**CONSULTING WITH YOUR LOCAL AREA**

Community Councils need to make every effort to communicate with all the residents living in the community. There are two parts to this duty, firstly to seek their views and secondly, to keep them informed of the Community Council’s work as their elected representatives.

This is a positive duty. Fulfilling it will immensely improve the service you give to the community. Here are some examples:

* Ensure your local authority is giving you the support you need to fulfil your duty through regular engagement with your Community Council Liaison Officer (CCLO)
* Include main contact details in all correspondence issued from your Community Council. Always invite contact and encourage feedback.
* Whenever possible, restate the ways constituents can contact you. Make this as easy as possible for them – offering multiple contact routes can help e.g. email, telephone or suggestion/enquiries box in a key community location.
* Create a website or ensure your details are included on the Local Authority website. List contact details for all Community Councilors, including pictures where possible. Show the date, time and venue of meetings, and the agenda. Include the minutes of all previous meetings.
* Look into using social media channels to publicise the work of the Community Council and to share information about upcoming meetings. You can use the [#FollowMe social media guide](https://www.communitycouncils.scot/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/40428/CC-Social-Media-Guide-2022.pdf) for Community Councils to help you decide which channel is best for you.
* Collate a database of e-mail addresses for constituents. Ask for permission to send them e-mail bulletins seeking their views and reporting your actions.
* Display Community Council contact details in all public buildings. Include information on what you do and how you can help.
* Secure space in any local newsletters, including local authority publications. You might want to do this collectively among all the Community Councils in your area.
* Invite and encourage the local press to attend meetings. Issue press releases on matters of local interest and communicate with the local media through your social media channels. Consider appointing someone to handle social media channels and media relations.
* Whenever you have a change of office bearers, let the local press know and contact any local organisations you have worked with. This communication should indicate the new office bearers and reinforce the status, work and approachability of your Community Council. Do the same after every Community Council election.
* Hold surgeries for the community in public venues. For example these could be community premises, local supermarkets or libraries. Advertise these in the local press and online well in advance and again closer to the time. Experiment with times, days and venues, and with the format of the surgery. Always have at least two Community Councilors present.
* Create and deploy surveys at least once per year. Ask questions about the community’s perceptions of you, of their community and their quality of life. Ask what you can do to improve the community. Find out what their priorities are. Be sure to include questions on the issues that will be important to your constituents in the future even if the details are not fully known. These surveys can be issued via email, social media and your website, as well as via printed papers in libraries or community centres in your area. Consider shorter, faster surveys on individual issues of significant local importance as they arise. The responses will be very important in helping you demonstrate how you speak for the community.
* Hold public meetings (in the true sense – all meetings of Community Councils are by law open to the public) whenever there is an issue of sufficient local importance. Monitor the attendance in terms of whether it representatively reflects the community – age, sex, area of residence, overall numbers and so on.
* Place suggestion boxes in prominent, busy local venues, as well as inviting online suggestions via email, social media and the website. Always respond to comments left when the person gives contact details. Regularly report comments at full Community Council meetings.
* If possible, deliver flyers or leaflets door to door. This is also an excellent way for Community Councilors to get to know their constituents, and vice versa. If there is a local community radio station, consider using it to promote the awareness and work of the Community Council.
* Word of mouth and informal personal contact is a common practice and has its place. However, it is the least objective method of discovering the community’s views and should not be relied upon wholly when the Community Council make important decisions.
* Use Plain English and explain any professional terminology or "jargon" used in all Community Council publications and correspondence to ensure that information is easy to understand.
* The [Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC)](https://www.scdc.org.uk/hub/community-engagement) has developed a number of resources to help with community engagement, including the National Standards for Community Engagement, which outline good-practice principles designed to improve and guide the process of community engagement.

## Remember*:*

* Always make it easy for the public to contact you
* Always seek comments and opinions from the community
* Always evaluate your effectiveness or otherwise regularly by results
* Never let the personal opinions of individual Community Councilors replace the views of your community.
* Always adhere to the principles of the Community Councilors Code of Conduct.