



<b>Subject:</b>	Draft Consultation and Engagement Framework
<b>Date:</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> November 2019
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
<b>Contact Officers:</b>	Patricia Flynn, Strategic Policy & Planning Officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Some time in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To present a draft Corporate Consultation & Engagement Framework, including outline action plan, for approval. This framework is needed in order to meet Local Government Auditor recommendations, to signal a best practice approach and to support delivery of Inclusive Growth and Corporate Plan commitments.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to agree: i. the draft policy framework, outline action plan and underlying principles and best practice standards that will guide our approach to consultation and engagement; and ii. to authorise its release for public consultation.

<p><b>3.0</b></p>	<p><b>Key Issues</b></p> <p><b>3.1</b> <i>Background</i></p> <p>In 2015, following a review of council’s approach to consultation and engagement (C&amp;E), SP&amp;R approved in principle a draft C&amp;E framework. However, a public consultation and final adoption of the framework was postponed to enable supporting infrastructure to be implemented and for emerging engagement requirements associated with the Belfast Agenda to be more fully taken into account. The draft framework has now been revised to reflect new developments and process, including commitments in the Belfast Agenda and draft Inclusive Growth Strategy.</p> <p><b>3.2</b> <i>Why the Framework is needed</i></p> <p>The Local Government (NI) Act 2014 reinforced the council’s duty to consult. The framework, which aims to improve the quality and consistency our C&amp;E thereby providing improved value for money, reputation and trust, is an important step in demonstrating council’s commitment to consultation. As a result, the Local Government Auditor has highlighted the delay and absence of an agreed corporate C&amp;E framework as a key area for improvement [Assessment Report 2018]. Whilst, council’s approach to consultation has improved significantly in recent years, our approach to engagement remains an area for development. An indicative action plan has been developed to support the framework which focuses in particular, on enhancing our engagement capabilities. Ultimately, the framework seeks to ensure that our residents and partners are more involved in the decisions and services that affect them. This brings about positive benefits for public services and for communities and is one of the commitments in our draft Inclusive Growth framework (IG).</p> <p><b>3.3</b> <i>Draft Consultation and Engagement Framework 2019</i></p> <p>The draft framework is not a programme of engagement events or consultations, but instead provides the policy context in which we will do this i.e. how we will plan, deliver and utilise our C&amp;E activity. The framework outlines the council’s approach to C&amp;E and sets out a vision with underlying principles and standards that we will aspire to meet. It aims to improve the quality, value and cost-effectiveness of our consultation and engagement, enabling council to meet statutory duties to consult whilst also helping to manage the increased public expectation to be consulted and involved. The draft framework is attached at appendix 1.</p> <p><b>3.4</b> <i>Strengths and Areas for Improvement</i></p> <p>Since 2015, council has invested in staff capacity building and an online corporate consultation platform, which over the past 3 years has hosted 167 consultations (public, customer and internal) and generated in excess of 28,000 individual survey responses. In addition, we have held a wide range of engagement events and can reference a number of good practice approaches such as the Belfast Conversation, physical programme and capital projects, cultural strategy and waste collection consultations and processes. Good practice case studies such as</p>
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these will form part of the officer toolkit being developed to support the implementation of the framework.

3.5 However, if we are to meet growing public expectations and honor commitments in the Belfast Agenda and our draft Inclusive Growth Strategy, then we must build on our strengths and address areas for improvement. In particular, we need to critically examine and improve how we engage with residents on an ongoing basis and earlier in the process using meaningful co-design and co-production methods. To this end, we will work with the Belfast Community Planning Partnership to strengthen civic voice and embed effective community engagement.

3.6 A cross-departmental working group has been established to develop a detailed action plan and to support its implementation. This group will work closely with the Belfast Agenda partners and the emerging CVSE Advisory Panel to test and develop shared approaches to community engagement. An indicative action plan has been incorporated within the draft framework (see page 11). It comprises the following key elements:

- i. Setting the framework
- ii. Consolidating our consultation and demonstrating impact
- iii. Strengthening engagement and civic voice (including digital inclusion)
- iv. Building capacity
- v. Continuous improvement and alignment to the Belfast Agenda

3.7 In particular, Members attention is drawn to the proposed action to develop and deliver at least 3 innovative engagement pilots. Given the correlation between community engagement, our civic leadership role and community planning, it is envisaged that the pilots will align to and support work being developed as part of the wider Belfast Agenda as well as more council focused engagement. The aim is to ensure a seamless engagement for the residents of Belfast moving forward.

**Next Steps**

3.8 Members are asked to approve the draft framework and the indicative action plan and to agree the following next steps, and specifically the publication of the draft framework for public consultation:

<i>Public consultation</i>	As per our Equality Scheme, the draft framework will be issued for public consultation in December for a period of 12 weeks
<i>Action Plan</i>	C&E Working Group to develop a detailed action plan, with specific focus on engagement and civic voice, ensuring

	alignment to inclusive growth, Belfast Agenda, customer focus and the digital inclusion element of the BRCD.
<i>Publication</i>	Finalised plan to be presented for approval and adoption by SP&R in March / April and published on council website.

3.9 Financial & Resource Implications

There are no direct financial implication arising from this report. Costs associated with the implementation of the action plan have been factored into current council budgets. Future and ongoing budget implications will be monitored as part of the action plan implementation and learning.

3.10 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

There are no equality implications contained in this report. However, the implementation of the framework will help support equality and inclusion.

**4.0 Appendices – Documents Attached**

Appendix 1: Draft Consultation& Engagement Framework