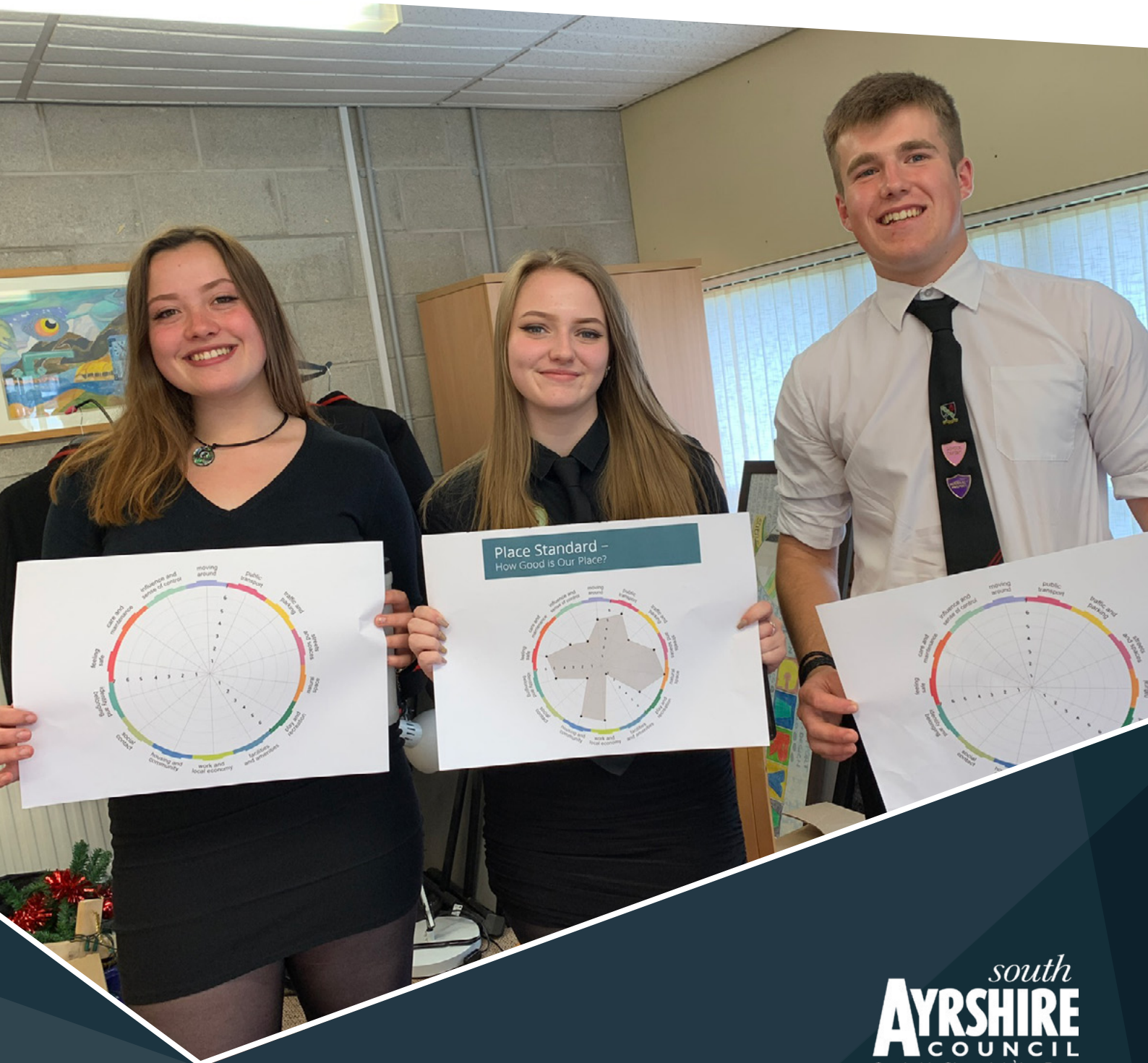
Stand up for South Ayrshire

Commitment 5
Increase the profile and reputation of South Ayrshire and the Council

Community Engagement Strategy

Published 2020



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Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Deas

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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

The Council Plan 2018-2022 sets out the Council's vision focussed on 'Our People, Our Place'. It details the high-level objectives and outcomes we want to achieve by 2022. The Council Plan also reinforces the importance of engagement with our communities and in ensuring that their voices and opinions are heard in terms of the effectiveness of our service delivery and to help drive further improvement where necessary. Our strategic objectives are:

- Effective leadership that promotes fairness
- Reduce poverty and disadvantage
- Health and care systems that meet people's needs
- Make the most of the local economy
- Increase the profile and reputation of South Ayrshire and the Council
- Enhanced environment through social, cultural and economic activities

The Plan also sets out the Council's ambitions to improve placemaking and create local place plans by listening to communities and enabling greater choices in how they lead their day to day lives. In order to do this the Council has adopted a corporate approach to placemaking - Placemaking in South Ayrshire This will be used in the development of 'place plans' by ensuring that all those responsible for providing services and looking after assets in a place work and plan together, and engage with local communities, to improve places.

Locality Planning is a key element of Health and Social Care integration and its legal basis is set out within the Public Bodies(Joint Working) (Scotland) Act, 2014. The main aim of Locality Planning is to deliver health and social care effectively, and Locality Planning Groups have been established in six areas across South Ayrshire. The South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan reflects the different needs of each area and also looks at available resources. This will be driven through local structures where local people, the third and public sectors come together and establish what each locality's needs with regard to health and social care through the South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership - Locality Planning

NATIONAL CONTEXT

At a national level there are a number of drivers which reinforce the importance of community engagement. In 2011, the Christie Report - The Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services concluded that future public services should be built around people and communities and should strengthen their autonomy and resilience. The Scottish Government's response to the report outlined a commitment to listening, engaging and responding to community needs and aspirations through open dialogue

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 sets out clear expectations that public bodies will properly engage with local communities with a specific focus on community engagement to achieve greater control and influence by communities in decision making. It requires us to promote and facilitate participation and to put in place processes and policies to support this.

The National Standards for Community Engagement (2016) are a set of principles which the Council is committed to upholding 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.

DEFINING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT LEVELS

The International Association of Public Participation identifies five key stages in the spectrum of engagement. The Council will adopt this framework and this will be used to identify, plan and measure the effectiveness of our community engagement activities. There are five definitions of engagement within the spectrum. These are:

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision making in the hands of the public
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide

This sets out not just the type of engagement activity that is required but also what this will achieve and what it actually means for our communities.

CONSULTATION PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITIES

We have developed a set of Consultation Principles for our Communities. The views and opinions of our Communities are important to us and this statement sets out how we will inform, consult and engage with our communities when making decisions about the services we provide.

TOOLKIT FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

We have developed a Toolkit for Community Engagement and Consultation. This toolkit is based on good practice guidelines for involvement, participation, engagement and consultation. It provides a range of options which managers and officers can use in the planning and delivery of community engagement.

COMMUNITY PLANNING TOOLKIT ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Improvement Service have developed a Community Planning Toolkit on Community Engagement.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

While we recognise that we can evidence a wide range of community engagement activities, this is not consistent across the Council. We also recognise that where we are weakest is in our ability to assess the impact of engagement and use what has been learned to improve our future community engagement. 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 on this is contained within the Toolkit for Community Engagement and Consultation.

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。

本信息可應要求提供盲文，大字印刷或音頻格式，以及可翻譯成多種語言。以下是詳細聯繫方式。

ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਬੇਲ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਣਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਰਪ ਵਚ ਵੀ ਲਈ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ, ਅਤੇ ਇਹਦਾ ਤਰਜਮਾ ਹੋਰ ਬੋਲੀਆਂ ਵਚ ਵੀ ਕਰਵਾਇਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਵਚੱਲੀ ਗਈ ਹੈ।

Niniejsze informacje mogą zostać udostępnione na życzenie w alfabecie Braille'a, w druku powiększonym lub w formacie 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.

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