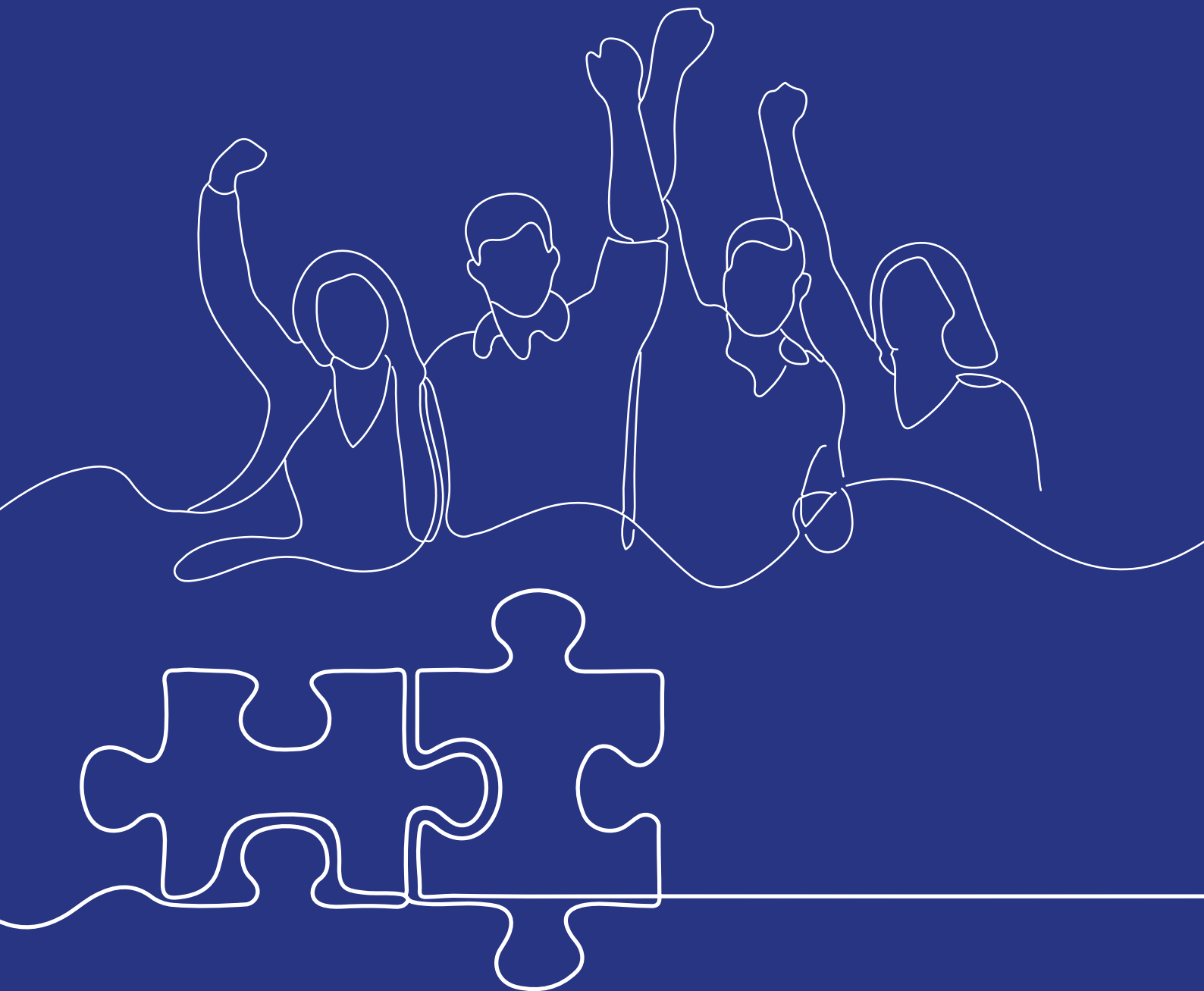


Community Engagement Strategy

Updated 2025



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DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The term Community Engagement can mean different things to different people. It is best understood as a planned process, which has the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people; whether they are connected by place, interest, affiliation or identity, to encourage them to actively take part in making decisions about their community. This can range from encouraging communities to share their views on how their needs are best met and influence how services should be delivered, to giving communities the power to make and share decisions on how services are delivered.



DEFINING OUR COMMUNITIES

Communities are usually defined as groups of people who have common characteristics. They can be broadly categorised as ‘communities of place’, defined by location such as a street, a ward, a town or an area, or ‘communities of interest’, defined by any shared characteristic, such as race, age, occupation, shared interest, affinity or other common bond.

South Ayrshire has an active voluntary and community sector with many groups and organisations providing valuable support and services within our communities. Many of these groups are made up of small neighbourhood community organisations working locally to support others in their area.

We recognise how important it is to involve communities and give them the means to influence issues that affect them. We also recognise that people can be members of several different communities and that some people find it harder to make themselves heard than others. We want to ensure that we actively involve all of our communities in a purposeful and meaningful way.

WHO IS THIS STRATEGY FOR?

This strategy is for anyone who plays a part in helping South Ayrshire to thrive and improve the lives of all our citizens. This includes public and private organisations, voluntary and community groups, residents, workers, students and any individual with an interest in how their environment and community can grow and flourish. The strategy is written for:

- **People who are involved in making decisions**
This includes individuals, community groups, businesses, voluntary organisations and anyone else who may get involved with decision making.
- **Organisations who involve people in making decisions**
This includes the Council, Community Planning Partners, private, voluntary and community sectors.



WHAT IS THE AIM OF THIS STRATEGY?

The strategy seeks to:

- Provide an overview of our approach to effective community engagement
- Identify ways in which we will inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower our communities
- Provide a practical toolkit for all those involved in community engagement

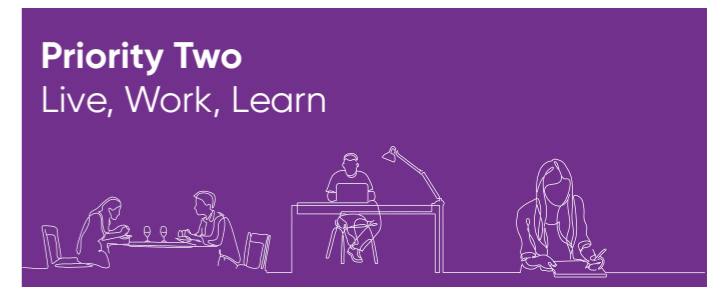
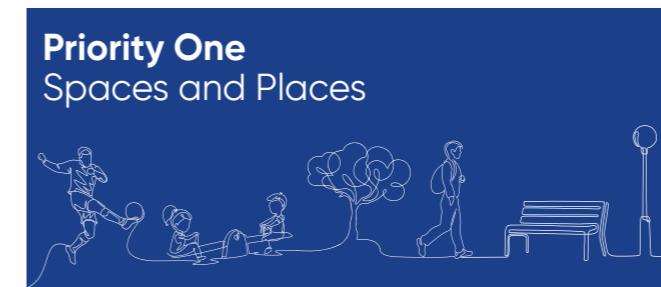
STRATEGIC CONTEXT

[South Ayrshire Council Plan 2023-2028](#) outlines the vision that the Council has for everyone living, working and visiting the area. The three key priorities of this plan are:

- That our **Spaces and Places** are of a high standard, that people can access our communities easily and that there is a range of high-quality, well-maintained sport and recreation facilities.
- That South Ayrshire has high quality opportunities for everyone to **Live, Work and Learn**. We aim that everyone will benefit from access to high quality education and can continue into lifelong learning. We want people and businesses to flourish by having a strong local economy and that everyone can find a good quality home that meets their needs.
- That we foster a culture of **Civic and Community Pride** by ensuring that everyone has opportunities to influence and contribute to what happens in their local area. We want to everyone to be proud to live in South Ayrshire and that we celebrate our culture and heritage.

Priority Three **Civic and Community Pride** has a focus on Community Engagement and this Strategy will set out our approach on how we will engage with communities.

Locality Planning is a key element of the work undertaken by the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). It is outlined in the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 and in Part 2 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, which relates to Community Planning Partnerships. The HSCP has established six defined localities within South Ayrshire. Through [Locality Planning Partnerships](#), the focus of work is informed by the specific needs of each area. Membership of these Locality Planning Partnership groups includes local residents and representatives from organisations that deliver services within the localities.



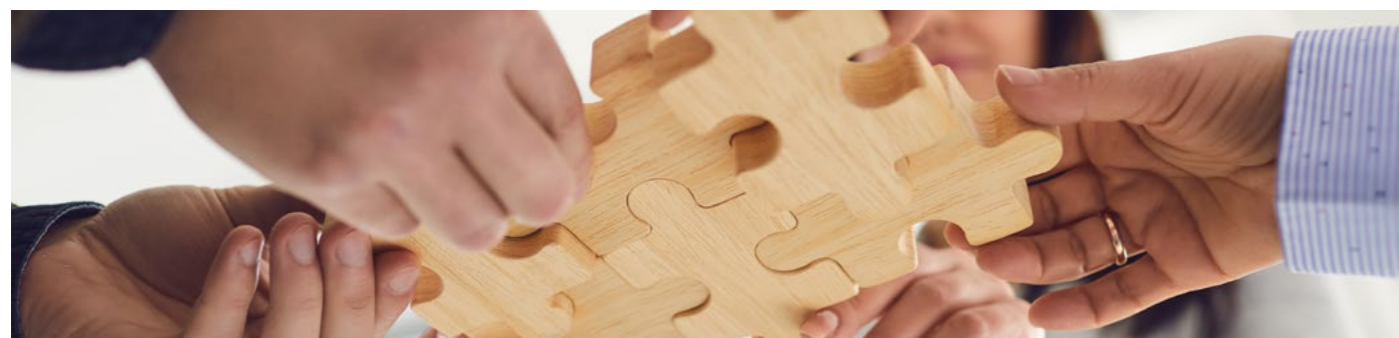
NATIONAL CONTEXT/SCOTTISH CONTEXT

In 2011 the report from the [Christie Commission](#) on the future of delivering public services concluded that public services should be built around people and communities and strengthen their autonomy and resilience. Following this work Scottish Government enacted the [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) which sets out its expectation on public bodies to engage and empower the communities that they serve. The Act has a particular focus on community engagement and how local communities should have greater control and influence on local decision making.

As part of the [Local Governance Review](#) initiated through Scottish Government and COSLA the initiative [Democracy Matters](#) was rolled out to communities across Scotland. Democracy Matters overarching goal is to create a vibrant and equal system of local democracy with an emphasis on community voices being heard and valued. Two consultation phases have now taken place and the results will be used to enhance the relationships between communities and public bodies. From the need for community engagement outlined in the [Community Empowerment Act](#) the [National Standards for Community Engagement \(2016\)](#) were developed as a set of principles that all engagement undertaken by the public bodies should be mindful of when interacting with local communities. The Council is committed to upholding these principles through the delivery of this strategy. The principles are:



Inclusion - identify and involve the people/ organisations affected
Support - identify and overcome any barriers to participation
Planning - clear purpose for engagement based on shared understanding of community needs and ambitions
Working together - to achieve the aims of engagement
Methods - that are fit for purpose
Communication - clearly and regularly with the people, organisations and communities affected by the engagement
Impact - assess impact of engagement and use what has been learned to improve our future community engagement.



How will we apply and monitor the effectiveness of these principles?

We will commit to working towards these principles of engagement and to monitoring our effectiveness at each stage. How we will do this is summarised below:

Inclusion

we will identify and involve the people and organisations that are affected by the focus of the engagement.

How will we know we have met this standard?

- The people and groups who are affected by the focus of the engagement are involved at the earliest opportunity.
- Measures are taken to involve groups with protected characteristics and people who often are excluded from participation due to disadvantage relating to social or economic factors.
- Participants in the community engagement process commit to continued two-way communication with the people they work with or represent.
- A wide range of opinions, including minority and opposing views, are valued in the engagement process.

Support

We will identify and overcome any barriers to participation.

How will we know we have met this standard?

- An assessment of support needs is carried out involving all participants. Support needs may include transport, caring responsibilities, accessible venues, timing of events etc.
- Action is taken to remove or reduce any practical barriers which make it difficult for people to take part in engagement activities.
- Access to impartial and independent development support is provided for groups involved in the community engagement process.



Planning

There is a clear purpose for the engagement, which is based on a shared understanding of community needs and ambitions.

How will we know we have met this standard?

- Partners are involved at the start of the process in identifying and defining the focus that the engagement will explore.
- A clear and agreed engagement plan is in place.
- All available information which might affect the engagement process has been shared and used to develop the community engagement plan.
- Partners agree what the outcomes of the engagement process should be, what indicators will be used to measure success, and what evidence will be gathered.
- The timescales for the engagement process are realistic.
- There are sufficient resources to support an effective engagement process.

Working Together

We will engage work effectively together to achieve the aims of the engagement.

How will we know we have met this standard?

- The roles and responsibilities of everyone involved are clear and understood.
- Decision making processes and procedures are agreed and followed.
- The methods of communication used during the engagement process meet the needs of all participants.
- Information that is important to the engagement process is accessible and shared in time for all participants to properly read and understand it.
- Communication between all participants is open, honest and clear.
- The community engagement process is based on trust and mutual respect.
- Participants are supported to develop their skills and confidence during the engagement



Methods

We will use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose.

How will we know we have met this standard?

- The methods used are appropriate for the purpose of the engagement. Some examples of methods of engagement are focus groups, public meetings, questionnaires, online surveys, social media campaigns etc.
- The methods used are acceptable and accessible to participants.
- A variety of methods are used throughout the engagement to make sure that a wide range of voices is heard.
- Full use is made of creative methods which encourage maximum participation and effective dialogue.
- The methods used are evaluated and adapted, if necessary, in response to feedback from participants and partners.

Communication

We will communicate clearly and regularly with people, organisations and communities affected by the engagement.

How will we know we have met this standard?

- Information on the community engagement process, and what has happened as a result, is clear and easy to access and understand.
- Information is made available in appropriate formats.
- Without breaking confidentiality, participants have access to all information that is relevant to the engagement.
- Systems are in place to make sure the views of the wider community continuously help to shape the engagement process.
- Feedback is a true representation of the range of views expressed during the engagement process.
- Feedback includes information on:
 - The engagement process;
 - The options which have been considered; and
 - The decisions and actions that have been agreed, and the reasons why.

Impact

We will assess the impact of the engagement and use what we have learned to improve our future community engagement.

How will we know we have met this standard?

- The outcomes the engagement process intended to achieve are met.
- Decisions which are taken reflect the views of participants in the community engagement process.
- Local outcomes, or services, are improved as a result of the engagement process.
- Participants have improved skills, confidence and ability to take part in community engagement in the future.
- Partners are involved in monitoring and reviewing the quality of the engagement process and what has happened as a result.
- Feedback is provided to the wider community on how the engagement process has influenced decisions and what has changed as a result.
- Learning and evaluation helps to shape future community engagement processes.

Participatory Budgeting

Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a process of involving citizens in deciding how to spend public money. At its core, PB is about community members shaping local services to meet local priorities more effectively. PB is motivated by the desire to democratically reallocate public money at a community level to priority services and initiatives identified by residents.

A separate [guidance document](#) has been produced to support the effective delivery of participatory budgeting.



INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

South Ayrshire Council acknowledge that there are barriers to participation and engagement from certain seldom heard groups within our communities. Commonly these groups are underrepresented and less likely to be actively involved in general engagement and participation processes.

People within seldom heard groups usually have multiple barriers to participation. The Council is committed to, where possible, actively seeking the views of seldom heard groups by breaking down the barriers to participation and by building a network of groups who regularly engage with seldom heard.

There are many factors that can contribute to people being seldom heard, such as:

- Communication impairments;
- Homelessness;
- Geographic isolation and;
- Poverty.

It is recognised that there are several key barriers and circumstances affecting these groups which lowers the rate of participation. South Ayrshire Council is committed to addressing these barriers by ensuring that our engagement with people:

- Treats everyone with fairness and values all individuals contributions;
- Describes clearly what someone can expect when engaging with us and what they are expected to contribute;
- Allows them to say no to being a part of the engagement process and;
- Gives a variety of ways people can give us their views.



RESOURCES

- What is Community Engagement? - [Community engagement | SCDC - We believe communities matter](#)
- [Principles for community empowerment | Audit Scotland](#)
- Planning with People - [planning-people-community-engagement-participation-guidance-updated-2024.pdf](#)
- Place Standard Tool - [Public Health Scotland](#)
- [Participatory Budgeting Guidance 2025](#)

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

This strategy includes a commitment to further develop in this area to improve our monitoring and evaluation with communities using the Audit Scotland Community Engagement Principles which were produced in 2019. These principles require us to demonstrate best value in:

1. Community Control – how we support communities to successfully take more control over decisions and assets
2. Public Sector Leadership – how we demonstrate strong and clear leadership on community empowerment which sets the tone and culture of the organisation
3. Effective Relationships – how we build effective working relationships between ourselves, local communities and local partners
4. Improving Outcomes – how we evaluate whether outcomes for local communities are improving and inequalities are being reduced
5. Accountability – how we ensure that we are clear and open about our approach to community empowerment and provide regular information to communities that is understandable, jargon free and accessible. How we are responsive to local communities when reaching decisions with a clear rationale for making difficult decisions and providing regular feedback.



DATA PROTECTION

All data gathered in any engagement exercise is subject to data protection and therefore must be managed according to South Ayrshire Council's Data Protection Policy. Further guidance and be found at [POL 20230901 Data Protection Policy 2023 V3.1](#)

This information can be made available, on request, in braille, large print or audio formats and can be translated into a range of languages. Contact details are provided below.

درخواست کرنے پر یہ معلومات نابینا افراد کے لئے اُبھرے حروف، بڑے حروف یا آڈیو میں مہیا کی جاسکتی ہے اور اسکا مختلف زبانوں میں ترجمہ بھی کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ رابطہ کی تفصیلات نیچے فراہم کی گئی ہیں۔

本信息可应要求提供盲文，大字印刷或音频格式，以及可翻译成多种语言。以下是详细联系方式。

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ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਬੋਲ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸੁਣਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਛੱਬ ਵੀ ਲਈ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ, ਅਤੇ ਇਹਦਾ ਤਰਜਮਾ ਹੋਰ ਬੋਲੀਆਂ ਛੱਬ ਵੀ ਕਰਵਾਇਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਵੱਢੀ ਗਈ ਹੈ।

Niniejsze informacje mogą zostać udostępnione na życzenie w alfabecie Braille'a, w druku powiększonym lub w formie audio oraz mogą zostać przetłumaczone na wiele języków obcych. Dane kontaktowe znajdują się poniżej.

Faodar am fiosrachadh seo fhaighinn, le iarrtas, ann am braille, clò mòr no clàr fuaim agus tha e comasach eadar-theangachadh gu grunn chànanan. Tha fiosrachadh gu h-ìosal mu bhith a' cur fios a-steach.

South Ayrshire Council
Customer Contact Centre
03001230900