

To: Cabinet
Date: 17th September 2025
Report of: Director of Communities and Citizen Services
Title of Report: Citizen and Community Engagement Policy 2025

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	To seek approval to adopt the Citizen and Community Engagement Policy 2025
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Corporate plan 2024-2028

Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:
Approve the Citizen and Community Engagement Policy 2025; and Delegate authority to the Director of Communities and Citizen Services to publish the Citizen and Community Engagement Policy and to make any typographical amendments as may be required, before publication.

Appendix No.	Appendix Title
Appendix 1	Citizen and Community Engagement Policy 2025
Appendix 2	Equalities Impact Assessment - Citizens and Community Engagement Policy 2025
Appendix 3	Risk Register - Citizens and Community Engagement Policy 2025
Appendix 4	Public Consultation Results - Citizens and Community Engagement Policy 2025

Background and Introduction

- Oxford City Council has a longstanding commitment to engaging with citizens and communities on the decisions that affect them. The Council takes a proportionate and targeted approach to ensure that views from diverse groups and communities are reflected in the decision-making process.

2. The Citizens and Community Engagement Policy, included at Appendix 1, sets out the framework for how the Council engages with citizens and communities, with the aim of better understanding their needs and increasing their involvement in decisions that impact their lives.
3. This Policy supersedes the Community Engagement Policy Statement 2014-17.
4. The Citizen and Community Engagement Policy includes the following key elements:
 - An overview of the factors influencing citizen and community engagement, including Oxford's diversity and recent housing sector reforms.
 - The principles that underpin the Council's citizen and community engagement activities, including flexibility, proportionality, transparency and clarity, timeliness, feedback, inclusiveness and accessibility, and strengthening tenant voice.
 - An outline of the Council's channels and approaches to citizen and community engagement.
 - The Council's internal information-sharing and engagement coordination mechanisms.

Development of the Policy

5. The principles of citizen and community engagement in the policy were informed by key sources, including the Cabinet Office and the Local Government Association (LGA), helping to shape the framework.
6. The Citizen and Community Engagement Policy aligns with obligations introduced by the Social Housing Act, particularly regarding tenant engagement and the protection of tenant rights. It sets forth how the Council will fulfil these obligations through enhanced engagement and service improvements tailored to tenant needs.
7. The Citizen and Community Engagement Policy was developed in collaboration with the Scrutiny Officer and Director of Corporate Strategy, and with valuable input from the Policy Officer Group, Housing, Communities, Citizen Experience and Contact Centre teams, along with contributions from Councillor Chapman.
8. The public consultation was carried out between 29 May and 26 June 2025, with 197 responses collected and analysed, as set out in Appendix 4. The results showed strong support for the Council's approach to community engagement, with over 80% agreeing with the policy's key principles and 93% saying it's important for residents to be involved in local decisions. People reported taking part in various ways, like online surveys, the Residents' Panel, and speaking with councillors. However, some concerns were raised about trust, communication, and accessibility. In response, the policy places greater focus on providing clear, timely feedback and offering a range of accessible ways for people to get involved—helping to build trust and show that residents' views are taken seriously. A more detailed breakdown of the consultation findings is provided in Appendix 4 – Public Consultation Results.
9. The policy has also been updated to reflect Cabinet's feedback on the Citizen Experience Strategy, including the need for more in-person consultation in outlying

areas, support for language interpretation where needed, and proactive engagement with children under 12.

Monitoring and Reporting

10. The Council will monitor engagement efforts to ensure departments use existing insights and avoid over-consultation.
11. Engagement findings will be reviewed, and departments will report on how feedback influences decision-making, ensuring transparency and demonstrating the impact of citizen input.
12. Feedback mechanisms will ensure that citizen input shapes policy proposals. Engagement results will be published, and the 'You Said, We Did' section on the Council's online portal will highlight how feedback has influenced decisions.
13. The policy will be reviewed once per year to ensure that it is still current.

Financial implications

14. There are no immediate or planned direct financial implications of this Citizen and Community Engagement Policy as it reflects programmes that are funded within existing budgets.

Legal issues

15. While there is not a statutory requirement to have a citizen and community engagement policy, there is new guidance from the Cabinet Office and the Local Government Associations on Consultation Principles. Local Authorities should adopt those principles to engage stakeholders in policy and legislative developments. The Policy has been developed in line with public consultation, the details of the consultation undertaken is set out in Appendix 4.

Level of risk

16. See Appendix 3 for the Risk Register.

Equalities impact

17. The Citizen and Community Engagement Policy is based upon our principles of engagement, which includes inclusiveness and accessibility. This is defined as: "the Council is committed to providing all citizens and communities with the opportunity to participate in engagement activity, as it recognises this leads to improved outcomes. This includes marginalised and/or under-represented groups and groups which are typically more challenging to engage with".
18. See Appendix 2 for the Equalities Impact Assessment.

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Background Papers:	
1	<u>Community Engagement Policy Statement 2014-17</u>
2	<u>Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023</u>
3	<u>Consumer Standards 2024</u>