

**To:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 12 January 2021  
**Report of:** Mish Tullar  
**Title of Report:** Overview of Citizen Engagement  
**Status:** Open

**Purpose of Report:** To provide an update for the Scrutiny Committee on the Council's approach to citizen engagement and consultation and the variety of methods used.

**Key Decision:** No

**Executive Board:** Cabinet Member for Customer Focused Services

**Corporate Priority:** All

**Policy Framework:** Council Strategy 2020-24

## Introduction

1. Oxford City Council is committed to building a world-class city for all its citizens. Working with local communities, partners, stakeholders and businesses to build channels for dialogue and engagement is a key part of the Council's plan to enhance the relationship between citizens and those who they elect to represent them. Public services that are based on an understanding of citizens' needs are crucial and consultation is one way of achieving this.
2. Engagement is a vital part of a modern, representative democracy and Councils, the police and health authorities have both statutory and common law duties to consult the public on a range of issues. It is the process of actively seeking information or advice prior to making a decision and ensuring that elected councillors are aware of, and connected to, the views of individuals, community groups, and other stakeholders. It is the way in which residents can influence the delivery of services and the development of policies; it applies to both routine functions, as well as significant one-off decisions. It is not intended to enable minority interests to overrule the best interests of the wider community and the city as a whole. Engagement supports, informs and improves decision-making by elected councillors, but it does not replace it; the responsibility for the final decision on any issue that involves the Council's resources rests with the city's elected members.

3. Over the past three years Oxford City Council has very significantly increased both the breadth and capacity for its citizenship engagement. This has included inter alia, the creation of a standing Residents Panel, holding its first Citizens Assembly, the use of community-based focus groups; and more recently strengthening of its locality presence, the use of a Virtual Town Hall format, and the procurement of a new easier to use platform for its Consultation Portal. Informal benchmarking with other local authorities would suggest Oxford City Council is more active and innovative in its approach to citizen engagement than neighbouring local authorities and is towards the leading edge of best practice in some areas.

## **Background**

4. Over the past decade, engagement projects at the Council have seen a shift from being mainly paper based to moving to a wide range of online methods using our consultation portal; online surveys, discussion forums and the use of social media.
5. The Consultation Officer provides corporate support and oversight for all public engagement. The role sits within the Corporate Policy, Partnerships and Communications Team, in recognition of the close interface between partnerships, communications channels and consultation. Most changes to policies or service delivery will involve engagement of strategic partners, community groups and individual citizens. For more significant proposals, the communications team runs multi-channel campaigns to encourage local residents to have their say. This can include channels such as posters and leaflets in community centres and libraries; bus shelter adverts; press releases, photo opportunities; and social media advertising. Facebook advertising is our most consistently used channel because it is the cheapest way to reach most Oxford residents.
6. The Communications team has surveyed residents to better understand how they prefer to be communicated with (See Residents Panel survey results Appendix C) and has strengthened two key channels. A filmmaker was appointed to the communications team, as film is an essential component of effective communication through social media. And oversight of the Council's advertising space on the city's bus shelters has been brought into the Communications team, as this channel had not been fully utilised previously.

## **Policy framework**

7. The Council has a number of policies that cover its approach to citizen engagement and consultation. These are:
  - a. [Community Engagement Policy Statement](#) which describes how the Council engages its communities in decision-making
  - b. [Statement of Community Involvement in Planning](#) which sets out how we seek to involve the community in the planning process
  - c. [Customer Experience Strategy](#) which provides the Council with a clear vision for the future state of customer and digital engagement and the technology required to support achieving the vision

- d. [Business Engagement Framework](#) which provides guidance on an approach to business representation and account management in the city
8. Other aspects of engagement are embedded within the diverse framework of statutory and non-statutory partnerships the Council is involved with, as well as its very many daily interactions with community-based groups, and individuals.

**Engagement Methods**

9. The Consultation Portal is the key tool for citizen engagement, particularly for any form of statutory engagement. The portal ([www.oxford.gov.uk/consultation](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/consultation)) allows us to run online surveys, attach consultation documents, view videos and post results of consultations. The portal has taken on greater significance since the trend towards more online methods and it has become fundamental to our business to have a portal that is easy to use and accessible for all.
10. However, consultations on the portal do not cover all our engagement work by any means. There is much more engagement that takes place across our Service Areas, as outlined in Appendices A and B. Much informal engagement takes the form of regular meetings with stakeholders, face to face meetings with residents, customer use of the Oxford City Council app and feedback to our services via the Customer Contact Centre or ODS. This form of engagement goes beyond the more formal approach of asking for opinions on a particular matter to way of gathering information through an ongoing dialogue to inform and improve our services.
11. A key new development was the creation of the Oxford Residents Panel in 2019, which comprises 600 people selected by Ipsos MORI making up of a representative cross-section of the city’s population. This panel will eventually reach 1,000 residents. This is a pool of people that are ready to participate in consultations when asked. This panel has been particularly useful over the course of 2020 for tracking residents’ views on the Coronavirus pandemic. We have been able to track views, concerns and anxieties through regular surveying which has helped us when delivering services
12. The methods of engagement the Council uses can be divided into 2 broad areas: ad hoc engagement methods and regular forums and meetings. The table below shows some of these methods. Often, an engagement project will use a combination of the methods in the table below:

<b>Ad Hoc Engagement methods</b>	<b>Regular Engagement Methods</b>
Oxford Residents Panel	Council and Committee meetings – which members of the public are permitted to address
Social Media Channels e.g. Facebook, Twitter, including online advertising	Children’s Board, Health & Wellbeing Board and other statutory partnership boards
Focus Groups	Oxford Strategic Partnership, Youth Panel and other non-statutory partnership meetings

Community Meetings	Stakeholder Meetings eg. regular meetings with the universities or Conference of Colleges
Online Surveys	Business Forums
Citizens' Assembly	Landlords Forum
Stakeholder meetings with interested groups	Special Interest Groups eg. Friends of the Parks
On Street Surveys	Project-specific engagement structures eg. Inclusive Tactical Urbanism group
Exhibitions	Race Advisory Group
Quick Polls	Virtual Town Hall – used for the universities meeting and also to be used for the Connecting Oxford Forum
Posters and leaflets	
Oxford City Council app	

### **Engagement participants**

13. The participants in any engagement exercise really depend on the topic that is being consulted upon. Participants may include the general public, businesses, our partnerships, charities, stakeholder groups, residents groups, other councils, staff and many more as is evident in Appendix B where Service Areas have listed their engagement contacts.
14. Previously the consultee mix involved a disproportionate number of older people, particularly from non-disadvantaged areas of the city, with the time to complete longer, paper based surveys. The increased use of quicker digital communication and online consultation portal has helped broaden the core consultee base. This has been possible by making consultations more accessible i.e. participation being possible on smartphones and online surveys being available to respond to at any time during the consultation period.
15. However further steps have been needed to ensure a better mix of young people, BAME people, people from more disadvantaged areas of the city, digitally excluded people and other 'harder to reach' groups. In particular this has involved creation of the Residents Panel, with a balanced cross-section of citizens, and much wider use of face-to-face, and focus groups – such as those involving groups of people with different protected characteristics, which informed the creation of the Anti-Racism Charter.

### **Additional engagement actions in development**

16. Other tools to further increase the Council's span of engagement approaches are being developed.
- a. A gender-balanced race advisory group will be set up in 2021/22 to support the Council and partners in shaping policy and make decisions from a grass roots up perspective, as well as identify talent for recruitment.

- b. A new more user-friendly Consultation Portal procured from a different provider, Delib is due to go live in early 2020. This is the platform used by Birmingham, Edinburgh, Camden and Liverpool Councils among others and is noted for its improved accessibility.
- c. Oxford City Council is a participant in an MHCLG-funded project focused on enhancing digital engagement. A digital design company, Snook, has been engaged to develop a 'playbook on community engagement'. Snook is currently conducting interviews with those that work in community engagement in the City Council to understand their needs, the challenges they face, any practical examples they can share - particularly around COVID-19. The research will help inform how the playbook is developed and what it contains, and should be ready by the end of February.

### **Consultation Toolkit**

17. A Consultation Toolkit, located on the Council's intranet, provides staff with guidance on the planning and implementation of each engagement exercise. A consultation project brief must be completed and then each public engagement proposal is considered by the Public Involvement Board, chaired by the Head of Corporate Policy, Partnerships and Communications. This provides an opportunity to assess the briefs and offer advice and guidance to ensure the engagement plan best fits the needs of the particular issue, and is in line with the Council's approach

### **Consultation response levels**

18. Despite the investment of resource and sometimes budget associated with different engagement exercises, the overall level of consultation responses is very dependent on the subject matter. The joint City and County Councils' consultation on city centre bus gates in summer 2020 gained over 7,000 responses; Connecting Oxford around 3,000; the Zero Emission Zone 900, while consultation on card payment facilities in Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles had 92 responses. Some consultations directed at specific groups may receive just a handful of responses – for example there were just 7 respondents to the consultation on the Street Trading Policy 2019.

19. Focused action has been taken by officers to increase the number of responses to the annual Budget consultation responses, by widening the use of tools available – including upweighted social media activity. The involvement of the Residents Panel in 2020 accounts for the significant uplift from the prior year:

2020-21 - 160 responses  
 2019-20 - 58 responses  
 2018-19 - 47 responses  
 2017-18 – 52 responses  
 2016-17 - 34 responses

### **Recent engagement highlights**

20. Appendix B provides details of the wide variety of engagement approaches being deployed across the Council's Service Areas. A small number of examples are highlighted below, as these represent significant developments in our approach, or notable successes using a variety of very different approaches.

**Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change 2019**

The use of Citizens' Assemblies and Citizens' Juries is becoming an increasingly important way of engaging the public in particularly complex issues. It was notably used in the UK following the 2017 Brexit vote for a "detailed, reflective and informed discussion about what the UK's post-Brexit relations with the European Union should be." Oxford City Council voted to use this approach to help guide its policy responses following its declaration of a climate emergency at the start of 2019. Ipsos MORI was commissioned to conduct this work.

The Oxford Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change recruited 50 residents of the city of Oxford. Participants attended two full weekends of deliberation and discussion over the 28th and 29th September and the 19th and 20th October 2019. They were tasked with deciding how to respond to the following question: "The UK has legislation to reach 'net zero' by 2050. Should Oxford be more proactive and seek to achieve 'net zero' sooner than 2050?"

This was the first time we had run an engagement exercise as extensive as the Assembly. The event showed us is that with extensive dialogue, guidance and time we can form hugely successful engagement exercises which delivered a report that has been very influential in shaping the Council's policy responses. It should also be noted that the cost of hosting the event was around £90,000.

**Queering Spires**

Informal engagement by the Culture team with people from LGBTQIA+ communities across Oxford helped create the award-winning Queering Spires exhibition in the Town Hall.

**Leisure Services COVID response**

Following the enforced closure of leisure facilities by Government due to COVI-19, the Council has in the interim increased and widened the engagement stakeholder group for its Leisure partnership Board group to help inform and shape a short term remobilising model

**Housing First**

The rough sleeping team at the council is seeking to improve the effectiveness of the services it commissions by consulting regularly with those with lived experience of rough sleeping in Oxford in general and has appointed a 'Lived Experience' Champion who is working with closely LEAF (the Lived Experience Forum of Oxfordshire Homeless Movement). To date the team has involved LEAF in a review of Day Service provision across the city, consulted on the shape of the 20 new Housing First units that is due to be commissioned and a series of meetings are being organised to inform re-commissioning of specific elements of services in the Adult Homeless Pathway.

**University students return during the pandemic**

In response to concerns raised by residents around the city over the prospective return of students in September 2020 against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, an online public meeting was organised by the Council. The Virtual Town Hall event on 28 September 2020 brought together senior leaders from both

councils, both universities, students unions and the police to answer both pre-submitted and live questions. The format enabled over 200 people to 'attend' the event and a further 2,000 to watch it live. A further 1,000 people then viewed the recording on YouTube and both participants and hosts felt it had been successful in reducing the level of concern among residents, while also helping inform the framework for partnership working with the universities over the ensuing months.

### **Financial Implications**

21. The annual consultation budget for the Council administered by the Consultation Officer is £42,000, which covers the cost of maintaining the Residents Panel and the Consultation Portal. However, there are in many cases additional costs associated with individual consultation and engagement projects. These are typically built into project costs, such as the extensive consultation work in Blackbird Leys supporting the regeneration programme there.

### **Legal Implications**

22. The requirement to consult is covered in some cases by a statutory duty, and in other cases by the public law duty. The public law duty to consult is one aspect of the principle that public authorities should exercise fairness in the exercise of their functions. Difficult judgments may need to be made on just what level of consultation is "proportionate" to the purpose and objectives of a consultation exercise

23. Public consultations are challenging, time-consuming and cost money. However, there are also an increasing number of consultation-related judicial reviews – and so understanding the balance of what is required is an important factor in determining the right approach to consultation on a particular issue.

### **Equalities implications**

24. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) was introduced in 2010, as part of the Equality Act. The PSED replaced previous public sector duties covering race, gender and disability, and created a new approach to equality. Rather than simply outlawing discrimination, it places an obligation on public bodies to consider how they can promote equality in all areas of their work. The PSED is an instrument that requires public sector organisations to consider the impact on equality when they are planning to change, cut or introduce services, right from the start. That means all consultation and engagement should have regard to meeting this equality duty.

### **Conclusion**

25. Oxford City Council has significantly increased the breadth and depth of its approach to citizen engagement and consultation in recent years, having both regard to its public law duties and equalities duties. While a formal benchmarking exercise has not been undertaken, comparison with our neighbouring District Councils would suggest the City Council is further down the road of best practice in this area than many others.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Engagement Projects 2020**

Please find a list below for the formal consultations that have taken place over the last year:

- Public opinion on the Coronavirus pandemic
- Air Quality Action Plan
- Alcohol and Dog Control PSPO
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme
- Budget Consultation 2020 and 2021
- Oxford Local Plan Main Modifications
- Meadow Lane Street Art Project
- Unlawful Developments (Beds in Sheds) Survey
- Proposed Headington Community Council
- Street Trading Policy Review
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2020/21
- Annual Safeguarding Audit
- Public Attitude Survey on the City Centre
- Council Strategy
- Mandatory Card Payments machines in Taxis

## **Appendix B**

Submissions on citizen engagement and consultation by Service Area.

### **Regulatory Services and Community Safety**

- *Who do you engage with?*
  - Community Safety Partnership – police, county child and adult social care, Probation, Turning Point drug treatment service, Uni Security, Brookes Community Liaison, JR11, Fire and Rescue, SAFE, Donnington Doorstep, Elmore.
  - Our key stakeholders are our clients, health and social care contacts, care agencies, lifeline agencies, and interest groups for our clients eg mainly based on age, specific illnesses or disabilities.
  - Response on behalf of PSST & HMOe – tenants/landlords/letting agents/National organisations NRLA/property owners/contractors/public utilities/undertakers/members of the public/other public services such as fire services/social services/homeless services/charities/Other district councils, County, Cherwell etc/Internally all other services.
  - Members of the public, victims of different forms of abuse, Councillors, businesses who are active in a particular area
  
- *What channels of engagement do you use?*
  - Surveys, exhibitions, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, or a combination of all these. On specific topics we've used surveys, ipad street surveys, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, World Café community engagement methods, walkabouts with residents, walkabouts with Cllrs, zoom community engagement meeting.
  - Normally we have a range of surveys, lots of events/exhibitions, focus groups, meetings, emails and social media but at present with COVID-19 it is mainly online events. We tend to get most success with the talks and events with our particular client group we hold in person. We normally go out in person to older people and disability groups and disability schools and undertake a presentation and take questions, so we are developing a recorded presentation which we can send instead and they can share with their members. Lots of our clients do not go out the house often so we rely on getting the message out to people who support them instead.
  - Landlord forum/Information exchange held twice annually/Landlord accreditation open to all agents and landlord/accreditation training held monthly, (pre-pandemic)/Landlords newsletter/
  - Use of twitter / facebook to promote work of the teams – especially around tenancy relations officer service and prevention of illegal eviction / harassment
  - Participate in the “green clean” action days organised by ORS to promote work of the team
  - Focus groups, Appreciative inquiries which are a form of stakeholder meetings. This is specifically done for graffiti projects to get approval, ideas

etc. There are meetings with the public usually with the police when there have been ASB issues in a particular street or a serious crime

- *How regularly do you consult, is it ad hoc or at regular intervals?*
  - Ad hoc
  - Formal consultation is not very frequent, it's only done at major changes such as our RRO policy introduction. We undertake informal consultation (and more importantly make improvements) all the time with surveys, recording feedback and in-person events.
  - Consultation on HMO additional licencing – 5 yearly/ Additional licencing and Selective licencing consultation ongoing/New homes bonus yearly
  - Landlord forum held every six months (pre pandemic) is opportunity to gain feedback, although not formal consultation
  
- *Key success stories:*
  - Barns Road engagement recently on drug and ASB issues with the community. Bullingdon Rd World Café event by the Drugs Task Force, community stakeholder meetings by Dan Courtenay on crime reduction initiatives (SS Mary and John Church), City Centre ASB engagement last winter – biggest survey completion rate for the Council that I'm aware of, Drug Task Force comms campaign one of the most successful council campaigns a couple of years ago with huge community interest. One to learn from is the Community Call-back scheme used by the police to contact everyone who calls in regarding drug dealing and drug misuse – it generates intelligence, directs resources, and callers receive a follow-up call on actions taken which also involved trying to recruit the caller into involvement with on-going community initiatives.
  - Michelle Millard heavily targeted the hospitals and managed to set up a very successful partnership with the John Radcliff and the Children's Hospital. They now let us have information stands and Posters/leaflets/banners in prominent positions on notice boards, wards, pharmacy collection points and waiting areas. They also advertise our stands on their intranet when we were able to be there so staff know that we are there to answer questions. Bulletins are sent via the hospitals intranet reaching over 30,000 doctors, nurses and health professionals. This was all done using no funding (apart from time and printing costs)
  - Officers from PSST & HMOe engaged in visiting referrals for the 'ground force project' for Oxfordshire local test and trace, working with Oxfordshire councils to locate uncontactable persons tested positive for the C19 virus linking in with locality hubs so information for advice and assistance can be provided.
  - Recent twitter campaign to promote work of tenancy relations officer lead to an unprecedented level of enquiries and some people even said "they were contacting us because of the twitter / facebook" – no figures, this is just the word of the tenancy relations officer
  - Current consultation on property licensing resulted in oversubscribed landlord events.
  - For the last 2 years there has been regular engagement with Black, Asian and Ethnically Diverse (BAED) women across the Thames Valley, the Strategic Officer for the project worked in ASBIT. The outcome of this project

was a Report with 10 overarching recommendations. The Report was published in October 2020, since then a BAED worker has been recruited to work specifically with victims of domestic abuse who are from BAED communities; a BAED World working group set up to take some of the subsections of the Report Recommendations forward; ASBIT have a part time DA specialist to take forward recommendations within the City Council and local community groups.

- The Murco Site graffiti project has been very successful with a constant change in the art drawn at the site. The art has been very varied. The main success was a father of an 11 year old budding street artist approached us and asked if it would be okay for his son to spray some art work at the site. Of course this was approved and the 11 year old did his first public painting.
- We held a focus group in March 2019 giving clients an opportunity to discuss their experience of the HIA. What's working? What's not? And how can we improve our service. This was a very successful morning and clients appreciated being given a voice.
- We regularly consult with health partners such as hospitals, social services, GP consortium and domestic abuse groups. Also community groups such as older peoples and specific condition groups. The HIA worked on Oxfordshire's Older People Strategy and attended various Foundations events and HIA Management groups to adopt good practice using experience and risk analysis.
- *Are there any particular methods you use to reach some of our harder to reach communities?*
  - Police Independent Advisory Group – we should use them more. Police Community and Diversity Officer – ditto.
  - We find targeting the groups people reach out to works the best for many people, they may not attend themselves but a friend or neighbour may do and report back to them. As a fail-safe we also engage with all the major health and social care contacts so that even people who do not engage easily can be reached.
  - Usually through other agencies such as HIA/Social services/Landlords exchange for local communities eg: East Oxford Community forum

## **Community Services**

- *Who do you engage with?*

A wide range of stakeholders across all of the Community Services Teams, including:

- Our communities and residents
- Leisure Users (led by Fusion Lifestyle)
- Leisure User representatives, Older and Younger People, Health partners, key clubs - through the strategic Leisure Partnership Board
- Non-Users of leisure facilities (led by Fusion)
- Young People
- Cultural Education Partnership

- Local and National Partners
  - Friends of Parks, conservation volunteer and other green space users groups
  - Sports clubs
  - Residents adjacent to parks/nature areas
  - Freeman of Oxford/Wolvercote Commoners
  - A wide range of partner organisations involved wildlife and conservation
  - Schools involved in Forest Schools/Countryside classrooms
  - Local councillors
  - Internal services
  - GLAM (Garden, Libraries and Museums – Oxford)
  - Active Oxfordshire
  - Young people
  - Secondary Schools (St Gregory the Great, Oxford Spires)
  - County Council – (MASH, LCSS)
  - Thames Valley Police
  - Range of external partners including:
    - **Health** – Public Health at County Council, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), OxFed, Primary Care Networks, Achieve Oxfordshire, Diabetes 2gether/Diabetes 4ward, Oxfordshire Mind.
    - **Sport & Physical Activity** – Active Oxfordshire, National Governing Bodies of Sport such as Oxfordshire Football Association, Fusion Lifestyle, KEEN, Sports Clubs.
    - **Other local community organisations** – Schools, Community Associations, Age UK, The Oxford Hub, Oxford Pedestrians Association. Plus local coaches/instructors/volunteers and our local communities generally.
- *What channels of engagement do you use?*
    - Stakeholder meetings
    - Focus groups
    - Direct email
    - Surveys
    - Marketing
    - Evaluation tools
    - Surveys
    - Focus groups
    - Community partnerships
    - Youth partnerships
    - Leisure partnerships
    - Network/partnership meetings such as Health & Wellbeing Partnerships and Active Travel in the City group.
    - Stakeholder Groups such as Playing Pitch Strategy Steering Group. Newsletters to partners and participants. When relevant surveys are used to gather information on a particular matter.
    - Partner Focus Groups around a particular agenda.
    - Newsletters/newspapers

- *How regularly do you consult, is it ad hoc or at regular intervals?*

A combination of all of the above across all service teams. Plus;

- With Young people
  - Beginning of every term
  - End of every term
  - Before summer holidays.
- By the Sport & Physical Activity Team
  - Communication around information sharing is done regularly with partners and feedback is proactively sought through this.
  - Further feedback is gathered annually through a Partner Survey and via our Quality Scheme process (Quest).
  - Consultation around a particular agenda item is only carried out when required to ensure we are not over-communicating!
- *Key success stories:*
  - A series of 12 focus groups were held to gather views from different BAME groups, faith groups and other groups of people with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act, including young people, older people, people with disabilities, LGBT+ to draw up an Anti-Racism Charter for the city. In addition to facilitating that, the process has also strengthened the Council's relationships with key harder-to-reach groups and has improved our understanding of particular needs that will inform policy and service provision going forwards.
  - Following the enforced closure of leisure facilities by Government due to COVID-19, the Council has in the interim increased and widened the engagement stakeholder group for its Leisure partnership Board group to help inform and shape a short term remobilising model
  - The Green Space Development Team supported the Friends of South Park to create their own management plan to ensure community ownership.
  - Working with a young person who faces many barriers (drug/alcohol using parents, in contact with social services, rape victim, part of the juvenile justice system) who became homeless and began using drugs and then fell pregnant with an abusive partner. Having a great relationship meant that this young person could speak to us about all issues and we could support her working with partners. Staff supported in midwife appointments, contacting the doctor for mental health support, working with social services for family support and with OCCs housing team. This young person is now in secure supported housing, having a healthy pregnancy and being supported by multiple organisations.
  - GO Active Outdoors campaign – in the initial 6 weeks, made over 350,000 impressions on social media.
  - GO Active Get Healthy – referrals from GP Surgeries in our hard to reach areas such as Leys, East Oxford and Barton.
- *Are there any particular methods you use to reach some of our harder to reach communities?*

- Direct contact and meetings with over 50s groups etc. who can go unheard because they are not involved in social media and online surveys etc.
- Delivery and the continuous involvement of the Locality Resource Hubs, which are in and at the heart of the community.
- Business Intelligence dashboard and insights as outcomes/ outputs from Locality Resource Hubs

For Young People:

- Working with partners who are already engaging them (KEEN)
- Offer specialist services (My Normal project)
- Ensuring marketing is inclusive

For the S&PA Team; this also varies but will tend

- To look for existing groups/individuals that are already successfully engaging with these communities and work with them to communicate information/consult as appropriate.
- Have also had success with referrals from GP Surgeries into our programmes.
- Are exploring some work with Faith Leaders being upskilled to become Physical Activity Ambassadors and help communicate key health and wellbeing information with their parishioners.

## **Culture Team**

- *Who do you engage with, who are your key stakeholders?*
  - Care homes, older people, community organisations, JR, community hospital, Health and Well Being partnerships, social prescribing partners
  - Residents of Oxford, visitors to Oxford, locally-based and regional, national and international artists and companies, theatre venues, schools, family centres, cultural organisations, libraries, museums, Westgate Oxford
  - Cultural and community based partnerships and networks
  - Local families
  - Children and adults with special educational needs
  - Event organisers and event stakeholders
  - Strategic partners – County Council, Universities, OxLEP etc.
  - Professional networks e.g. CLOA and LAEOG
  - Volunteers at the Museum who are located in and beyond Oxford. Social media users who engage with the Museum account online.
  - Members of Oxford International Links twinning groups in Oxford, Civic Office, International Links officers from Oxford's twin cities
  - Members of Oxford's diverse communities
  - Colleagues across most teams in the Council as well as members, where appropriate
- *What channels of engagement do you use?*

- Surveys, exhibitions, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, as well as surveys, events, verbal feedback, emails, meetings, pre and post activity group chats, engagement during activities (in person and online), feedback forms, focus groups, social media, emails, stakeholder meetings, event consultation process, video and film and other creative methods including music, poetry, dance and visual arts.
- *How regularly do you consult, is it ad hoc or at regular intervals?*
  - Fortnightly meetings with the Cultural Partnership and Quarterly meetings with the Cultural Education Partnership stakeholders
  - Annual meetings with Oxford Preservation Trust, Bonn Square stakeholders, Broad Street protocol stakeholders
  - Regular catch ups as needed with TVP and the Safety Advisory Group (usually monthly) for events
  - Each project (regardless of the size of it) is evaluated by those engaged in the project in whatever way is relevant – on-going projects are also regularly evaluated. Strategic evaluation is built into every project plan at the early stages (and necessary for fundraising purposes too).
  - Consultation also includes Light touch, no agenda Tea and Talk session – began with a few people and grew to a regular 16 meeting monthly, some of whom became volunteers for the museum.
  - Youth Panel continued to meet using Zoom from March to November to coordinate and plan the online cabaret called Stories of the Spires – this livestreamed event showcased performances of young talented local performers talking about their memories of Oxford. This has had over 900 views on Facebook so far.
  - We are still engaging volunteers with remote volunteer opportunities such as transcribing, creating online exhibitions on our Digital Collection website, blogs, and write alternative labels for the objects on display in the museum.
  - Quarterly meetings for Oxford International links. All other meetings are ad hoc, as and when required
- *Key success stories:*
  - Running focus groups with people from different intersectional protected characteristics to help shape the new Equality and Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging strategy
  - Engaging with the Cultural Partnership and across wider sectors to facilitate successful larger scale strategic projects and fundraising bids across the city e.g. for anti-racism work, social prescribing, holiday activities linked with food provision
  - Engaging with people from LGBTQIA+ communities across Oxford to create the Award winning Queering Spires exhibition in the Town Hall
  - Engaging with members of the Windrush communities in the city to tell their stories and exhibiting this as part of the work of the Museum of Oxford



- Engaging with our twin cities to create a global dance film as part of the Christmas Lights Festival
  - Engaging with members of the Refugee Resource Women's group including 25 women and 8 children from Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Republic of Congo, Sudan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nigeria to make and exchange decorations with groups in Perm
  - Engaging with people with Dementia and Parkinson's to create a dance programme to meet their needs
  - Engaging with young people, schools and families to run programmes as part of the cultural education partnership to reach those who are NEET, early years/families
  - Lots but would need a bit more steer regarding what particular kind of engagement project you would like to highlight as there are so many
- *Are there any particular methods you use to reach some of our harder to reach communities?*
    - Going through trusted partners, workshop and group leaders and community ambassadors/faith group leaders
    - Working through locality hubs, Oxford Together and community groups
    - Working through media partners e.g. Jack FM, Oxford Mail
    - Working through business partners e.g. Oxford Bus Company
    - Taking time to build relationships, listening, trying things, being prepared to change direction.
    - Listening to the needs of the community, coproducing solutions and sharing decision making
    - Engaging communities across all projects take time – to build up relationships and trust with the communities / identify and engage with key stakeholders / ascertain what is wanted needed not just what can be parachuted in. Each project is unique and takes a different approach and I would say there is no “one size fits all” approach to be successful.

## **Business Improvement**

- Customer Services carry out adhoc engagement surveys most recently we engaged on the Customer Digital Strategy and face to face services. The majority of our engagement is with Residents and across all channels; online, telephone, and at specific events such as tenancy groups and recruitment roadshows.
- Customer Services report monthly on customer satisfaction for telephone and face to face customer contact we are currently at 99.4% ytd satisfaction against a target of 98% for telephone and 91% ytd satisfaction against a target of 80%.
- We have Service level agreements for all of the services we support and meet with them monthly to report on service performance and to discuss service improvements these meetings are all face to face

- ICT engagement exercises are with external organisations and are generally limited to other Local Authorities.

## Planning

	Planning Policy	Development management	Heritage and design
Who do you engage with, who are your key stakeholders?	<p>This varies depending on the document we are engaging on and the stage.</p> <p>It can be as wide as everyone in the city, but it might be residents of a particular area.</p> <p>Resident and community groups are key stakeholders.</p> <p>We engage with landowners and developers frequently to understand their development plans.</p> <p>Key agencies and authorities include Sport England, the Environment Agency, Natural England, the County Council, surrounding district councils</p>	<p>There are numerous for Development Management which again vary</p> <p>Planning Applications (Statutory consultation process)</p> <p>Local residents</p> <p>Key statutory consultees such as Highways Authority;</p> <p>Environment Agency; Natural England; Historic England;</p> <p>Highways England; Thames Water; Sport England;</p> <p>National Amenities Societies</p> <p>Residents Associations</p> <p>Oxford Civic Society</p> <p>Oxford Preservation Trust</p> <p>County Council and surrounding</p>	<p>Archaeology: We engage with agents, architects, contracting archaeological units and members of the public (through outreach events). Key stakeholders include the Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum (councillors, museums, heritage bodies, volunteer groups, contractors), Historic England, Oxford Preservation Trust and Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society.</p> <p>Urban Design &amp; Heritage:</p> <p>Listed building consent applications</p>

		districts	<p>require the statutory consultation process to be followed. We consult and engage with:</p> <p>Local residents Historic England, Amenity Societies Oxford Preservation Trust Local amenity societies</p> <p>For other projects including conservation area appraisals, design guides etc, we consult more widely and following the Statement of Community Involvement.</p>
What channels of engagement do you use? Surveys, exhibitions, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, a combination of all these?	We use a combination of methods, particularly surveys/questionnaires, direct mailings to contacts, exhibitions and public meetings, although rarely focus groups. Social media is increasingly important too.	<p>Those set out within the legislation Newspaper advert Site Notices Public access website Publication of weekly list Social media</p> <p>It is a combination of all</p>	<p>Archaeology: Minimum of two talks a year on recent work (Festival of Archaeology and Oxpast) plus often several more when invited. This year, David recorded an online talk for OPT. He has also been using video diaries (via council social media) and twitter (personal account) to improve public</p>

			<p>outreach. Given talks at schools and widened the circulation list for the regular 'Archaeology in Oxford' update. More formally he provides a user feedback form to all commercial searches of the HER. Also contracted units are increasingly being required to undertake handling sessions of recently excavated material in the museum.</p> <p>Urban Design &amp; Heritage: We use a combination of methods.</p>
How regularly do you consult, is it ad hoc or at regular intervals?	It is ad hoc, depending on the timeline for documents we consult on.	It is a specified consultation process per application	<p>Archaeology: We have attempted to consult contracting units on HER management issues/service delivery on an ad-hoc basis.</p> <p>Urban Design &amp; Heritage.</p> <p>For applications: It is a specified consultation process per application.</p> <p>Otherwise, ad hoc when it is for a project or</p>

			document we are producing.
Any key success stories regarding engagement projects that you would like to highlight.			Archaeology: The video diaries have been successful (3,600 views on latest).
Are there any particular methods you use to reach some of our harder to reach communities.	Engagement with key representatives can be useful. We try to take interactive, engaging, manned exhibitions to existing events that are attracting people not inclined to be interested in planning, such as the Cowley Road Carnival.	Engagement with key representatives is useful to identify areas where we may need to go beyond the statutory.	Archaeology: We have increasingly required contracting units to provide public information leaflets and plan to leaflet Barton Village Road with targeted historic Barton leaflet when it seems appropriate (re Covid).

### **Housing Services**

- Across Housing Services, we have a good record of engagement and consultation work with those we deliver our services to. We are seeking to develop this over the next years to ensure that our customers are allowed more opportunities to be involved in and inform service development. We already have well developed programmes of engagement through the Tenant Involvement Team for example.
- Significant changes to legislation that are due to be implemented will put even more emphasis on this. ‘The Charter for social housing residents: social housing white paper’, published in November 2020 and that sets out a requirement for increased, tailored engagement by landlords with their tenants and one that reflects that tenants want different levels and types of engagements, as well as a requirement that landlords can show how they have sought out and considered ways to improve tenants engagements. There is also a significant focus on engagement and involvement in the Housing Safety Bill, with a duty placed on the ‘Building Safety Manager’ to consult and inform on any ongoing activity.
- As a landlord, we will be affected and have to review our engagement activity to ensues it is aligned with both the Bill and the Charter. Already having a high performing Tenant Involvement team within Housing Services, sees us in a good place to do this. Essentially the Charter and the Bill will place a significant

emphasis on working even more closely with tenants on co-regulation than presently and the most significant challenge identified is the one faced by local authorities where tenants are not necessarily the focus at the top of the organisation or governance structure. The regulator however, makes it clear that this is the expectation.

- Another area within Housing Services where ‘customer engagement’ has developed rapidly over the last year, is the engagement with people who have lived experience of homelessness. Throughout the ‘Everyone In’ response for example, all rough sleepers accessing accommodation were offered a ‘strength based assessment’ that sought to inform the support and accommodation offered when persons moved to more independent accommodation. The rough sleeping team at the council is seeking to improve the effectiveness of the services it commissions by consulting regularly with those with lived experience of rough sleeping in Oxford in general and has appointed a ‘Lived Experience’ Champion who is working with closely LEAF (the Lived Experience Forum of Oxfordshire Homeless Movement). To date the team has involved LEAF in a review of Day Service provision across the city, consulted on the shape of the 20 new Housing First units that is due to be commissioned and a series of meetings are being organised to inform re-commissioning of specific elements of services in the Adult Homeless Pathway.
- The above is an overview of some of our current work and what we are planning to achieve in relation to customer and stakeholder engagement. We are of the firm belief that end user of our services should have their say and inform the development of our services in order for these to be outstanding.
- *Who do you engage with, who are your key stakeholders?*
  - Across the Housing Service we have a number of different external stakeholders. We engage with tenants and leaseholders as we are a landlord and provide services for our residents and consult regularly with those with lived experience of rough sleeping in Oxford to improve the effectiveness of the services the Council commissions for example.
  - To develop and change services we deliver as a Council we also seek to engage all staff that are involved in services delivery as they are all key stakeholders.
- *What channels of engagement do you use?*
  - Surveys, exhibitions, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, a combination of all these?
  - Our channels of engagement vary depending on the reasons for engagement and the stakeholders we are engaging with. Engagement can be one-off or ongoing. Approaches can and have involved:
    - Public consultations on an e-platform, such as Council’s e-consult or Survey Monkey
    - Holding focus group meetings and discussions
    - Forming groups to discuss specific topics/services and for groups to carry out formal reviews of aspects of our services
    - Tenant Co-optee on the Housing & Homelessness (Scrutiny) Panel

- In person meetings with tenants and leaseholders (these have now moved to video calls).
  - We have recently introduced a monthly consultation via mobile phone/e-mail with tenants and leaseholders that have registered to take part.
  - Newsletters and postcards.
  - Door knocking/door step consultation/surveys.
  - Mystery Shopping
  - Through two research pieces in relation to our homelessness services (statutory and non-statutory) carried out by Crisis, users of our wider homelessness services, such as the housing options team, have been interviewed about their experiences in interacting with the council.
  
- *How regularly do you consult, is it ad hoc or at regular intervals?*
  - The regularity of engagement varies depending on the reason and type for engagement. Some teams/services consult ad hoc when a specific piece of work is carried out, whilst others, such as the Landlord Services Team consult on a regular basis where meetings with tenants and leaseholders are scheduled for example.
  - The rough sleeping team on the other hand have just carried out consultation to inform the commissioning of a new service in Oxford and have scheduled a series of meeting to inform the re-commissioning for certain aspects of services in the Adult Homeless Pathway.
  - Consultation on policies and strategies takes place as and when these document are developed. If these are statutory documents, code of guidance is followed on how and when consultation takes place.
  
- *Key success stories*
  - We have had some very good successes in engagement work across the services, particularly in our Landlord Services Team that also has a dedicated Tenant Involvement Team. Particular successes include: Tenants/Leaseholders forming Stakeholders Panels to be part of the interview process for jobs within Housing Services.
    - Post-works consultation on Great Estates sites.
    - Tenants/Leaseholder group reviewing the Great Estate Programme and the proposed Great Estate site for 2020/21 & 2021/21 to prioritise works.
    - Online survey following every edition of Tenants in Touch (quarterly tenant magazine).
    - Tenant Group formed as part of the Riverside Court Refurbishment Programme.
    - Consultation on new flooring colours and landscaping improvements at Riverside Court.
    - Tenants testing the new Choice Based Letting software, as part of the forthcoming self-service application.
    - Plans of ongoing engagement with LEAF and service users when developing/re-commissioning services for rough sleepers
    - We also plan a STAR survey (tenant & leaseholder satisfaction survey) in 2021.

- *Are there any particular methods you use to reach some of our harder to reach communities.*
  - The rough sleeping team have appointed a 'Lived Experience Champion' in the team who works closely with the Lived Experienced Forum of Oxfordshire Homeless Movement which enables engagement with a previously 'hard to reach' community.
  - The Landlord Services team carry out door knocking or door step consultation/surveys, as this often has a higher success rate and captures a wider audience.

## **ODS**

Recycling-wise we:

- involved people county-wide to be part of our bin recycling art competition: [https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1302/coffee\\_cup\\_competition\\_art\\_aims\\_to\\_increase\\_recycling](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1302/coffee_cup_competition_art_aims_to_increase_recycling)
- ran a number of quizzes, polls, Q&A, live discussions on social media
- held a number of presentations digitally
- digitally attended Brookes' freshers' fair
- participated to public consultation on our comms
- participated to the citizen's assembly (Maria Warner)
- recycling also has an e-newsletter they send periodically

Corporately we:

- ran a number of quizzes, polls, Q&A, live discussions on social media
- survey on quality of services (e.g. motor transport, maintenance services, cleanliness of streets and public loos)
- survey to our commercial customers on their needs

## **Financial Services**

- The annual budget consultation. This involves taking the draft budget out to consultation and invite members of the public as well as other key stakeholders to participate. The consultation is an online survey but available in a paper version too for those that would prefer that. The Residents Panel are also invited to take part in this. Since the formation of the Residents Panel we have seen an increase in the response rate to the budget consultation.
- The Council Tax Reduction Scheme has also been a major engagement project within Finance over the last year.

## **Law & Governance**

- Feedback surveys are carried out after cases to monitor service standards and highlight any areas for improvement.
- The Elections team works with both universities and their student bodies to drive up voter registration numbers. In addition there is a broad engagement



programme with schools which are offered a range of activities including Why register? Why vote? Workshops; 'How to run an election' training and support for mock elections and referendums.

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