

Consultation & Engagement Strategy

2020-2024



“Supporting strong, active and inclusive communities who can influence and shape the district of West Lindsey”

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1. Introduction

The Engagement and Consultation Strategy for 2020-2024 aims to support strong, active and inclusive communities who can influence and shape the district of West Lindsey.

This strategy aims to create a more transparent and accountable council and promote our vision of:

“West Lindsey is a great place to be where people, businesses and communities can thrive and reach their potential”

Within this strategy we will outline our priorities for consultation, how we might involve our communities and some of the different pieces of legislation which involve consultation for the council including the Equality Act 2010 and Community Rights which is from the Localism Act 2011.

2. National and Local Context

National Drivers

Nationally the importance of consultation and engagement is recognised and supported by numerous pieces of legislation such as the Local Government Act 1999, the Equality Act 2010 and the Localism Act 2011.

The Local Government Act 1999 places a duty on local authorities to inform, consult or involve the public whilst the Localism Act 2011 gives communities new rights and powers to have a greater freedom to be involved in the way local decisions are made and more influence over the future of where they live. Under the public sector Equality Duty in the Equality Act 2010 councils must recognise the need to encourage people to take part in public life.

These pieces of legislation encourage greater community involvement leading to the idea that this supports better decision making and builds trust between the council and the communities.

Local context

Understanding the key issues and challenges for our district has provided a sense of purpose for all that the council intends to do over the next four years and beyond. We have determined what our vision should be. We have questioned what success would look like, which enables us to succinctly communicate the council’s ambition to residents, stakeholders, government and the private sector. We now have clear priorities and delivery programmes.

The Corporate Plan sets out the strategic objectives of the Council for the next four years. It reflects the opportunities and challenges facing the district and what our residents have told us is important to them. We also express our desired outcomes for the next four years, which will provide our officers with clear direction. It is our aim to ensure that attention is paid to all of our communities, residents and businesses; lives are improved and our district prospers.

The Plan is a strategic document, which is supported by our Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the annual Executive Business Plan (EBP). The EBP sets out the environment in which the Council will deliver the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan. It will consider the national, regional and local context for delivery and identifies the ‘deliverables’ for the next three years.

In order to deliver against this vision, the Council will focus on three themes as illustrated below:



3. Priority Outcomes

All consultations undertaken within West Lindsey will look towards these 4 outcomes:

Outcome 1

Communities are enabled to lead the way in making West Lindsey a great place.

Outcome 2

Communities have the opportunity to influence issues that affect them.

Outcome 3

Activities are focused and purposeful using fit for purpose technology for the activity.

Enabling Outcome

Staff are supported to involve communities effectively in everything that we do.

4. What is Consultation?

Consultation according to the Consultation Institute is:

“The dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based upon a genuine exchange of views, with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action”

During 2016 officers at WLDC joined the Consultation Institute to ensure that all consultations are legal. Since joining these officers have attended training run by the Consultation Institute covering a range of topics and will continue to update this knowledge as appropriate training becomes available. To ensure that our consultation is legal we will abide by the Gunning Principles.

Before 1985 there was little consideration given to consultations until a case (R v London Borough of Brent ex parte Gunning). This case sparked the need for change in the process of consultations when Stephen Sedley QC proposed a set of principles that were then adopted by the presiding judge. These principles, known as Gunning, were later confirmed by the Court of Appeal in 2001 (Coughlan case) and are now applicable to all public consultations that take place in the UK.

These outline the principles which all consultations must abide and are:

1. When proposals are still at a formative stage

Public bodies need to have an open mind during a consultation and not already made the decision, but have some ideas about the proposals.

2. Sufficient reasons for proposals to permit 'intelligent consideration'

People involved in the consultation need to have enough information to make an intelligent choice and input in the process.

3. Adequate time for consideration and response

Timing is crucial – is it an appropriate time and environment, was enough time given for people to make an informed decision and then provide that feedback, and is there enough time to analyse those results and make the final decision?

4. Must be conscientiously taken into account

Think about how to prove decision-makers have taken consultation responses into account.

5. How we currently involve our communities and businesses

There are a number of ways in which we currently consult across the district.

Informing

We aim to give communities and businesses information about our services, policies and decisions which might interest or affect them.

Consulting

We aim to ask communities and businesses for their opinions about our services and policies.

Involving

We aim to give communities and businesses opportunities to get involved in our consultations through routes such as the Citizen Panel and by making them aware through sources such as surveys, by the use of our website, social media and local press.

Supporting

We aim to support a range of providers including local businesses and organisations through the voluntary and community sector.

Acting together

We aim to work with our communities, businesses and the voluntary and community sector to help identify what their needs are and how we might take action or help them to take action to meet these needs.

Giving them power

We aim to give our communities and businesses the confidence and ability to achieve their outcomes themselves.

Our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) also provides an important way of involving our communities. It guides the way in which we involve residents, businesses and other stakeholders when developing our planning policies and making decisions about physical changes to the district.

6. Community Rights

Community Rights as contained within the Localism Act are a set of powers which give communities more control over their community, helping them to save local amenities, decide what is built and how the area should develop. Community Rights gives the community the opportunity to deliver local services and develop them into community enterprises.

There are four community rights:

Community Right to Bid (Assets of Community Value)

The Right to Bid gives communities the opportunity to bid to buy and run valued local amenities if they come onto the open market. Voluntary and community groups can nominate privately and publicly owned assets to be included on a list of assets of community value. This list is managed by the council.

Community Right to Challenge

The Right to Challenge gives community groups, charities, parish and town councils, voluntary agencies and groups of two or more council employees (relevant bodies) the opportunity to express their interest in taking over a local council service where they think they can do it differently and better.

Community Right to Build

The Right to Build gives communities the power to build new shops, housing or community facilities through a Community Right to Build Order which is a type of Neighbourhood Development Order and forms one of the neighbourhood planning tools introduced in the Localism Act 2011.

Neighbourhood Planning

This local tier to the planning system will allow local communities to decide how their local area should develop by producing a Neighbourhood Development Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order. These Plans will need to conform to the existing higher level planning framework but they will still offer communities the ability to create a local solution to local issues.

Further details on all of these community rights can be found at:

www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/communityrights.

7. Parish Charter

WLDC acknowledges that parish/town councils and parish meetings are at the grass-roots level of local government. In their role as democratically accountable bodies, they offer a means of shaping the decisions of certain services and supporting local communities.

West Lindsey's Parish Charter sets out how WLDC and parish/town councils and parish meetings can work together to provide high quality and efficient public services for our residents and communities.

The charter is our commitment to work together with the parish/town councils and parish meetings and a statement of the principles in which all involved approach their work together.

A copy of West Lindsey DCs Parish Charter can be found at:

www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/parishcharter.

8. Equalities

As a local authority the Council has a responsibility to meet the Equality Duty which is set by law as part of the Equality Act 2010. The duty gives protection for all persons who might be discriminated against because of their age, race, sex, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership. These 9 areas of protection are called the protected characteristics.

The duty requires us have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The specific duties placed on public bodies are to:

- Publish information to show our compliance with the Equality Duty – including information relating to employees who share protected characteristics and information relating to our service users
- Set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years

A copy of our latest Equality Statement can be found at:

<https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/my-council/how-the-council-works/key-plans-policies-and-strategies/equality-and-diversity/>

9. Strategy Review

This strategy will be reviewed and updated every 4 years to ensure that it stays relevant to the current provision and need for consultation and engagement at WLDC.

10. Contacts

For further information please contact a member of the Engagement Team.

E-mail: engagement@west-lindsey.gov.uk

or visit our website at www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/consultations

Appendix A – Action Plan

Key Outcome	Actions Required	Performance Measures	Target Date	Lead Officer
C1	Awareness raising of consultation for team leaders through SLT	100% of Team Managers achieved	July 2020	Corporate Governance Officer
C2	Update of internal consultation page for staff	Minerva consultation page updated	June 2020	Corporate Governance Officer
C3	Raise awareness of internal consultation page through use of Minerva and staff TVs	Information available to through different sources for all staff	August 2020	Corporate Governance Officer
C4	Ensure all consultations use the consultation calendar	100% of consultations booked onto the consultation calendar	September 2020	Corporate Governance Officer
C5	Feedback is available on the website and in other means when requested for all consultations	100% of consultations have a final report published on the councils website	September 2020	Lead officer for each consultation
C6	Ensure membership with the Consultation Institute is gained every year	Membership in place each year	February 2021 and yearly after	Communities Manager
C7	Review the technology used for undertaking consultations (to include survey design, collation of data and analysis)	Appropriate technology used which is fit for purpose	December 2020 and yearly after	Corporate Governance Officer