individuals to develop and support efficient and effective structures for working together.
- **Equality Guidance:** The Council's Equal opportunities officer will have a key role in working with staff , community organisations and individuals to ensure that the needs of all are understood and reflected in the engagement framework and we will make specific arrangements to ensure the involvement of excluded and minority groups.
- **Community Support Unit:** The Community Support Unit will focus on building the capacity of and enabling community members to take an active part in community engagement activity. They will continue to provide key skills, training on Community Capacity Building to community groups. This will allow community groups and organisations to build their strength and confidence to actively participate in engagement with council staff and departments.

Detailed action plan for the development of the policy outlining lead officer, budget and deadlines will be prepared this policy will be reviewed in 2016.