

Agenda



Democratic Services Committee

Date: Friday, 27 January 2023

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Committee Room 7 - Civic Centre

To: Councillors D Fouweather (Chair), T Watkins, K Thomas, A Sterry, P Hourahine, T Harvey, A Pimm, M Spencer and E Stowell-Corten

Item	Wards Affected
1	<u>Apologies</u>
2	<u>Declarations of Interest</u>
3	<u>Minutes of Meeting held on 13 December 2022</u> (Pages 3 - 8)
4	<u>Participation Strategy: Ward Meetings</u> (Pages 9 - 22)
5	<u>Date of next Meeting</u> 21 February 2023 at 10am
6	<u>Webcast of Committee</u> Democratic Services Committee, 27 January 2023 - YouTube

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Minutes

Democratic Services Committee

Date: 13 December 2022

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors D Fouweather (Chair), T Watkins, K Thomas, A Sterry, P Hourahine, T Harvey, A Pimm and M Spencer

Felicity Collins, Elizabeth Bryant (Monitoring Officer), Leanne Rowlands (Customer Services Manager) and Pamela Tasker (Governance Officers)

In Attendance:

Apologies: Councillors E Stowell-Corten

1 Apologies

Councillor Corten.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillor K Thomas implied that all Members have an interest as it affects all Wards.

3 Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 18 October 2022 were accepted and approved as a true record of the meeting.

4 Ward Meetings

The Democratic Services Manager presented the Ward Meeting Report to Committee which contains possible changes to the support for ward meetings.

Since the pandemic, the face to face meetings came to a stop and were not re-instated as there are a range of ways of making representation to the public.

It was noted that the council is required under the Local Government Act to encourage residents to engage and the Participation Strategy has been developed. It was noted that people want more of a voice not through just digital means.

Members were advised that the report aims to support all of the requirements on consulting with the public in a broader approach, including face to face approaches and facilitating the feedback from the residents on the decisions on ward meetings.

Key points:

The report proposes for two ward meetings to be facilitated per year for each ward. The first meeting would be around the budget consultation and the second would be six months later focusing on council performance and service plan feedback.

It was noted that the ward meetings would be supported by officers in setting up the meetings and helping with the publicity to ensure they are well attended.

The meetings would be discretionary as it would be down to the Ward Member requirements. Members were reminded that if every ward wanted to hold twice yearly meetings, that would come to 42 meetings per year and they would require adequate officer support for those meetings to happen.

A consistent approach is necessary and that this is a proposed change in supporting those meetings, it is a requirement for the committee to make and share the process with other Councillors.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager went through the consultation feedback from the residents.

Committee raised the following points:

- Councillor Thomas felt that the documentation could be made more accessible and explanatory and used an example, stating that the planning application documents are counter-intuitive. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager assured Members that they will be updating the Committee in February to share on how they have progressed the participation strategy.
- An observation was made by Councillor Thomas that the comments from residents in the consultation have an angry tone. The Chair stated that with online feedback, people can hide behind usernames, whereas in neighbourhood committee meetings they are there for a sensible discussion, and therefore accountable for their comments.
- Councillor Thomas noted that the Stow Hill ward should have the ability to have ward meetings and felt it was regrettable they could not have been reinstated sooner since the pandemic. It was highlighted by the Member that the ward meetings are one but a very important strand of the participation strategy but felt that the strengths of having ward meetings were lost in the document.

When looking at different sections; the Member felt that the agenda should be led by the residents and not the council as it was noted their ward would hold three meetings a year in which residents had an opportunity to raise issues.

Councillor Thomas also expressed concern on the point of two meetings per year being sufficient; as the Stow Hill Ward would do and disagreed with the prescribed maximum number of two per ward as Members have local issues which arise and therefore it would not be desirable to use the proposed agenda model.

- The Chair reminded the Members that it would be one meeting to discuss the budget, and then another for the council performance which would be prescriptive on what is being discussed and also to take into account the staffing levels for facilitating those meetings.

- Councillor Watkins asked if there would be an opportunity to have extra ward meetings with Senior Officers in attendance.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager advised that support from a senior officer for minute taking would be for two meetings a year. But reminded Members that the ward meetings are not the only way to liaise with the public as they would not replace the surgeries and other methods that the Councillors have in place.

It was explained that it is about formalising the support the council are able to provide. Although the ward meetings are not the only part of the participation strategy they are trying to move it forward with the resident's wishes and provide support to the Members.

It was noted that not all Members are experienced in those type of meetings so the senior officer's presence would add assurance.

- Councillor Watkins noted he was a single ward member for one of roughly the largest wards in Newport. Therefore the Member wished to clarify whether residents will be able to dial in remotely to the ward meetings. The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager advised that is not something they have considered but they could potentially look into that. However the ward meetings are supposed to be a different way to engage with the residents aside from via technology; as they already have good Wi-Fi consultation and interactions through social media. This would be for those residents who may not have access via the technology.
- Councillor Watkins asked if it would be possible for the ward meetings to be in place for the upcoming budget consultation period.

The Lead Officer confirmed that they are looking to put as many meetings together for the Members who wish to have them in the New Year. They are aware of the tight timeline from cabinet consultation until the 2nd February 2023.

- Councillor Sterry noted that he is in the biggest ward in Newport and the numbers of attendees fluctuate for in person meetings. Therefore the Member asked the officers to confirm how they would look to advertise the ward meetings to reach all of the residents.

It was mentioned that his party asked for Lliswerry's meetings to be advertised in Newport Matters but were told they could not as that was classed as political.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager recognised that while social media is a good tool, they are mindful of the less engaged residents and continue to look for places where the information can be shared in a formalised standard approach.

- Councillor Thomas made the suggestion of a rolling table on the website for residents.

The Democratic Services Manager advised that the suggestion could be looked into.

- Councillor Hourahine noted that he agreed with the notion that the topics should be agreed with the chair with a rotating chairperson for the meeting as they do within his ward. The Member went on to state that the options set out on page 13 are for Committee to approve the framework and make further amendments at that stage.

It was recognised by the Member that by agreeing to that, they would be putting those ward meetings in place but stressed it would be unlikely for wards to go back to three meetings a year.

The Member felt that the options were fairly straightforward if they were approved but if the committee would not approve, they would like to ask the officers to consider the flexibility points that have been made.

- Discussion ensued amongst the Members and the Chair felt that the council should not be prescriptive on what to discuss with the agenda. Committee acknowledged it would be a tight timescale to organise the meetings for this coming budget consultation and the Chair suggested that they could push the decision back and get the amendments that the committee has requested so they could be in place for the future years.
- It was acknowledged by Councillor Sterry that some wards are a lot smaller than others in size and some may have more meetings a year and asked for that to be taken into consideration.

The Chair noted the logistical problems for all different types of wards. The Member also noted Councillor Watkins' issue of a venue may not be able to support the digital meeting but it was noted by Councillor Watkins that some community councils, were offered finance from the Welsh Government to set up the remote dialling in system.

- Councillor Thomas asked with regard to the options on page 13 on the acceptance of framework; if the ward meeting suggestion was accepted, would the Committee accept the participation strategy.

In response, the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager clarified they would not be accepting the strategy itself, just the ward meetings being held twice a year.

The Chair asked each Committee Member to confirm their recommendations for clarity.

- Councillor Thomas suggested for the wards to have the option of three meetings, not a prescribed number of two as it is necessary for some wards to address a wide range of issues with their constituents.
- Councillor Watkins was willing to accept the framework as a minimum but would like to see Members being able to request and arrange additional ward meetings with a senior officer present as local issues arise.
- Councillor Spencer agreed that the wards should be able to have a minimum of three meetings per year.
- Councillor Hourahine wished for the agenda of the ward meetings to be co-ordinated with the chair of those meetings and agreed that there should be a minimum of three ward meetings allowed.

- Councillor Sterry confirmed he was happy with the proposal but expressed his concern with the minimum number being two for meetings per year as his area has four due to the amount of residents in the ward.
- Councillor Pimm confirmed he was happy with the mentioned proposals.
- Councillor Harvey stated that he would be happy with a minimum of two meetings with the option for additional meetings if needed.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager confirmed that the Committee Members would accept the framework with the following recommendations considered:

1. A minimum of two ward meetings a year.
2. An agenda set by the co-ordinators and residents rather than a prescribed one.
3. Support for other meetings such as ad-hoc meetings.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager advised the Committee that she is happy to take back the recommendations and will have another look at the proposal but reminded the Members there will be a limit on the number of meetings handled by senior officers. The Committee were asked to note that the council is in a tough position over the past few months' capacity wise.

- Councillor Watkins noted that it would not mean that the officers would have to be there for everything, like police officers.
- The Chair noted they would require a helping hand for advertising the meeting and asked if the Committee would need to wait until January to discuss the report.

The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that given the timeline, it would need to be discussed in January 2023.

- Councillor Thomas mentioned with regard to advertising; a strategy of an undertaking from the officers that they recognise the commitment to advertise in certain ways. In Stow Hill, a poster would be produced, and suggested one on the website on a rolling basis, or in Newport Matters. It was mentioned that Councillors would do the majority as they print the leaflets and footwork themselves.

In response, the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager advised that the council would look into the suggestions made but appreciated with the costings; they have to ensure they are supported under the budget.

The Committee wished to go with the second option for further information provided in an additional meeting for January 2023 before the scheduled meeting of 21 February 2023.

5 **Date of Next Meeting**

The Committee Members agreed to re-convene for an ad-hoc meeting in January 2023. The meeting booked after that will be on Tuesday 21 February 10am-12pm Committee Room 1.

The Chair suggested after that the Members could get the report to all Members so they can input additional comments through email.

Meeting terminated at 10:50 hrs

Report



Democratic Services Committee

Part 1

Date: 27th January 2023

Subject Participation Strategy: Ward Meetings

Purpose To consider the role of ward meetings under the Participation Strategy which was implemented by the Council in May 2022.
To make any comments on the proposed framework to support ward meetings.

Author Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

Ward City wide

Summary Under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 Local Authorities are required to publish a Participation Strategy that supports residents to become more involved in decision-making and to encourage more diversity in decision-makers.

Democratic Services Committee supported the development of the Strategy, which was adopted by the Council in May 2022.

Key objectives under this strategy include;

- (a) ways of promoting awareness among local people of the principal council's functions;
- (c) ways of facilitating access for local people to information about decisions made, or to be made, by the principal council;
- (d) ways of promoting and facilitating processes by which local people may make representations to the principal council about a decision before, and after, it is made;

Feedback from residents regarding the Strategy indicated that indicate that respondents felt that there was room to improve in terms of citizen engagement and involvement in the democratic process. Ward meetings are one of many ways that the Council is able to support public involvement in decision-making; defining an agreed framework for the ward meetings, including the support available for ward councillors will promote consistency and equality in line with the principle aims of the Participation Strategy.

The reinstatement of ward meetings also offers the opportunity for residents to raise items for discussion, supporting the aims of the Participation Strategy in listening to residents and empowering citizen's and communities to have their say on what matters for their local area.

Proposal To note the report and consider the proposed framework to support ward meetings prior to consideration by full Council

Action by Democratic Services Manager

Timetable

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Head of Law and Regulation
- Chief Executive
- Directors
- Heads of Service

Background

In line with The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 the Council published a Participation Strategy in May 2022. The Council already has experience in participation, engagement, consultation and co-production. The expectation is that the Strategy will support the organisation to build on this experience and move towards greater participation over time.

The Act states that a public participation strategy must, in particular, address:

- (a) ways of promoting awareness among local people of the principal council's functions;
- (c) ways of facilitating access for local people to information about decisions made, or to be made, by the principal council;
- (d) ways of promoting and facilitating processes by which local people may make representations to the principal council about a decision before, and after, it is made;

The Strategy aims to be open and responsive to the needs of citizens and communities. This includes engaging local people in participative processes, by which residents can influence and shape policy and services.

Participation is about sharing decisions with those affected by them and must be an integral part of the Council's work. Whilst participation is not about giving groups or individuals whatever they ask for, residents should always have a degree of decision-making power so that they feel listened to and understood.

Participation supports residents to be 'actively involved with policy makers and service planners from an early stage of policy and service planning and review' (Participation Cymru, 2012). Participation should include a wide range of different methods and techniques. Feedback from the consultation on the Participation Strategy indicated that the public would like the Council to be visible to residents, to explore alternative methods of consultation and to ask residents what matters to them.

The Strategy requires the Council to openly share information with residents about the Council's functions, not just when the public are being asked to make a decision. Regular updates and discussions help to make sure people living in Newport have the opportunity to digest and explore information before they may be asked to give their opinion or recommendations.

As public participation is a challenging aspect of council business, it is expected that this strategy will evolve and improve over time as the benefit of experience and good practice becomes evident.

Ward meetings

The 'Practitioners' Manual for Public Engagement' (Participation Cymru, 2012) defines consultation as '*a formal process by which policy makers and service providers ask for the views of interested groups and individuals*'. Ward meetings clearly meet the definition of participation under this standard.

Ward meetings were previously held within communities, at the request of elected members, with senior officer and administrative support. Ward meetings did not have a standard framework and ran on an ad-hoc basis, with varied agendas.

Whilst ward meetings offer a valuable opportunity to engage with residents, the inconsistent approach to their content meant that the exchange of information varied depending on location. Adopting a standard framework to support ward meetings will establish a consistent and holistic approach to engaging with communities under the public participation strategy, while making the best use of limited resources. This approach will support the aims of the Participation Strategy by sharing key information about the Council and council service provision, and by engaging with residents on key decisions that will impact their communities in a timely manner.

Through discussion with the Democratic Services Committee in 2022, the feedback from elected members highlighted the key features that they considered to be an essential part of the arrangements for ward meetings. The Committee agreed that it was important to have the option to hold ward meetings on a regular basis to provide the opportunity to engage with residents. Members felt that retaining the option to hold three meetings per year would be beneficial, and that support in promoting the meetings beforehand would promote wider awareness in the community. However, Committee Members also recognised the resource required to support ward meetings must be balanced against the economic challenges facing all local authorities. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to develop and strengthen participative engagement with the community on important conversations, including setting the budget and reflecting on performance, but emphasised the requirement for communities to set their own agenda for discussion. The Committee requested that the proposed framework and support be reconsidered with this feedback in mind.

Framework and Support

Formalising the approach to ward meetings will ensure a consistent and equitable approach to the dialogue for residents in all wards, supporting the aims of the participation strategy.

Over the cycle of the municipal year, there are key corporate decisions such as budget setting and the medium term financial plan that the Council routinely engages with citizens on. Methods of engagement include consultation that can be accessed online, and as a gateway to the public Wi-Fi available across the City. Utilising one of the regular ward meetings to focus on budget setting and supporting residents to engage with this process on a face-to-face basis will encourage rich and meaningful feedback that shapes the outcome

of the decisions being made. The budget setting cycle would require the ward meeting to take place in January to support the collection of meaningful feedback to inform the decision making process. Nonetheless, it is recognised that providing the opportunity for residents to set points for discussion is important, so the agenda would include the budget setting process, and topics raised for discussion by the community through their elected representatives.

In addition, a second supported ward meeting approximately six months after the budget setting ward meeting would provide a further opportunity to promote awareness of the Council's functions including a summary of progress against key objectives and projects. Again, the agenda would also include items raised by residents for discussion.

Two ward meetings per ward on an annual basis would potentially be forty-two in total that would be supported by officers. Based on feedback from Democratic Services Committee, Members would have the option of holding a third meeting but there would be limitations on the officer support due to the volume of meetings involved and the investment of officer time this represents.

Administrative support to schedule and arrange up to three ward meetings per year will be provided via Democratic Services. Further administrative support will be provided by officers from across the Council at two meetings per year, to ensure that feedback from residents is recorded and collated centrally to support consultation and feed into the decision-making process. Support from Senior Officers will also be provided to ward members at two ward meetings per year. This will be on a pre-planned, rostered basis so that there is appropriate assistance whilst continuing to support the work-life balance of officers when working outside of usual office hours. Where Members wish to hold a third meeting, administrative support would be provided for booking suitable venues within communities for ward meetings, but there would be no officer support at the meetings.

Support in promoting up to three ward meetings would be provided, to include promotion via social media accounts, Newport Matters and limited amounts of posters produced to a set template.

Whilst the proposed framework would support meetings in each ward if required, it would remain within the remit of the ward member/s to determine whether the ward meetings are held in their own community. Members may prefer to communicate with their residents in a different way, and in this case are not obliged to hold ward meetings. However, for those wards who want the meetings, then this is a consistent way of organising and structuring the meetings.

Ad-hoc meetings concerning specific issues arising affecting communities would be considered on a case by case basis.

The Ward Meeting framework does not replace other methods of engagement with communities that are open to Councillors, such as ward surgeries, casework, emails or social media, for example.

This framework will support the development of more participative decision making with the community whilst balancing the resource requirements needed to provide appropriate support. The proposed framework balances the aims of the Participation Strategy in engaging citizens in important conversations and empowering them to set part of the agenda themselves.

Consultation

Statutory consultation concerning the Participation Strategy was open for 30 days in February and March 2022.

The feedback received as part of the consultation supported the actions outlined in the strategy to encourage participation. The full response to the consultation can be found in Appendix B. The responses to questions and comments feedback indicates that residents are interested in the decisions that the Council makes, and would welcome having more of a voice as part of the decision making process. The feedback gathered as additional comments in the responses indicate that respondents felt that there was room to improve in terms of citizen engagement and involvement in the democratic process. The respondents felt that the actions outlined in the strategy would help residents to become more involved in decision making. The insights gained through the additional comments indicate that residents would like engagement to focus on more varied and alternative methods of communication, particularly with potentially harder to reach groups.

Financial Summary

There are no direct financial implications associated with the proposed framework.

Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of Risk occurring	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce it's effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the Risk?
Failure to meet the legislative requirements set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to support residents to be actively involved in democratic processes	H	L	Participation Strategy has been adopted by the Council and this will be developed to increase transparency and engagement with residents	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Failure to support residents to participate via ward meetings in a fair and equitable way	H	L	Framework in place to support consistent approach to ward meetings	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

*Taking account of proposed mitigation measures.

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Whilst the Corporate Plan is still in development at the time of preparing this report, the Participation Strategy will be embedded as part of the Corporate Plan. This will be reflected throughout the strategic plans, right down to the service plans in each area.

Other Council strategies and plans that link closely to this work are The Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 and the Newport Well-being Plan 2017-22. The commonality with the Equality Plan is involving local people in the decisions that affect them, considering diverse needs when developing services and helping people to feel connected to the place that they live.

The goals that the Strategy shares with the Newport Well-being Plan relate to Sustainable Development principles under the Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Specifically, Involving People and developing solutions in partnership with local people and communities, and ensuring they are involved in decisions that affect them. The aim under the Well-being Plan is that people and communities are friendly, confident and empowered to improve their well-being. This plan is also currently under revision but will continue to support the principles of the Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Options Available and Considered

1. Approve the framework and endorse it for recommendation at Council
2. Do not approve the framework or endorse it for recommendation at Council

Preferred Option and Why

Option 1. The Committee is asked to note the report, and approve the ward meeting framework for adoption.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There will be no adverse budgetary impact as a result of these proposals, the proposed framework to support ward meetings will be fully funded through existing budgets. Any further development to this level of support would require additional budget or grant to be identified so that the support remains fully funded.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

The proposed action is in accordance with the Council's statutory duty under section 39 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to encourage local people to participate in decision-making. The proposed framework for ward meetings is also consistent with the Council's Participation Strategy, under section 40 of the Act, and the promotion of increased public engagement and consultation.

Neighbourhood Committees were originally introduced by the Council in the 1990's and, at the time, this was an innovative approach to engaging with the public in the local ward areas. The meetings were formal in nature and organised on traditional committee lines, with the senior ward member chairing the meeting and published agendas and minutes. However, they were never decision-making bodies and therefore not strictly Council "committees". Over time, the role of the Neighbourhood Committees changed significantly, particularly with the development of Executive governance arrangements and advancements in technology, with more effective ways of communicating and engaging with much larger numbers of local residents. Following a review in 2011, the structured arrangements for quarterly Neighbourhood Committee meetings in each ward were changed to a more flexible approach to ward meetings. The meetings were held at times and at venues agreed with the ward Councillors, supported by senior officers, who also set the topics for discussion at the public meetings. There were no longer any formal agendas reports or minutes and the ward meetings were conducted on a more informal basis, as a means of engagement and

communication with the public. Although there was a limit of three ward meetings in any calendar year, it was left to the discretion of the members in each ward as to how and when any meetings were arranged, if at all.

Prior to the suspension of ward meetings during the Covid-19 lock-down period, some wards held ward meetings on a regular basis, others only held meetings in response to specific issues, for example as part of a consultation exercise. Some wards did not use ward meetings at all, as they found that other communication methods with their residents were more effective.

This proposal would involve the reintroduction of discretionary ward meetings, but on a more structured basis and in accordance with the new Participation Strategy. Where ward members wish to hold ward meetings, then they will focus on key areas of consultation and participatory decision making, namely the budget and delivery of the corporate plan and well-being objectives. However, the ward meetings are only one of a number of tools available to elected members and the Council to engage with residents and, where other methods of consultation are considered to be more effective, then residents in those areas will receive the same information and opportunities to respond. Therefore, ward members will still have the choice of whether or not to hold these consultation meetings in their wards.

Comments of People, Policy and Transformation

The Council's Participation Strategy aims to strengthen engagement with residents, increase their involvement in decision making and their understanding of the democratic process. The particular focus is the relationship between Ward members and the Council as a democratic body and local people. This report outlines a framework for consistent and supported Ward meetings across the local authority area. It also sets out a focus for Ward Meetings, centred around the budget setting process which had previously only engaged with a relatively small proportion of the population in a centralised manner. The introduction of face-to-face ward meetings will complement the increasing use of electronic forms of public engagement helping ensure the Council is inclusive of more societal and equalities groups and avoiding digital exclusion.

Local Issues

Not applicable.

Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010

A fairness and equalities impact assessment has been drafted and will be updated following further consultation.

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The support framework supports the development of A More Equal Wales; achieving more diversity and inclusion in the voices that are heard in decision-making will help to reduce inequalities. The Strategy does not adversely affect any of the other Well-being Goals for Wales.

The Strategy supports The Well-being Plan 2018-23 objective;

3) People and communities are friendly, confident and empowered to improve their well-being

This will be supported through working with residents and communities to develop solutions and empowering the community as part of the decision making process.

The Strategy supports the Equality Plan 2020-2024 objectives;

1. Leadership, Governance and Involvement.
2. Community Cohesion

By supporting residents to be involved in making the decisions that affect them, considering diverse needs when developing services and helping people to feel connected to the place that they live.

The framework supports the long-term development of better engagement and involvement of residents over time so that it continues to meet the changing needs of local people.

Consultation

Full details of public consultation are outlined in an earlier section of this report. Consultation concerning the proposed strategy will be open for 30 days commencing in October 2022.

Background Papers

- <https://www.newport.gov.uk/documents/Council-and-Democracy/Participation-Strategy-Final-Format.pdf>
- [The Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024](#)
- [Well-being Plan 2018-2023](#)

Appendices

Appendix A

Responses to Consultation



Consultation
Results Participati

Consultation on Public Participation Strategy

Page 1

Under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, local authorities in Wales must publish a Participation Strategy that sets out the ways in which local people are encouraged to participate in decision-making by the council.

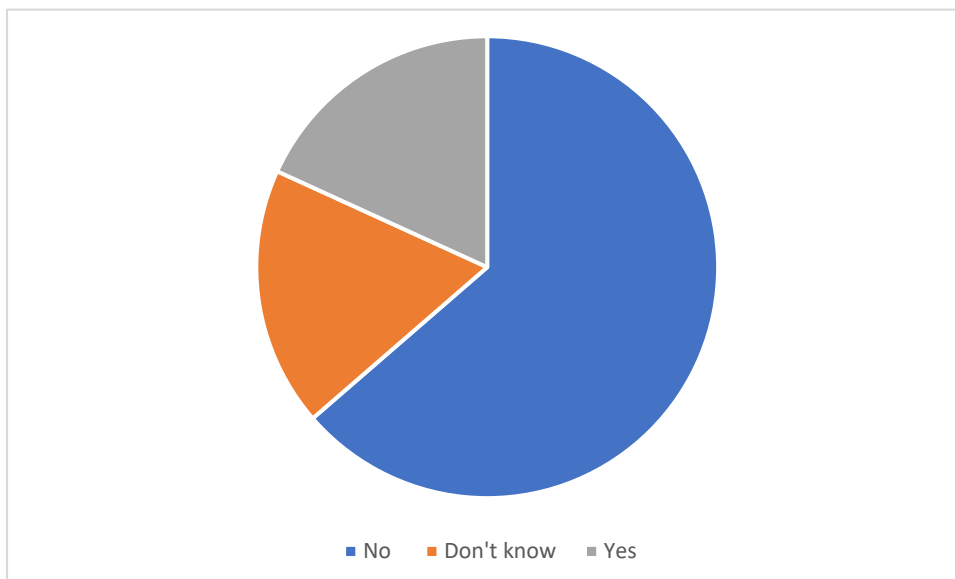
This strategic plan outlines Newport City Council's priorities for encouraging participation in decision making. Public participation plays a key role in providing better outcomes for both the Council and stakeholders.

The Council's stakeholders include citizens, businesses, visitors and others. The Council wants to take steps to ensure all voices are heard, particularly those from seldom-heard groups and young people are also given the opportunity to participate.

The draft Participation Strategy outlines the Council's current position and details the actions that will be undertaken by the Council to encourage and facilitate all stakeholders to take part in the decision-making process.

<Link to Draft Public Participation Strategy>

Question 1: Are you confident that you could find out how and why the Council had taken a decision that you felt affected you?



If no - why not?

Nothing is ever clearcut and straightforward.

To many layers of beauracracy within NCC. No accountability when challenge just a standard response of send an email that is never responded too.

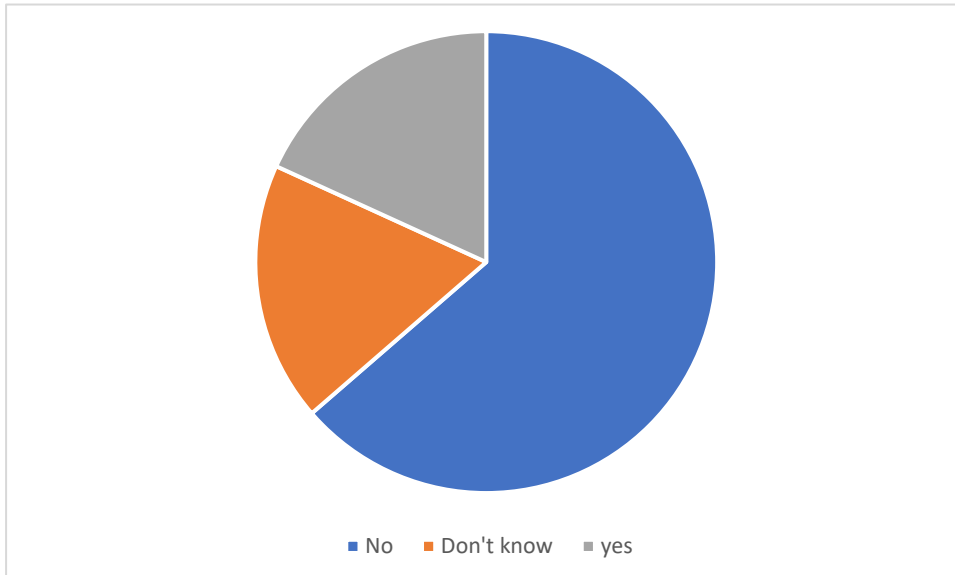
I struggle to find reports and documents on the website using the search facilities

As the council will continue to ignore the feedback from the consultation. Their argument will be there was limited engagement.

It's all very opaque. The website is not easily navigable and councillors don't appear to be there.

I find it difficult to contact anyone

Question 2: Are you confident that you would be able to influence a decision being made by the Council that you felt affected you?



If no - why not?

Decisions are often made and agreed but not always followed through. I understand circumstances change but that shouldn't mean "goal posts" are moved.

NCC does only what it wants. It is not interested in public opinion. If it did it would not overturn planning permissions in its favour and would not let the roads of Newport be in the condition they are in.

They don't listen to people's views

As the council will continue to ignore the feedback from the consultation. Their argument will be there was limited engagement.

Planning applications -the net is not cast wide enough. Eg, I live above Batchelor Road and there is an HMO application pending. I am not told about this when say, 5 cars will have a knock on effect on my road.

I feel that often, lip service is provided to residents rather than a genuine effort to listen.

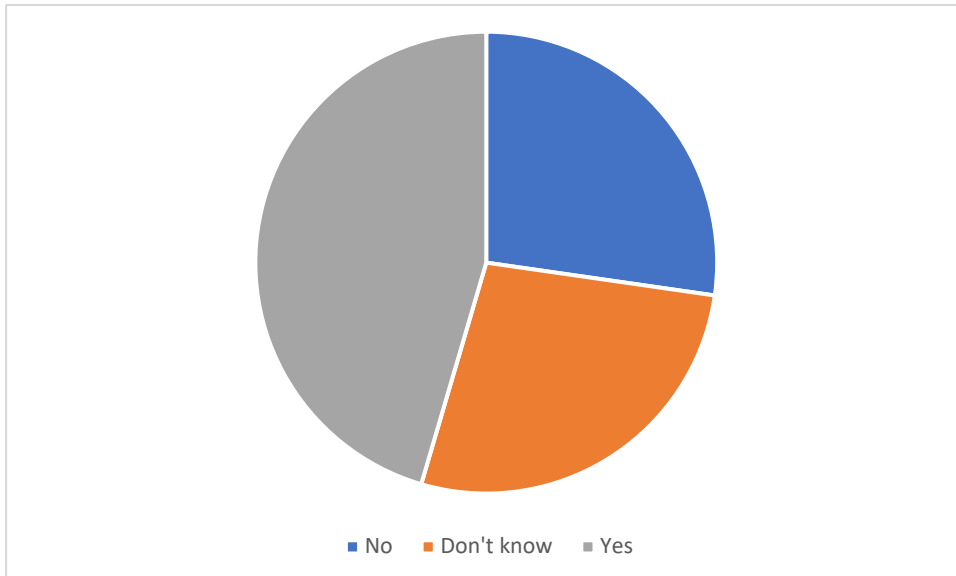
Page 2

We want to be open and transparent about how we make decisions and help residents understand and fulfil their role in the decision-making process

Action 1: Publishing a Guide to the Democratic Process

Action 2: Improving the Council website so that it is easier to access information

- Action 3: Ensuring that the council's forward plan supports public engagement by being accessible, timely and user friendly
- Action 4: Adopt more participative approaches to engagement which empower citizens and place decision making in the hands of communities and individuals e.g. participatory budgeting exercises.
- Action 5: Using technology to increase the reach of engagement activity, for example, using public wi-fi to promote surveys.
- Question 3: Do you feel these actions will make it easier for you to influence decisions being taken by the Council?



If no - why not?

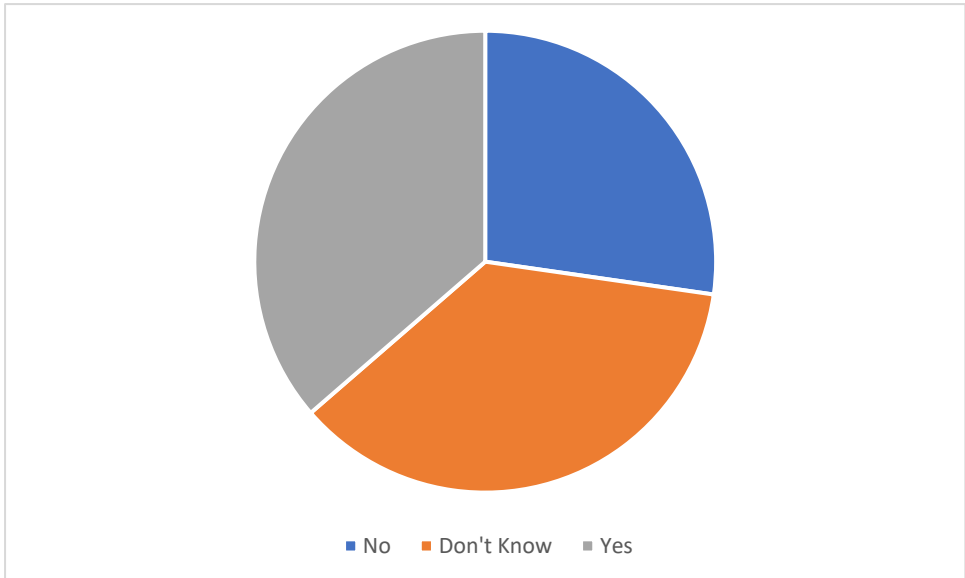
Number 1 :- not user friendly or easy to read. Number 2 :- website is awful, see #1 Number 3:- see #1 Number 4:- The council are out of touch with many citizens and don't listen anyway. Number5:- see number 4.

You talk of technology what about vulnerable groups who do not or cannot rely on technology?

As the council will continue to ignore the feedback from the consultation. Their argument will be there was limited engagement.

Page 3

- Action 6: Ensuring that information for potential councillors is available and informative.
- Action 7: Implementing technology that allows Councillors to attend and participate in Council meetings from any location with an internet connection.
- Question 4: Do you feel these actions will make it easier for residents to understand the role of a Councillor and consider representing their community?



If no - why not?

Can't see how the above improves supports residents engage with cllrs

The 2 points do not in any way explain the expectations of councils.

Page 4

We want residents to feel that decisions have been made **together**, taking on board public opinion when making Council policy.

Action 8: Developing a petition scheme that sets out how the Council intends to handle and respond to petitions including electronic petitions.

Action 9: Regularly reporting on comments received from residents

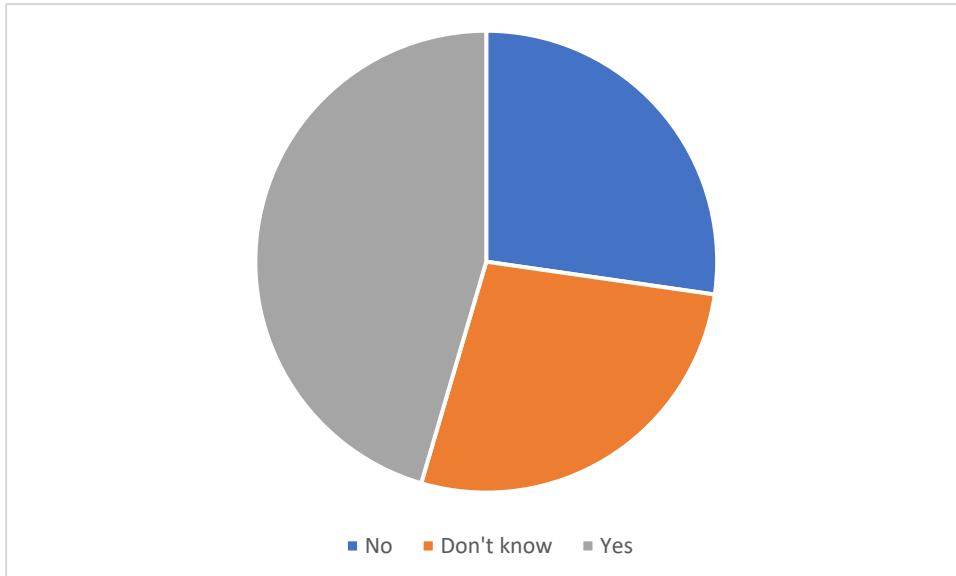
Action 10: Developing a better understanding of the demographics of residents who regularly provide feedback, so that any gaps in representation can be identified.

Action 11: Review and update the Scrutiny Public Engagement Strategy.

Action 12: Report on progress made against these actions through the Council's Annual Self Assessment Report

Action 13: Promoting engagement with residents via social media through induction training and ongoing support for Councillors

Question 5: Do you feel these actions will make it easier for residents to influence decisions taken by the Council??



If no - why not?
Even the question itself is so long winded it shows the lack of understanding in relation to engagement needed
Again you are targeting a certain demographic who use social media, what about those that don't.what happens when those raising concerns via social media do not get responses how are these concerns escalated.

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Question 6: Is there anything else that you think we should consider to make it easier for people to find out how decisions are taken by the Council?

(Free text)

Maybe the worst survey on engagement ever written- so heart and confusing on the narrative it'll be amazing if anyone makes it to the end and this is about communication!!
Be visible, research the residents in your authority area, ask them what matters to them. I have contacted the council via social media twice to not receive a response.
Consultation with children , young people and the public linked to strategic documents such as Newports Play Sufficiency Assessment to be made public to allow residents to know that their views and opinions have been heard and that they have been acted upon and reflected in the Action Plan moving forward Nas recommended by Welsh Government
Simpler plain English guides to how the council decision making process works
More transparency and less vanity projects. Focus on what people actually want.
Drastically improve customer response times as it is difficult for cusomters to wait on the phone for a long time or wait up to two weeks for a reply to an e-mail.

Question 7: Is there anything else that you think we should consider to make it easier for people to influence decisions taken by the Council?

(Free text)

As above!

It might help if all areas of Newport were on your list of areas.

From a personal perspective people get fed up of completing surveys .. having alternative methods of consultation to be explored.. online focus groups , using social media to ask questions through polls will allow a greater response to issues that affect all

Make it easier to find information online.

Treat petitions as a mini referendum and make sure they are taken into account or have some teeth. Don't go through the motions like the Senedd does. Petitions mean nothing there.

Drastically improve customer response times as it is difficult for customers to wait on the phone for a long time or wait up to two weeks for a reply to an e-mail.