Redditch Borough Council Engagement Policy 2026-2028

Title	Redditch Borough Council Engagement Policy 2026-2028
Description	This policy sets out the Council's approach to delivering inclusive and meaningful community engagement over the period 2026–2028.
Created by	Engagement and Equalities Advisor
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1. Purpose

At Redditch Borough Council, we want people to feel informed, heard and able to influence decisions that affect their lives. Engagement plays an important role in helping us understand what matters to people, how services are experienced and how decisions may affect different communities. This insight strengthens the evidence we use and supports fair, practical and responsive decision-making.

This Engagement Policy builds on the work we have already delivered, and the learning gained from previous engagement activity. Over recent years, we have developed a more consistent and inclusive approach, improving how we involve residents, communities and partners in shaping local services and decisions. This experience has helped us create a more practical and joined-up way of working, which this policy now sets out and strengthens for the period 2026 to 2028.

As we continue to develop our approach, we are focused on making it easier for people to take part in engagement and maintaining the relationships we have built with communities and partners. We will continue to listen carefully, particularly to underrepresented voices, and be open about how feedback is used. By doing this consistently, we aim to strengthen trust and ensure engagement is meaningful and valued.

This policy also supports the Council through one of the most significant periods of change in local government in Worcestershire. Following the Government's decision to replace the existing county and district councils with two new unitary authorities from April 2028, engagement will play a vital role in ensuring residents, communities, businesses and partners remain informed, involved and able to influence how services and local priorities develop. By maintaining a clear, consistent and inclusive approach to engagement, we will help ensure local voices continue to inform decision-making throughout the transition and beyond

2. Scope

This policy applies to all consultation and engagement activity undertaken or commissioned by Redditch Borough Council between 2026 and 2028, where we are seeking to understand views, inform decisions or improve services. Activity may range from statutory consultation to more informal engagement and may take place at a corporate, service, or local level.

Engagement may be undertaken to meet statutory requirements or to support service improvement and community involvement. It plays an important role in understanding views and informing policies, priorities, services, budgets, and decision-making, including supporting Equality Impact Assessments.

This policy applies to external consultation and engagement activity only. It does not cover internal consultation within the organisation, such as matters relating to employee pay and conditions, which are managed separately through Human Resources. Consultation on planning applications, the Local Plan, and Traffic Regulation Orders is also outside the scope of this policy.

Across all engagement activity, the Council will take a coordinated and proportionate approach. This includes using established engagement channels and partnerships, encouraging participation from a wide range of people, and using a mix of methods to reflect different needs and circumstances. The Council will be clear about what can be influenced and will ensure that feedback is considered alongside other relevant evidence when making decisions.

3. Building on our Successes

Engagement activity in recent years has helped us better understand how people want to take part and what makes engagement effective. We have delivered a range of engagement activity across the Council, including:

- borough-wide consultations such as the Local Plan roadshows, combining face-to-face events with online engagement
- targeted engagement with tenants and service users to inform housing and community safety services
- partnership work with voluntary and community organisations to reach underrepresented groups
- use of surveys, drop-in sessions and community events to support service improvements

We have learned that:

- people are more likely to take part when engagement is clear, relevant and easy to access
- using a mix of online and in-person approaches helps reach a wider range of people
- working with community groups improves reach and trust
- clear communication about what can and cannot change helps manage expectations
- engagement is most effective when it takes place early and is linked to decision-making

This learning shapes how we will continue to develop and improve our approach.

4. Our Responsibilities

National responsibilities

The Council has a responsibility to involve residents and communities in its work. This includes requirements under legislation such as the Equality Act 2010, Local Government Acts and national guidance. We follow established principles of good consultation (the Gunning Principles), ensuring engagement is fair, timely and allows people to give informed views. Alongside this, our approach reflects a wider commitment to being open, transparent and accountable.

What this means locally

In Redditch, engagement supports the Council's priorities and the Equality Strategy and Action Plan. It helps us understand lived experience and consider how decisions may affect different communities. We will continue to strengthen how we:

- reach underrepresented communities
- use insight to inform decisions
- link engagement with equality considerations

A mix of digital and non-digital methods will continue to be used to ensure engagement remains accessible and flexible.

Local Government Reorganisation

The Council recognises that Local Government Reorganisation will bring significant change as Worcestershire transitions to two new unitary authorities from April 2028. During this period, engagement will be an essential tool for understanding the needs, priorities and concerns of residents, communities and stakeholders. We are committed to providing clear opportunities for people to participate in conversations about the future of local services and places, ensuring that community insight helps inform planning and decision-making throughout the transition. By taking an open, accessible and coordinated approach, we will support meaningful involvement and help maintain trust during a period of change.

5. Our Approach to Community Engagement

What we mean by community engagement

Community engagement is about listening to people, understanding their experiences, and involving them in decisions that affect their lives. It builds on ongoing engagement activity across the Council and can range from sharing information through to working more closely with communities to shape solutions. The approach taken will depend on the issue and what we are trying to achieve, ensuring engagement is both appropriate and meaningful.

Why engagement matters

Engagement helps the Council understand what matters to people, design better and more accessible services, and make informed and balanced decisions. It also supports the development of stronger relationships and helps build trust over time.

For communities, engagement provides an opportunity to have a voice in local decisions, influence services and priorities, and build confidence and understanding. It also helps people see how their views contribute to outcomes and shape future services.

Good engagement is clear, meaningful and takes place early enough to influence decisions. Taking a thoughtful and proportionate approach helps ensure engagement is both effective and valued by those taking part.

What we mean by community

People may identify with communities in different ways, including where they live, shared interests or experiences, and aspects of identity or background. These connections are not always fixed, and individuals may belong to more than one community at the same time.

Our approach recognises this and reflects the different ways people experience community life. We continue to build on existing relationships while also seeking to reach new and less-heard voices, ensuring a broader and more inclusive understanding of our communities.

6. Who is Involved and How We Work Together

Community engagement is a shared responsibility across the Council. Understanding people's experiences and views is essential to delivering services that work well and reflect local needs.

Engagement should be part of everyday activity and link with policy, communication, equality work and service delivery.

Across the Council engagement is coordinated to reduce duplication, make best use of resources and ensure insight is shared and used effectively.

Service areas lead engagement relevant to their work, supported by the Performance and Improvement Team. This includes designing inclusive engagement, choosing appropriate methods and using findings to inform decisions.

Elected Members play an important role in representing community views and supporting engagement locally. Scrutiny processes help ensure community insight is considered in decision-making.

7. Putting this into Practice

Community engagement will continue to develop as part of how the Council works day to day, building on existing practice.

Embedding engagement in everyday work

Engagement will be built into how the Council plans, designs and reviews its work. This includes policy development, service design and improvement, budget setting and priority-setting, as well as Equality Impact Assessments. Bringing engagement into these core areas helps ensure that decisions are informed by a combination of data, insight and lived experience, supporting stronger and more balanced decision-making.

A proportionate and inclusive approach

We recognise that not all decisions require the same level of engagement, and that people experience different barriers to taking part. Our approach will reflect the scale and impact of each issue, ensuring that engagement is proportionate and meaningful. We will use a mix of methods and make reasonable adjustments where needed so that people can take part in ways that work for them.

Working alongside the Equality Strategy

Engagement plays an important role in supporting the delivery of the Equality Strategy and its action plan. It helps us hear from underrepresented communities, understand different experiences and identify potential impacts of decisions. This insight informs Equality Impact Assessments and strengthens how equality is considered across the Council's work.

Tenant engagement

Engagement with Council tenants is an important and distinct area of activity.. Housing Services has a dedicated Engagement Strategy for Redditch tenants which aligns with and complements the corporate approach, whilst also meeting the specific requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing

Engagement during change

As Redditch Borough moves towards the new unitary authority arrangements, engagement will remain central to how we understand and respond to local needs. We will continue to listen to

residents, communities, businesses and partners, using their insight to help inform future service design, priorities and decision-making. Alongside providing opportunities for participation, we will communicate openly about developments and be clear about how feedback is considered, helping to ensure local voices continue to be heard throughout the transition to the new councils.

Working with partners and communities

We will continue to work closely with community groups and partners. This includes building on existing relationships, reaching a wider range of people and making the best use of local knowledge. Working in partnership also helps reduce duplication and supports more effective and long-term engagement.

8. Monitoring and Learning

We will take a data-led approach to engagement so that it helps improve outcomes for residents and supports the delivery of the best possible services. For each engagement exercise, we will set clear aims linked to the decision, service or outcome being considered, including who we need to hear from, the level of take-up we are seeking and how we will monitor whether the approach is reaching a broad and representative range of people. Where appropriate, this will include reviewing participation data, representation and the effectiveness of the methods used. We will use this learning to strengthen future engagement and improve service design and delivery.

9. Get Involved and Contact Us

You can find out about current consultations and engagement opportunities on the Council website www.redditchbc.gov.uk/council/strategy/consultations/

We welcome feedback and involvement from residents, partners and community groups.

Email: equalities@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
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