Review of Public Engagement in Newport City Council

1.0   Purpose

To review the Council's engagement and consultation arrangements against current requirements, feedback from Scrutiny and other work and good practice examples and make recommendations for development.

2.0   Background

Public engagement is an integral part of democracy and the functioning of Local Government. There is a statutory basis for involvement of stakeholders in decision making stemming from legislation including the Equalities Act 2010 the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 and most recently the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015.

Under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act there is a duty on public bodies to 'involve' stakeholders in improving their own and their community's wellbeing. This duty is part of the wider sustainable development duty set out in the Act which introduces then following 'five ways of working':

1. **Long-term** – public bodies must work toward long term, sustainable wellbeing benefits.
2. **Prevention** – we should act now to avoid future problems or to stop problems from getting worse.
3. **Collaboration** – we should work with a range of stakeholders, including empowering citizens to deliver wellbeing goals.
4. **Integration** – we should consider all seven wellbeing goals and also the wellbeing objectives of other partners in the course of our business
5. **Involvement** – the specific duty to incorporate engagement into our work.

It can be noted that all five of the above duties are grounded in principles of citizen engagement and participation.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee have taken a specific interest in public engagement and asked that the Council report back on any work being done to address / implement their recommendations from their consideration of this year's engagement related to the Budget process (made at their meeting on 1 February 2018).

These recommendations are summarised as:

- What actions the Council are undertaking to address concerns about the public engagement process in the budget for 2019/20
- What steps the Council are making in the development of a strategic approach to public engagement,
- Process for ensuring robust information is presented next year as part of the public consultation (including the consistency of information within the business cases)
- How to ensure that feedback is made available to consultees,
- And the medium the Consultations are available, through to ensure increased ease of access to the public in the future.

The Committee requested that they receive an update at their meeting on Thursday 26 July. At that meeting the Head of People and Business Change presented a report which included the progress that had been made and the current plan for the consultation and engagement on this year's budget proposals. The Head of Service also discussed the Hierarchy of Engagement and the examples within the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) and gave examples of how to move from *Informing* to *Empowering* citizens. It was thought that the Council were generally at the consult phase, and on occasions had moved towards involving citizens. Empowering citizens to be decision makers was a longer process, but the Council was in a similar position to other organisations.

Additionally, the Officer discussed online surveys and advised Social media online surveys (SNAP) were being developed. The work of Newport Youth Council was outlined and aims to develop the participation and involvement of young people in public services and decision-making.

The Head of People and Business Change also explained that a review of public engagement was underway which would look at wider and at the longer-term issues and report to the Committee at their meeting on 15th November.

The following report sets out the findings of the review of public engagement and also recaps on the specific work to improve engagement on the Council's budget.

## 3.0   Rationale for the review

The following review will consider how the Council has approached consultation with the public, and how effective this engagement has been. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee's role is then to establish if the Officers have identified the areas for improvement and any actions which can be carried forward. For reasons of clarity a series of recommendations have been included in the body of this report as they arise, they are then brought together as a way forward in the recommendations section 7.0.

The Council is involved in many different types of public engagement in the course of its business, however this review will specifically consider engagement which focusses on the involvement of the public and stakeholder groups in decision making. Further to this, the main focus will be on engagement work that is supported by the corporate centre i.e. People and Business Change through the Partnership, Policy and Involvement team. This will include the Council's budget, key strategies like the Wellbeing Plan, the Schools Accessibility Strategy etc. Whilst there is significant engagement which takes place directly by service areas without central support this work is often limited in scope and wider relevance and the service area will often be best placed to lead on it, with central support provided when necessary.

In order to consider how effectively we engage with the public we need to have an understanding of what good practice looks like within local government. There are a range of different approaches within local authorities, and some authorities will spend significantly more than others so it is difficult to compare like with like. However the basic outcomes of engagement will centre around:

- How many responses are received to engagement exercises
- How good local people think the council is at engagement
- What are the different ways in which the council engages with local people
- The range and representativeness of respondents
- How meaningful engagement work is e.g. the level of participation and involvement, timeliness, feedback which demonstrates that engagement has influenced decision making

As part of this review we have looked to answer these questions and also to compare the current situation with expectations and aspirations. The review will be centred around the following themes:

Engagement Review themes
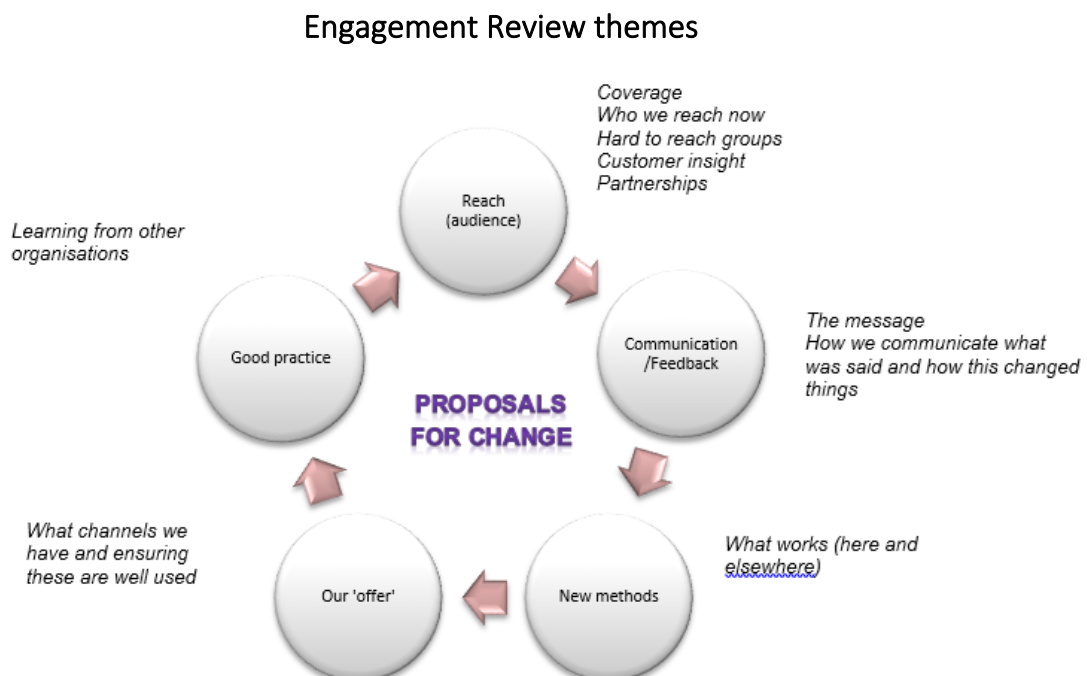
4.0   Our 'offer' – the support and resources currently available

As a Council we currently have a range of methods and approaches to support engagement across the Council. We also have links with partner organisations through the Public Services Board Engagement sub group to coordinate engagement activities and share best practice and resources. This group includes the main statutory partners and third sector engagement specialists e.g. GAVO Engage project. The Engagement Group have contributed to the review and act as a critical friend for instance the analysis in section 6.0 was developed in collaboration with the Engagement Group in a workshop.

Table 1

Engagement methods	Reach	Comments

Budget Consultation
      Pre-proposal survey
      Online survey
      Printed survey
      Engagement events
	All ages can respond including children and young people	Responses are often clustered around specific proposals eg which affect respondents. rather than a more objective and holistic viewpoint.

Citizens Panel	Response rates are currently around 300-400. Ages from 16+ can take part, however in practice active members tend to be 45+ age ranges with few young people	Well established and used by services. Recent steps taken to recruit additional members. Service Areas to be reminded of this and other corporate engagement resources.
Bus Wifi Surveys	Around 7000-8000 respondents. Can be used every month. Age range is younger than citizens panel and reaches a high number below age 25.	A new method which has proven ground breaking in terms of reach. However surveys must be kept short and not in-depth.
Schools Wellbeing Survey	Runs every 3 years and focusses on pupil wellbeing. Response rates between 500-1500.	Will be run again in 2019.
Newport Youth Council	Young people aged 11-25. Currently around 15 members	Aims to involve young people in influencing decision making and giving them a voice in public life.
Social media online surveys (using SNAP)	Reach is large with more than 20,000 NCC social media followers.	Increasingly used to share information, news, surveys and events
Consultation on major strategies e.g. Wellbeing Plan, Local Development Plan	Depends on the focus of the strategy. The recent Wellbeing Assessment/Plan involved widespread engagement and achieved diverse response rate.	Service Area to be reminded of corporate resources and support available for this type of consultation and engagement.
Pupil Participation and Learning Network	Primary school network aimed at empowering young people and developing the 'pupil voice'	Strong work at school level although limited to 8 schools at present
Specific engagement events e.g. Families Love Newport, budget Q&A sessions. 'Kids take over Libraries' event.	Can be targeted to clients groups or open-access. Can use council venues e.g. the Market, Info Station, libraries, summer events.	Working to better coordinate events through multi-agency Engagement Group and to make use of existing events wherever possible, rather than run additional events
Ward members	Ward Members are active in all	Ward Members have assisted

	20 wards and are the elected representatives	in promotion of consultations, distribution of surveys e.g. in Ward Meetings

4.1   One Newport Engagement Group

The Partnership Policy and Involvement Team convene a multi-agency engagement group for officers to advise on the development and co-ordination of consultation and engagement activities conducted across the Public Service Board (PSB)

The core aims of the Group are to:

- Coordinate consultation activity
- Communicate consultation and intelligence
- Contribute to a central data resource
- Share best practice
- Enable citizen's to participate
- Effectively engage with the people, communities and groups we represent

The group is made up from members of the key public agencies and local partners like Newport City Homes, GAVO, SEWREC etc. This group was instrumental in achieving a large response to the Wellbeing Plan consultation by supporting the Council to consult at public events run by partners e.g. Sports in the Park, Newport City Homes tenants panels etc. Through the Big Lottery funded Engage Project the Council was able to engage with a range of hard to reach groups including BME populations, BME young people, adults with learning disabilities and older people in residential care. Unfortunately funding for the Engage Project ceased in April 2018 and this poses a potential risk in terms of continuity and reach.

Recommendation
GAVO to advise the One Newport PSB on continuity arrangements following the end of Engage Project funding

People and Business Change to remind all service areas of the engagement offer and support available to them to ensure engagement remains a year round cycle.

5.0   Our Reach – how successful is this?

5.1   Public perception of Council engagement

The public's perception of engagement arrangements is probably one of the best ways to evaluate how effective we are. There are two main data sources available to us. Firstly the National Survey for Wales survey from 2017/18. The following table shows the responses given by a sample of 500 people from each authority when asked if they thought their Local Authority gives them opportunities to participate in decision making.   Of the 22 Welsh authorities Newport had the joint 4th lowest rate of negative responses, suggesting that engagement was regarded as better than the Wales average.

Table 2

Opportunity to participate in Local Authority decision-making - ranked by negative responses (Lower is better)					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Negative responses
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Neath Port Talbot	-	8	12	21	57	78
Merthyr Tydfil	-	-	17	27	46	72
Blaenau Gwent	-	12	14	27	45	72
Bridgend	-	10	18	23	46	69
Powys	-	14	15	27	42	68
Gwynedd	-	12	18	24	44	68
Isle of Anglesey	-	10	19	27	41	68
Carmarthenshire	-	11	20	28	39	67
Denbighshire	-	11	18	32	35	67
Vale of Glamorgan	-	10	21	29	36	66
Rhondda Cynon Taf	7	11	17	20	45	65
Flintshire	-	14	15	36	27	64
Pembrokeshire	-	16	20	36	28	63
Wrexham	-	15	19	27	35	62
Swansea	-	13	22	26	36	62
Caerphilly	-	16	19	25	36	61
Monmouthshire	-	17	18	35	26	61
Ceredigion	-	15	20	21	40	61
Newport	**-**	**15**	**18**	**18**	**43**	**61**
Torfaen	-	17	19	25	35	60
Conwy	-	16	18	28	30	59
Cardiff	4	18	21	24	33	57

A further question was asked about whether Local Authority's consult with the public when setting their budgets, see table below. Newport City Council performed less well for this question ranking joint 4th lowest (joint 4th highest number of negative responses).

Table 3

Local Authority consults local people when setting their budget - ranked by negative responses						
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Negative responses
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Neath Port Talbot	-	-	12	24	59	83
Blaenau Gwent	-	-	15	26	51	77
Powys	-	8	17	27	47	74
Bridgend	-	9	19	22	49	71
Rhondda Cynon Taf	5	8	16	23	48	71
Vale of Glamorgan	-	-	23	32	38	70
Gwynedd	-	12	16	26	44	70
Newport	**-**	**9**	**17**	**21**	**49**	**70**
Carmarthenshire	-	8	22	29	40	69
Merthyr Tydfil	-	-	19	26	43	69
Denbighshire	-	-	22	33	33	66
Flintshire	-	10	19	38	27	66
Monmouthshire	-	-	26	33	33	66
Wrexham	-	10	21	27	38	65
Torfaen	-	11	23	30	35	65
Swansea	-	7	26	26	39	65
Isle of Anglesey	-	-	23	30	35	65
Conwy	-	12	19	31	33	64
Caerphilly	6	11	20	23	39	62
Ceredigion	-	-	27	24	37	62
Pembrokeshire	-	15	23	36	24	61
Cardiff	6	12	23	27	33	60

These results suggests that we are perceived as doing less well at promoting participation in the budget setting/financial planning process and is consistent with some of the views the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee has expressed. The assumption is that budget engagement in Newport, over the last two years, has to some extent been limited to stakeholders directly affected by particular proposals. We also have anecdotal evidence that the public will sometimes choose not to respond to the budget consultation unless they are directly affected by it, to avoid 'passing judgment' on matters which don't affect them e.g. in the case of proposed changes to respite services which the majority of people did not use and therefore did not want to agree or disagree with. This disassociation with the budget could be addressed by less specific engagement, and focussing on the 'bigger picture' for Council finances as a whole. For example, a budget engagement survey will be undertaken for 2019/20 seeking opinions on how people assign relative importance to different services. This has the additional benefit of not being time-bound by financial settlement announcements, meaning that engagement can begin earlier in the year.

Using a second qualitative data source, in July 2018 we used bus wifi to ask local people a similar question "Do you think you can influence decision making in your local area". The results from a large sample of over 4,800 people were strongly positive with 45% indicating that they thought they could influence decision making, and only 14% thinking that they could not.

Table 4

I can influence decisions affecting my local area	Number of people	Percentage of people
Strongly agree	1290	26.57%
Tend to agree	888	18.29%
Neither agree nor disagree	989	20.37%
Tend to disagree	375	7.72%
Strongly disagree	297	6.12%
Don't know	1017	20.94%
Total Responses	4856	

This high level of positivity might be explained by the fact that the respondents on bus wifi may well have completed as many as six previous Council consultations in previous months, suggesting that their opinions were being actively sought and were valued.

5.2   Response rates

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee have questioned the number of response rates received in the budget consultation, particularly as this is one of the most significant matters for public engagement.

Budget

The budget consultation rates (after formal proposals are released in December) are as follows.

2018/19   294 responses

2017/18   343 responses

2016/17   230 responses

As Scrutiny has noted the total response rate for the budget consultation tends to be a relatively small proportion of Newport residents. This is accepted and ways of increasing this response rate are explored in this report, but it should also be noted that evidence suggests that possibly more than 75% of residents would be unlikely to respond to the budget consultation even if they were aware of it and could access it (source - bus wifi survey Jan 2018). It is however noted that bus wifi respondents are a relatively young demographic, which would suggest that different approaches and methods need to be found to increase the engagement of these groups.

Furthermore, the budget challenge is becoming increasingly complex as many of the proposals offer little choice, and are a selection of unpalatable trade-offs, which may increasingly impact on small numbers of the population depending on their needs (e.g. social care proposals). However it is important that the Council continues to engage with the public to ensure there is an understanding of the challenge and of the view of priorities for communities.

For the 2019/20 budget consultation we have reviewed methods used elsewhere and developed a prioritisation list for the public to be able to show what services are important, and understand the breadth of services (included as appendix 2).

Furthermore, the quality of the information provided to the public on savings proposals has been reviewed for 2019/20 to improve the clarity and use of language. Also improvements have been made to the Fairness and Equalities Impact Assessments (FEIAs) over the last two years and these will play an important part in identifying who might be affected and what the impacts might be. FEIAs now also take sustainable development and wellbeing duties into account.

Bus Wifi surveys - Since starting to use bus wifi total response rates have increased by a huge degree. We now are in a position where our reach and response is probably greater than any of the other Welsh Local Authorities. However it should be noted that consultation on detailed matters e.g. budget proposals would be challenging using bus wifi. During the last budget consultation (for 2018/19 budget) we used bus wifi to raise awareness of the consultation and this reached over 6,000 people, however it did not translate into an increase in numbers of surveys completed.

Bus Wifi response numbers

September 2017	7,796
October 2017	8,616
November 2017	8,716
January 2018	6,310
March 2018	8,551
July 2018	4,867
Average	7,476
Total to date	44,856

5.3 Demographics and representativeness

Obtaining data that reflects the wide-ranging diversity of the population is an important part of effective public engagement. Anonymised demographic data on respondents is routinely collected during centrally supported engagement activity. Accurate demographic data can be obtained from the following sources:

- Council Budget consultation
- Citizens panel
- Bus wifi surveys
- Key strategy consultations e.g. Wellbeing Plan, Waste Strategy, Customer Services

The demographic data collected will vary between different exercises but will commonly include:

- **Gender** – to ensure a balance between sexes and because gender is a protected characteristic under the Equalities Act 2010.
- **Age -** using age groups, which has helped us to identify differences between younger and older people
- **Race –** which is used mainly for monitoring purposes
- **Location –** the area of the city the respondent lives in. This 'spatial data' is usually recorded by ward or sometimes postcode. This helps to monitor geographical coverage and can identify disparities between areas, or changes in perception.
- **Disability –** whether then respondent has a disability to help ensure representativeness of this 'protected group' (Equalities Act 2010) and to identify disparities with the wider population.

The demographic breakdowns of the respondents varies by the different data sources. For instance the formal budget consultation tends to receive the greatest response from the middle age groups (working age adults) between 25 – 64 who account for 81% of the total response.

Table 5

2018/19 budget	Number of people	Percentage of people
0-10 years old	0	0.00%
11-17 years old	7	2.44%
18-24 years old	27	9.41%
25-34 years old	48	16.72%
35-44 years old	85	29.62%
45-54 years old	70	24.39%
55-64 years old	30	10.45%
65-74 years old	18	6.27%
75+ years old	2	0.70%
Total Responses	287	

The demographics of two of the most widely used engagement resources, the citizens panel and bus wifi are markedly different from each other. For instance the citizens panel tends to consist of older residents with a relatively small number of younger people (under 25), whilst bus wifi tends to be more representative of younger age groups with around 50% of respondents under 25 and few people over 64. The different demographics are in practice beneficial as they complement each other and give us alternative ways to reach different audiences. We are also now more aware of how opinions between age groups can differ as shown in Chart 1 below which is taken from a bus wifi survey.
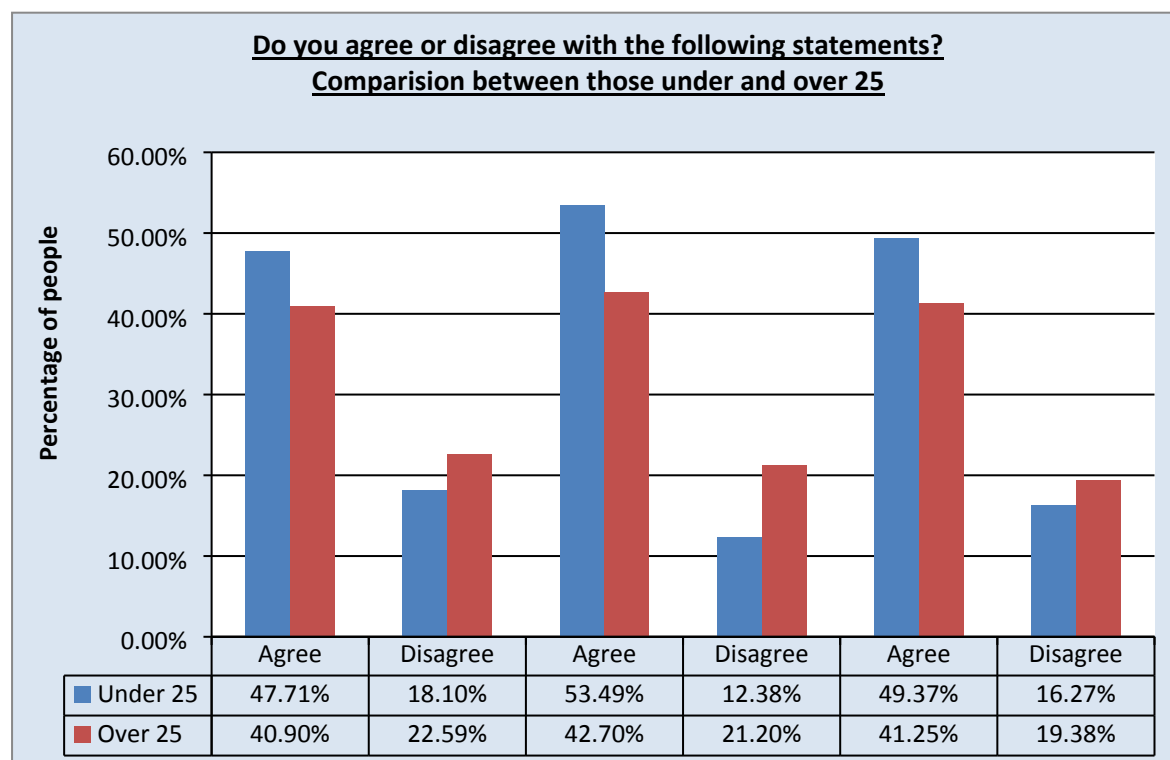
Table 6
Citizens Panel Survey (July 2018)

Age	Number of people	Percentage of people
0-17 years old	0	0.00%
18-24 years old	2	0.74%
25-34 years old	9	3.33%
35-44 years old	16	5.93%
45-54 years old	40	14.81%
55-64 years old	68	25.19%
65-74 years old	86	31.85%
75+ years old	43	15.93%
Prefer not to say	6	2.22%
Total responses	270	

Table 7

Bus wifi survey (March 2018)

Age	Number of people	Percentage of people
Under 12 years old	136	1.59%
12-17 years old	2011	23.52%
18-24 years old	2230	26.08%
25-34 years old	1653	19.33%
35-44 years old	1031	12.06%
45-54 years old	739	8.64%
55-64 years old	410	4.79%
65+ years old	341	3.99%
Total responses	8551	

Chart 1

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Comparision between those under and over 25

	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Under 25	47.71%	18.10%	53.49%	12.38%	49.37%	16.27%
Over 25	40.90%	22.59%	42.70%	21.20%	41.25%	19.38%

5.4   Wellbeing Plan consultation

Aside from the budget consultation one of the major pieces of work on engagement in recent years was undertaken when developing the Local Assessment of Wellbeing, a document which is required by the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015. This work involved asking a wide range of local stakeholders, primarily residents about what they wanted to see in Newport in the future and what they currently valued most in terms of social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing.   There is a statutory duty under the Act to involve people with an interest in achieving wellbeing goals and ensuring that those persons reflect the diversity of the population. This involved a relatively large-scale engagement programme which took place in 2016 and is considered to have featured a number of examples of good practice and was well received by Welsh Government, the Future Generations Commissioners Office and other partners.

Particular effort was made to engage with harder to reach groups. To do this the Council worked in close collaboration with a wide range of partners from:

- **Public sector agencies** – ABUHB e.g. using the Health Boards BME health panel, Communities First e.g. promoting surveys through Job Clubs.   Coleg Gwent promoted involvement of students. Community Development promoted translated surveys to minority communities (incl. Eastern European and BME languages).   A specific young people's wellbeing survey was also run for all Newport school and college pupils.
- **Third sector** – Newport Live and Newport City Homes e.g. having an engagement presence at all summer events like Sports in the Park, attending Newport City Homes tenants forum. The BME Youth Forum made a Future Generations film. Rainbow Newport promoted LGBT involvement. GAVO's Engage project linked with Deaf Clubs Sight Loss Clubs, Newport People First.
- **Private Sector** – surveys were promoted through the Councils local business directory contacts.

A total of around 2,400 responses were received which would rank amongst the highest response rates the Council has achieved for a strategy development consultation. Furthermore the demographic response was in line with the ethnic make-up of the city, which was considered difficult to achieve with the engagement methods in use at that time (before bus wifi was in place). Headline demographics were:

- 8.7% of responses were from non-white individuals

- 11.3% of responses were from non-white British individuals (this would include White Irish, White Gypsy/Traveller and other white backgrounds)

    (The 2011 Census records that 10% of the Newport population is non-white)

- 500 responses were received from young people who completed a separate survey

It should be noted that an engagement exercise of this scale with numerous outreach events and activities took almost 12 months in total and required much of the capacity of the two officers allocated to public engagement within the Partnership Policy and Involvement Team. It would not be straightforward to replicate this scale of work to the Council's budget engagement particularly given the time constraints arising from the timing of the final settlement from Welsh Government. However a pre-proposals budget engagement phase has been run in previous years, which seeks to inform longer term financial and service planning and can commence earlier in the financial year. Such an exercise is being carried out for 2019/20 and began in late September.

With the above in mind It should be stressed that public engagement work should not be repetitive i.e. asking the same things every year or focussed on achieving high numbers of responses above all else. The most effective approach is to build up a body of information and intelligence on what residents have been telling us. The COUNT principle (Collect Once Use Numerous Times) is explained in the following section.

5.5   Newport Youth Council

The Council supports the running of Newport Youth Council to develop young people's participation and involvement in decision making and public life. The Youth Council is open to anyone from 11-25 and the young people involved come from varied backgrounds. The aim is that the Youth Council increasingly sets its own agenda and interests, however the Partnership, Policy and Involvement Team work closely with them to link them with the Council's work programme.

The following case study indicates how we are currently working with the Youth Council to take forward the 'Future Generations agenda' whilst working in an empowering way.

Case study 1

St. Paul's Walk Mosaic Project

Newport Youth Council (NYC) is a youth-led forum to give a voice to young people and influence decision making on issues that matter to them across Newport.
Members of the youth council have been involved in a public arts project to reduce Anti-social behaviour and improve wellbeing in a public open space - St Paul's Walk. The project has involved young people working in collaboration with a local artist to create a mosaic that represents the Suffragette movement. There have been a number of workshops held at the top of Newport market through the past few months to develop the mosaic. Newport Youth Council members and other young people across Newport have been involved in the project for example – The Bigger Picture – a voluntary organisation focused on youth community inclusion have worked closely with a local historian on the project, this has promoted integration and intergenerational work. The mosaic will be unveiled at a presentation in November at St. Pauls Walk aiming to prevent anti-social behaviour and create a sense of ownership for the work for the long term. Young people also gave interviews to the local media of how they found working on the project and what they have learnt.
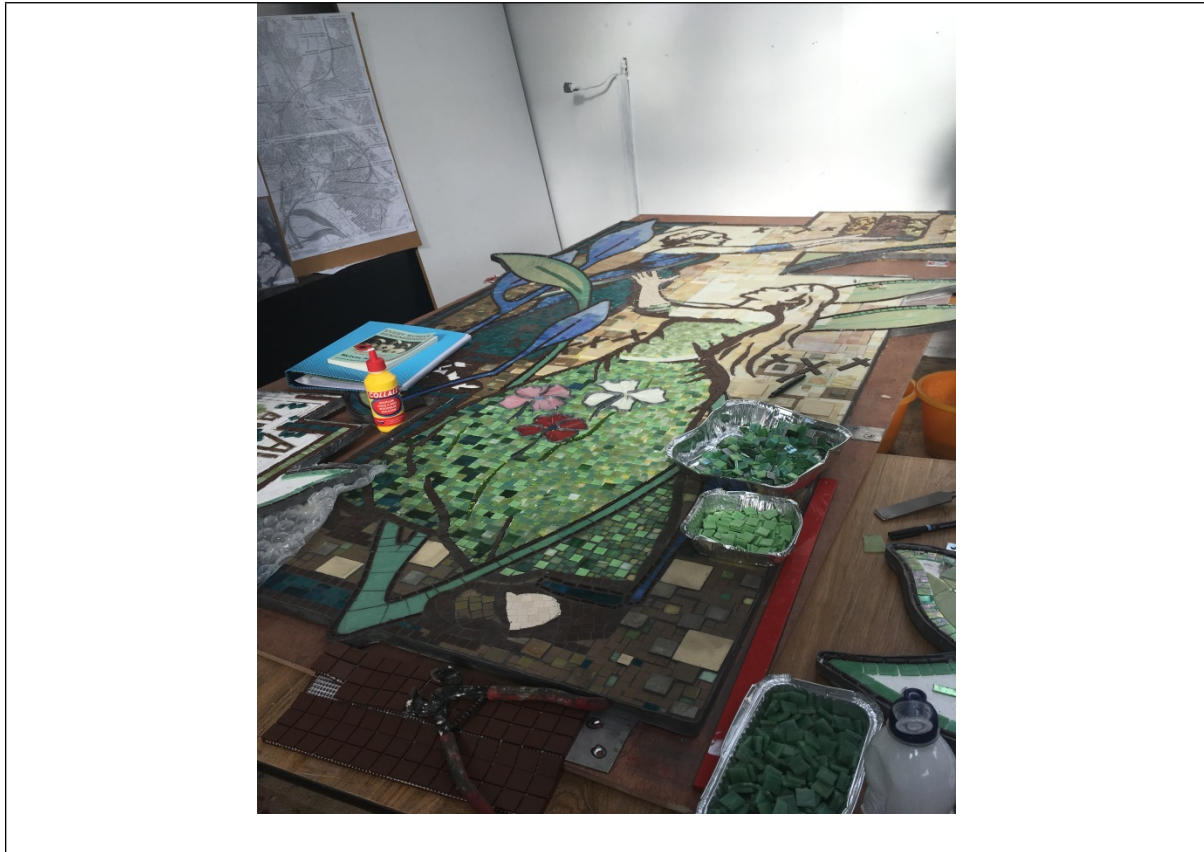
5.6   Year-round engagement processes

The Committee recommended moving to a year-round budget consultation and engagement process, rather than what was perceived as a short period during Christmas/ the New Year. This report shows that wider consultation and engagement is already a year-round process and the intention is to gather insight and intelligence, which can be used as widely as possible to inform financial planning, service development and strategy. For instance, the Wellbeing Assessment (revised every 2 years) involved extensive public engagement and then informs key strategies like the Corporate Plan which ultimately inform financial/service planning and business change decisions.

There are also good examples of where public engagement is used to inform the planning of projects which contribute to improving wellbeing e.g. the St Paul's Walk project where the public have been consulted on the design and future uses of this site and young people are working on an art project to prevent vandalism.

A digest listing key pieces of consultation work is given in Appendix 3 of this review which shows that the Council is continuously engaging with stakeholders throughout the year, accumulating understanding of residents and particular stakeholders.

Whilst regular 'year-round' public engagement is clearly desirable, it must be balanced with the risk of overloading people (known as 'consultation fatigue'). One of the ways of avoiding this is to not repeat duplicate engagement work and to make sure that the information gained from engagement is used widely and repeatedly, to build and share knowledge. This can be describes as the COUNT principle, as in the box below.

The COUNT principle should be taken forward internally within the Council and also between local partners e.g. through coordination of activities and sharing of knowledge. This principle recognises that much of the engagement work undertaken across the Council is relevant to budget planning, even if it is not directly about savings and proposals e.g. the engagement work on the wellbeing plan. Service Areas will need to make reference to past engagement to inform their decision making process when planning savings proposals each year.

Recommendations

- The COUNT principle should be promoted through training on participation and engagement within the Council.

- Explore options for an online consultation and engagement database and consultation work plan. This work is now underway through the One Newport Engagement Group.

5.7   Communications and message

As demonstrated by the above evidence, through existing communications and engagement channels the council already has e.g. social media survey links, citizens panel, bus wifi surveys engagement events, partner agency promotion, distribution of printed surveys etc we have access to a wide local audience and varied demographic. The challenge of increasing response rates is perhaps more about improving the perceived relevance of budget engagement. Evidence gathered from talking to local people suggests local people who do not take part in Council engagement exercises come from the following groups:

- Those that think that the Council are elected to make spending decisions and oversee the running of local public services, and are comfortable with allowing them to do this, however they may become more democratically engaged if a particular decision affects them or concerns them personally. They may also be concerned about giving an opinion on services that relate to other people but not themselves e.g. they do not have a child with additional learning needs.
- Those who are apathetic and knowingly have no interest, they may differ from the above group in thinking that involvement in engagement is pointless and might be disengaged in politics generally e.g. not voting.
- Those that might take part in engagement but do not because they find it difficult to access, inconvenient or simply do not know about opportunities.
- Those who are not aware of budget engagement activities at all. This is most likely to include people who are not following Council communications e.g. not reading Newport Matters, not following social media, In reality this group is likely to be a significant proportion of the population and could overlap with those who are happy for the Council to 'just get on with running services'.

Recommendation
Continue to provide a range of opportunities to participate in Council decision-making e.g. pre-proposal budget consultation. Whilst this is intended to increase budget participation, it is wider than this as we recognise that some people do not want to respond to budget proposals for various reasons.

Use and evaluate a new pre budget questionnaire which captures views on prioritisation of services. This exercise can be continued throughout the year and will inform medium term financial planning.

The following table shows the results of an analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats relating to the Council's public engagement processes. This was

carried out in collaboration with partner agencies from the One Newport Engagement Group and summarises the main recommendations of this review.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Bus Wifi capability unique in Wales, we should achieve over 90,000 interactions in first 12 months • Track record of collaborative work with partners and effective multi-agency Engagement Group in place • Cross-service area 'Budget Comms and Engagement' group in place • Well-established Citizens Panel • Multi-agency engagement group in place • Extensive events programme and networks already in place for engagement • Fairness Commission in place to act as critical friend and independent advisor • All Heads of Service now have Clear Review objectives for young people's involvement • Scrutiny active in reviewing engagement processes and improvement plans • Evidence of cost/effective approach to consultation (National Survey for Wales)	• Organisation could make more use of engagement for business intelligence - COUNT principle. • Tendency to engage late in the decision making processes e.g. during policy development, business change • Limited history of face to face engagement between council/public/stakeholders • Relatively low skills and experience of public engagement within service areas • No allocated funding to improve engagement from the current position • Feedback processes are often under-developed • Achieving representative sample of equalities groups has proved difficult e.g. BME residents • Limited coordination of engagement across schools e.g. best practice sharing, collaboration
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Training for Elected Members on participation and engagement so they can act as champions and challengers of poor practice • Members could lead consultation within their wards • Newport City Homes and Newport Live are strong partners for engagement • Heads of Service more aware of corporate support for engagement • New Youth Council contract in place, provider has expertise in use of creative media • Potential for more Gwent wide work e.g. Happiness Pulse • Expand work of Pupil Participation and Learning Network (only in 8 primary schools currently) • Effectively used short film to promote Wellbeing Plan consultation, could use videos more widely for engagement • Newport Intelligence Hub could add value to engagement processes e.g. recruiting to Citizens Panel • New technologies emerging to support better engagement e.g. real-time online	• Service Areas undertaking engagement without seeking corporate support • Public understanding of budget pressures can be limited e.g. belief that efficiencies alone can close funding gap • Increased public apathy following year on year financial pressures • Increased risk of digital exclusion as e-methods become the norm • Citizens Panel response rates low and membership skewed towards an older demographic • GAVO's Engage Programme ended in March 2018 (Lottery Funded) its focus was on hard to reach groups • Increasing workload pressure on corporate support for engagement (Policy, Partnership and Involvement Team) • Balancing the pressures to make cost savings with duties to involve stakeholders in decision making

voting	

The evidence presented in this review paints a mixed picture of the effectiveness of public engagement arrangements in Newport City Council. This is perhaps demonstrated by the National Survey for Wales tables (tables 2 and 3) which show that people thought that overall this Council compares well in terms of participation in decision making but less well in involvement in budget setting. Furthermore with our new bus wifi survey capability we are confident that we should be able to improve perception against both these measures and note that our own, more recent, perception survey (table 3) indicated very positive results.

As we are currently ranging from good to acceptable performance against key measures of engagement and we currently spend relatively little in terms of officer resource and services it can be concluded that the Council's corporate engagement activities are cost effective and represent good value for money.

Bus wifi has given us a game-changing opportunity to regularly engage with over 5% of the population. However it use will be limited by level of detail, length, relevance and complexity.
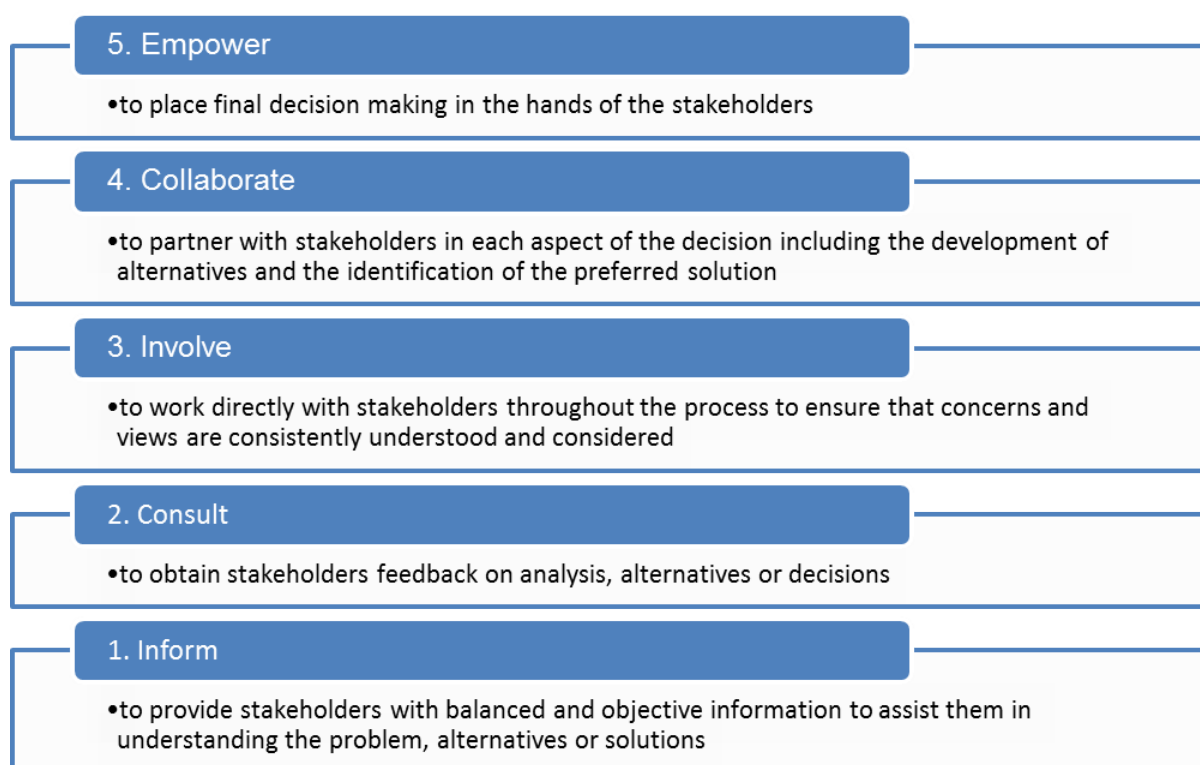
The Partnership, Policy and Involvement Team are able to provide advice, support and access to useful resources for Service Areas wanting to carry out engagement, however there are recent cases whereby Service Areas have not requested any corporate support and as a result have consulted inadequately. To avoid this the Head of People and Business Change has presented to Corporate Management Team on the range of support on offer, which has resulted in better collaboration within the Council, a briefing paper was prepared for CMT which was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in July.

The Partnership, Policy and Involvement Team will seek to embed the COUNT principle so that learning from engagement activities are shared and knowledge is accumulated. Through the One Newport Engagement Group we will coordinate activities with partners and share resources and learning, which should help us to continue to improve

6.0   Moving from informing and consulting to involvement

Previous reports to Cabinet Members and Overview and scrutiny have outlined the hierarchy of engagement based on 'Hart's Ladder of participation' shown below. This forms an aspirational good practice model for public engagement with progressively greater levels of stakeholder involvement, collaboration and empowerment. Moving 'up the ladder' must remain an aspiration for the Council and there are areas of work where this has now evolved.

Hart's Ladder of Participation

5. Empower
- to place final decision making in the hands of the stakeholders

4. Collaborate
- to partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution

3. Involve
- to work directly with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that concerns and views are consistently understood and considered

2. Consult
- to obtain stakeholders feedback on analysis, alternatives or decisions

1. Inform
- to provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives or solutions

Such a move towards greater citizen empowerment and involvement is implicit in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, however this is about public engagement in its widest sense and will require significant culture shift over several years. It is also not something that can be achieved 'across the board' and suits certain services and projects more than others. Strengthening community resilience is a key aim of the Council's Corporate Plan and the One Newport partnership Wellbeing Plan and this will require improved citizen empowerment and involvement. These plans will support moves up the hierarchy of engagement, and will allow elected members to monitor progress towards this end.

When applying the Harts Ladder model more specifically to involvement in decision making, the main focus of this review, whilst it is always positive to maximise involvement, collaboration and empowerment, most engagement work by the Council will inevitably remain at levels 2 and 3. This will be due to issues of practicality, the ability of stakeholders to meaningfully participate within the constraints, and ultimately appropriateness. For

example it would not be appropriate to give stakeholders the final decision making responsibility on major savings proposals as these are matters for Cabinet within their democratic mandate.   Furthermore, the underpinning political system for local government in the UK is representative democracy rather than direct democracy. Nevertheless there will be opportunities for higher levels of participation in decision making (levels 4 and 5 of Harts Ladder) and there are some good examples of this including the following case studies.

Case Study 2
Youth Council selection of service provider and participation worker

The service provider contract for Newport Youth Council was recently recommissioned. The Youth Council nominated three of their members to be part of the procurement panel. The young people were given equal status as the Council officers on the procurement panel and were involved in all stages of the process from agreement of the specification, shortlisting, interviews of suppliers, deciding questions, selection criteria, final selection and feedback. The final interviews were also chaired by one of the young people. Their involvement in this process has increased their sense ownership, developed their skills, experience and confidence and has helped ensure the successful provider is 'the right fit' for the Youth Council. The chosen provider, Media Academy Cardiff said that the selection was one of the most rigorous and best run that they had been involved in.

Recruitment and selection of the Youth Council's participation worker is now underway and the young people are again taking the lead role in choosing the individual they want to support them in their work going forward.

This example would represent level 5 of Hart's Ladder – 'stakeholder empowerment' as they were given the final decision making mandate

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Case study 3
Accessibility Strategy for Schools

The 2010 Equality Act requires Local Authorities to prepare an accessibility strategy for schools. The Childrens Commissioner recently published a report in which she called on Local Authorities to :

- *Publish their Accessibility Strategies and school accessibility plans on their website*
- *Raise staff awareness of the document ensuring that the public can be easily directed to them*
- *Consult with children, young people and families in preparing the strategy*
- *Embed a "Childrens rights" approach to this work*

In order to develop the strategy a structured workshop with key stakeholders was facilitated in June 2018. This workshop was in partnership with the Policy, Partnership and Involvement Team and the Education Development Officer. A number of Stakeholders attended the workshop including access and disability interest groups, parent groups and disability and access expert. The workshop was an interactive opportunity to get the views

and opinions of stakeholders to help develop the accessibility strategy for schools. . Stakeholders looked at what was meant by "access" as well as feedback of what would be good / not good to include in the strategy. Attendees at the workshop also looked at a vision, the values that should be embedded in the strategy and the priorities for implementation.

Based on the input at this workshop a draft strategy was developed. In September the Participation officer supported the Education Development Officer at a structured discussion with two young service users of Serennu Children's Centre. The Participation officer engaged with the young people to find out their views on the Schools accessibility strategy and the difficulties they had encountered attending school.

Such examples provide stakeholders with significant opportunities to enhance their participation in public life, ownership, develop their skills and experience and also help to ensure that the right decisions are made. As a Council we are now being asked by outside organisations including the Wales Audit Office, Future Generations Commissioners Office, Data Unit Wales, to share our work as examples of best practice. This includes engagement work on the Wellbeing Plan, Serious and Organised Crime and the Pillgwenlly Area Focus work.

Recommendations
- Scrutiny members and Cabinet Members can play a part in ensuring Service Areas have regard to the improving participation levels and engage widely with stakeholders in the course of their business, for example in ensuring decision making reports show evidence of engagement, or that policies promote greater participation and empowerment.

- Participation and engagement training for elected members and officers should be delivered.

- Ensure that good practice is recognised and shared within the Council

7.0   Conclusions and recommendations

This review concludes that good progress has been made in improving public engagement processes in recent years. This is evidenced by the positive feedback on engagement shown in table 3, particularly in increasing the reach and numbers of participants and the number of engagement exercises undertaken (see appendix 3). However this picture is inconsistent, there are pockets of good practice but there have also been examples of inadequate consultation. The perception data presented in table 3 suggests that budget engagement is one of the areas where involvement could be improved.

People and Business Change and particularly the Partnership, Policy and Involvement Team have developed a wide ranging offer of support and resources to enable good engagement and will seek to work more with Service Areas to raise standards, work differently, innovate and adopt best practice. Part of this will involve changing culture and practice in the light of the 'involvement' duty under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. This will also require a higher degree of challenge by the 'corporate centre' and elected members when faced with poor engagement e.g. in decision making reports.

The following recommendations are proposed to improve the extent, reach and quality of engagement.

Table 7 - Recommendations

Review Theme	No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
Reach	1	The Engage Project has ceased and continuity is unclear. GAVO should report to the Public Service Board on continuity arrangements and risks.	GAVO – PP&I Team to arrange
Offer	2	Service areas are advised to have early discussions on engagement with PP&I Team for advice and support	Service Managers – report writers
	3	Members are asked to have an overview of the level of engagement in reports for decisions and challenge where this is not sufficient	All Members
	4	People and Business Change to remind all service areas of the engagement offer and support available to them to ensure engagement remains a year round cycle	Head of People and Business Change PP&I Team
Good Practice / New methods	5	Corporate Management Team to include engagement as a regular agenda item	Head of People and Business Change
	6	Performance measures for engagement should be included in corporate monitoring e.g. National Survey for Wales	Head of People and Business Change
	7	Ensure that good practice is identified and shared within the Council and between partners	PP&I Team

	8	Explore options for an online consultation and engagement database and consultation work plan.	PP&I Team
Communications / Message	9	The Committee gives further consideration to the role of elected members in public engagement	OSMC
	10	Bus Wifi should include feedback to respondents	PP&I Team
	11	A pre-proposals stage budget engagement exercise be carried out for 2019/20 to broaden the reach and inform medium term financial planning. This exercise will continue next year (after the formal budget consultation ends) which will be the basis for year round engagement on the budget.	Head of People and Business Change
	12	More attention and challenge is given to the wording and language used in budget proposals so that they are clear, and understandable.	Head of Finance, Head of People and Business Change and Head of Law and Regulation.

Appendix 1

Examples of engagement methods used in other Councils

Budget Simulators – Scrutiny recommended the consideration of alternative methods of engaging with the public with specific reference to budget simulators, as used in other local authorities. Such a simulator was used by Newport City Council in 2014 with very limited success in terms of the number of hits and completed budgets (a balanced budget is submitted by an individual so that their proposed spending priorities can be assessed).   As part of this review we looked at other authorities use of simulators and similarly found that they achieve a low level of usable engagement, particularly given that they typically cost upwards of £6,000 a year. We found that Rhondda Cynon Taff Council's budget simulator used for 2018/19 achieved   . At an estimated cost of £6,000 this equates to around £60 per view. We would consider this to be an unjustifiably high costs particularly in the context of identifying cost savings. It is possible that the move from desktop/Laptop PC's towards mobile devices as one of the main means of communication and engagement has limited the appeal of budget simulators which tend to suit larger screen PC type devices. It is becoming increasingly important to keep up with changing technological trends when planning public engagement and communication as older methods become less effective.

For instance it should be noted that the LGA has recently stopped providing it's free to use budget simulator, which is the version we used in Newport in 2014, the reason being that few Councils were deciding to repeat budget simulator exercises and few new Councils were coming forward. Budget Simulators are however very powerful in conveying the difficulties and constraints of balancing council finances, albeit to a relatively small number of people and at a cost.

Short films on budget engagement, key strategies etc – a number of other local authorities have, in recent years, used short films, often animations, to convey their financial situations and to promote budget consultation and engagement. A similar short video was used by this Council to publicly consult and promote the Wellbeing Plan in the last 18 months. The feedback we received was positive however there are production costs and there have been around 450 views to date, although the video will remain relevant for several years from now. Budget videos are often only relevant for a single financial year, and as a result can be relatively high cost per view.

Social Media – Other Local Authorities have used social media platforms for engagement on the budget and other matters. This includes both recorded messages e.g. explaining the financial context and promoting consultation or live two-way channels with executive members, or chief officers. Other council's have also used social media platforms like Facebook to 'drip-feed' surveys, question by question, over a period of time.

Incentives to participate in consultations – Some Councils e.g. Bridgend are encouraging residents to respond to their budget consultation with the opportunity to win prizes

e.g. Those 13 and over who complete the survey have the opportunity to be entered into a free prize draw to win one of the following:

- a family of four ticket for Maesteg Town Hall's pantomime on 12 January 2019
- a family of four ticket for Grand Pavilion, Porthcawl's pantomime, on 15 or 16 December 2018
- a one year leisure membership

Prizes might be a more cost effective method to raise response rates than more expensive technologies e.g. budget simulators, budget challenge films.

Greater use of in-house spatial data/customer insight expertise – the Council has a strong level of expertise in spatial data/customer engagement expertise in the Newport Intelligence Hub. Discussions are underway in how they can better support engagement work. For example by using customer insight to inform a recruitment campaign to increase citizens panel membership and broaden its demographic profile.

Appendix 2

Have your say

Some of the key activities we do as a Council:	How important is each activity to you? (Scale of 1-10, 1 least important , 10 most important)
1. Improve the educational achievement of all pupils	
2. Support pupils with special educational needs and disabilities	
3. Support older people to live independently in their own homes	
4. Support people with caring responsibilities	
5. Support people with mental health conditions	
6. Protect children and support them to remain safely with their families	
7. Support housing needs e.g. homelessness, housing for vulnerable people	
8. Encourage regeneration of the city centre and surrounding areas	
9. Support community regeneration to help people into employment	
10. Provide youth services & children's play schemes	
11. Provide libraries, museum, arts and heritage services	
12. Maintaining roads e.g. repairs to roads/walking routes, winter maintenance	
13. Keep open spaces clean, tidy and well maintained	
14. Ensure there is effective public transport and a sustainable travel network e.g. walking/cycling and low emissions transport	
15. Increase recycling and sustainable waste management	
16. Maintain an effective refuse collection system	
17. Promote tourism and visitor events and market the city	
18. Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour by working with partner agencies	
19. Ensure people in our communities get on well together e.g. tackling hate crime, violent extremism	

20. Improve digital services for the public and businesses e.g. access to public Wi-Fi and high speed internet	

Additional Information

This information will be used for anonymous monitoring

a.	What gender are you?				
	Male		Female		Prefer not to say

b.	How old are you?

c.	What area of the city do you live in?

d.	Do you consider yourself as disabled?				
	Yes		No		Prefer not to say

e.	What is your ethnic group?

Appendix 3

List of engagement work supported by Policy, Partnership and Involvement Team completed since January 2017

Date	Subject	Client	Source
January 2017	NCC Budget 2017-18 – Budget Proposals	People & Business Change	Online SNAP Survey
	Welsh Language Strategy 2017-22	People & Business Change	Online SNAP Survey
	Pill Community Safety Survey	People & Business Change	Online SNAP Survey
	Assessment of Local Well-being	People & Business Change	Online SNAP Survey
	Children & Young Person's Well-being Assessment	People & Business Change	Online SNAP Survey
	Schools Accessibility Survey	Education	Online SNAP Survey
February 2017	Community Transport	Adult & Community Services	Involve Newport Citizens Panel
	Perception of Newport / Safety in Newport	People & Business Change	Involve Newport Citizens Panel
	Customer Services Satisfaction Survey	City Services	Online SNAP Survey
March 2017	Community Resilience Survey	City Services / People & Business Change	Online SNAP Survey
April 2017	One Newport Partnership Evaluation 2017	People & Business Change	Online SNAP Survey
	Employee Survey 2017	People & Business Change	Online SNAP Survey
	Questionnaire for Employers	Adult & Community Services	Online SNAP Survey
May 2017	Explore Newport Market	Law & Regulation	Involve Newport Citizens Panel
	Newport Transporter Bridge	Regeneration, Investment & Housing	Involve Newport Citizens Panel
	NCC – Evening & Night Time Economy	Law & Regulation	Involve Newport Citizens Panel
	Aspire Project Questionnaire 16-24 year olds	People & Business Change	Online SNAP Survey

July 2017	NCC – Evening & Night Time Economy	Law & Regulation	Online SNAP Survey
	Employee Survey 2017	People & Business Change	Online SNAP Survey
August 2017	Perception of Newport / Safety in Newport	People & Business Change	Involve Newport Citizens Panel
September 2017	Perception of Newport	People & Business Change	Bus Wi-Fi
	NCC Active Travel IMN Survey	City Services	Online SNAP Survey
October 2017	Safety in Newport	People & Business Change	Bus Wi-Fi
	Pill Community Safety Survey 2017-18	People & Business Change	Online SNAP Survey
	Staff Conference 2017	People & Business Change	Online SNAP Survey
November 2017	St Pauls Walk Events	Regeneration, Investment & Housing	Bus Wi-Fi
	Customer Services Satisfaction Survey	City Services	Online SNAP Survey
December 2017	Welsh Education Demand Survey	Education	Online SNAP Survey
January 2018	PSPO Consultation	Law & Regulation	Online SNAP Survey
	Budget 2018-19 Awareness	People & Business Change	Bus Wi-Fi
	Nurseries Project Post Implementation Evaluation	Education	Online SNAP Survey
	School Admissions Survey	Education	Online SNAP Survey
	NCC Budget 2018-19 – Budget Proposals	People & Business Change	Online SNAP Survey
	Newport's Well-being Plan 2018-23	People & Business Change	Online SNAP Survey
	City Centre PSPO Consultation 2018	Law & Regulation	Online SNAP Survey
	Maesglas PSPO Consultation	Law & Regulation	Online SNAP Survey
February 2018	Support Service for People Aged 55+	Adult & Community Services	Involve Newport Citizens Panel
	Perception of Newport / Safety in Newport	People & Business Change	Involve Newport Citizens Panel
	Caerleon Lodge Hill Primary Pupil & Staff Survey	Education	Online SNAP Survey

March 2018	Citizens Panel	People & Business Change	Bus Wi-Fi
	Customer Services Satisfaction Survey	City Services	Online SNAP Survey
April 2018	Care & Support Survey	Adult & Community Services	Online SNAP Survey
May 2018	Consultation & Engagement Activities	People & Business Change	Involve Newport Citizens Panel
	City Centre Masterplan – Have Your Say	Regeneration, Investment & Housing	Involve Newport Citizens Panel
June 2018	Employee Survey 2018	People & Business Change	Online SNAP Survey
	Rights of Way Improvement Plan Review	City Services	Online SNAP Survey
July 2018	Consultation & Engagement	People & Business Change	Bus Wi-Fi
	Period Poverty for Staff and Pupils	Education / People & Business Change	Online SNAP Survey
	Schools Accessibility Survey	Education	Online SNAP Survey
August 2018	Perception of Newport / Safety in Newport	People & Business Change	Involve Newport Citizens Panel
September 2018	CRM	City Services	Bus Wi-Fi
October 2018	Recycling Survey	City Services	Bus Wi-Fi
	HMO Licensing Review	Law & Regulation	Online SNAP Survey
	Community Use Survey	Education	Online SNAP Survey
	CRM Survey	City Services	Online SNAP Survey