

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO: Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 12th June 2023

LOCATION: Council Chamber, Penmorfa, Aberaeron

TITLE: Engagement and Participation Policy Annual Report 2022-2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To provide an opportunity for the Scrutiny Committee to consider the progress made in delivering the Council's Engagement and Participation Policy during 2022-23

REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION: As the designated Scrutiny Committee for oversight of engagement and consultation

BACKGROUND:

The Ceredigion Engagement and Participation Policy 'Talking, Listening and Working Together' was approved by Cabinet on 04/10/2022 and published on 18/10/2022.

[engagement and participation policy ceredigion county council.pdf](#)

This is the first Annual Report that outlines our progress in delivering the Policy.

CURRENT SITUATION:

The Annual Report is presented as Appendix 1. The report provides an update on the progress of the Action Plan contained within the Policy, along with the Engagement Methods utilised by the Council, some examples of Continuous Engagement and a summary of the Engagement, Consultation and 'Inform' exercises undertaken during 2022-23.

At the end of the report a conclusion section has been included to assess the improvements made over the past year and to identify where further progress is required in moving forward.

WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS:	Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why	No, does not present a change in policy or service.
	Summary:	
	Long term:	
	Integration:	

Collaboration:
Involvement:
Prevention:

RECOMMENDATION (S):

To consider the content of the Engagement and Participation Policy Annual Report 2022-2023 and to provide feedback for Cabinet to consider when the report is presented to them on the 4th July 2023.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):

To ensure appropriate scrutiny of the Engagement and Participation Policy.

Contact Name:	Cathryn Morgan
Designation:	Equalities and Inclusion Manager
Date of Report:	26/05/2023
Acronyms:	

Ceredigion Engagement and Participation Policy ‘Talking, Listening and Working Together’ Annual Report 2022-2023



Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg



Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

Author: Cathryn Morgan, Equalities and Inclusion

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Matthew Vaux

Approved by Cabinet: xx/xx/xxxx

Publication date: xx/xx/xxxx

Ceredigion Engagement and Participation Annual Report 2022-2023

This report outlines the work undertaken by the Council during 2022-23 to deliver our Engagement and Participation Policy with the overall aim of improving the way that we engage and consult with the public and other stakeholders.

Why Engage?

Our Engagement and Participation Policy, that was approved in October 2022, sets out how we will talk and listen with all of those who live, work or study in Ceredigion, including people whose voices are seldom heard.

It's important that we give residents and stakeholders the opportunity to tell the Council about their own vision for their communities and about what they want in terms of service provision.

Our legal duty to consult is set out in various pieces of legislation, including:

- **The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** – the Council must involve people with an interest in achieving the National Well-being goals.
- **The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021** – the Council must encourage public participation in our decision making.
- **The Welsh Language Measure 2011** – the Council must ask the public for their views on the impact that our decisions will have on the Welsh Language.
- **The Equality Act 2010** – the Council must involve and engage with people who share Protected Characteristics.
- **The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996** – the Council must consult with organisations specified in the Regulations and must inform people that are likely to be affected by a traffic order.
- **School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013** – the Council must comply with the [School Organisation Code](#) which outlines the principles that should be taken into account when proposing to make changes to school provision.

It's not just about our legal duty, however. Engaging and consulting with the public gives us better information to help our decision making. This can lead to better outcomes for our residents.

SECTION 1

Action plan: Progress 2022-23

Aim 1: To mainstream effective engagement and participation across Ceredigion County Council

Action	Progress	Responsibility	RAG status
To develop an Engagement toolkit and deliver training on its use to all Corporate Managers.	<p>The toolkit has been developed and the content is being tested on current engagement exercises. The content is listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation decision making tool • Engagement/Consultation plan template • Engagement and Consultation checklist • Accessible formats guidance • Equality monitoring template • Stakeholder group contact details <p>Advice has been offered on a one-to-one basis during 2022-23. Group sessions on its use will be rolled out during 2023-24.</p>	Equalities and Inclusion officers	Amber some progress made
To maintain a timetable of consultation and engagement exercises carried out by all Council Services.	<p>Complete – the timetable is held by the Equalities and Inclusion team and will be updated on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>5 x Consultation exercises, 7 x Engagement exercises and 4 x Inform exercises were undertaken during 2022-23. There is more detail in Section 2 below.</p>	Equalities and Inclusion officers	Green action is on track
To publish an Engagement Annual Report to monitor the developments as we change how we engage with the public.	This report fulfils the requirement for 2022-23.	Equalities and Inclusion officers	Green action is on track

Aim 2: To ensure that we engage with the people of Ceredigion in the best way

Action	Progress	Responsibility	RAG status
To revise and update our list of Stakeholder groups.	The list has been revised and updated. Once verified, it will be added to the Engagement toolkit and available to all Council staff.	Equalities and Inclusion officers	Green action is on track
To develop the use of online engagement platforms and maintain the use of non-digital engagement methods.	<p>The corporate Engagement and Consultations webpage is under review and will be updated during 2023-24. An online platform – ‘Have your Say Ceredigion’ – is being tested but is not yet in constant use.</p> <p>Non-digital methods of engagement are being utilised but not consistently across all Council services.</p>	All Corporate Managers	Amber some progress made
To improve the way that we feedback to those who have participated in our engagement exercises.	A consistent method is currently being developed and will be rolled out across all Council services during 2023-2024.	All Corporate Managers	Red no progress made

Aim 3: To meet our statutory duties and responsibilities under legislation

Action	Progress	Responsibility	RAG status
To ensure a mechanism is in place so that the public can attend Council meetings in person or remotely via a hybrid meeting system.	<p>The mechanism is in place.</p> <p>In accordance with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 members of the public are able to attend hybrid meetings in person or remotely.</p>	Democratic Services	Green complete
To revise and update our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) tool	<p>The revised Integrated Impact Assessment tool is at 'draft' stage. It contains up to date information about Ceredigion population (<i>Census 2021</i>) and requires officers to consider stakeholder engagement as part of the assessment.</p> <p>The draft tool will be presented to Cabinet for approval in July 2023.</p>	Equalities and Inclusion officers	Amber some progress made
To establish an e-petition system and publish a protocol that sets out how the Council intends to handle and respond to petitions.	<p>The Petitions Protocol is listed under Part 5 (Codes and Protocols) of Ceredigion County Council constitution. The constitution is publicly available on the Council's website - The Council's Constitution - Ceredigion County Council.</p> <p>An e-petition system is currently being developed and will be presented to the relevant Committees shortly.</p>	Democratic Services	Amber some progress made

Aim 4: To keep up to date with the latest innovations and best practice in the field of engagement

Action	Progress	Responsibility	RAG status
To review and revise Ceredigion County Council's Engagement and Participation Policy	The current Engagement and Participation Policy was published in October 2022. It will be reviewed in 2025, or before this if required.	Equalities and Inclusion officers	Green action is on track
To keep an engagement toolkit up to date for all staff to use.	The engagement toolkit is being developed. It will be kept up to date and be available to all staff after it has been approved and published on the internal staff website.	Equalities and Inclusion officers	Amber some progress made
To liaise with Engagement and Equalities colleagues across Wales.	<p>The Equalities and Inclusion manager is a member of the Wales Tackling Poverty & Inequality Network and Councils Engagement Leads Network, both run by WLGA.</p> <p>The Equalities and Inclusion team contributes to regional engagement and equality meetings and is currently working with Mid and West Wales Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion managers on a regional consultation exercise to prepare for the revision of our Strategic Equality Plan.</p>	Equalities and Inclusion officers	Green action is on track

SECTION 2

Engagement methods

There is no 'one size fits all' solution to engagement. We aim to use the best type of engagement for the right situation.

Continuous engagement is achieved through an ongoing conversation between the Council and our local communities. Sometimes a targeted engagement or consultation exercise is the best method. In other instances, the Council has a legal duty to follow a specific process to inform the public and provide opportunity for feedback.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to gain the public views on the wide range of services and strategies that the Council provides. A variety of methods are used to promote our engagement and consultation exercises including social media, press releases, posters, and targeted emails to stakeholders.

Paper copies of information and surveys are often produced. These are generally available to download from our website or by request. They are also circulated via email and placed in our Libraries and Leisure Centres. All services are encouraged to provide alternative versions, e.g. Easy Read, Large Print and Young Person summaries. Easy Read training was undertaken by 15 staff in January/February 2023 and 8 Council Services now have access to an extensive symbols library to enable more Easy Read documents to be produced and make it easier for people with learning difficulties to engage with us.

Discussion sessions, thematic workshops, meetings with key stakeholders and face to face drops ins are also offered, particularly where feedback is sought from a specific cohort, for example the Youth Council, or in a specific place, for example flooding in Llanybydder, Llandysul/Pont-Tyweli.

An Engagement toolkit is being developed and this will enable a more consistent approach to the way that the Council engages with the public.

'Have your Say Ceredigion' – is being tested but is not yet in constant use. The aim is to develop this online platform so that people can sign up to have their say on specific areas of interest to them using a range of tools, for example ideas boards, stories, polls and surveys.

Some Examples of Continuous Engagement

Clic – Customer Service Contact Centre took 130,908 phone calls during 2022-23 with average waiting times across all lines being 2 mins 40 seconds. The Contact Centre handled 35,852 emails in the same period. Contacts vary from simple requests for information, to complex referrals and intricate enquiries. Enquiries and contact with the public provide valuable feedback to the Council about the services that we provide and are part of our ongoing conversations with people who live, work and study in Ceredigion.

Citizen portal - My Account enables Ceredigion residents to set up their own account to view online details about their Council Tax, Housing Benefit and Business Rates. Additional functionality is being built into the portal so that citizens will be able to keep up to date on Council related matters that are of interest to them.

Council meetings are open to the public, all minutes are published on the Council website along with a calendar of upcoming meetings. This enables interested members of the public to understand how the Council is run and to know what decisions are being taken at any given time.

Ceredigion Youth Council meets with Senior Managers and Elected Members four times per year. Minutes of their meetings are presented to both the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, to ensure that the views of young people are fed into the democratic process.

The Children and Young People Service Provider Forum enables workers from the public sector, third sector and further education sector to share information. Members of the Forum raise challenges faced by the children, young people and families that we support and work together to find solutions that will help.

Ceredigion Local Access Forum represents land managers and owners, users of land and those with other interests. The forum advises the Council and other bodies on access and recreation issues.

Ceredigion Disability Forum enables people with a disability to meet with Council officers to discuss issues that are important to the disabled community and the Council.

Ceredigion Armed Forces Community Forum is a forum for members of the Armed Forces and workers from the public sector and third sector to share information and challenges and work together to find solutions that will help.

Ceredigion Local Action Group - Cynnal y Cardi is made up of organisations representing the private, community and public sector to ensure a well-balanced representation of interests. Members work together to support rural regeneration activity across Ceredigion.

Ceredigion Carers Forum is coordinated by the Carers and Community support team and enables unpaid Carers to talk about the issues that are important to them. The **Carers Alliance** is a separate group made up of professionals from all sectors who support unpaid Carers. Both the Forum and the Alliance provide valuable feedback to the Council to help improve the support services that we provide.

Community Connectors run regular drop-in sessions throughout Ceredigion, which are open to everyone. They support the communities that they work in and work with people to develop a range of networks, activities and events. These activities enable them to identify unmet need and feedback to relevant services.

Ceredigion Ageing Well Officer has been gathering feedback from older people on various aspects of life as we get older in Ceredigion. This is an ongoing process and will feed into an Age Friendly self-assessment which will contribute to an Age Friendly action plan. This will enable the Council to become a member of the Age Friendly Communities Network in Wales.

Pathfinder meetings bring partners together in specific geographical areas to discuss issues faced by children and families in their communities. Health board, public sector and community sector representatives work together to plan future parenting and family support provision that is based on feedback from the families with whom they work every day.

Town and Community Councils are closest to the public as regards meeting local needs. Elected Members sit on their local Town or Community Council, which gives the County Council a direct line of contact to the issues and challenges faced by our local communities.

Engagement exercises undertaken in 2022-23

Seven targeted engagement exercises were undertaken during 2022-23. Some were run by the Council alone and some were run in partnership with others as we try and reduce 'consultation fatigue'. Feedback from these exercises will contribute to the development of future plans and strategies.

1. Development of Regional Investment Plan to deliver UK Shared Prosperity fund (May/June 2022)

Growing Mid Wales (Ceredigion County Council and Powys County Council) ran an internal and external engagement exercise to invite views on how the UK Shared Prosperity Fund should be used over the next 3 years.

Number of responses: 176 responses to an online survey plus over 150 stakeholders who attended a webinar and 20 member organisations of the Growing Mid Wales Partnership.

What next: Responses were used to help shape the high-level priorities of the Mid Wales Regional Investment Plan 2022-25. The Plan provides guidance to local businesses and organisations who wish to apply for funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

2. Flooding at Llanybydder, Llandysul and Pont-Tyweli (June - August 2022)

Highways and Environmental Services ran a 12-week engagement run in partnership with National Resources Wales and Carmarthenshire County Council to seek views of the public to get a better understanding of the impact that flooding has on the communities.

Number of responses: 124 (58: Llanybydder and 66: Llandysul/Pont-Tyweli).

What next: Responses will feed into the next stage of the work and form part of decision making that Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government will undertake to design and implement any flood risk reduction scheme.

3. Mid Wales Employment and Skills survey (July - September 2022)

A 7-week engagement run by the Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership (Ceredigion County Council and Powys County Council) to inform the Mid Wales Employment and Skills Plan 2022-25.

Number of responses: 69 (73% from Powys / 27% from Ceredigion)

What next: The Mid Wales Employment and Skills Plan 2022-25 was launched in March 2023. The Plan identifies key sectors and skills and priorities for regional investment to support jobs and growth in the Mid Wales region.

4. Post-16 education (October 2022)

Schools and Culture ran a 4-week engagement with businesses, parents, primary and secondary school pupils and university students. Respondents were asked for their views about the range of courses and type of provision needed for post-16 learners.

Number of responses: 1,307 to the online survey.

What next: Responses will feed into the review of post-16 provision in Ceredigion.

5. Future uses in Council Buildings (December 2022/January 2023)

Economy and Regeneration ran an 8-week engagement with the public to ask for their views on how best to use the main Council offices in the future.

Number of responses: 533 (508 to the online survey and 25 to a paper version). Additional responses also received via Clic.

What next: Feedback will be considered, alongside feedback from Council staff and data on the use of desks and meeting rooms in pilot hybrid office areas.

6. Crime and Disorder Strategic Assessment (January – March 2023)

Ceredigion Community Safety Partnership ran an 8-week engagement to gather views about crime and disorder in the county.

Number of responses: 89 responses to the online survey, 3 responses on a paper survey and 9 responses from a Ceredigion Youth Council event.

What next: Responses will inform the Ceredigion Community Safety Delivery Plan which aims to protect local communities from crime and to help people feel safer.

7. Ceredigion Dementia Action Plan (Feb/March 2023)

Our Through Age Well-being programme ran a 6-week engagement with the public, with particular emphasis on older people, to establish how we are doing and what we can do to improve the lives of people living with dementia and those who care for them.

Number of responses: 35 from the online survey plus 10 from drop-in sessions at 6 locations across the county. Additional responses were collected from face-to-face visits to 5 groups/care homes, focus sessions with service providers and 55 x one to one video calls.

What next: Responses will feed into the development of a Ceredigion Dementia Action Plan.

Consultation exercises undertaken in 2022-23

Five consultation exercises were undertaken to obtain public feedback on specific plans or proposals. Results of the consultation exercises were presented to Cabinet alongside the final plan or policy. All approved plans and policies are now published on the Council website (apart from the Maternity and Early Years Strategy for Mid Wales which will be presented to Cabinet on 06/06/23).

1. Childcare Sufficiency Assessment report (May/June 2022)

Schools and Culture ran a 4-week consultation to seek the views of interested parties on the draft Childcare Sufficiency Assessment report. The draft document was based on the results of an extensive assessment of the availability of childcare in Ceredigion.

Number of responses: 17

Impact of the Consultation: People generally agreed with the content of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. This is probably due to the extensive consultation undertaken in 2021-22 to inform the assessment report. The action plan was developed in line with the original document.

2. Engagement and Participation policy (July-Sept 2022)

Policy, Performance and Public Protection ran an 8-week consultation to seek the views of interested parties on how the council should engage with the public and to ask for feedback on the draft Engagement and Participation policy.

Number of responses: 112

Impact of the Consultation: The final policy was amended in response to the feedback received.

3. Maternity and Early Years Strategy for Mid Wales (July/August 2022)

A 13-week regional consultation was run by Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire Local Authorities and Hywel Dda University Health Board to seek the views of interested parties on this strategy which focusses on integrated support in the first 7 years of a child's life.

Number of responses: 137

Impact of the Consultation: Amendments were made to the strategy based on feedback received.

4. Ceredigion Corporate Strategy 2022-27 (August/September 2022)

Policy, Performance and Public Protection ran a 5-week consultation to seek the views of Ceredigion residents on Ceredigion Council's draft Corporate Strategy and steps we'll take to achieve our proposed Corporate Well-being Objectives over the next 5 years.

Number of responses: 51

Impact of the Consultation: Amendments made as a result of the consultation were incorporated into the final document.

5. Ceredigion Public Services Board Local Well-being Plan 2023-28 (October 2022-January 2023)

Ceredigion Public Services Board ran a 14-week consultation to seek feedback from the public on the content of the draft Local Well-being Plan for Ceredigion. The draft Plan was based on the results of an extensive assessment, including consultation, carried out in 2021-22 on the state of well-being in Ceredigion.

Number of responses: 34 completed surveys, plus feedback from focus sessions with 16 schools and Ceredigion Youth Council. 7 detailed responses from local and national organisations and 15 responses on the ideas wall on 'Have your Say'.

Impact of the Consultation: Comments and feedback were incorporated into the final document and will also enhance the development of the detailed delivery plan.

'Inform' exercises undertaken in 2022-2023

In some instances, the Council has a duty to inform the public about a proposal and provide a way for interested parties to respond. Four 'inform' exercises took place during the period.

1. Application for the Registration of Erw Goch Field

All correspondence, including minutes of Cabinet meetings relating to this matter, are listed on the Council website

Number of responses: 2

2. Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETRO)

Two ETRO's were made to retain and amend a number of traffic management measures that were previously introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic in Aberaeron, Aberystwyth, Cardigan & New Quay via Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders.

Number of responses: 34, plus discussions with the Disability Forum

3. Architect Plans for Aeron Valley Community Area School

An open evening was held at Theatr Felinfach campus for people to view the architect plans which were also available on the Council website.

Number of responses: 48

4. Aberaeron Secondary School Footpath closure

A copy of the Traffic Regulation Order, responses, and comments on responses from the Council are listed on the Council website. All respondents also receive a written response from the Council.

Number of responses: 8

Conclusion

This is the first Annual Report on the delivery of the Council's new Engagement and Participation Policy 'Talking, Listening and Working Together'.

A lot is being done to engage with residents and stakeholders, but the corporate approach is inconsistent. Feedback on our engagement and consultation campaigns is usually presented to Cabinet meetings and more needs to be done to ensure that we develop a mechanism to consistently report back to those who have shared their views.

The number of responses to targeted campaigns is generally low. The Council was criticised for lack of engagement activities during the Covid-19 pandemic, but post-Covid there are concerns that the increased level of consultation is already leading to consultation fatigue and overload.

The average response rate for UK public consultations stands at 0.7% and some of our engagement and consultation campaigns did achieve this, for example our 'Future uses in Council Buildings' (0.75%). We do not rely on survey responses alone however and we cannot base our success rate merely on the number of responses to surveys. Some campaigns are targeted at specific areas, for example 'Flooding at Llanybydder, Llandysul and Pont-Tyweli', this would reduce the number of anticipated responses. Further analysis of the level, type and source of responses would be helpful, but this is difficult with finite resources.

There are good examples of continuous engagement listed on pages 7 and 8 and we need to do more with the valuable feedback from these stakeholder groups so that their views contribute to a broader context across all Council services.

We work with many strategic partners, and this gives us good opportunity to share resources and reduce consultation fatigue. Working with others may lead to some inconsistencies, however a solid corporate engagement toolkit will help to address this.

A range of methods are used to engage with our communities in Ceredigion and it is important that we continue to develop innovative methods of engagement whilst recognising that the resource for this work is finite.

Despite these challenges, we have a clear duty to engage and consult with our stakeholders and need to maintain a balance between online methods, paper copies and face to face opportunities so that residents and stakeholders can participate effectively in the Council's decision making.