

Working together with Cambridgeshire County Council: the Council's commitment to supporting the voice of local people to be heard

Cambridgeshire County Council believes that everybody who lives in Cambridgeshire has the right to be involved in the Council decisions that affect their daily lives.

Because of this the Council would like the help of the public in the design and delivery of their local services. The Council knows that working together with the people who use its services is the best way to make sure that local people's needs will be met and will also make the best use of the resources available.

This document tells you how the Council will make sure the public:

- Have a say in decisions that affect them.
- Know how to get involved.
- Know how their feedback has been used and how the Council will give feedback after a consultation has happened.

This document has been written jointly by staff from Cambridgeshire County Council, the public (of all ages and backgrounds) and representatives from voluntary sector organisations.

Cambridgeshire County Council's Commitment

How the Council will listen to you.

We believe that:

- People who live in Cambridgeshire should be able to give feedback on the Council services they use.
- People who live in Cambridgeshire should be asked about services at all stages, from deciding what is needed to looking at how well it is working.
- It should make it as easy as possible for everybody to give feedback. For example, the Council should use a variety of ways such as:
 - Feedback from people using its services on a regular basis, including reviews, case studies, complaints and compliments
 - Surveys (online, postal and telephone)
 - Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Blogs)
 - Meetings and workshops
 - Talks
 - Information events
- Everybody's thoughts, opinions and feedback should be respected and valued equally.

How the Council will engage with you.

We should engage the public at an early stage of any planning process. This should:

- Occur over an appropriate length of time, with timescales that allow for activities that support meaningful engagement. The aim is to have sufficient time to discuss different ideas and options for any new services or potential changes that are being proposed.
- Identify those sections of the community who are most likely to be affected and prioritise those individuals/groups for discussion.
- Keep a clear record of all engagement activities which take place.

How the Council will consult with you.

We should make sure that people understand:

- What they are being asked for their opinion on and why.
- How long everybody has to respond to a consultation.
- What the Council is asking them to do and what commitment they will need to make.
- What difference their help will make.
- How they will receive feedback after a consultation has happened.

In addition, we should:

- Be clear and honest about the process of making decisions and what differences can be made by any consultation.
- Allow enough time and resources for any consultation to happen, to make sure that everyone is able to take part. This means that:
 - The Council should allow sufficient time for any consultation to take place, ideally following best practice guidelines of allowing three months for larger scale consultations where appropriate/possible.
 - Consultation materials should be available in different formats (such as large print) as appropriate so that as many people as possible can join in.
 - Any information provided should be relevant, up-to-date, in clear English and with no jargon.
 - Training should be given to Council staff to support them to do this type of work.
- Give additional support (if needed) to minority and disadvantaged groups to help them to respond to consultations. This may mean undertaking targeted work focussed on a particular client group.
- Recognise that people who work for the Council and other partner organisations can act as informal advocates for the people they work with and tell us about issues important to their clients and their own

services.

- Ensure that there is ongoing engagement with people who use services (not just as part of a formal consultation process).
- Learn from good practice developed by other organisations.

The Council's Commitment was agreed: 2017

The Council's Commitment will be reviewed: 2020

Would you like to help the Council to improve its services?

If so, then please get in touch by contacting:

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