

Further Scrutiny work – clear language (in engagement work)

Version 1.00 of the Scope

Background

Recently, members of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee have scrutinised how the Council undertook the engagement exercise as part of the Gwynedd Challenge. The aim was to help the engagement team to learn lessons for any future engagement exercise.

A number of good lessons derived from the work, and these have been included in a report presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 16/06/2016. However, one of the recommendations made by scrutiny, as noted below, requires further work:

“One of the possible weaknesses was that some of the content prepared by the services was hard for the public to understand as it used complex language and too much “council speak” that the public does not understand (in Welsh and English). The inability to communicate clear and simple messages is a weakness that needs to be addressed. It is possible that a Scrutiny Investigation or Working Group would be able to look at improvements in this field.”

Purpose of the work

The purpose of further scrutiny work would be to look independently at previous written engagement work (in Welsh and English) to see how easy it is for the public to understand. Recommendations would be presented as a result of the work.

In order to undertake the work, we will need to:

- Understand engagement principles (especially from a language perspective)
- Consult with specialists to understand how information should be presented to the majority of the population
- Compare 3 or 4 recent engagement exercises with the above. We would also ask members of the public and officers (the authors) for their views on the suitability of the language used and how easy it is to understand.
- Assess and learn lessons from the above.

Timeframe of the work

Work begins	Straight away
Work ends	
Report presented to Corporate Scrutiny Committee	20 October 2016 or 6th December 2016
Report form scrutiny to Cabinet	Following the committee

Programme

Outline of the main steps and meetings.

Members will be required to undertake further work between meetings.

1.	Consult with Participation Cymru to understand the principles of engagement, in particular in context of the language to be used. (See appendix A for information).	
2.	Consult with specialists to receive guidance on <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Average reading level (or reading age) for the majority of the population• How to present written information for the average reading level• Are there guidelines for writing materials of the sort?• Any further relevant information available	
3.	Select 3 or 4 recent engagement exercises, and compare what was presented with the guidelines available.	
4.	Ask for comments from a representation group of the public on the items noted in 3.	
5.	Discuss with a few officers/ authors to understand how things can be improved from their perspective (and what support they need)	
6.	Compile recommendations	
7.	Present to Corporate Scrutiny Committee	

NATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN WALES



1 Engagement is effectively designed to make a difference

Engagement gives a real chance to influence policy, service design and delivery from an early stage.

2 Encourage and enable everyone affected to be involved, if they so choose

The people affected by an issue or change are included in opportunities to engage as an individual or as part of a group or community, with their views both respected and valued.

3 Engagement is planned and delivered in a timely and appropriate way

The engagement process is clear, communicated to everyone in a way that's easy to understand within a reasonable timescale, and the most suitable method/s for those involved is used.

4 Work with relevant partner organisations

Organisations should communicate with each other and work together wherever possible to ensure that people's time is used effectively and efficiently.

5 The information provided will be jargon free, appropriate and understandable

People are well placed to take part in the engagement process because they have easy access to relevant information that is tailored to meet their needs.

6 Make it easier for people to take part

People can engage easily because any barriers for different groups of people are identified and addressed.

7 Enable people to take part effectively

Engagement processes should try to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence of all participants.

8 Engagement is given the right resources and support to be effective

Appropriate training, guidance and support are provided to enable all participants to effectively engage, including both community participants and staff.

9 People are told the impact of their contribution

Timely feedback is given to all participants about the views they expressed and the decisions or actions taken as a result; methods and form of feedback should take account of participants' preferences.

10 Learn and share lessons to improve the process of engagement

People's experience of the process of engagement should be monitored and evaluated to measure its success in engaging people and the effectiveness of their participation; lessons should be shared and applied in future engagements.

These Principles were developed by Participation Cymru working with TPAS Cymru, under the guidance of the Participation Cymru partnership. Endorsed by The First Minister of Wales, The Right Hon. Carwyn Jones AM on behalf of the Welsh Government.

Further guidance on the National Principles can be found at

www.participationcymru.org.uk

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