



2022 – 27 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION STRATEGY

1.0 CONSULTATION OBJECTIVES

Consultation and engagement with our community plays a key role in helping the council deliver its objectives and statutory obligations. A new **Council plan** was agreed for the period 2022-2027 and contains three new priorities which are:

1. People first
2. Sustainability
3. A brighter future together

The key starting point for our Community Consultation Strategy is ensuring that consultation forms part of the process for delivering on our core priorities. With that in mind, our consultation objectives are to:

- Provide opportunities for residents and stakeholders to have their say on issues that are important to them.
- Support elected councillors to exercise their democratic role in the decision-making process.
- Ensure a range of consultation channels are used, including increased use of digital channels to:
 - reach a wider, more representative sample of our community
 - make it easier for people to share their views
 - enable two-way conversations by sharing progress updates along the way
 - reduce the historical costs of consulting our community whilst increasing the frequency
- Improve the quality and cost effectiveness of consultation activity in the council.
- Share the results of our consultations with our community.
- Let you know where and how consultation has influenced decision making.

2.0 WHY WE CONSULT

Our priority is 'People first' and we want to hear from you. You know the district best and we want to provide you with as many opportunities as possible to have your say on issues that are important to you and your community.

Your feedback will enable us to make council services more relevant to our community's needs in the future.

3.0 WHEN WE CONSULT

There are three main types of consultation:

Opinion research surveys

We also use opinion research surveys as a tool to gauge our community's opinion on a range of services. This type of consultation varies from detailed surveys (seeking high level views from local partners on investment plans) to short, snappy surveys asking people what they love most about living in North Herts.

Service-specific

We also carry out service-specific consultation activity from time to time, with methods varying according to the scale and nature of the project. Examples of this include informal on-site face-to-face consultations in parks (when considering the types of play equipment to install) and larger, online consultation surveys on key services such as Waste and Recycling.

Statutory

Councils sometimes have a statutory requirement to consult residents, and this is especially true for issues such as planning or redevelopments. Statutory consultations are bound by legal requirements and can have strict rules surrounding how they should be conducted. Where the duty to consult is imposed by statute, the procedure to be adopted is also likely to be prescribed by legislation.

4.0 HOW WE CONSULT

Consultation happens on a daily basis across the council in an informal sense. From day-to-day contact with our community, to listening to feedback provided to our Customer Service team through our **compliments, comments and complaints process**. We use a variety of consultation methods to ensure that you can influence the development of policies and help inform service delivery. For non-statutory consultations, the right tool must be considered for the type of consultation with cost-effectiveness also considered.

Elected councillors

Elected councillors play a crucial role in community consultation through their roles as community leaders and in scrutinising the work of the council. Councillors form a crucial link between our community and the council both through initiatives such as Councillor Surgeries and Town Talks (follow us on Facebook @northhertsdc for future meetings) and providing residents with an opportunity for personal contact by email, phone, post or in person.

The pandemic has also seen Councillors embrace new platforms for consultation, such as 'whole street' zoom meetings to discuss localised issues.

Critically, councillors are elected to represent your views and opinions and do this through the formal decision-making process, where they have the ability to scrutinise council decisions and policies.

Our community engage platform

Our community engage platform enables us to utilise a range of tools, including project creation, a mapping mechanism, discussion boards and the ability to create detailed surveys. This platform enables us to share project updates with you along the way and have two-way conversations on issues which matter to you. **Sign up here** to be the first to hear about our future projects and surveys.

District Wide Survey

We have historically carried out a **District Wide Survey** every two years to gain high level feedback and opinion on council services. The questions set have remained largely the same each time to enable satisfaction level comparisons. The District Wide Survey has traditionally been a phone-led survey which is proving more difficult to complete in this new digital age, so we are currently investing in alternative technology to enable us to reach more people, more frequently.

Citizens Panel

Our citizens panel are district residents who have expressed interest in being contacted via email for their opinions on a variety of topics related to council business. They play a key role in informing council decisions and if you'd like to be part of this going forwards, please **click here**.

Local partner pool

Our local partner pool includes voluntary organisations, Town Business Improvement District's (BIDs), Education providers, businesses and MP's from across the district who we continue to approach for feedback on relevant consultations. **Click here** to join.

'Community asks' surveys

On occasion, we send out quick, simple, online surveys regarding a number of topics which are usually more informal. These tend to be shared on social media (follow us on Facebook @northhertsdc) and in our **weekly e-newsletters**.

Face to face research

In certain circumstances face-to-face consultation is most effective, including councillor surgeries and focus groups. This particularly enables us to capture the views of those people in our community who aren't online or are harder to reach. Focus groups, in particular, can be very resource intensive and expensive, so only used when really necessary.

Social media and e-newsletters

We mainly use our social media channels and e-newsletters to communicate consultations to our community. To keep up to date with projects and share your views, **sign up here** for e-newsletters and follow us on Facebook (@northhertsdc), Twitter (@NorthHertsDC) and Instagram (@northhertsdc).

5.0 KEEPING YOU UPDATED

Your feedback is important to us. We'd love to hear your views and keep you informed on the progress of projects and next steps on services.

Sign up here for announcements of new projects and progress updates on current projects through our community engage platform.

Click here to sign up to our Citizen's Panel or Local Partner Pool – just let us know which you're signing up for.

Results of all consultations will also be published on our website: www.north-herts.gov.uk/consultations

6.0 CONTACT

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