



Kirklees Democracy Commission Cross Party Working Group – 27 January 2020

Citizen Engagement Progress report

Background and Context

As part of its work the Democracy Commission developed the notion of [Active Citizen](#) and Council subsequently agreed the following outcome and recommendation:-

Outcome: Active Citizens have a stake in the place they live and are able to inform and influence the future of their community and the decisions affecting it.

Recommendation: Kirklees Council should make Active Citizenship a shared strategic priority and use this as a basis for developing a new democratic relationship between Kirklees citizens and the state.

The Commission discovered from a wide range of sources that the council's approach to "consulting" with its citizens and communities is no longer sustainable as an effective model. Citizens are increasingly sceptical of consultation. They believe that the process is a tick box exercise where the outcome has been decided in advance. They seek genuine engagement and dialogue which is designed in a way that takes citizens on an ongoing journey rather than picking them up and dropping them in the way that consultation is perceived as working.

The Commission, in advocating the notion of Active Citizen acknowledged that local people are more likely to have a stake in the place that they live, work or visit if there is a more genuine approach to engagement and dialogue.

Appendix 1 of this paper sets out the citizen engagement principles that have been agreed by the Democracy Commission Cross Party Working Group and Executive Team. These are now used as a basis for building a different dialogue with local people to create an environment where the notion of active citizen can begin to develop and flourish.

Work was commissioned in July/August 2018 to test our citizen engagement principles on a pilot basis using the [Place Standard](#) tool and methodology. Following an intense cross service pilot and evaluation, setting out the key findings and

considerations, the place standard now forms part of our new approach to citizen engagement.

The Place Standard Tool and Methodology

The place standard explores 14 themes that focus on both the physical and social environment and the relationships between people and their surroundings, and is used to assess and improve the quality of a place. (Physical environment = the buildings, streets, public spaces and natural spaces that make up a place and the social environment = the relationships, social contact and support networks that make up a community)

It provides a framework to facilitate conversations to help identify what's good about a place, what needs to improve and what citizens can contribute. It helps focus on priorities for action and encourages a very collaborative approach (working with not doing to) as it enables communities, public agencies, voluntary groups and others to work together to identify their priorities for a particular place that need to be targeted to improve people's health, wellbeing and quality of life.

The place standard can be used to assess places that are (i) in early stages or still being planned or developed – e.g. new housing development; (ii) in areas undergoing some change, such as a regeneration scheme or investment opportunity; and (iii) well established for continuous improvement.

The tool is also versatile enough to be used from street level up to regional level. The important thing to note is that citizens recognise the identity of the place that is being assessed. See **Appendix 2** for a visual representation from a place standard conversation.

One of the benefits of the place standard is that it's consistent and provides a baseline which can be re-assessed to see how well places are performing. In developing our approach it was recognised that there should be opportunity to go back to communities to 'sense check' and report back on conclusions, proposals and actions as a result of the information contributed by communities.

To summarise, the tool:-

- Enables & empowers people to give their views by providing a simple structure for discussion;
- Frames a conversation around how people think and feel about where they live and their experience of it – whether they live, work or visit.
- Starts from a position of strength in that it helps identify the assets of a place, it helps identify what could improve and importantly what communities can contribute i.e. their ideas, suggestions and their involvement.
- Is easy to use: it is written in simple, understandable language and gives visual outputs;
- Is flexible in where, when and with whom you can use it;
- Brings communities together with the third, public and private sectors, promoting joint working with councillors and the community at the heart;
- Encourages broad thinking about place and an understanding of how themes impact on each other;

- Addresses inequalities and challenges social isolation, making everyone's views equally important;
- Has multiple uses: can be used to understand, prioritise and monitor improvements.

Progress to Date

The council's approach to citizen engagement has progressed significantly over the past year and key achievements are summarised as follows:-

- Citizen engagement principles are becoming embedded and our approach to place based engagement using the Place Standard continues to grow.
- A citizen engagement reference group (CERG) was established in November 2018 to provide oversight and advice on all significant place based citizen engagement planned by the council, ensure that engagement accords with the citizen engagement principles and provide advice in planning and delivering engagement.
- CERG meets monthly to consider and co-ordinate planned engagement activity to agreed standards and principles.
- Over 200 people have received training in delivering place standard conversations. This includes staff from 26 service areas, 12 councillors, 6 voluntary organisations and 39 residents.
- The broad framework and staged approach developed consists of:-
 1. Undertaking place standard engagement to understand **'how good is our place'**
 2. **'Making it better together'** - developing ward and neighbourhood action plans
 3. Place standard re-engagement to assess **'how are we doing'**
- To date place standard engagement has been delivered in 13 neighbourhoods across 6 wards engaging 3,540 citizens, summarised in the table below:-

Ward	Neighbourhood/Village	Numbers Engaged
Kirkburton	Shepley Village	400
	Shelley Village	200
Birstall and Birkenshaw	Birstall	200
	Fieldhead	
Holme Valley North	Meltham	700
	Honley	464
Newsome	Berry Brow Flats	80
	Hudds Town centre Blueprint	978
Colne Valley	Linthwaite	200
Golcar	Cowlersley	58
	Longwood	260
	Milnsbridge	
	Golcar Village	
Total		3,540

NOTE: citizen profile information is available by age, gender and postcode

- Huddersfield Town Centre Blueprint engagement has received very positive feedback from planning officers for the successful engagement and depth and quality of feedback received about Huddersfield town centre. The feedback is now being used to test and inform the blueprint baseline and activity.
- Feedback from other place standard engagement is being used to inform key pieces of work, for example the Healthy Streets initiative and Shaping Places funding proposal.
- The pace and volume of engagement activity using the place standard tool has been sustained and further engagement is planned in 12 neighbourhoods covering 8 wards as follows:-

Ward	Neighbourhood/Village
Ashbrow	Sheepridge/Deighton
	Bradley
	Fartown
	Fixby and Cowcliffe
Birstall and Birkenshaw	East Bierley
Dewsbury East	Chickenley
	Earlsheaton
	Dewsbury Town Centre Blueprint
Dalton	Waterloo
Batley East	Soothill
Greenhead	Paddock
Newsome	Huddersfield University Campus

Next Steps

Capacity to help deliver place based citizen engagement has been developed within the organisation through a train the trainer approach. Whilst numbers 'trained' to date is relatively high, some staff have been unable to help deliver engagement on the ground, possibly due to pressures from their day job. **There is therefore an urgent need to reiterate the message to service managers that they encourage and support their staff to help deliver place standard engagement.**

There is a need to strengthen involvement from Council services and partners to respond to engagement i.e. in contributing to priority setting, creative problem solving, co-producing responses to respond to engagement priorities and supporting the development of ward/sub ward action plans.

In this context a series engagement events have taken place with front line staff who work in specific geographical locations. This will be followed up by two engagement sessions with councillors. Both sets of engagement are intended to help us understand the good work that is already taking place and understand the barriers and the ways in which in which we can improve what we do - all with a view to developing an operating model for place based working. This will form the cultural change that needs to take place in the council and across partners to ensure that we

work in a different, more flexible and responsive way, building on the outcomes our approach to citizen engagement.

The Cross Party Working Group is asked to note and comment on the progress report

Carl Whistlecraft and Vina Randhawa, Democracy Service

Citizen Engagement Design Principles:

- **Embracing local identity** – Kirklees is an administrative boundary. As such this presents challenges in the context of engaging with our citizens in a way that is meaningful and relevant to them. Our towns, villages and communities are the core strength of Kirklees – we need to recognise and harness this. They are an individual and collective strength which should be acknowledged and valued in the context of engagement. One size does not, and should not, fit all. Our approach to engagement should build outwards from communities not downwards. Understanding local identity will be key to making this happen;
- **Treating people as citizens not customers** – Our approach to engagement must be based around the narrative of the citizen not the customer or client. In aspiring to the notion of the Active Citizen it is dependent on the development of relationships and dialogue as opposed to a transactional one based on traditional models of service delivery. Engagement in this context will facilitate active citizens and facilitate a shift in their expectations of the Council and partners;
- **Co-producing and changing behaviour** – Our engagement with citizens must be a means by which we develop a wider stake for them in civic society – doing with and not to. Consulting on pre-determined options will not create an environment where citizens change their expectations and behaviours or willingly work with us to collectively problem solve. Genuine engagement that takes citizens on a journey should create an environment where they develop a wider understanding and are better placed to take ownership where that is the best approach;
- **Placing Councillors at the heart** – Our approach must make a virtue of both representative and participatory democracy. Councillors (including those in Parish and Town Councils) should therefore be placed at the heart of engagement with the communities they represent with a view to leading that dialogue over time. Emerging outcomes from recent workshops with councillor and officers show that this is not currently happening. Consultation and engagement is taking place in electoral Wards without the knowledge or input of the local councillors. This must change;
- **Acknowledging our staff as citizens** – A significant number of our staff are residents within the borough. Many are already active citizens who have a stake in the place that they live and work. This should be a strength from which to build our approach to citizen engagement, utilising staff insight as part of how we work on a more routine basis;
- **Deploying our staff as agents for change** – Involving our staff in a different approach to citizen engagement provides an opportunity to expose them to different ways of working and aid the move towards alternative ways to design and deliver across services. Our staff are “the face of the state” and as such are

key change agents in a changing relationship, particularly those who work directly in communities, neighbourhoods and Wards. Moving away from traditional models of service delivery will increasingly mean placing the citizen at the heart of dialogue and service re-design. This will require an officer and service culture change;

- **Utilising new and existing networks** – The council and its partners already have extensive networks from which to develop a different approach to engagement. This is a strength. Our interaction with groups, service users and a breadth of citizens who are already engaged provides a helpful starting point. Similarly there is a plethora of on-line and off-line networks that thrive and exist independently of the council, doing great things within and across communities. Our approach to engagement must seek to tap into networks that already exist and seek to develop and nurture them where they do not. There needs to be a stronger feature on genuine digital engagement which seeks to grow the civic conversation;
- **Widening our engagement reach** – The Cross Party Working Group have already been very clear that greater emphasis must be placed on undertaking engagement in a way that extends reach beyond those citizens and organisations who are visible and traditionally engage. This may well mean a move away from traditional approaches and see a greater emphasis on blending on-line and off-line techniques, some of which may be more resource intensive;
- **Using intelligence and citizen insight** – In undertaking citizen engagement moving forward there is an expectation that the intelligence we have and hold is used in a way that informs and facilitates. It should be used as a basis for framing the dialogue not leading it to a pre-determined conclusion. Our engagement should be framed in a way that generates insight with a view to developing a richer understanding of our communities, their motivations and aspirations. This will inform the relationship with the council that they expect and we would seek to develop and the capacity within communities.
- **Working in plain sight and telling stories** – If we are serious about engendering trust with our citizens our engagement with them should be open and transparent. Using the Democracy Commission methodology it is important that we develop our approach and thinking alongside our citizens and learn with them along the journey. This will demonstrate a genuine culture of engagement from the outset and will build confidence in the process as well as the outcomes and outputs. A transparent way of working should incorporate an agile approach to sharing the stories from our citizens and communities in a way that shares the great things that are happening and facilitates behavioural change.

How to use it

How do I use it?

The Place Standard is very easy to use. Users consider each question in turn rating a place on a scale of 1 to 7. One means there is a lot of room for improvement, 7 means there is little need for improvement, the quality is as good as it can be. Then you plot the ratings on the compass and join the dots to make a 'spider' diagram.



