

Meeting of the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee

**Wednesday, 6th September, 2023 at 6.00pm
At Saltwells Education Development Centre,
Bowling Green Road, Netherton**

Agenda – Public Session (Meeting open to the public and press)

1. Apologies for absence
2. To report the appointment of any substitute members serving for this meeting of the Committee
3. To receive any declarations of interest under the Members' Code of Conduct
4. To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 12th July, 2023 as a correct record (Pages 4 – 8)
5. Public Forum
6. Stalled Sites – Strategies for bringing back into use privately owned vacant land and property (Pages 9 – 18)
7. Consultation Process Review across the Authority (Pages 19 – 47)
8. MyDudley Digital Platform Update (Pages 48 - 73)
9. Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee Progress Tracker and Future Business (Pages 74 - 76)

10. To consider any questions from Members to the Chair where two clear days notice has been given to the Monitoring Officer (Council Procedure Rule 11.8)

Distribution:

Councillor D Stanley (Chair)
Councillor S Henley (Vice-Chair)
Councillors A Aston, A Davies, C Eccles, A Hopwood, E Lawrence, N Neale, T Russon, P Sahota and K Westwood.



Chief Executive

Dated: 29th August, 2023

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Minutes of the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee

Wednesday, 12th July, 2023 at 6.00 pm
At Saltwells Education Development Centre, Bowling Green Road, Netherton

Present:

Councillor D Stanley (Chair)
Councillor S Henley (Vice-Chair)
Councillors A Aston, R Collins, A Davies, M Hanif, A Hopwood, E Lawrence, T Russon (From Minute No. 5), P Sahota and K Westwood.

Officer:

K Taylor (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

1 Comments of the Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee and emphasised his wish for the Committee to undertake a positive approach to ensure detailed and effective scrutiny on the issues within the remit of the Committee.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors C Eccles and J Elliott.

3 Appointment of Substitute Members

It was noted that Councillors R Collins and M Hanif had been appointed as substitute Members for Councillors J Elliott and C Eccles respectively, for this meeting of the Committee only.

4 **Declarations of Interest**

No member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

5 **Public Forum**

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

6 **Programme of Meetings and Business Items for 2023/24**

The Committee considered the programme of meetings and items of business for detailed consideration by this Select Committee during 2023/24.

In referring to the suggested items for inclusion, Councillor P Sahota considered that the proposed list did not reflect the wider range of services being delivered by the Regeneration and Enterprise Directorate and Corporate areas and believed that there was some flexibility and capacity within the programme to include additional items and still allow sufficient time for informative discussions. He further reported that the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise and Senior Officers were supportive to the recommendations.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed to include the following items for inclusion to the programme for the 2023/24 municipal year:-

Commercialisation Strategy Update

An update from the service area on how the Strategy was progressing and to identify solutions in reducing ongoing annual subsidies and ensure that the Council was delivering their aspirations.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

An overview and update on progress made from the service area in delivering positive outcomes from the Fund.

Estates Strategy

An update from the service area and assurance needed that timescales were being adhered too in rationalising and ensuring Council owned estates were fit for purpose. This update would be presented in conjunction with the Council House Refurbishment Update.

Key Performance Indicators – Corporate and Regeneration

An oversight of the key performance indicators in relation to Regeneration and Corporate areas only and consideration as to whether they were challenging in order to help deliver better services and performances.

Councillor A Davies welcomed the inclusion of an update on progress made in relation to stalled sites, and requested that a further update be scheduled in March, 2024. He also referred to the proposed update on the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension to the November, 2023 meeting and suggested whether this should be deferred to later in the municipal year to allow sufficient time in exploring opportunities in securing the additional funding needed to support the Metro extension to Brierley Hill.

In referring to the My Dudley Digital Project, Councillor E Lawrence emphasised the importance of IT within the organisation and referred to discussions held at the Future Council Scrutiny Committee during last year, where it was noted that a significant amount of money had been allocated for upgrading to Microsoft E5 licences and welcomed an update on this area.

Councillor E Lawrence further recommended an additional item in relation to performance data in relation to Leisure Centres, in particular Duncan Edwards Leisure Centre and Halesowen Leisure Centre. It was noted however that this could be presented in line with the Commercialisation Strategy item.

Councillor A Aston welcomed and supported the comments and suggestions made, however urged that flexibility be maintained throughout the programme to allow for any emerging issues during the year.

The Chair acknowledged the good points made and emphasised the need for Members of the Select Committee to be fully engaged and undertake robust discussions whilst considering the items brought forward. Lead Officers for each report would be requested to attend the respective meeting and present current information and future aspirations and ensure that items were completed in order to avoid any repetition. Accountability and assurance would need to be demonstrated in order to evidence how taxpayers' money was being spent appropriately. It was also suggested that site visits would be undertaken where appropriate.

Following a request to re-schedule the January, 2024 meeting and subsequent discussion, the Committee agreed to retain the meeting date, as approved by Full Council in May, 2023, however requested that the Senior Democratic Services Officer review the timings of the proposed business items in accordance with comments made by the Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That the report on the programme of meetings and potential items of business for this Committee, be noted.
- (2) That the Senior Democratic Services Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, be requested to review the timings of the proposed items in relation to the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension Update and the Economic Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan for later consideration during the municipal year.
- (3) That the following items be included in the programme of business for 2023/24:
 - Key Performance Indicators – Corporate and Regeneration
 - Commercialisation Strategy Update
 - UK Shared Prosperity Fund
 - Estates Strategy
 - Stalled Sites Progress Update (March, 2024)
- (4) That, subject to resolution (2) and (3) above, the Committee confirm the programme of business as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report submitted, subject to the need for flexibility to reflect any changes that might arise during the municipal year.

- (5) That the Lead for Law and Governance, following consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, be authorised to make all the necessary arrangements to enable this Committee to undertake its programme of scrutiny work during the 2023/24 municipal year.
 - (6) That the terms of reference for the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee, as set out in the Appendix to the report submitted, be noted.
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7 **Questions Under Council Procedure Rule 11.8**

There were no questions to the Chair pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 11.8.

The meeting ended at 6.49pm

CHAIR

Meeting of the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee - 6th September 2023

Report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise

Stalled sites - strategies for bringing back into use privately owned vacant land and property

Purpose

1. This report is to update the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee on the strategies deployed in the last 12 months, by the local authority to bring back into use privately owned land and property which remains derelict or untidy or where development is stalled.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Committee:-
 - Note the progress made since the report submitted to the Future Council Scrutiny Committee on 7th Sept 2022;
 - Acknowledge positive actions being undertaken by services in seeking to bring back into use privately owned land and property which remains vacant and derelict;
 - Recognise the limitations of statutory powers in requiring private landowners to bring forward vacant and derelict sites for development.

Background

3. Following a report to the Strategic Executive Board (SEB) on 24th March 2021 and Informal Cabinet on 31st March 2021, a Stalled & Derelict sites working group was established to co-ordinate work across multiple service areas regarding land and properties identified as “*problem or derelict sites*” by the local authority and communities or where development has stalled.

The Stalled & Derelict sites working group includes officers from the following service areas;

- Planning
- Housing
- Environmental Health & Trading Standards
- Legal Services
- New Heritage Regeneration
- Projects & Delivery
- Dudley Business First
- Corporate Landlord Services

In addition, the work of the stalled & derelict sites group will support the aspiration of the Council in seeking to maximise the redevelopment of brownfield sites specifically where housing sites remain vacant or derelict or development has been stalled for a significant period.

In order to support the work of the group the Council has at its disposal a range of strategies and interventions to support the re-use of vacant and derelict land and property

Empty Homes Strategy

The Council's Housing Directorate has in place a range of strategies and policies for managing empty homes and properties and seeking their return to use for housing purposes.

The Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan covers the period 2020-2024. The strategy sets out the key drivers for bringing back into use empty homes namely the New Homes Bonus policy which recognises that empty homes returned to use provide additional accommodation in the same way that new build properties do, with an empty home returned to use being rewarded in the same way that a new build property is via a payment of the equivalent council tax income to the local authority for four financial years following its return to use.

Empty Homes Grant

An Empty Homes Grant is available to support owners of empty properties with grants of up to £10,000 to support essential repairs and improvements to bring back into use the properties which have been vacant for longer than 12 months.

Use of Enforcement Tools

There are a range of enforcement tools that are utilised by the Council to support the re-use of empty homes as well addressing concerns relating to land and property that has become derelict or untidy.

Enforcement should only be used as a last resort where it has not been possible to resolve the matters through pro-active engagement with land and property owners and where there is a clear economic or environmental need to do so.

i.) Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO)

Introduced by the Housing Act 2004, EDMO's allow the Council to take over management & secure occupation of a dwelling that has been unoccupied for a period greater than two years. The EDMO provides for the undertaking of necessary repair works and the recovery of the associated costs through the rent received following the deduction of a management fee.

EDMO's can last for up to seven years and do not require a change in ownership of the dwelling.

ii.) Enforced Sale

The Law of Property Act 1925 allows the Council to recover charges registered against a property (or land) through the sale of that property (or land). Such charges will generally come about through works carried out in default of a statutory notice such as the Housing Act, Building Act, Town and Country Planning Act, Environmental Protection Act or Prevention of Damage by Pests Act. This procedure will be considered where debts are in excess of £5000 and there has been no attempt to pay and a property has remained empty for a period greater than six months.

iii.) Section 215 Notice

Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) have planning powers to deal with derelict/blighted land within Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. S215 gives LPAs the power to serve notice on land/buildings which it considers have an adverse impact upon the amenity of the neighbourhood.

When considering if a S215 is appropriate the LPA must consider the context. In the case of derelict land and buildings, it is necessary to consider whether the status of the land itself means the condition is as one would expect, and also whether the measures required in a notice will themselves resolve the issue.

The failure to comply with a notice result in an offence for which the responsible party may be prosecuted. In cases where this does not resolve the matter, LPAs may use direct action to undertake measures prescribed in the notice and can then seek to recoup the costs from the responsible party either directly or via placing a charge on the land which can lead to enforced sale proceedings (see above)

iv.) Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)

Compulsory purchase is intended as a last resort to secure the assembly of land and property needed for the proper implementation of a project or scheme, using powers set out in various Acts of Parliament. The main legislative context for compulsory purchase is found in these Acts:

- Land Compensation Act 1961
- Compulsory Purchase Act 1965
- Land Compensation Act 1973
- Housing Act 1985
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

Before initiating a CPO, it must be demonstrated that the scheme for which the CPO is required is capable of being delivered. The Council must as a minimum demonstrate the fit within a policy context, that planning permission, if necessary, will be forthcoming and there is sufficient funding identified.

The Council will always seek a voluntary agreement on the acquisition of the land or property with the leaseholder or freeholder in the first instance. However, where appropriate to support and enable the proposed timetable for the project, the Council may start a compulsory purchase timetable, as a contingency measure and initiate formal procedures alongside the negotiations to come to a voluntary agreement to purchase.

The compulsory purchase system is based on the general principle that any owner of land or rights compulsorily acquired or interfered with is entitled to compensation and should be no worse or better off in financial terms following the acquisition. Any property which is the subject of a CPO will be compulsory purchased at market value.

CPO's may also allow the council to acquire properties for the better provision of housing accommodation or to make a quantitative or qualitative improvement to existing housing.

The Council is committed to using its CPO powers where necessary. Recent Orders at the Dudley Interchange project and housing led regeneration in Colley Gate, shows the Council's intent to see stalled and derelict sites be brought forward.

4. **Site Progress**

- Initial long list of 68 sites has been prioritised to a list of 20 sites for first tranche.
- 12 sites have progressed, with 8 sites having made little or no progress.
- Collectively the 8 sites are capable of accommodating approximately 115 homes.
- High level information has been established through commission of specialist property development and legal advice on the 8 remaining sites including, appraisals, site layouts and legal advice on statutory powers including CPO.

Working Group Progress

- Secured Homes England revenue funding (£60K), to procure specialist property development and legal expertise to advise most appropriate course of action for each site including use of CPO powers.
- Appointed external advisors Thomas Lister surveyors Freeths solicitors and PCPT architects to consider and report on routes to bringing each site forward to include associated risks.
- Present report findings and run workshop to share learning.
- Engage with private sector developers and registered providers via soft market testing questionnaire and presentation to Dudley Housing Partnership. Early market engagement will consider the market appetite and the views of house builders and developers.

Next Steps

- Establish Cross directorate multi-disciplinary task and finish working groups to oversee actions for 8 sites, in addition to Colley Gate site.
- Develop delivery options and work plans incorporating recommendations of commission into actionable steps to progress regeneration of sites.
- Continue to engage with private sector developers and registered providers via market testing following analysis of the questionnaire.
- Establish a high-level project plan, including spend profile for the programme.
- Review and update long list of (68) sites with any new sites identified since 2021 and begin to prioritise next tranche of priority .
- Investigate options to secure additional revenue funding to develop a core team of officers to progress priority sites given there is currently no full-time resource working on the stalled & derelict sites programme.

5. Case Studies - positive action on derelict sites

Enville Street, Stourbridge



The council owned site has remained a long-term vacant site on the edge of Stourbridge ring road and is a key gateway site to the Town Centre. Having previously been terraced housing until the 1990's, the houses were subsequently demolished to facilitate the re-alignment of Enville Street (A458).

The site can support development of a housing led 10-unit scheme in line with planning application (P22/0332), planning approval was gained March 2022.

Previously aligned to HRA development pipeline, Housing Directorate strategic requirement to allocate resources to servicing and maintenance of existing stock now means new development partner is now required.

Corporate Landlord are progressing to bring this site to the open market disposal with benefit of planning permission, following an ongoing review of adjacent landownerships to establish if larger development more comprehensive site is viable.

Proposed scheme site layout plan (P22/0322)



122 – 128 Colley Gate, Cradley



In 2013, Decision Sheet (DUE/37/2013) authorised the use of the Council owned land at Colley Gate as a basis for a potential site assembly with other land between 122 & 128 Colley Gate.

Following marketing and detailed negotiations Hortons were chosen as the preferred development partner by the local authority and a report to Cabinet on 21st September 2016 subsequently approved entering into an agreement with Hortons for the regeneration of the Colley Gate site with the agreement dated 18th April 2019.

In May 2021, Hortons notified the Council, that they no longer wished to pursue their interests in the site at Colley Gate and that they were terminating the development agreement in line with the termination conditions.

With the redevelopment of the site being a priority for the council, officers from Housing and Communities have subsequently developed a residential led scheme for the redevelopment of 122 to 128 Colley Gate which includes the council owned property at 128 Colley Gate, for an 8-unit affordable housing scheme, and a planning application (P22/0220) has subsequently been approved with conditions in May 2022.

Previously aligned to HRA development pipeline, Housing Directorate strategic requirement to allocate resources to servicing and maintenance of existing stock now means new development partner is now required.

Proposed site layout of the scheme
(P22/0220)



As the development site included three properties currently in private ownership (122 -126 Colley Gate) the Council appointed Thomas Lister to support with the acquisition of the site. Terms have been agreed, with completion anticipated in August 2023. In seeking to acquire all the land, in tandem with negotiations, the council decided to use its CPO powers in order to deliver the approved scheme. This process has brought forward an objector to the scheme, and the Council via Thomas Lister are seeking to resolve the objector's issues and a withdrawal of the objection, without compromising the scheme unduly. However, if this cannot be achieved the matter will proceed to a Public Enquiry.

Finance

6. A £1 million budget was approved by the Council in February 2022 to support the work of the stalled & derelict sites working group, with a specific focus to facilitate the acquisitions of properties by the council to bring forward development. The £1million will be funded by prudential borrowing, the debt charges for which are to be built into the Council's base budget.

Law

7. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides the Council with power to do anything (whether involving the expenditure, borrowing, or lending of money or the acquisition or disposal of any property or rights) which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.

Pursuant to Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 a local authority has a general power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do.

Section 123 Local Government Act 1972 provides that the Council receives best consideration in respect of disposals of land.

There are a number of statutory authorities for intervention but to summarise they include the following:

Housing and Planning Act 2016

Law of Property Act 1925

Compulsory Purchase Act 1965

Land Compensation Act 1973

Housing Act 1985 & 2004

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

Legal Services will advise on a case-by-case basis

Risk Management

8. There are no identified material risks to the Council resulting from the report. As part of the proposed delivery plan for each priority site a detailed risk register will be developed that captures any key risks. Where the council is taking a lead role in the development of sites key risks are likely to include the ongoing effect of inflation on construction projects and the impact this has on budget allocations.

Equality Impact

9. There will be no negative impact on people with protected characteristics as a result of this report. The development of regeneration projects is undertaken with full regard to the requirement for equality impact assessment

The Council's Equality and Diversity policies will be applied throughout the delivery of this project.

10. Equality impact assessments will be developed for individual schemes where the need to is identified by the site working group.
11. There are no specific impacts that will affect children / young people.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

12. There are no direct HR/OD impacts associated with this report. Where additional specialist support is required to support the activity of the working group this will be procured in line with the Council's standing orders.

Commercial/Procurement

13. There are no direct commercial implications associated with this report. Where additional specialist support is required to support the activity of the working group this will be procured in line with the Council's standing orders.

Environment & Climate Change

14. The establishment of the Stalled and Derelict site programme, with the aim to promote and support the redevelopment of former brownfield sites for commercial development accords with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

Council Priorities and Projects

15. Bringing back into use vacant and derelict sites will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Dudley residents through improved residential amenity and a reduction of anti-social behaviour which is often associated with derelict sites.

It will also work towards providing access to a range of housing offers that are affordable, accessible, and attractive, meeting the needs of our diverse communities.



Helen Martin
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Meeting of the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee – 6th September 2023

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

Consultation process review across the authority

Purpose

1. To provide an overview to the committee of consultation activity across the authority and to provide an update on future improvements to processes.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended the Committee: -
 - Note that Dudley Council does not have a single, corporate department with an oversight or responsibility for consultations taking place across all directorates and services in the local authority.
 - Understand the scale and complexity of consultation activity undertaken across the local authority service areas and how best practice has been used to inform a consistent corporate approach.
 - Support the new Consultation Framework and the database produced for guidance by the Chief Executive's performance management team and key stakeholders across the organisation. (Appendix B – Consultation Framework).
 - Support the officer working group to identify the best software solution. Conversations together with requirements gathering are currently taking place with consideration to use the 'MyDudley' platform.

Background

3. The consultation process review commenced in the Autumn of 2022, following a paper that went to the former Future Council Working Group Committee on 27th July 2022.

The Head of Communications and Public Affairs, together with the Head of Planning presented the report submitted in relation to the consultation process review across the authority.

In presenting the report it was commented that the former Corporate Scrutiny Committee had undertaken a review of the consultation process across the Local Authority approximately 3 or 4 years ago. Following the recent large-scale consultation that had taken place in relation to the Black Country Plan (BCP), it was considered an appropriate time to re-elevate the process, considering any new learnings that had been identified and to address any gaps in the process.

It was recommended that the Chief Executive's Office lead a review of consultation processes across all directorates, to collate information and identify best practice areas to inform a consistent corporate approach.

The full report and action notes from the meeting of 17th July 2022 are available as background documents.

4. **Consultation Review**

Following the meeting of the Future Council Working Group it was agreed that a review of the approaches to consultation is undertaken. To support this project an officer working group was established in the autumn of 2022, the key tasks of the group included:

- Baselining all current forms of consultation to understand the different approaches and identify best practice.
- Develop a forward plan of planned consultation exercises that are due to take place over the next 12 months.
- Develop a framework and guidance for all directorates to ensure a consistent approach. (Appendix B – consultation Framework)
- Bring a report back to the former working group, now the new select committee in due course with progress and updates.

It is important to note that 'consultation' is different from 'engagement', it has a clear beginning, middle and end and is carried out formally through surveys, meetings etc. It can be any activity that gives local people a voice and an opportunity to influence important decisions. It involves

listening to and learning from local people before decisions are made or priorities are set.

The remit of the officer working group is to concentrate only on consultation and therefore excludes engagement activity, which is generally carried out by community groups.

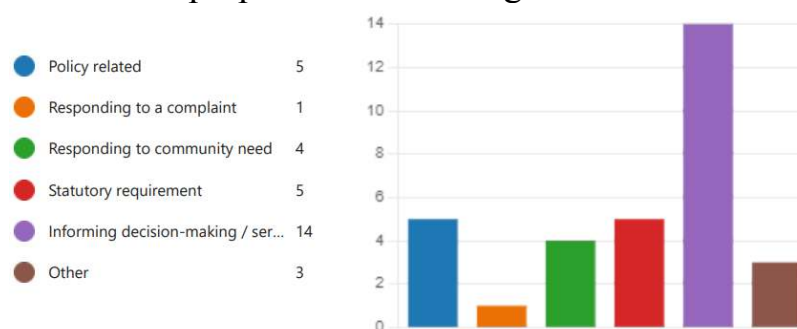
Consultation Research and Baseline Exercise

The performance management team initially carried out an internal survey to enable us to capture external consultation activity taking place across the organisation.

The purpose of the review was to enable us to baseline all current forms of external consultation, to understand the different approaches and identify best practice. To also develop a forward plan of planned external consultation exercises that are due to take place over the next 12 months. In doing this exercise it provided the team with the knowledge and understanding to ensure we have a consistent approach for the authority on consultation activity through a corporate framework and a database of consultation activity for intelligence sharing and targeted communications and inclusive consultations with accessibility for all through.

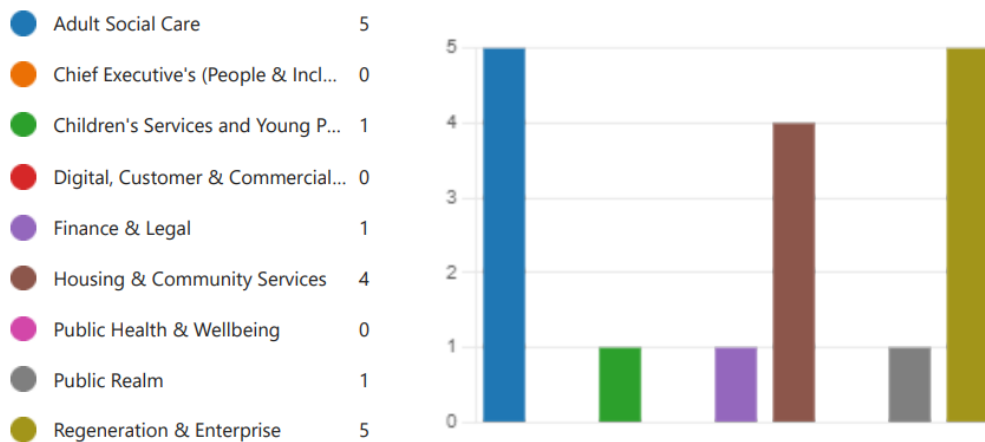
The results of the survey (17 responses) highlighted the majority carry out external consultations between 1-5 per year and generally on a yearly basis unless it is based on need or linked to either a project or major improvements to services. The key purpose of conducting the consultation activity are to inform decision making (14), policy or statutory related (5 each) or responding to community needs (4).

What is the purpose of conducting the consultation activity?



The highest proportion of external consultations conducted by directorate are Adult Social Care and Regeneration & Enterprise respectively, followed by the Housing & Communities directorate as the graph illustrates below.

Please tell us which directorate you are in.



The survey also asked whilst conducting the consultation are Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's) carried out to ensure there are no barriers to participation or disadvantage to any protected groups from participation. Surprisingly fourteen people responded with No, or Don't know, with only four people confirming that they do carry out an EIA.

One of the key methods used when carrying out consultations were via a paper or online survey, this highlighted issues in relation to survey packages used either via a paid licence or free online licences. In total six service areas use a free online survey form to carry out their consultations, which has consequences in terms security issues and GDPR regulations.

To see the full survey results, please refer to Appendix A.

Considering the issues above in terms of EIA and GDPR, the consultation framework and guidance have a dedicated section on both these areas to ensure the authority adheres to legal regulations and also includes a privacy statement for Dudley.

Software Solutions

The officer working group are considering a corporate software licence to ensuring the authority abide by regulations. One consideration is to use the 'MyDudley' platform to eliminate issues with licences and to create a one platform approach to enable us to be better engaged with our residents, which in turn will ensure policies/regulations are being met.

However, for the time being, services will continue to use the paid software packages, if a licence is not held. The baseline exercise highlighted that ‘Survey Monkey’ was the most favourable software packaged used when carrying out online consultations, second to SNAP (Appendix A – baseline results Q15).

What software do you use if conducting online/paper surveys?



Due to Survey Monkey being the preferred option, the framework directs people to our Communications and Public Affairs (CAPA) team who currently have a survey monkey enterprise licence, which can be used ensuring GDPR regulations are followed, until a better solution is in place.

Further information on software packages and licences can be found in section four of the consultation framework.

5. **Consultation Framework / Guidance**

Following the baseline exercise and extensive external benchmarking, the performance team have produced a consultation framework, providing key messages and guidance to all staff carry out external consultations with other key functions including the Information Governance team, CAPA team and the Equality and Diversity team. (Appendix B – Consultation Framework).

The purpose of this guidance is to help teams identify areas they need to consider and tools available when carrying out consultations and provides a consistent approach across the council. This includes:

- Definition of consultation
- Our corporate approach
- Licences and enterprise accounts information
- Considerations
- EIA, DPIA and Privacy notices.
- Accessibility
- Tools and Resources

The tools and resource section includes information from the LGA, the centre for Governance and Scrutiny, together with Arnstein's ladder of participation.

It is recommended that the committee review the framework and offer any further inclusions or recommendations before it is published internally to all staff. This would also include the 12-month forward plan of consultations. (Appendix B/C – consultation Framework/Database).

Consultation Database/List

You may recall the Council previously had a 'Community Engagement Database' which was supported by a framework and toolkit, but due to the disbandment of the corporate policy and research team around 10 years ago, the database is no longer updated nor in use.

It has however been highlighted by our Strategic Executive Board members that a database of consultations would be beneficial to both members and officers to provide oversight of consultations being carried out and help to inform consultation planning.

Currently, digital and customer services are leading a review to look at a replacement that would also integrate with the new digital front door, MyDudley as previously mentioned in Section 4. A digital working group has been assigned and a requirements gathering exercise is currently underway with key stakeholders across the organisation.

However, until a solution is in place, we have developed the temporary database on SharePoint. (Appendix C – Database - export list)

Staff will be asked to enter the details of any consultation taking place onto the database where all staff can access to update. The purpose of the database is to also request that staff check the list when planning consultations so that wherever possible we do not overwhelm our residents and communities.

An extensive communications plan will be in place to promote the framework and database to all staff when signoff/approvals are complete.

Resource and Ownership

It must be noted that Dudley Council does not have a single, corporate department with an oversight or responsibility for consultations taking place across all directorates and services in the local authority. Formerly, the authority did have a centralised strategic intelligence and policy unit which carried out this function and held a consultation and engagement database to track all activity taking place and ensure a consistent

approach was used. However, this team was repurposed several years ago.

In order to re-establish a corporate ownership of all consultation activity it is recognised budget and resource would need to be identified. The corporate performance management team have carried out the current exercise alongside their substantive posts. Going forward it would not be sustainable to continue to embed, monitor and provide continuous reviews, unless further resources are in place.

Finance

6. If corporate ownership of all consultation activity is recognised, a budget, resource and location of the post would need to be considered.

Law

7. There are no material legal considerations in this report, however it must be remembered that in a number of consultations on statutory documents that the requirements of a consultation will be legal defined. Any consultation exercise, or public engagement, must meet the minimum requirements of the legislation to ensure that the adopted document is legally sound.

Risk Management

8. There are no material risks associated to this report for Select Committee.

Equality Impact

9. No equality impact assessments are needed for this report.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

10. There are no material Human Resources or Organisational Development considerations for this report.

Commercial/Procurement

11. A requirements gathering exercise is in place to consider consultation activity may be an option. If so the only implications would be the cost of an additional module added to the existing MyDudley platform.

Council Priorities

12. In order to deliver the aims and objectives of the Council Plan and contribute the wider borough vision it is imperative the authority has a

sound and robust process in place to consult with its key stakeholders on activity across the authority.



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Deputy Chief Executive

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Appendices

Appendix A – Consultation Baseline Report
Appendix B – Consultation Framework / Guidance
Appendix C – Consultation Database – export list

List of Background Documents

Consultation Process Review – Future Council Working Group report/action notes.

External Consultations Activity Review

This review covers all aspects of external consultation across the organisation. It is important that we obtain the views of as many stakeholders as possible. We are keen to capture the wide range of external consultation activity that is carried out across the Council and from all levels.

Note: Consultation is different from engagement, it has a clear beginning, middle and end and is carried out formally through surveys etc.

The purpose of the review is to enable us to baseline all current forms of external consultation to understand the different approaches and identify best practice. To also develop a forward plan of planned external consultation exercises that are due to take place over the next 12 months. In doing this, Dudley will have:

- A consistent approach, through a toolkit and framework
- Intelligence sharing for targeted communications
- Inclusive consultations with accessibility for all

We also ask you to leave your employee contact details for us to contact you if necessary to help inform the new consultation platform/database and for intelligence sharing.

Thank you in advance for your contribution.

.. required

* This form will record your name, please fill your name.

General information

1. How many external consultations do you/your service carry out in an average year?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20 or more

2. How often are external consultations undertaken? (By 'external' we mean individuals and groups outside the council) *

Please tick all that apply. If selecting 'other' please add detail.

- One off
- Weekly
- Fortnightly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Twice yearly
- Annually
- Every 2 years
- Every 3 years
- Other

3. What is the purpose of conducting the consultation activity? *

Select all that apply. If selecting 'other' please add detail.

- Policy related
- Responding to a complaint
- Responding to community need
- Statutory requirement
- Informing decision-making / service design / service priorities
- Other

Requirements

4. Are any of the consultations carried out a contractual requirement?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

5. Is personal data collated and processed from those you are consulting with?

Personal data as defined by GDPR

- Yes
- No

6. Have you published a Privacy Notice that details the lawful basis for processing personal data and what you will do with it?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

7. Is special category data such as disability, health, crime data relating to individuals processed as part of the consultation?

- Yes
- No

8. Are Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) undertaken?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

9. Are Equality Impact Assessments carried out to ensure there are no barriers to participation or disadvantage to any protected groups from participation?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Audience and communication methods

10. What communication methods are used? *

Please tick all that apply. If selecting 'other' please add detail.

- Council-led forums (e.g. Your Home, Your Forum)
- Focus / scrutiny groups
- Service user groups
- Participation in organised activity / event / roadshow
- Site visits
- Email
- Face-to-face interviews
- Information posters
- Letter with response form
- Digital platforms (online questionnaires / surveys)
- Questionnaires / surveys (paper)
- Referendum / public vote
- Written reports / circulation of documents
- Other

11. Who are the target audiences? *

Please tick all that apply. If selecting 'other' please add detail.

- Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) groups
- Businesses
- Children / young people / youth groups
- Community groups
- Elected members / Councillors
- Faith groups
- Families
- Gender groups
- General public
- Parents (of children under 18)
- Patients / service users
- People with learning disabilities
- People with mental health issues
- People with physical disabilities
- People with sensory impairments
- Schools
- Stakeholders / representatives
- Tourists / visitors to the borough
- Other

12. What at the target age ranges?

Please tick all that apply.

- All ages
- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 and over

Tools and resources

13. What support/resource do you currently use when conducting consultation activities? *

Please tick all that apply. If selecting 'other' please add detail.

- Own team (internal resource)
- CAPA (communications / marketing)
- Graphics team
- Print services
- Intelligence team
- Digital/ICT services
- External resource / organisation carry out consultation on our behalf
- Other

14. Do you use software to carry out paper/online surveys? *

- Yes
- No

15. What software do you use if conducting online/paper surveys? *

Please tick all that apply. If selecting 'other' please add detail.

- Snap
- Survey Monkey
- Mentimeter
- MS Forms
- Other

16. Do you or your team currently hold a software user license for any of the following? *

Please tick all that apply. If selecting 'other' please add detail.

- No license held
- Snap
- Survey Monkey
- Mentimeter
- Other

17. Are you aware of the Council's Community Engagement database? *

- Yes
- No

18. Do you use it to record current consultation activity? *

Yes

No

19. Are you aware of the Council's Community Information Directory? *

Yes

No

20. Do you use it to support stakeholder engagement? *

Yes

No

Upcoming consultations

21. Are you currently undertaking any consultation at this time or plan to do so in the next 6-12 months? *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

22. Please tell us the consultation title

23. What is the purpose of this consultation?

24. When is the consultation due to be carried out?

Approximate dates are acceptable.

Please input date (dd/MM/yyyy)



25. When was the consultation last carried out? (if applicable)

Approximate dates are acceptable.

Please input date (dd/MM/yyyy)



About you/your team

26. Please tell us which directorate you are in. *

- Adult Social Care
- Chief Executive's (People & Inclusion; CAPA; Secretariat)
- Children's Services and Young People
- Deputy Chief Executive's
- Digital, Customer & Commercial Services
- Finance & Legal
- Housing & Community Services
- Public Health & Wellbeing
- Public Realm
- Regeneration & Enterprise

27. What is the name of your service area/team? *

28. Who is the contact officer regarding these consultation activities?

If different from the person completing the survey

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Microsoft. The data you submit will be sent to the form owner.

Consultations Framework

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Definitions.....	2
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4. Tools and resources available.....	3
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6. Additional resources	6

1. Introduction

Many teams within the council carry out consultation and engagement with various stakeholders such as borough residents, tenants, tourists and businesses. Carrying out this work effectively helps us shape how we deliver services as well as informs and engages with our stakeholders.

The purpose of this guidance is to help teams identify areas they need to consider and tools available when carrying out consultations and a consistent approach across the council.

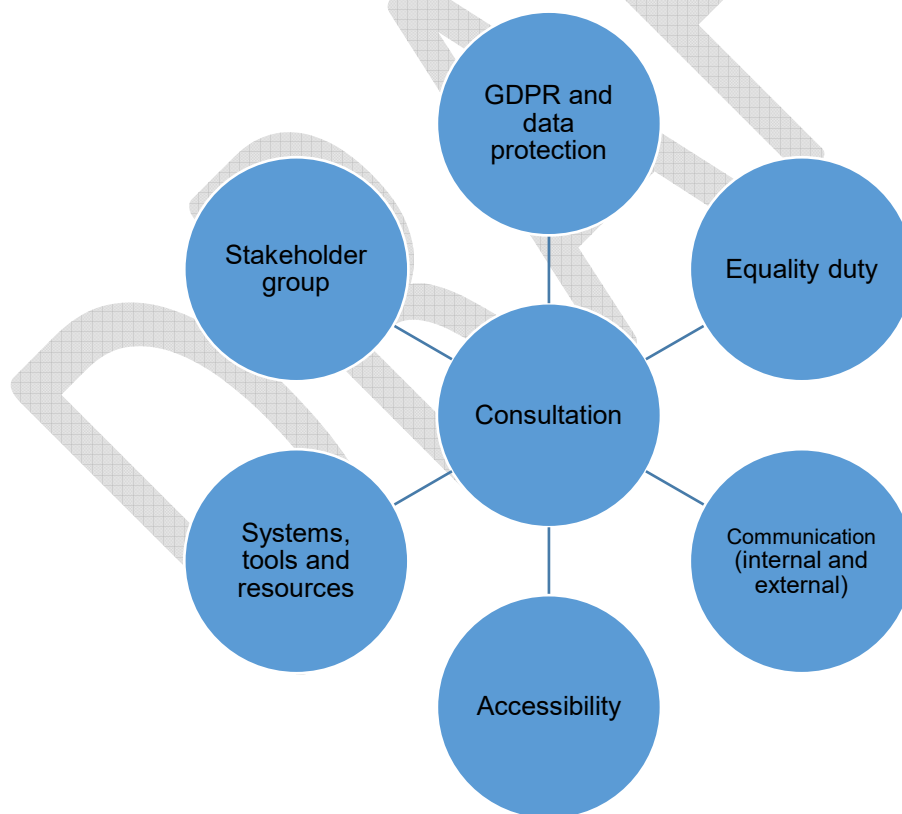


Figure 1 Consultations considerations

Alongside this guidance, a new ‘consultations list’ has been developed. This central list will allow officers to see activity being carried out throughout the council. This could then aid intelligence sharing for targeted communications and clear communication with elected members.

2. Definitions

The local government association (LGA) use the term 'engagement' to mean *“anything that creates a stronger two-way relationship between council and the community. This runs from formal consultation to more deliberative and informal listening exercises.”*

In Dudley we differentiate between engagement and consultation.

Many teams carry out engagement with their service users as part of their business as usual. This can include outreach work with residents and community groups as we target our services to those who need them.

Consultation is different from engagement, it has a clear beginning, middle and end and is carried out formally through surveys, meetings etc. It can be any activity that gives local people a voice and an opportunity to influence important decisions. It involves listening to and learning from local people before decisions are made or priorities are set.

Examples of consultations the council have carried out include:

- Your Borough, Your Future Survey (Autumn 2022, providing insight people's thoughts on climate change priorities and help shape the council's climate action plan)
- The Big Question (Annual survey regarding budget priorities)
- Play Area Strategy (Summer 2023, gather public opinion on play areas in parks and open spaces to help shape the council's new play area strategy)
- Portersfield development (Summer 2023, shaping proposals for the former Cavendish House site in Dudley)

3. Corporate approach

3.1. Consultations database/list

The previous Community Engagement Database which was available through Connect is no longer available. Currently, digital and customer services are leading a review to look at a replacement that would also integrate with the new digital front door, MyDudley.

However, until a solution is in place a temporary shared list is needed in order to give members and officers oversight of consultations being carried out across the council. Staff are asked to enter the details of any consultation taking place onto the list which is hosted on SharePoint and all staff can access it to update. The list requires some basic details regarding the consultation and a lead officer to be named as a contact.

It is also requested that staff check the list when planning consultations so that wherever possible we do not overwhelm our residents and communities.

Staff are asked to ensure new items are added to the list in a timely manner as it will be used to inform councillors of any upcoming consultations.

▲ Consultations SharePoint site including list: <https://dmbc.sharepoint.com/sites/Consultations>

3.2. Licenses and enterprise accounts

Many online tools for formatting and carrying out surveys have free licenses/versions with basic features and access. However, care should be taken when signing up for one of these as they may not be GDPR compliant, particularly around the hosting of surveys/results on servers outside the UK or EU.

Care also needs to be taken when signing up to a paid for service. There have been many cases in the council where an individual has had budget agreed for an individual license but have then left the council, the license then cannot be accessed by other staff and continues to be paid for until the purchase card is out of date.

Individual or free licenses do not typically provide you with the necessary liability cover if things go wrong e.g. data breach. Terms and conditions must be checked before entering into any licensing agreement, including the use of 'free' licenses.

Providers often offer an 'enterprise' or 'corporate' license which allows for multiple users and additional features. These are more expensive, but they are more likely to provide the assurance we need when considering data protection.

4. Tools and resources available

4.1. LGA New Conversations Guide

The New Conversations document from the Local Government Association (LGA) is a guide to engagement. The guide has extensive information on engagement and consultation including good practice, choosing engagement methods, stakeholder mapping and legislative issues.

The New Conversations Guide along with other LGA resources is available through the Consultations SharePoint site.

▲ [Consultations SharePoint site](#)

4.2. Shared licenses

CAPA currently hold an annual SurveyMonkey (Momentive) Enterprise License. This license allows access to additional templates, analysis/insights and ensures all data is stored in line with GDPR. The license allows for 15 seats (users).

Services can either choose to purchase an annual seat for £357 (provides access to set up unlimited surveys) or commission CAPA to set up adhoc surveys at a cost of £25 per hour. Contact capa.admin@dudley.gov.uk for more information.

4.3. Service specific software

A number of services use software specific to their needs. This is particularly the case where consultation is part of the council's statutory duty. Where specific tools or software are needed teams have the autonomy to put this in place following all corporate guidance on procurement and data protection.

4.4. Communications and Public Affairs

Service areas carrying out consultations will need to engage with Communications and Public Affairs in order to communicate their consultation to targeted audiences across the borough and beyond.

CAPA has a professionally trained team of communicators who may advise on the consultation approach and provide access to a wide range of tools to communicate the consultation.

Deploying a multi-channel approach to communications, with a mix of traditional printed methods and digital and social channels, CAPA will support services to reach their specific target audiences for consultation, both internally and externally to the council.

Please note that CAPA does not carry out the consultations or analyse the data from responses, both of which need specialist input with the team carrying out the consultation.

4.5. Print services

The council's Print Services team offer a diverse range of quality printed products from the simplest black and white photocopying through to high profile bespoke print jobs that utilise modern day print and marketing methods.

▲ More information about the service is available via [Connect Print Services page](#)

4.6. Council website

Currently, details of consultations are published on our external website. Content can be added to the website via a MyICT request to the web authoring team. Any news/media releases are dealt with by CAPA.

▲ [MyICT request for website updates](#)

▲ [Consultations on external website](#)

5. Considerations

Any consultation carried out is owned by that service/team. There is no centralised team that supports consultation delivery and analysis. Before carrying out any consultation teams will need to identify their own resource/staff time to design the questions being asked, engage with the audience identified and report on the responses received.

5.1. Is consultation needed?

When considering if consultation is needed, the **Gunning Principles** help us to ensure consultation is legitimate in a legal sense. The principles are:

- **Proposals are still at a formative stage.**
 - A final decision has not yet been made by the decision makers.
- **There is sufficient information to give 'intelligent consideration'.**
 - Information provided alongside the consultation must be available, accessible and easy to understand.
- **There is adequate time for consideration and response.**
 - There must be enough opportunity and time for consultees to take part.
- **'Conscientious consideration' must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made.**
 - Decision makers should be able to evidence that consultation responses are considered.

More information on the Gunning Principles and other aspects to consider when designing consultation can be found in the LGA New Conversations Guide (available on the [Consultations SharePoint site](#)).

5.2. Stakeholder group and consultation methods

As we have seen in the Gunning Principles, ensuring a consultation is accessible is essential. People accessing consultations will have varying needs that should be considered while you are designing the consultation. Stakeholder mapping (see LGA New Conversations Guide) is a tool to identify the people you are consulting with. Knowing who your audience is allows you to plan the consultation methods which will result in good quality responses.

While online surveys are increasingly being used, they may not be appropriate for all due to digital poverty or a lack of digital skills. Other barriers to participation should also be considered such as literacy or language needs (for written or spoken responses) and physical access (for meetings). A combination of methods may be appropriate. See also below sections on EIA and online accessibility.

5.3. DPIA and privacy notices

If you are processing personal data (this includes email addresses, phone numbers and other personal information relating to a living individual) you need to have a lawful basis as specified within the UK GDPR. If your consultation is likely to involve high volumes of individuals, and or you are targeting your consultation at individuals with special characteristics, such as disabilities, you may need to undertake a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA). Please see further details of the requirements for this at this link:

▲ [DPIA guidance](#)

In addition to the Corporate Privacy & Disclaimer Statement there is also a generic Consultations Privacy notice which teams can use. You should also ensure that if your service has a Privacy Notice published on the Council's website it includes what happens to consultation data if the data differs to that you normally collect.

You should signpost your audience to the most appropriate privacy notice so they can be further informed as to how their personal information will be handled.

▲ [Corporate Privacy & Disclaimer Statement](#)

▲ [Other privacy notices, including generic consultations privacy notice](#)

Please also note that if you are contacting people by email and/or SMS text messaging routes, you should provide people with a mechanism to opt-out of future communication.

5.4. Equality Impact Assessment

We shall ensure we are using our corporate Equality Impact Assessment templates as part of our governance process to ensure we are compliant with the Equality Act 2010, and our Public Sector Equality Duty.

▲ [EIA templates and guidance](#)

If you require any information about the communities you wish to consult and engage with, please contact the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion team who can provide you with this specific information, and likewise should you require specific workforce Equality statistics. If you should require any support completing your Equality Impact Assessment; or you are interested in training on and around how to strengthen the completion of these forms, please contact the team at EDI@Dudley.gov.uk.

5.5. Online accessibility

Many consultations utilise online surveys and/or are supported by online information. Accessibility applies to everyone and not just the 1 in 5 people who have a disability.

For accessibility on the web we follow the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to meet the AA standard. When designing a consultation to be viewed online, it is also worth considering that current statistics show that over 70% of visitors to dudley.gov.uk are on a smartphone (July 2023). Where possible, check drafts as they would appear on a smartphone.

Guidance on accessibility is available via ICT User Support on the link below.

▲ [Accessibility hub](#)

6. Additional resources

A number of additional resources to help plan consultation activity are available through the Consultations SharePoint site.

▲ [Consultations SharePoint site](#)

Resources include:

- New Conversations Guide from LGA
- How to write effective survey and research questions (Centre for Governance & Scrutiny)
- Arnstein’s ladder of participation
- The Consultation Institute Charter

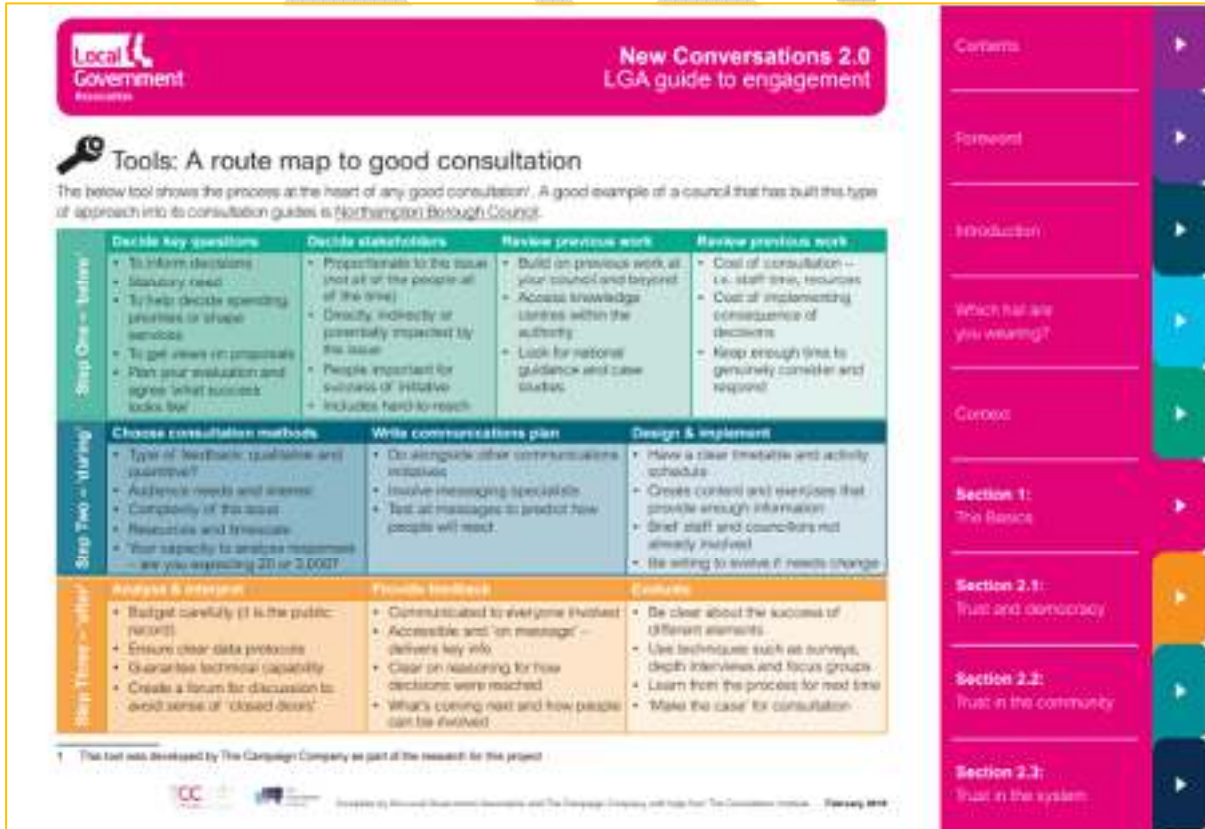


Figure 2 Example from the LGA New Conversations guide

Example Consultations List as at 15-08-2023

Title	Description/purpose	Status	Directorate	Contact Officer	Start date	End date	Methodology	Audience	Ward	DPIA	EIA	Relevant webpage	Additional info
Adult Social Care - Choose Our Vision Statement	Dudley Council's Adult Social Care services are continuing to improve the support they offer to Dudley borough residents. As part of our continuous improvement, you can have your say on how you think Adult Social Care should be providing services in the future. Which of the statements below best reflects the vision for our adult social care services - what they should be aiming to provide for local people?	2-Open	Adult Social Care	Matt Bowsher	06/07/2023	11/08/2023	Survey (online)	Council staff	Internal only			https://dmbc.sharepoint.com/sites/connect/news/Pages/Help-shape-the-vision-for-Adult-Social-Care-in-Dudley.aspx	Promoted via news item on Connect
Portersfield Consultation	You are invited to help shape proposals for the former Cavendish House site in Dudley. The site which is located near the existing bus station with views of the town's historic castle, could benefit from a multi-million-pound private investment. Plans could include a significant housing development and improved walking and cycling routes.	2-Open	Regeneration and Enterprise	Emma Atkins (Placemaking)	26/07/2023	20/09/2023	Survey (online);#Survey (paper);#Information posters	Borough residents;#Council staff	All wards			https://www.regeneratingdudley.org.uk/portersfield-consultation	The proposals will also be on display in Dudley Library.
Online platform (MyDudley) consultation	Have your say on council's new online platform A survey has been launched giving residents the chance to shape Dudley Council's new digital platform for reporting and requesting services online. The anonymous survey only takes 10 minutes to complete and will be used to find out what is important for residents and should be included in the new MyDudley platform. It will allow residents to report and request online a host of services from the local authority. People will still be able to access support via face-to-face consultations at Dudley Council Plus or over the phone.	2-Open	Digital, Customer and Commercial Services	Rachael Langford (Digital and Customer Services); Nicola Biddle (Digital and Customer Services)	31/07/2023	13/08/2023	Survey (online);#Open days / roadshows	Borough residents;#Council staff	All wards			https://www.dudley.gov.uk/news/have-your-say-on-council-s-new-online-platform/	Promoted via news items on Connect and dudley.gov.uk Road show dates/locations: https://www.dudley.gov.uk/council-community/get-involved/attend-a-mydudley-roadshow-event/
Moving driving offences	Residents are being asked for their views on plans to apply for new powers to enforce moving traffic offences in Dudley borough. Dudley Council is planning to apply for the new powers from government in a bid to improve road safety, tackle congestion and improve air quality. If granted, this would allow the council to introduce targeted camera enforcement at identified individual problem locations for moving traffic offences, such as stopping in a yellow box junction, where not permitted to, making banned right or left turns or illegal U-turns, ignoring no-entry restrictions or going the wrong way in a one-way street. The council has now identified three possible locations across the borough and is keen to hear residents' views about potential enforcement at these sites and for people to suggest other possible locations. They are: Windsor Road / Richmond Street, Halesowen – No Entry Halesowen Road / Northfield Road, Netherton – Banned Right Turn Wolverhampton Road / Beachcroft Road, Kingswinford – Banned Right Turn Subject to the outcome of the consultation, an application will be made to the Department for Transport to seek powers to enforce moving traffic offences in the borough, with the aim to begin implementing them in autumn 2024.	2-Open	Environment	Nicholas McGurk (Transport and Highway Services)	31/07/2023	10/09/2023	Survey (online)	Borough residents	All wards			https://www.dudley.gov.uk/news/have-your-say-on-new-powers-to-tackle-moving-driving-offences/	Promoted via news items on Connect and dudley.gov.uk
Add a specialist base at Dawley Brook Primary School	Dudley Council has a statutory duty to provide each child in its area with an appropriate school place. There is an identified need within the Dudley area for places for children with Special Educational Needs with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) The Council is consulting on plans to provide an inclusive SEND Unit at Dawley Brook Primary School, which will meet the needs of up to 12 young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan.	3-Closed	Children's Services	Salahdin Thirway (Childrens Social Care)		30/06/2023	Survey (online);#Survey (paper)	See attached document	All wards			https://www.dudley.gov.uk/council-community/get-involved/consultation-on-the-proposal-to-add-a-specialist-base-at-dawley-brook-primary-school/	
Your Borough, Your Future	Residents are invited to share their thoughts on how they and the council can work together to tackle climate change. The climate is changing and so is Dudley! The Your Borough, Your Future survey aims to gather people's thoughts on their priorities and how willing they are to make changes to their daily lives to help make a difference. It also asks residents for views on where they feel changes can be made to council services to reduce the carbon impact. Such initiatives include improving waste and recycling services and exploring the use of alternative fuels for vehicles.	3-Closed	Environment	Gail Scholes	18/10/2022	18/11/2022	Survey (online);#Survey (paper);#Open days / roadshows	Borough residents	All wards			https://www.dudley.gov.uk/council-community/get-involved/your-borough-your-future-survey/	Webpage includes links to online survey, video and dates/places for roadshows
Play area strategy	Dudley Council is creating a new strategy, which will explore how the council invests and develops its play area provision. The aim is to share resources across the borough, with a particular focus to be placed on areas of the borough that might not have as much choice in play equipment for young people. It's hoped parents and young people will take the opportunity to have their say on what they would like to see in borough parks, and where they would be most likely to access it.	3-Closed	Environment	Julia Morris (Street, Green Care and Amenity Services)	16/05/2023	09/06/2023	Survey (online)	Children/young people (17 & under);#Families	All wards			https://www.dudley.gov.uk/playareastrategy	
Develop a township model of Early Years Inclusion Hubs for Children with SEND	As part of a commitment to support more Dudley children with the right provision at the right time; the Council is consulting on a proposal to change its current model of specialist nursery provision from a single setting, Leapfrog at Netherton Park Nursery School, to a locality model. This will be achieved by establishing an Early Years Inclusion Hub in each of the borough's five townships.	3-Closed	Children's Services	Salahdin Thirway (Childrens Social Care)	05/06/2023	30/06/2023	Survey (online);#Survey (paper)	See attached document	All wards			https://www.dudley.gov.uk/council-community/get-involved/consultation-on-the-proposal-to-develop-a-township-model-of-early-years-inclusion-hubs-for-children-with-send/	

**Meeting of the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee -
6th September 2023**

Report of the Director of Digital, Customer & Commercial Services

MyDudley Digital Platform Update

Purpose of report

1. To provide an update to the Corporate and Economic Select Committee on the MyDudley programme.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that the Committee note and comment on the contents of the report.

Background

3. The 2021/22 Medium Term Financial Strategy approved spend in a new digital platform to improve resident self-serve experience.
4. The digital platform is a tool that enables residents and councillors to request services from the council and ask questions. The platform allows two-way communication. Residents can self-serve by making a service request, and officers can respond through the platform. Any employee completing service requests for residents can view and respond to reports.
5. The Digital and Customer Services team procured the platform and awarded the contract to Granicus UK in April 2023 to deliver the platform which we branded MyDudley. The contract is worth £1.5m over 7 years (5+2).

6. The contract value includes set up costs and licence and support cost. We future proofed and agreed pricing for further functionality that we may want to procure later.

The platform functionality includes;

- Customer portal – used by residents
- Customer service hub – used by Dudley Council Plus
- Councillor portal – used by councillors
- Staff portal – used by officers

7. In March 2023, prior to contract signing, we organised a session for councillors to review the platform and gain assurance the preferred solution was the right solution to deliver online services for the residents.
8. Whilst online self-service will be the first choice for many of our residents, it is an enhancement to our offer and not a replacement way to contact the council. Over the 5 year contract, the number of online services available will increase, covering the majority of resident service requests received by the council. Residents will still be able to contact us by phone and visit us in-person. We will continue to ensure the needs of our residents are met.
9. The more we enable residents that can self-serve to self-serve, the more resources we have for those residents of different communities who cannot self-serve, or are vulnerable, or have complex needs. We will direct resources to support these residents via phone or face-to-face. This will improve our response rates and mean elderly, or vulnerable residents access the services they need more quickly.
10. Community Engagement

The introduction of this new technology and online services has the potential to bring about long-term improvements and efficiencies for the council. However, it can also be a further barrier for digitally excluded groups and communities to access services.
11. We are committed to understanding how different groups and communities use existing council services. The MyDudley implementation plan aligns to the feedback gained from community engagement and the future roll out of services will continue be informed by data and engagement.

12. The Digital and Customer Service team is carrying out engagement sessions and surveys to understand how residents use digital technology and what we need to do to make these technologies meet the needs of different communities. Involving users in the co-creation of the platform is a way of reducing exclusion due to digitalisation.
13. To bring independence, the team partnered with Healthwatch Dudley to facilitate our community engagement sessions (end of February/early March 2023). They were attended by residents and carers with wide ranging age, ability and accessibility needs. From having BSL interpreters, to working with residents to understand their needs, we will focus on accessibility at every step.
14. What we picked up from these initial consultation sessions was the need for easy, streamlined and joined up reporting, as well as the desire to retain help in-person or over the phone when needed. The groups also selected the new name for the platform, MyDudley. See **Appendix A** for the full data report that details the feedback from these initial consultations.
15. In July 2023 we launched the MyDudley Roadshow event. Residents were invited to complete a survey about how they and the council could work together to improve online access to council services.
16. The two-week roadshow consisted of sixteen events commencing 31st July 2023. Week one, the roadshow visited leisure centres, community centres and cultural centres. Week two, a promotional double decker bus visited different town centres with internal and external promotion in precincts, car parks and marketplaces.
17. The roadshow was supported by a marketing, communications, and engagement plan, including PR and a social media schedule. Communication activity ranged from targeted e-Bulletins to a digital advert for loop display on 42 doctor's surgery screens in the borough.
18. 3,073 residents completed surveys, 289% more than needed for the data to be valid. Sixty-two hard-copy surveys were completed. The roadshows were picked up by media outlets and received press coverage from Black Country Radio and the Express and Star. See **Appendix B** for further details of engagement statistics and results to date.
19. Early results from the survey highlight the opportunity to increase the number of residents who would use online services: 80% of residents who currently get in-touch in-person or called Dudley Council would possibly use online services in the future.

20. Implementing MyDudley

We are on track and on budget on our implementation timeline, see **Appendix C**. Our aim is to demonstrate “You said, we did” and directly trace aspects of the new platform back to what residents told us. Our high-level the timeline reflects the needs and preferences of residents. Our resident focussed implementation requires us to be flexible and take an iterative approach, being prepared to change our plans where resident feedback suggests a need. The initial launch focuses on delivering what residents told us they most access and what they most want to see on the platform. In autumn, go-live will deliver the first phase of the customer portal giving residents the ability to:

- Create a secure account and track their enquiries.
- Raise an enquiry about waste, bins and recycling
- Report anti-social behaviour
- Book tip appointments
- Report an issue in my neighbourhood

21. Councillor portal

Council officers respond to enquiries received by councillors and response times vary greatly between services. We will migrate councillor contact to the new platform. This presents an opportunity to improve this service.

22. A new councillor portal provides opportunity to:

- Track requests against the 10 day SLA target and escalate
- Provide councillors with a more consistent experience
- Enable communication between service areas and councillors
- Standardise practices that can be shared across service areas to support improved delivery
- Empower councillors to digitally self-serve and get served – to the betterment of the whole borough

Whilst a new platform provides additional functionality and transparency, it is acknowledged that service areas require people and resources to fulfil and action councillor contact. The new platform will provide directors with regular data and insight to allow services to target improvements.

23. Members of the cross-party Councillor Digital Forum attended a MyDudley briefing on 27th June. The objective was to ensure Members of the Councillor Digital forum agree the Phase 1 project milestones and benefits.

24. The Councillor Digital Forum briefing covered key functionality within the councillor portal, mock ups to illustrate the art of the possible and a discussion on future state, including reducing the cost of digital contact.
25. Councillors agreed a pilot approach to the councillor portal and agreed nominated Councillors to engage and co-design the build phase to shape process design and help flush out inefficiencies and pain points across resident & councillor platform.
26. On Monday 10th July, all Elected Members were invited to attend a showcase about the new MyDudley Councillor platform. Attending Members offered their views and contributed ideas and suggestions. Councillors engaged in conversations with officers about digital trends, challenges faced by residents, and opportunities for collaboration.
27. The following five key themes emerged and will be taken into consideration in the build of the new councillor portal:
 - Theme 1. Accessibility
 - Theme 2. Simplicity
 - Theme 3. Closure / Final Approval
 - Theme 4. Language
 - Theme 5. Visibility of Cases / Accountability

28. Governance & principles

Full programme governance is in place. The Councillor Digital Forum feeds into The Digital Board, which in turn reports into Cabinet via SEB. In addition, the project is reported directly to SEB via the Corporate PMO's Major Project Reporting.

29. The Digital Board also steers and receives input from the Digital Platform Steering group who are responsible for project budget, agreed savings, risk and benefits realisation.
30. The Digital Platform Steering Group are signed up to three key design principles. Ensuring these are adhered to will help us to enhance the customer experience, maximise the investment in the platform, maximise the efficiencies and realise the required savings. These are:
 - Principle 1. Single Front Door
We will ensure that access to council services is through the MyDudley platform wherever possible, exploiting integration and automation.
 - Principle 2. Consistent Customer Experience

We will direct energy towards the greatest impact for our people using data at the heart of decisions, co-designing and removing reliance on e-mail as a business tool.

- Principle 3. Data Driven

We will use data to identify trends to inform service design.

Finance

31.

The approved MTFs budget in place for the new digital platform, licenses and additional staffing is as follows;

- 22/23 £480K
- 23/24 £460K
- 24/25 £420K

The Granicus contracted prices over the term is within allocated budget.

- 22/23 Total spend £60,908
- 23/24 Spend to date £235,575

MTFS spend was approved on the basis the project would realise savings as customer contact reduces because more residents will self-serve. The Digital and Customer Service team will monitor the rate of resident self-service against the target reduction. The cabinet approved budget reduction is in Dudley Council Plus.

Digital, Commercial and Customer Services	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000
Digital Platform implementation & roll out savings.	-	120	470

Law

- 32 An external legal team were contracted to support the procurement of the new platform through a competitive dialogue process and to ensure the best terms and conditions were negotiated for the council.
33. We review feedback from consultation to ensure all development meets current legal and accessibility requirements.

Risk Management

34. Any risks will be mitigated using the Council's existing risk management framework.

Equality Impact

35. Being digitally literate opens-up opportunities for all age groups to enjoy the social, cultural, economic, and educational benefits being digitally active brings. Digital technology allows people who are housebound to interact with the outside world, overcoming loneliness and social exclusion. Advancements in technology enable visually impaired residents and hearing-impaired residents to use technology.
36. The work described in this report has no effect of the decision on children and young people. Being digitally literate opens-up opportunities for all age groups.

No consultation with children and young people has taken place; and we did not involve children and young people in developing the proposals. We may extend engagement activity to young people as we develop the platform.

37. As we develop and roll out our platform, we have planned in accessibility testing. We will invite residents who we have previously consulted with to test the platform against their needs. This will be an ongoing process throughout the development.
38. Since the council has now awarded the contract and has developed an understanding of the new platform and resident priorities, a further Equality Impact Assessment will be completed that aligns to the implementation. The project team will adopt the practice of repeating equality impact assessment throughout the various roll out phases.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

39. Colleagues within People and Inclusion are working with the Digital Platform project to develop employee engagement sessions and ensure alignment with the people programme.

Commercial/Procurement

40. Procurement legislation and compliance with Contract Standing Orders will be adhered to should the further purchasing of goods be required.

Environment/Climate Change

41. Being digitally literate enables a greater reach of climate change information and resources to residents, increasing accessibility to information such as becoming more energy efficiency, reducing pollution and waste management. Using digital services encourages less use of paper. Becoming paperless reduces chemical and physical waste and reduces carbon footprint.

Council Priorities and Projects

42. The contents of this report relate to the key Council priorities including the Borough Vision, Council Plan 2022-25.
Dudley The borough of Ambition and Enterprise
Digital opportunities are being exploited to modernise our working culture, customer experience and public services.

Luisa Fulci

Luisa Fulci
Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services

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Appendices

Appendix A – Consultation Data Report
Appendix B – Engagement Report
Appendix C – Implementation Timeline

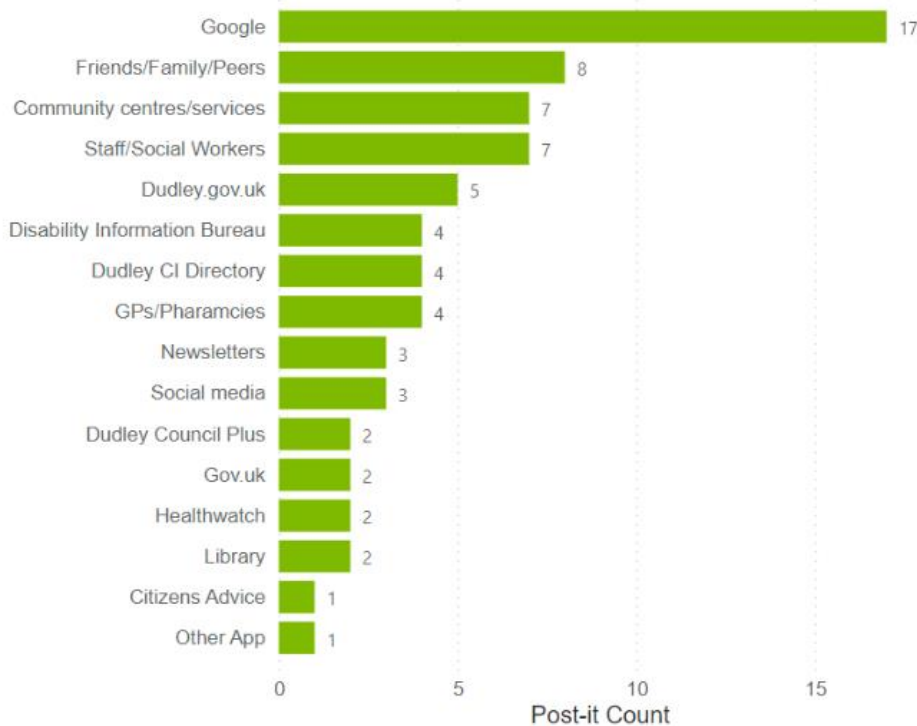
Feedback from the Community Engagement Sessions



Q1. How would you normally look for information, advice and assistance?

- a. Where do you normally search/go? 72 Post-it responses
- b. About what topics? 7 Post-it responses
- c. Would this be for Council services? 0 Post-it responses

a. Where do you normally search/go?



b. About what topics?

Post-it

flytipping/litter-sometimesweb, others in person
 health, education, news feeds, employment
 Housing options
 housing, council tax, education, registrar services (need interpreter)
 Repairs
 rubbish- extra bins, tip
 services

Other comments (12 Post-its)

Post-it

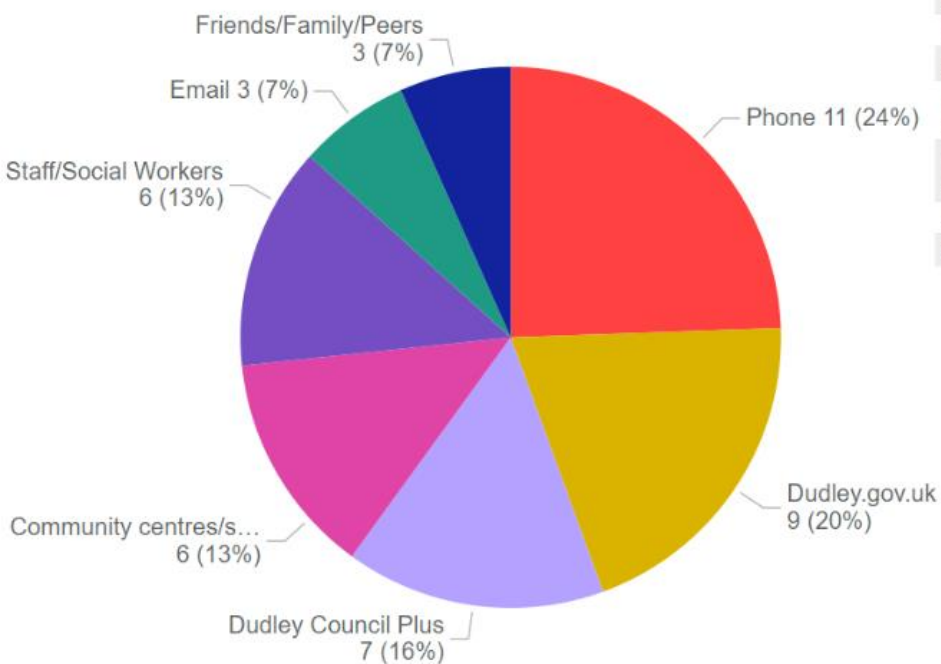
404 not found common on Dudley website
 don't want an app- want it on website
 Everything/most is out of date on websites re disabilities
 if know about computers, need something easy to log in to
 Key words required in searches
 love tech
 need interpreters to be linked to any changes from the start
 planning very hard to use
 respond service
 struggling to progress after newsletter
 work for people plus- disappointed others don't know who we are
 wouldn't google for health advice



Q2. How do you currently access Council services? 45 Post-it responses

a. And how has your experience been with [insert example]? Then, move through different examples from the group to capture different experiences. 28 Post-it responses

How do you currently access Council services?



a. Good Experiences

Post-it

booking a tip slot-much better book a slot
 email services would be useful
 likes ref numbers to follow up
 payment via direct debit for ctax
 planning good ex see plans, turn around time
 reported hedges-oldswinford all done online
 tip appointment-normally online good
 tip used to be clunky now great

a. Bad Experiences

Post-it

1 repair at a time, used twice
 adult education difficult to access due to no interpreters/funding
 couldn't scan and upload photos
 extra green bins-online fiddly. Paid twice by mistake
 if there is a problem with blue badge you need an email
 length of waiting times stops communication
 login a fiddle but motivated to do it for refund
 long queues to dc+
 no direct contacts please help
 no emails or contacts published on the website, people want a list of contacts
 no notice of timings
 no one could answer my enquiry
 No public directory
 not enough content
 not sure who to contact re social care
 planninginfo not clear on web- wanted a conversation
 problems on website
 social care-struggle to find on website
 the website lets the residents down
 website is poor- hard for professionals to navigate
 let alone service users



Q3. If you have used the Dudley Council website in the past, can you tell us what was good and what could have been better? 28 Post-it responses

a. If you were using a new Council website, what features would you like to see from that service? 29

b. Would you have any concerns about using a new site and how could we help resolve those issues? 25

What was good about Dudley.gov.uk

Post-it

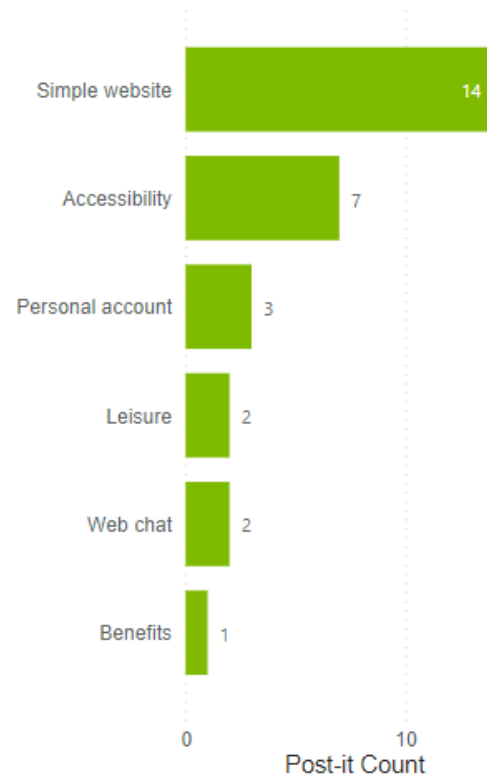
area where can see everything about property, interesting not always relevant
 as soon as I report something its done straight away
 certain thing are easy
 clickable phone numbers
 content is good
 hamburger menu
 icons
 regarding pages good easy to book an appointment at tip
 search instant hits
 since its been updated its opened up more avenues

What was bad about Dudley.gov.uk

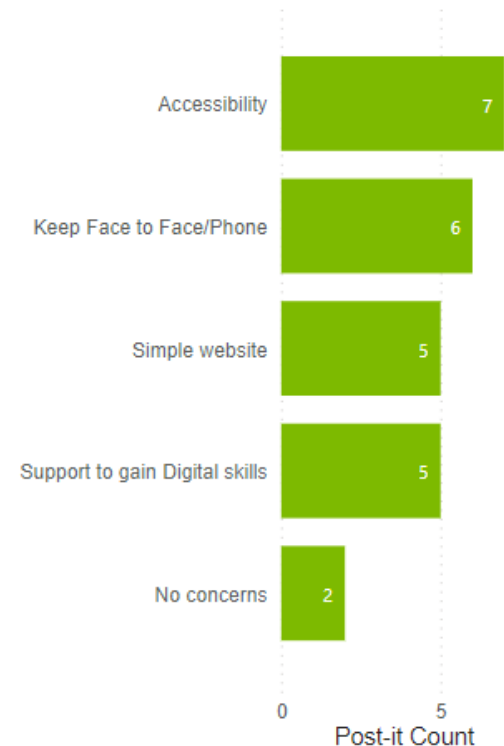
Post-it

ci directory a little more user friendly
 confident info there somewhere getting to it not always easy
 cookies issue
 Dudley app
 experienced in IT but frustrating
 hard to find what you want
 leave feedback to end
 looped content
 no BSL videos
 not all obvious
 not enough good enough
 planning section hard to use
 postcode search, avoid as google is better
 sometimes encouraged to do something else while trying to do one thing
 struggle to find what im looking for
 take an advice role in dudley but don't find it easy on the website
 wont let you do anything til accept cookies, not everyone knows

a. What features would you like to see?



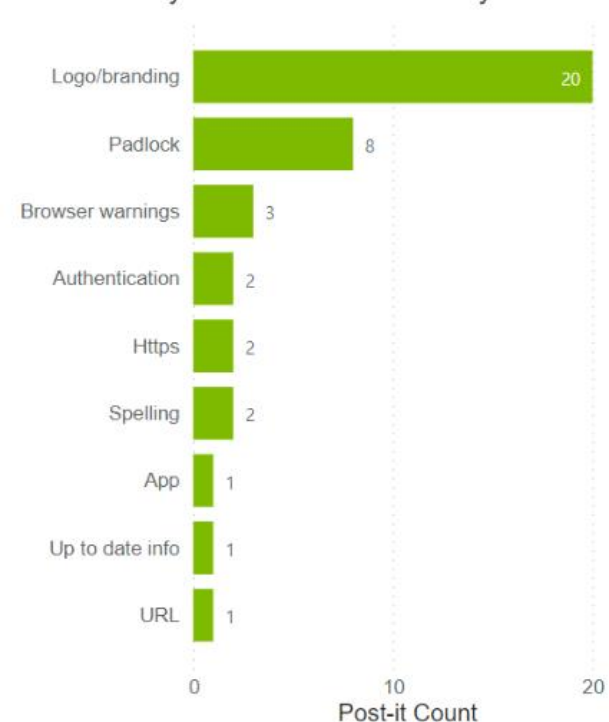
b. Would you have any concerns about a new site?



Q4. Let's think about other websites you may use, such as for online shopping or to book an appointment with your GP. What is it about those websites that assures you they are safe and trustworthy? 40 Post-it responses

a. If you have any doubts about a new website, is there anything you check before you use it? 9 Post-it responses

What is it about those websites that assures you they are safe and trustworthy?



a. If you have any doubts, is there anything you check?

- Post-it
- 2 bank accounts-set up ready to pay online
 - check with scams team
 - do homework on facebook marketing, not all is trustworthy
 - dudley council scams team involved in shaping this
 - if any doubts about a website, just wouldn't use it
 - only use credit card online
 - phone contact for assurance
 - set up account feels safe
 - use other websites to check for scams

Other comments (46 Post-its relevant shown below)

- Post-it
- app for dudley council
 - back appt online for GP
 - can be too secure because of password required
 - checking before accepting cookies
 - don't always trust brands as can be copied
 - don't keep changing it- customers there a long time don't want that
 - don't mind signing into account
 - don't trust top 5 results via google search
 - don't use phone to pay for things, I know too many people who have lost phone
 - easier if all info already uploaded to account
 - give people options-if happy online go ahead but alternatives stay
 - Internet security-before giving personal info
 - making things more obvious on website eg book appointment
 - not confident on some sites scams/hackers
 - passwords
 - staff support
 - tutorial or signed-how to use the website
 - would feel more assured if wider info was up to date
 - would like single sign in

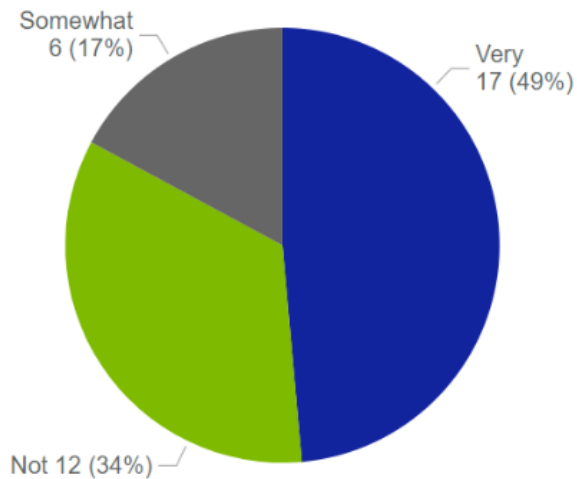


Q5. If you were logging into your personal account to access Council services, would you want the login portal to have its own name and identity?

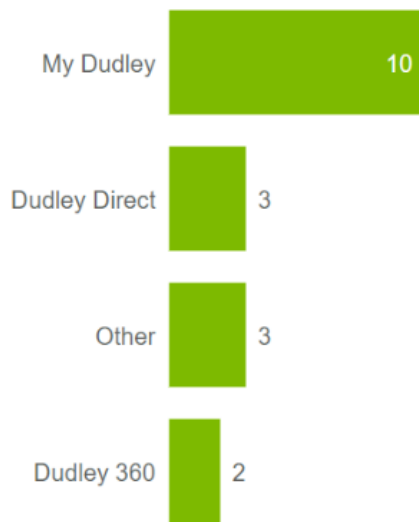
a. How important is the name of the login portal to you? Multiple choice: not important, somewhat important, very important. 35 Post-it responses

b. If yes to wanting a name/identity-share the five options: MyDudley, One Dudley, Dudley Direct, Dudley Council Plus, Dudley 360, Other? 18 Post-it responses

a. How important is the name of the login portal to you?



b. If yes which option?



Post-it Count

Other comments (20 Post-its)

Post-it

- ability to print end of year bill
- carers on behalf of, need to be able to log for someone else
- dbl website for dudley glms very easy
- don't use online so don't know
- dudley cases access
- for deaf people its hard to understand so will only ask a social worker- very important there is one.
- help with budgeting
- how far back can you access council tax bills etc retention archive
- if use google, if cant find what I need I will go back to google itself and try to recognise names that come up
- multifactor authentication
- need categories
- no pop ups please
- print confirmations
- reminders on appt about bills in advance
- seamless
- takes time for people to be interested as obviously its new. After using may feedback
- time scales
- to be able to log on behalf of legitimately rather than share username and password
- used my heart service for shopping-alright there clothing
- whats happens to my information







Comms and Engagement Activity

- Comprehensive marketing, communications and engagement plan (including roadshow events)
 - PR and social media schedule
- Consultation launched Monday 31 July at 9am and closed Sunday 13 August at 11:59pm
- Two-week roadshow programme to 16 destinations commenced 31 July and finished on 11 August
 - Week one (w/c 31 July) – leisure centres, community centres and cultural centres
 - Week two (w/c 7 August) – double-decker promotional vehicle visited different town centres every day with internal and external promotion in precincts, car parks and marketplaces

Comms and Engagement activity

- A non-exhaustive summary of communications activity includes:
 - Targeted emails and eBulletins to a wide internal and external stakeholder list, including members (also included in Connected Councillors), MPs, employees, 'Friends of...' groups, general public, partner organisations, housing tenants
 - PR and social media
 - Artwork production (displayed in local libraries, DC+ and the Council House)
 - Digital advert produced for loop display on 42 doctor's surgery screens in the borough
 - Press ad in The Chronicle
 - Web pages on main website
 - Internal communications, including an email from the Chief Executive to all employees and survey reminders across all internal channels
 - Alternative formats were procured and made available
- Risk assessments, town centre and shopping centre bookings were completed and all locations were supportive of the initiative



Comms and Engagement Activity

Roadshow Week One Destinations:

- Duncan Edwards Leisure Centre
- Sedgley Community Centre
- Halesowen Leisure Centre
- St. Francis Parish Church
- Crystal Leisure Centre
- Quarry Bank Community Centre
- Halesowen Cultural Centre
- The Dell (in partnership with Play Week)

Comms and Engagement Activity

Roadshow Week Two Destinations:

- Halesowen Town Centre, Lower Somer Sq.
- ASDA Brierley Hill
- Brierley Hill Indoor Market
- ASDA Sedgley
- Dudley, Marketplace
- Dudley, Churchill Precinct
- Stourbridge, Crown Sq.
- Merry Hill

Comms, PR, social media and engagement stats and results to date

- **3,073 surveys completed online** *(representative sample: population size 260,100, confidence level of 95% which is standard for surveys, margins of error between 3% and 5%, between 384 and 1,063 survey responses required – over just two weeks, this survey fulfilled the representative sample by 289%.)*
- 62 hard-copy surveys were completed, with the majority of residents opting to use online submissions
- On average, 236 surveys were completed per day

Comms, PR, social media and engagement stats and results to date

Proactively issued:

Number of Facebook posts and stories: 24

Number of Instagram posts and stories: 21

Number of Tweets: 4

Number of ebulletins: 7

Number of press releases: 2

Number of press ads: 1

Number of social media ads: 2

Comms, PR, social media and engagement stats and results to date

Headlines:

of total open-rates for external ebulletins: 26,658

of total click-rates for external ebulletins (on survey link): 1,281

of total reach across social media platforms (including advertisements):
93,203

of total link clicks across social media platforms (including advertisements): 774

of subscribers to new Granicus topic, MyDudley: 600

of residents who receive The Chronicle (in which we had one press ad):
46,513 recipients

Comms, PR, social media and engagement stats and results to date

- 659* total visits to related webpages (31 July – 13 Aug), with 512 unique views
 - (67 then went onto the survey; 13.09%)
- Two targeted emails to 19,539 registered tenants (emails supplied by Housing and Public Health)

*(*not including people who have declined cookie collection)*

Comms, PR, social media and engagement stats and results to date

Press Coverage:

- 31 July:

<https://www.blackcountryradio.co.uk/news/local-headlines/have-your-say-on-dudley-councils-new-online-platform-for-services/>

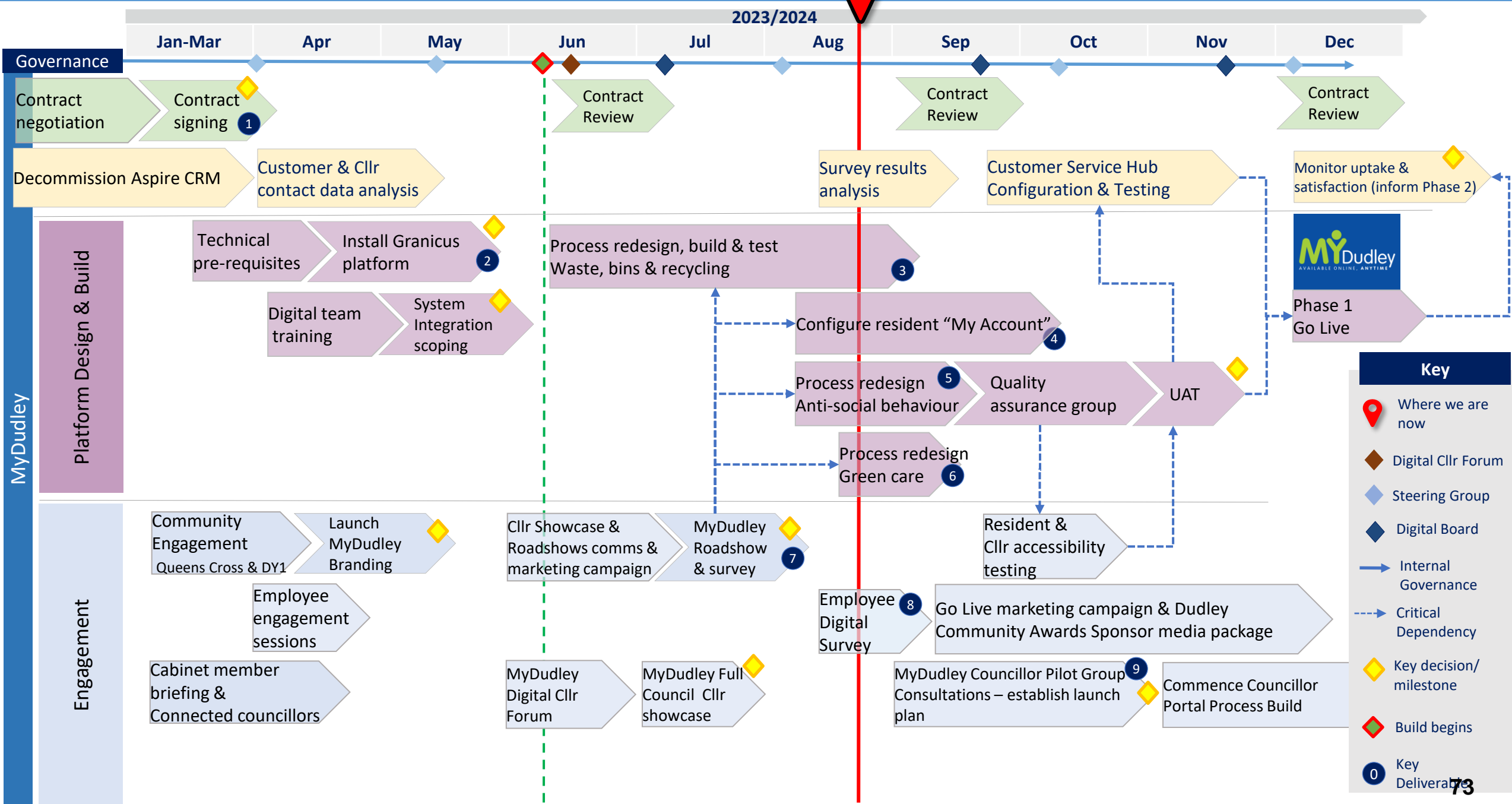
- 4 August:

- Full-page ad in The Chronicle to 46,513 recipients

- 8 August:

<https://www.expressandstar.com/news/local-hubs/dudley/brierley-hill/2023/08/08/roadshow-set-to-show-off-new-digital-council-system/>

MyDudley Implementation Phase 1 - Plan on a Page



Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee

Progress Tracker

Subject (Date of Meeting)	Recommendation/action	Responsible Officer/Area	Status/Notes
Programme of Meetings and Business Items for 2023/24 (12 th July, 2023)	Resolution (2) - That the Senior Democratic Services Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, be requested to review the timings of the proposed items in relation to the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension Update and the Economic Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan for later consideration during the municipal year.	Democratic Services	Completed
	Resolution (3) - That the following items be included in the programme of business for 2023/24: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Performance Indicators – Corporate and Regeneration • Commercialisation Strategy Update • UK Shared Prosperity Fund • Estates Strategy • Stalled Sites Progress Update (March, 2024) 	Democratic Services	Completed

Future Business 2023/24

<u>Date of Meeting</u>	<u>Work Programme</u>	<u>Responsible Officer/Area</u>	<u>Notes</u>
2 nd November, 2023	Commercialisation Strategy	F Parrett (Head of Commercial)	Report
	Key Performance Indicators – Regeneration and Corporate	C Blunn (Corporate Performance and Programme Manager)	Report
11 th January, 2024	Major Regeneration Projects Update	H Martin (Director of Regeneration and Enterprise)	Report
	Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension Update	H Martin (Director of Regeneration and Enterprise) Representative from Transport for West Midlands	Report
	Estates Strategy	S Cooper (Head of Corporate Landlord Services)	Report

6 th March, 2024	Economic Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan	H Martin (Director of Regeneration and Enterprise) P Mountford (Head of Economic Growth and Skills)	Report
	UK Shared Prosperity Fund	P Mountford (Head of Economic Growth and Skills)	Report
	Stalled Sites Progress Update	P Mountford (Head of Economic Growth and Skills)	Report
	Annual Report 2023/24 and potential items of business for 2024/25	Democratic Services	Report