

Community and stakeholder engagement

A strategy: 2021-2024


#OurFuture



What is engagement?

Throughout the evolution of this document, we have agreed the following definition: **Involving local people and other stakeholders in the decisions that affect them.** That could be in a number of ways.

<https://i2s.anu.edu.au/resources/stakeholder-participation-iap2-public-participation-spectrum/>

		INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 				
		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.

How we got here

The creation of a new community engagement strategy for Welwyn Hatfield was a recommendation of the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge.

At the start of the development of a new strategy, we held a stakeholder mapping workshop and follow-up session with members of the Corporate Leadership Network across all services, and with political representation from the Leader of the Council. These sessions were guided by the LGA guide to community engagement, *New Conversations 2.0* (2019). We discussed:

- Who our stakeholders are
- How we currently engage with them
- What we could do more of, less of, or do differently
- What impact those actions might have

The outcome was a set of strategic aims, themed as per the following principles. We went back to look at these five principles again in light of over 1,600 responses to our *Your Welwyn Hatfield* survey, as well as stakeholder engagement sessions at the Alliance Conference, making sure those contributions were reflected in the document.

Our **five**
principles of
engagement

UNDERSTAND

Be clear about who our stakeholders are, and help them to understand us

ENABLE

Make it easy for people to have a say, keeping up with technology to enable access

ENCOURAGE

Encourage people from all our communities to get involved

EQUIP

Ensure we are equipped with the tools we need to engage effectively

SHAPE

Connect with our communities so they can help shape our services

UNDERSTAND

Be clear about who our stakeholders are, and help them to understand us

- Get a better understanding of our communities – their wants/needs as well as demography
- Coordinate and share the information internally we have about our communities
- Bring partners to corporate leadership network and other meetings for discussion, challenge and updates
- Ensure our communities understand our services and how they are delivered

ENCOURAGE

Encourage people from *all* our communities to get involved

- Broaden Borough Panel and Tenants Panel representation, and consider expiry of membership to encourage vitality
- Share insight with our partners and actively involve them in engagement activities
- Be clear about how and why we want to engage
- Work with the Youth Council to encourage young people to take part
- Incentivise engagement by telling the story of how we work with our communities, and what we can achieve

ENABLE

Make it easy for people to have a say, keeping up with digital technology to allow access across all platforms

- Ensure we understand how and when our communities want to engage with us
- Have a consistent approach to how we engage with our communities, whatever channel we use
- Invest in technology that makes it easier for people to engage with us digitally
- Provide and promote the use of a digital platform for our communities to exchange ideas

CONNECT

Connect with our communities so they can help shape our services

- Work towards a single system for collecting, storing and sharing the feedback we have about our services
- Ensure we have a consistent approach to using our insight to shape services, connecting it more explicitly to our business planning process
- Publish a consultation and engagement calendar so our staff and our communities are clear about when they can get involved
- Work with partners to help increase people's digital skills and confidence, enabling them to engage in new ways

EQUIP

Ensure we are equipped with the tools we need to engage effectively

- Continue to improve communication between teams and services taking into account increase of flexible and remote working
- Develop a new intranet that includes collaborative working tools
- Ensure staff are identifying stakeholders and engagement when planning projects, and develop a community engagement toolkit, helping them to do so
- Form a community engagement group to share best practice
- Support councillors and staff in promoting opportunities to get involved in local activities and decision-making

Community engagement group

- Chair – Corporate Strategy and Engagement Manager
- Deputy Chair – Head of Community and Housing Strategy
- Communications and Marketing Manager
- Community Partnerships Manager
- Neighbourhood and Enforcement Manager
- Governance Services Manager
- Planner/Senior Planner
- Team Leader (Public Health & Protection
- Senior Performance and Strategy Officer
- Housing repairs and maintenance – tbc
- Human Resources Manager
- Environment, Parking & Bereavement Manager
- Economic Development Officer
- Digital Services Manager
- Policy and Culture Support Officer