ANNEX A

Community Engagement Policy

2021-2028

Alexdd
Training

Leadership Team Sponsor (s): Efosa Ekhator /Ikponwonsa Ebohon

Cabinet Portfolio: Portfolio Holder for Communities, Voluntary Sector and the Environment

Corporate Plan Theme: All

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ANNEX A

Policy Purpose & Context

1.1 The Community Engagement policy sets out why engaging with the community is important and the principles that underpin good engagement with individuals, communities and local businesses across the borough.

1.2 AlexD&D training's policy is to ensure that key stakeholders across the borough have a voice to influence the development of policies and strategies that will affect their lives, and inform the way in which services and developments in the borough are planned and implemented.

1.3 AlexD&D Training is committed to engaging with communities and this policy provides the strategic direction to ensure quality and consistent engagement across the work we do. This policy forms part of a proposed 'Community Engagement Framework'.

What is Community Engagement?

1.4 For the purposes of this framework community engagement is the conversations we have with people about decisions that may affect them. It is about providing opportunities for people to have a say in reviewing, designing, approving, influencing or commenting on the decisions, activities and services in the borough. It is also being clear that the Centre cannot involve all people all of the time and will in many circumstances need to give clear information to individuals and communities.

1.5 The approach to engagement will need to be tailored to the type of activity taking place which includes[1];

- **Information Giving**: Where residents, communities and businesses are informed but have no influence i.e. a road closure due to an emergency

- **Consultation:** Where residents, communities and businesses are consulted and their views influence the outcome, but they don't necessarily have the final say in decisions i.e. we want to know about the priorities in your community

- **Co-Creation**: We do things together and it is jointly decided i.e. we want to develop a new strategy on social care and we agree this together with users and carers of services.

- **Supporting Citizen Power:** Individuals, communities and businesses lead and the Centre stands back supporting only when invited to do so

The Importance of Community Engagement

1.6 Engaging with people is at the heart of centre business. We believe that people who live and work in Dartford have the right to influence and have a stake in the future of the Borough. Dartford is a great place to live, learn, care and work, but over the next four years we want even more for our Centre. We want residents and businesses to be central in that journey, actively working together to help achieve our strategic priorities, as set out in the Centre Strategy, and help to shape better and more efficient services.

Our Policy Statement

1.7 This policy sets out a compelling case for engagement that encourages a partnership of collaboration between communities and the Centre, where the Centre can enable Communities to do more for themselves. We need to engage the right people at the right time not necessarily all of the people all of the time.

We will Listen and Understand

1.8 To fulfil this policy the Centre needs to have key methods to understand and listen to individuals, communities and businesses, as a basis to engagement activity whatever form that takes. Our ability to listen and understand will rely upon a variety of different channels some that are traditional methods but increasingly through digital platforms and social media. The Centre needs effective strategies in each of these channels and the capability to draw all of the insight together into something that we can understand, share and use.

Dartford People will inform our Policy and we will Keep People Informed

1.9 Our engagement activity will help to shape and inform the policy decisions that we make, meaning that our policies reflect the people they are for and the place they serve. This should support us to achieve our priorities, solve long standing problems and generate new ideas across the borough. This will involve more engagement that ‘co-creates’ and ‘supports citizen power’ which may involve new ways of service delivery and ideas that the Centre has not considered before.

1.10 The centre should keep people informed and support people to get involved but there is also a responsibility on residents and communities to be active and engaged in creating a thriving future for Dartford and realise our ambitions over the next four years.

We will be Inclusive and act with Purpose

1.11 Our engagement activity must be inclusive and recognise that all people across the borough have a voice and an opinion of worth. Recognising the diversity across the borough it is important for an equality of opportunity for all people to be involved. This means our engagement must be accessible, use clear

language that people can understand and use the most appropriate information available.

1.12 Engagement needs to be clear about the purpose, scope and limitations of any activity, this clarity is fundamental to quality engagement. This will mean purposefully locating the voices of those with something at stake, via either specific communities of interest or geographic communities so that the right people at the right time are involved.

We will make the most of what already exists in communities and where possible increase Community Capacity

1.13 Community engagement is happening across the borough through a variety of channels, through existing voluntary community and faith groups, though elected members, through parish and town councils, our frontline staff and there are numerous others. We want to make the most of this activity, linking up the engagement within our locality areas, learning from what works and where possible increase the capacity in communities to engage and act.

The Community Engagement Framework

1.14 We will achieve this policy by have a community engagement framework that sets out clearly what is important, how we will do this and how we will provide adequate training and guidance for staff across the Centre.

1.15 The community engagement strategy will set out the specific actions and changes we will make to deliver the ambitions contained within this policy.

[2] The Community Engagement strategy to be agreed in autumn 2021