



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

2024 to 2027

March 2024

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1. Background

The Council is committed to working closely with the public as part of fulfilling its community engagement role.

Community engagement includes everything that the Council does to involve the public in the Council's work. The Government defines engagement as *"the process whereby public bodies facilitate citizen and community participation in order to incorporate their views and needs into the decision-making process."*

The main purpose of a Community Engagement Plan is to ensure that our services reflect the needs of the local community. This requires SDC to undertake consultation to inform strategy, policy, service development and the allocation of the council budget.

This document outlines the principles for consultation and engagement for the Council, enabling us to continue to improve service delivery by collecting focused and meaningful feedback from residents, communities and customers.

Key requirements include:

- To support the role of councillors in understanding the needs and wishes of the community
- The need to inform the Council Plan and provide a solid base for developing services and service strategies
- To measure customer satisfaction and opinion in relation to service delivery and be able to track changes over time and in relation to service changes
- To measure issues around quality of life, such as the fear of crime
- To measure targets for the performance indicators
- To improve the delivery and take up of our services
- To support bids for resources or the allocation of resources
- To support equality impact assessments

It is important to get the full involvement of all elements of the community in the consultation process to ensure our priorities reflect local needs. These are broken down within the plan itself.

The Performance, Consultation & Insight Unit will deliver this plan and apply the principles to all generic engagement and consultation exercises, as well as providing support and advice for all service-specific consultation and engagement activity that is proposed and carried out.

Indeed, the Unit will undertake all consultation work for services. The only exceptions are specific consultations undertaken by Planning Policy, in particular the Local Plan and for specific planning applications.

2. Consultation Methods Used / Forms of Engagement

These are:

Consultation Methods

Online Surveys
Citizens' Panel
Focus Groups
Consultation Events
Face to Face Interviews
Paper Surveys
Opinionmeter in Reception

Forms of Engagement

Complaints procedure
Member led surgeries for communities
Opportunities to attend Council, Cabinet and other meetings
Participation in Planning Meetings
Petitions
Public Meetings
Questions to Council
Social media comments via SDC X/Facebook, SDC Consults X
Webcasting of Council meetings
Workshops

3. SDC Corporate Indicators as Measured by Surveys

- How do you rate Stratford District as a place to do business? (*Source: SDC Business Survey*)
- Percentage of people satisfied with their local area as a place to live (*Source: SDC Residents Survey*)
- Percentage of residents who feel that they can influence decisions in their local area (*Source: SDC Residents Survey*)
- Percentage of residents who found it easy to access Council services (*Source: SDC Residents Survey*)
- Percentage of residents who say that they are satisfied with the way SDC runs things (*Source: SDC Residents' Survey*)
- Overall satisfaction of service received on contact with the Council (*Source: SDC Residents' Survey*)

4. Results of Consultation Exercises

Dissemination will be via:

Internally

- E-mails to Management Team, plus other relevant officers
- Relevant portfolio holder(s)
- Councillors (if applicable)
- Relevant Council Committee (if applicable)
- Staff (if applicable)

Externally

- Press Releases (if applicable)
- Stratford-on-Avon District Council Website
- Social media
- Council publications (if applicable)

5. What we do with the Data and Findings

With the consultation findings we will:

- Make as freely available as possible
- Share the information to the appropriate audiences interested in the consultation
- Provide evidence and help to inform decisions
- Provide evidence for the guiding and development of policies and strategies
- Provide feedback to services in order to make improvements and show progress over time, particularly when gauging improvement in service delivery.
- Capture ideas from residents, communities and customers that will help the Council with service design and resource allocation.
- Identify concerns that need investigation and resolution.

Results from consultation exercises will be used, alongside advice from experts, officer recommendations, Council strategy and priorities, insight and Councillor opinion to help finalise decisions or shape future plans.

6. Service Standards

The Performance, Consultation & Insight Unit's Manager is a member of the research industry's professional body, the Market Research Society and therefore works under its Code of Conduct.

All data processing is conducted under the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct, whereby in summary.

- All surveys are confidential and that only anonymised data is published,
- Questionnaires are kept for twelve to eighteen months and then destroyed as confidential waste,
- 10% of questionnaires inputted are backchecked to ensure accuracy,
- The processing and storage of the information complies with the Data Protection Act 2018.

7. Timetable

TARGET GROUP	HOW	WHEN
Residents	<i>Citizens' Panel – Whenever issues need consulting on.</i>	On demand
	<i>Budget Consultation: Options</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Questions in Citizens' Panel</i> • <i>On-line survey via website</i> • <i>Specific targeted consultation using external agency</i> 	Annually
	<i>Residents' Survey</i>	May 2024 February 2026
	<i>Ad-hoc Surveys (Issues Based), including one-off consultations to those Panel members signed up to receive surveys online</i>	On demand
SDC Employees	<i>Staff Survey</i>	September 2024 September 2026
	<i>Issues based surveys and Workshops</i>	Ad-hoc
Businesses	<i>Questionnaire</i>	September 2025 September 2027
	<i>Business Sounding Board</i>	Ad-hoc
	<i>Ad-hoc consultation using different methods when required, i.e. breakfast meetings</i>	On demand
Parish/Town Councils	<i>On-line surveys on different subjects, i.e. Council Plan</i>	Ad-hoc
	<i>Survey of clerks and parish & town councillors</i>	2024
	<i>Parish Forum</i>	Every 6 months
Community/Voluntary Groups	<i>On-line surveys on different subjects, i.e. Council Plan, Growing Opps</i>	Ad-hoc
Visitors	<i>Face to Face Street Survey for Stratford Market Towns – Alcester, Shipston, Southam</i>	Summer 2025?
	<i>Stratford Town</i>	Summer 2027
Older People	<i>Questionnaire</i>	On demand
	<i>Forums - SCAN groups where operating</i>	Every 2 months
Young People	<i>Ad-hoc research – qualitative or quantitative research working in partnership with various agencies</i>	Ad-hoc
Partners/Stakeholders	<i>On-line surveys on different subjects, or via meetings at Elizabeth House. Consult Stratford Inclusion Partnership</i>	Ad-hoc
Ethnic Minorities	<i>Corporate surveys include a profile question</i>	When undertaken
People with Disabilities	<i>Corporate surveys include a profile question</i>	When undertaken

8. Who The Council Will Consult

RESIDENTS

Citizens' Panel

The Citizens' Panel is the main tool used to consult residents in Stratford District. Ideally, the Panel has 1,000 people, broadly representative of the District, who have agreed to participate in the Panel. Perceptions of the Council as a whole are researched using the Citizens' Panel. The Panel is consulted by a series of postal/online questionnaires. Topics covered refer directly to individual service areas, Council strategies and priorities. The Panel is consulted on an ad-hoc basis as and when required. If feedback is required on a single issue basis requiring a quick response, only the online element of the Panel is used.

Residents' Survey

This is the main piece of consultation with the public. The Residents' Survey is used to measure what people think of the area in which they live, what they think about Stratford DC services, and the way the District Council works. It is undertaken every two years and goes to 6,000 residents identified randomly (approximately one in ten households). The Council will also use the survey findings to help establish its priorities for the future and in improving its services. It also provides information for performance indicators.

Other Major Surveys

Members wish to involve council tax payers of SDC in helping to prioritise spending by the Council. SDC has used a mixture of techniques in order to achieve this in the past few years. After the comprehensive Simalto exercise in 2010, more conventional techniques have been used including the Citizens' Panel, and online surveys. A more detailed and representative budget consultation exercise is planned for the future.

Service Users

There are a number of service specific consultation exercises undertaken throughout the year either on a continuous basis or as one-off surveys. For example, various ongoing housing satisfaction surveys, visitors to Elizabeth House, building control users, rural crime etc.

TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

An online questionnaire to all town / parish councils would be included in Parish/Partners Talk; with the hope all parish and town councillors in the District would receive it. This survey would obtain valuable feedback on how councillors view the relationship with SDC, receive feedback on the planning application process, how SDC deal with parishes via democratic services, standards, and help with parish/neighbourhood plans etc. There would also be the opportunity of surveying the Clerks in the District.

A Parish Forum bringing together parish and town councils is to be created to improve dialogue with this sector.

Councils are consulted on an ad-hoc basis on subjects such as the Council Plan.

The Warwickshire Local Councils Charter is where parish and town councils in Warwickshire have agreed with the county and district councils on how they will work together for the benefit of local people in planning, consultation, communication and the delivery of public services. As far as is practicable, SDC will aim to give town and parish councils the

opportunity to comment before making decisions that affect their area. This Charter is currently under review.

BUSINESSES

Business ratepayers and related business organisations in Stratford District. Businesses will be consulted through targeted consultation. SDC consult with businesses through either questionnaires, targeted meetings or the website. As well as a district-wide survey every two years, research will be undertaken on an ad-hoc basis as and when issues require consultation with businesses. Local business forums and organisations, such as the Growth Hub and Federation of Small Businesses, are always willing to promote our surveys.

A "Business Sounding Board" was established in 2013 where SDC can consult on issues quickly, by sending an online survey to a group of businesses signed up to receive surveys or formal consultations on a regular basis.

Consultation on policy changes/issues takes place through regular meetings with the taxi trade, landlords, for example and via formal online consultations.

VISITORS

The Stratford Town Visitor Survey last took place in the summer of 2023. The market towns of Alcester, Shipston-on-Stour and Southam were last surveyed in 2016.

COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY GROUPS

The community and voluntary sector are consulted online on major consultations on subjects, such as the development of the Council Plan and if any subject matter is relevant to this group. Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action (Stratford) is the engagement vehicle used, where we utilise their newsletter to the groups in the organisation (500 plus).

PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Dialogue with our partners and stakeholders occurs on a regular basis, often via online surveys. Where appropriate, the Council will hold workshops or meetings with key stakeholders to discuss particular issues and key technical matters in depth.

SPECIFIC GROUPINGS

Older People

Consultation is via the Senior Citizens' Action Network (SCAN) and the associated Chairs. Older people are defined as anyone over the age of 55, although membership of SCAN tends to be primarily people of retirement age and older. Stratford District Council provides regular officer time to support these networks and there is also close liaison with County Council staff in the Localities & Communities team.

The SCAN initiative, run by older people for older people, aims to improve services for and policies relating to older people, by working with a range of public bodies and other organisations. The meetings provide a platform for older people to 'have their say' and to disseminate information on a wide range of topics.

At present there are two SCANS operating across the district in Shipston-on-Stour and Stratford-upon-Avon. Each group meets six times per annum and the combined groups have a membership of approximately 100 people, although some members do not attend

the meetings on a regular basis. Meetings are free to attend and start with refreshments and an opportunity to socialise.

Specific speakers are arranged to address the SCAN groups, primarily through the Chairs and the SDC Policy Officer. SDC's focus is on supporting new initiatives like the Health and Wellbeing Partnerships inclusive of all ages.

Young People

This element of consultation is part of our commitment to give young people a voice on the services that affect them too. Classified as young people aged 25 or under. The main challenge is to engage with those in the 17 to 25 year age group. A closer relationship with Stratford College will need to be developed and there are opportunities to engage with Warwickshire College and Sixth Forms of the schools in the district. There will be a need to consult with evening school classes and apprentice networks.

In addition, the County Education Service have a number of schools who operate School Councils.

There are young people who have been elected in the Warwickshire Youth Elections to represent Stratford District. Members are the local face of the regional and national UK Youth Parliaments, run by young people, for young people. They meet usually once a month supported by experienced Youth Workers at Warwickshire County Council under the banner of Child Friendly Warwickshire.

Each area of Warwickshire has a youth forum which represents young people at a local level. It's a chance for young people to talk about the things that matter to them and how they would like to make a difference in their community. The target ages are 11 to 18.

The Stratford Youth Collective is a new charity, that brings together multiple partner organisations and provides youth support in Stratford-upon-Avon and the wider district. This may present an opportunity for engagement. There are members who are in part running or contributing to the leadership of the Youth Collective and their provision of service in the town.

Ethnic Minorities

As there are no organised ethnic minority groups in the District, effective consultation has been difficult to achieve. However, all corporate surveys include a question on ethnic minorities.

People with Disabilities

Accessible Stratford is willing to be consulted on various issues and has developed a Disability Guide for the town of Stratford-upon-Avon.

"OTHER" CONSULTATIONS

Equality Impact Assessments

Consultation is a key element of any equality impact assessment and the Unit is involved for primary or secondary research whenever required.

SDC Employees / Members

Regular consultation with its employees is an important aspect for an organisation to undertake.

Consultation will include staff surveys and ad-hoc issue based surveys, e.g. Welfare, Technology.

Since 2000, a staff survey has been undertaken every two years, from which an action plan is developed.

Regular consultation for Member development is important on the aspects of Council work they require more knowledge. These are all carried out online.

Responsible Community Leadership

State of the District

Analysis of engagement and consultation, added to the relevant insight, is included in the yearly State of the District paper presented to Council in October. This can include primary research to get views on the District in general and the use of secondary research from the consultation done in the previous year.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

Planning decisions affect many aspects of the built and natural environment, so it is important that local communities, businesses and other interested parties can engage in the processes for plan-making and development management decision-making. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) identifies how and when they can be involved.

Whilst the SCI primarily sets out how the Council will engage with communities in the planning process, it also provides guidance for external groups in undertaking community consultations including for example developers involved in major developments who are required to undertake an SCI and together with neighbourhood planning groups consulting upon Neighbourhood Development Plans. Methodologies depend on the type and stage of plan making and may include:

- Online engagement - such as website, social media, email alerts, online surveys
- Face-to-Face engagement - such as events, drop-ins, exhibitions, presentations, meetings
- Written Notifications - such as email notifications
- Publicising Notifications - such as adverts, public notices, press releases, posters, site notices, leaflets

The preparation of the SCI is a requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). The Localism Act 2011 re-emphasises the importance of enabling communities to contribute towards shaping the places where they live. The Council established the SCI in 2006 and the latest version was adopted in February 2024, available to view at the following link: <https://www.stratford.gov.uk/planning-building/statement-of-community-involvement.cfm>

Local Development Scheme

The District Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) of April 2022 (available to view at www.stratford.gov.uk/lids) represents a comprehensive project plan for the preparation of Local Development Documents. As reported in the Annual Monitoring Report, 2023 (Table 1), consultation is planned on the following documents in 2024.

Document	April LDS Timescales	Planned consultation
Core Strategy review (South Warwickshire Local Plan)	Issues & Options consultation – October 2022 Preferred Options consultation – July-October - 2023 Proposed Submission consultation – June-August 2024	Issues & Options consultation undertaken in January 2023 Preferred options consultation – scheduled for 2024.
Site Allocations Plan	Informal stakeholder engagement – July-September 2020 Preferred Options consultation – Oct/Nov 2020 Second Preferred Options consultation- 2022 Proposed Submission consultation – Nov/Jan 2024 Submission –July 2024 Examination – Nov 2024 Adoption – Feb 2025	On Target – stakeholder engagement held summer 2020 On Target – Consultation undertaken Oct – Dec 2020 On Target – Consultation undertaken May – August 2022 Scheduled for 2024 Scheduled for later in 2024 Scheduled for later in 2024 Scheduled for later in 2025

Parish Plans and Neighbourhood Planning

Many engagement opportunities exist for Parish, Community and Neighbourhood Plans. This area of work is important for the Council for its community leadership role. Neighbourhood Plan refreshes will have to be implemented in the future, which may include an element of consultation and hence work for the PCIU Unit.