# Talking, Listening and Working Together ‘You said, We Did’

This is the feedback we received from people during our engagement activity, how we have listened to what was said and how this has shaped the strategy and action plan.

## The NEL Commitment

**You said...** The Commitment is good, how will it work in practice?

The CCG, Council and VCSE Forum have all adopted the NEL Commitment. **We have** put a number of steps and checks in place to make sure this happens.

A group of community members, council, CCG and VCSE representatives will monitor this and report progress and issues to the Union Board (the union of the Council and the CCG).

**We are** developing an online ‘tool kit’ for staff and anyone with an interest in engagement. This will include resources to help get it right.

**You said...** It would be a good for all organisations that work in our communities to work to the NEL Commitment of Talking, Listening and Working Together.

**We will** start writingthe Commitment into all future service specifications and contracts. Providers will be expected to show how they are using the Commitment in their service developments.

**You said...** Will other organisations like Engie and health and care providers work to the Commitment too?

Our intention it that all council and CCG policies and projects will work to the Commitment. This will include those carried out on the Council’s behalf by partners such as Engie. For example, the Commitment forms part of the refreshed Statement of Community Involvement for the Local Plan which was received by Cabinet in December and will be consulted on in 2020.

**We are** now talking to other organisations and agencies in the area and asking them to adopt the Commitment so that it truly is for everyone in North East Lincolnshire.

**You said...** It would be a good idea for GP practices to follow the principles in the Commitment when working with their Patient Participation Groups (PPGs).

**We have** shared this suggestion and the Commitment with the CCG’s Council of Members (GPs). The Steering Group will further engage with GP practices in 2020.

## How you want to receive information from us

**You said...** One size does not fit all’ - we need to listen to communities and provide engagement opportunities that work for them.

Our strategy says…our communication and engagement materials should be accessible and where appropriate provide information in other formats such as paper copies, audio, other languages and Easy Read.

**You said...** You suggested ways to make sure our information reaches all communities ranging from digital surveys and social media, paper information in places people go, in person at meetings, local venues and in the street.

**We are** going to look into some of these suggestions further and hopefully include these as part of a minimum standard of communication so you know what to expect and where to look for opportunities to have your say.

Our strategy says…we use a range of communications to inform people about how they can have their say. This includes social media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram - and dedicated sections of our website.

**We have** also undertaken to get out and about and go to places where people are rather than expecting them to come to us.

**You said...** Postal newsletters were also identified as a good way to reach all households.

**We are** looking at producing a newsletter for residents.

We understand that some households find it much harder to find out what’s going on and to have their say and simply providing paper surveys in public places may not be enough. **We are** exploring ways of sending information to help people that may be housebound, or restricted in other ways, to have their say while balancing the cost of large postal fees for newsletters to every household.

## How you want to have your say

**You said...** The message was clear - people are put off from getting involved if they feel that decisions have already been made and they are being invited to take part in a ‘tick box’ exercise.

The NEL Commitment says ‘We will be clear and honest about how you can get involved and what we are doing with what you’ve told us’. It’s true that there are some things we ‘have to’ consult you on, this isn’t the case for most of what we do. We need to do more to show you that we are using what You said.... The information is out there but it’s clear we need to do more to get that message to people.

**We will** challenge any inaccurate information about plans and consultations by being clear about why we are asking and what the possibilities are.

**You said...** The most positive experiences of engagement have been when communities have worked alongside organisations as equal partners to co-produce plans and solutions.

**You said...** When talking about co-production this must mean working as equal partnership from the earliest opportunity all the way and this should be an ongoing commitment.

**We have** included a number of measures in the strategy to evaluate how we are doing, and to put more focus on working with people on projects. These include:

* Evidence in project plans that we have spoken to people early
* Number of project groups that include representation from communities
* People we engage feel they are positively involved in plans and solutions

**You said...** People wanted an opportunity to talk about what is important to them rather than have the council or the CCG set the agenda.

Through the steering group, alongside voluntary and community sector partners and ward members, **we will** enhance the ways in which we are continuously listening to the priorities of local communities and communities of interest across North East Lincolnshire. **We will** also develop our approach to feeding these insights into organisations and supporting community led change.

## About surveys

**You said...** Not everyone has access to or likes to use digital media - paper surveys need to be available too.

Our strategy says… Not everyone can come to meetings or can come to talk to us in person – online and paper surveys are another way for us to understand people’s views. Alternative formats are available. We can also arrange for people to complete a survey by post, over the telephone or by meeting with us in person.

**We will e**xplore ways for people to engage with us via a paper survey mailing list. We need to make sure this makes the best use of resources by having a good rate of return.

**You said...** Long surveys are off putting.

Sometimes we do have a lot of questions to ask, but **we will** always try to keep them as short as possible. We ask people to answer some questions about themselves at the end of our surveys and **we have** now made it more obvious that these are optional. These questions help us to understand how well we are reaching all communities and how some of our diverse communities think. It does mean the survey takes a bit longer to complete but it is important and if you’re short of time you can always opt-out.

**You said...** Sometimes the wording of questions in surveys is restrictive. People should be able to able to express their views in open questions.

Sometimes we ask questions that do not cover all options and this will be frustrating to many people who have a view that does not fit with the options provided. We don’t have to consult on all options and some are ruled out because of legal reasons or because they are no-longer affordable. We always need to be careful and give people realistic options to choose from. **We are and will continue to** work closely with our partners and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to make sure that we don’t rule out any of these options too early. **We will** however, make sure our surveys include an opportunity for people to express their views in free text comment boxes.

## How you want us to feedback

**You said...** Feeding back and sharing the outcomes from engagement is important if you want people to be involved, and this isn’t often happening.

**We have** included in our strategy that ‘You said, We Did’ updates for all engagement activity should be published within six months of the close of the engagement/consultation. Where this is not possible we will publish a progress update at timely intervals.

**We will** send links to ‘You said, We Did’ updates to Accord members and to the Council’s consultation e-mailing list.

**You said…** People that knew about the ‘You said, We Did’ pages on the council and CCG website thought this was a good way for them to receive feedback. Others thought we should do more to make sure the people that have given their views get to hear about what has happened, such in the same way that they engaged with us in the first place.

If we have invited people to a focus group or visited a community group, we feedback in their preferred way**. We will** ask groups and individuals how well they think we have done this as part of our monitoring.

## Engagement meetings and events

**You said…** We should hold events at times so that things like work or childcare, or if you’re worried about leaving the house on a dark evening are no-longer a barrier.

**We have** included in our strategy that - We will make sure events are interactive and held at different times throughout the day, giving more people the opportunity to attend.

**You said...** People need to be in an environment they feel comfortable in order to openly provide their views.

**We have** included in our strategy that - We always try to ensure that whenever we carry out any engagement activity in the community, we choose accessible venues that local people use and engage in ways that people are comfortable with.

**You said...**The opportunity to discuss personally sensitive issues was highlighted as a key issue.

We appreciate that many people feel uncomfortable expressing their views in front of an audience, especially when they are personal or emotional in nature. While public events are important**, we will** try and vary our events to allow opportunities for informal and personal conversations.

## Reaching our diverse communities

**You said...** We should engage more with people in disadvantaged wards, existing community groups and seldom heard groups such as ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.

**We will** expand participation in and the role of our Community Equality Impact Assessment Panel for health and care policies/plans. This brings together community members from all walks of life who help us understand the impact of our plans and policies on groups with protected characteristics. They give their views to make sure we take into account people’s needs when we design our services and commission our providers.

**We have** also added ‘unpaid carers’ and ‘social deprivation’ as characteristics we consider when carrying out equality analysis, along with those listed in the Equality Act as protected.

**We have** also undertaken to get out and about and go to places where people are rather than expect them to come to us.

**You said...** Supporting people to take part by covering travel expenses and holding meetings at appropriate times and venues were seen as ways to reach more diverse audiences.

**We have** developed a joint Volunteer Expenses Policy to underpin this strategy.

**Our community Equalities Impact Assessment Panel advised us** to carry out targeted work with seldom-heard communities.

Our action plan includes carrying out targeted work to community and membership groups such as ‘Men in Sheds’ and sports organisations to increase awareness of engagement opportunities amongst men; outreach work with minority ethnic, LGBT, people/groups with disabilities and faith groups; and strengthening links with schools and colleges to increase participation by young people.

**We also** want to target deprived wards where people do not routinely engage with us.

Telling us when we get things wrong

**You said...** The best ways to tell us when we get things wrong were email, online feedback forms and over the phone. People appear to value a dedicated contact to handle their concern before it gets to the complaints stage and to have their query passed on to the relevant department.

The strategy says… We encourage feedback (compliments, complaints, comments) about the way we do things via the council’s online feedback form or CCG Patient Advisory and Liaison Service (PALS).

While we do have a process for feedback and we also operate a ‘No Wrong Front Door’ policy and any queries and requests that come through our engagement team are passed on in a similar way. When a complaint is received, it is allocated to a member of staff to look into and communicate with you directly.

**We also** included information in the strategy about contacting our Engagement team directly.

## About the strategy itself

**You said...** Some people felt that the language used was difficult to understand in some places however most people were very comfortable with the understanding of this.

**We have** published an Easy Read version of the Strategy and it is also available as an audio recording

**You said...** There was some concern expressed that the strategy placed too much emphasis on engagement with groups as opposed to individuals and questioned how accurately a group could represent the views of individuals.

**We made** changes to the strategy in response to this to emphasise the importance of engagement with individuals as well as groups in plans and solutions; and that we measure how effectively we are achieving this.