

Consultation Feedback Summary of Themes and Responses

Introduction.

This summary provides an overview of the key themes identified through the consultation on the Draft Consultation & Engagement Strategy, conducted between 23 October and 18 December 2025. It explains how the insights gathered have informed and shaped the final Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2026–28, ensuring clear alignment with the priorities and concerns expressed by residents, partners, and stakeholders. In total, 47 survey responses were received through targeted outreach to more than 100 VCSE organisations, supplemented by several face-to-face conversations and a member briefing, offering a broad and representative range of perspectives on how consultation and engagement should operate across the city.

Overall, respondents expressed positive support for the strategic direction, and the qualitative feedback—often rich, thoughtful, and detailed—was analysed to identify common themes and areas for improvement. These insights have directly contributed to strengthening the final strategy, ensuring it reflects best practice, supports trust-building across communities, and responds meaningfully to the issues raised throughout the consultation process.

Summary of Feedback Themes

1. Clarity of Purpose, Aims and more detail around how aims will be met
2. Plain-English Communication and Accessible Explanations
3. Inclusivity, Representation and Reaching Seldom-Heard Groups
4. Building Trust and Demonstrating Accountability
5. Early, Ongoing and Deeper Engagement
6. Stronger Partnership Working
7. Methodological Rigour and Representativeness
8. Consistency Across All Council Services

How the Strategy Responds to These Themes

The Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2026–28 incorporates a range of features and commitments that directly align with, and respond to, the themes identified during the consultation process.

1. Clarity of Purpose, Aims and Detail on Delivery

The Strategy sets out a clear Purpose that explains the importance of consultation and engagement, how these processes shape services and priorities, and how they contribute to building trust and improving quality of life across the city. It outlines four aims focused on meaningful, inclusive, open and accountable practice.

A dedicated section defines consultation and engagement, drawing on Local Government Association definitions and an adapted Ladder of Public Engagement.

The Council has reduced the number of focus areas from five to four and added a separate section describing how the Strategy will be implemented, including the key enablers required.

Each focus area now provides clearer detail on the actions the Council will take and how these will be delivered. An Expected Outcomes subsection has also been added to show what each focus area is intended to achieve.

The key principles have been expanded to include co-design and accountability, emphasising the Council's commitment to working collaboratively with communities.

While these principles are explained in greater depth, they are not the primary focus. By delivering the Strategy's aims through the four focus areas, the Council will naturally meet the Gunning Principles and embed the Civil Society Covenant across all community-facing activity.

2. Accessible and Plain-English Communication

The Strategy incorporates communication standards that include plain-English summaries, visual storytelling, audio and translated materials, accessible formats, and consistent explanations of scope and objectives.

3. Inclusive and Representative Approaches

The Strategy commits to mixed-methods research, the use of interpreters, accessible events, outreach in community spaces, Equality Impact Assessments, and a commitment to identifying under-represented groups, all within a framework of ongoing Community Insight development.

The Council has also replaced the term inclusive with equity to provide greater clarity regarding its commitment to improving representation and diversity in user voice.

4. Trust, Transparency and Accountability

Trust is one of the Strategy's core principles and is supported by transparent reporting, clear communication of how public input will be used, strengthened governance arrangements, application of the Consultation Charter, and alignment with the Gunning Principles.

5. Early, Ongoing and Deeper Engagement

The Strategy clearly distinguishes between consultation and engagement, emphasising that engagement is an ongoing process. The ladder of involvement (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower) provides clarity, alongside the Consultation Charter, which supports a proportionate approach to consultation activity.

6. Partnership Working

Partnership working has been strengthened across the Strategy, including collaboration with VCSE organisations, community groups, businesses, public sector partners and education institutions.

7. Rigour, Reliability and Mitigating Bias

The Strategy commits to mixed research methods, proportional representation where feasible and appropriate, continuous insight gathering, regular review and adaptation, and a test-and-learn approach.

The Council has also addressed the issue of self-selection bias and set out how it will work to reduce the potential impact of this on consultation findings.

8. Consistency Across Council Services

The Strategy clearly identifies responsibility for delivering each focus area.

Corporate ownership is embedded through cross-service governance, annual roadmaps, staff training, monitoring tools, benchmarking and shared accountability.

9. Meaningful Measures of Success for Residents and the Council

The Strategy reduces the emphasis on purely numerical success measures. While quantitative indicators remain important, the Council has added additional measures

relating to resident experience, perceptions of involvement and levels of representative feedback.

Success measures are defined across three dimensions:

How much: participation levels, diversity and representative involvement.

How well: quality of feedback, timeliness of reporting and participant experience.

How connected: sense of influence, feeling listened to, trust and partnership working.

Conclusion

The Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2026–28 provides a comprehensive response to the themes identified through consultation. It sets out a structured, principles-led and organisation-wide approach that emphasises inclusion, accessibility, transparency, rigour and partnership working. The Strategy establishes clear expectations for meaningful and consistent involvement of communities across all Council services.