

# Scrutiny Committee

Report of Head of Corporate Services

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To: Scrutiny Committee

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## Consultations and Engagement Annual Report 2022-2023

### Recommendation

That Scrutiny Committee notes the consultation and engagement carried out by the council during 2022-2023 as shown in **Appendix A** and makes any comments to Cabinet for consideration.

### Purpose of Report

1. To update members on the projects that the Consultation and Engagement team delivered between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023.
2. To inform members on the work to begin benchmarking demographic data to ensure the councils are reaching all relevant audiences, and to help measure if the councils are increasing engagement among audiences we've historically failed to reach, particularly young people.

## Strategic Objectives

3. The activities detailed in this report supports the council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024. Carrying out effective consultation and engagement supports the Corporate Plan goal of working in an open and inclusive way.

## Background

4. In the last financial year, the Consultation and Engagement team conducted 22 consultations, launched 21 feedback forms, and supported four neighbourhood plans consultations and five conservation area appraisals.
5. The team's new annual report (attached at **Appendix A**) highlights the key findings from each project and the actions the councils have taken thanks to the outcomes of these consultation and engagement activities.
6. The report has been put together to show the variety of engagement the councils carry out and demonstrate how consultation and engagement findings have led to changes in council services. For example:
7. 234 respondents helped us shape our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, the feedback has resulted in the development of our Equality and Diversity database, consisting of local groups, charities and organisations that relate to the protected characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity and disability. This database will help us ensure our consultations are shared across a broad spectrum of groups.
8. The 314 responses received to the Joint Local Plan Issues consultation have helped to shape the next stage of the Joint Local Plan Options consultation.
9. Crashing was a theatrical production, a live performance commissioned by the Community Safety team and delivered to Year 9 and 10 students. 81% of respondents said they think they would now be able to recognise the signs of CSE. The feedback shows that the production was successful at educating young people about child sexual exploitation (CSE) and the success of the production has led to plans for it to be repeated in coming years.

## Next Steps

10. It is proposed that the report is on the councils' websites and circulated to our consultation databases to show how their support and feedback has been considered.
11. The report will also form the starting point for improved communications with our wider audiences on the benefits of community engagement, and to demonstrate the councils are serious about taking public views into consideration when shaping our services.

## Climate and ecological impact implications

12. This report is provided for information purposes only and as such has no direct climate and ecological implications.

13. However, the report does refer to several projects which helped inform the council's ongoing approach to tackling climate change. For example, the Joint Local Plan consultation sought views on the themes of reducing carbon emissions and nature recovery and landscape. The waste and recycling sessions included in the report would also contribute towards reducing waste and protecting our resources.

## **Financial Implications**

14. This report is provided for information purposes only and as such has no direct financial implications. All of the costs for projects covered in this report were conducted within service budgets.

## **Legal Implications**

15. This report is provided for information purposes only and as such has no legal implications.

## **Procurement implications**

16. This report is provided for information purposes only and as such has no procurement implications.

## **Risks**

17. This report is provided for information purposes only and as such has no identified risk implications.

## **Conclusion**

18. The new annual report will help us track the demographics of those responding to council engagement activities over time to ensure we're enabling all our communities to influence their council services them, not just those who are already engaged with council activities.

19. Publication of the report, and the associated improvement in communication around consultation outcomes, helps improve the transparency of council decision-making. In part it does this by showing stakeholders how we've listened to views and modified our plans, strategies, and policies thanks to public input.

20. We expect this to encourage more audiences to participate in future projects – both those who have previously responded to our engagement, and those who haven't, therefore widening our group of active consultees.

## **Background Papers**

- Consultation and Engagement Annual Report 2022-23