

Have Your Say: A plan for local involvement - 2015-2018



Falkirk Council

www.falkirk.gov.uk/consultations

Introduction

As a Council, we want to work with local people to improve our services and make the Falkirk Council area the best possible place to live and work. We know that the services we provide are better when we listen to the people who use them. And we know that we can achieve much more when we work together with local communities to make things change.

We regularly ask people for their views in lots of different ways. And we often work together with community groups to improve local communities.

Now, we want to become even better at involving communities. This plan sets out how we will do this over the next 3 years (2015-2018).

This plan has two main sections:

- The Principles for Community Involvement in Falkirk. These are the standards that we will try to achieve whenever we involve communities, from the smallest consultation to the largest engagement process.
- The Action Plan for Community Involvement in Falkirk. We have set out a number of things that we want to do over the next three years to improve the ways in which we involve communities. We have also outlined how we will know whether we are making a difference.

We produced this plan through a number of discussions with community groups and individuals. We have tried to take everyone's views into account. If you have any suggestions about how we can involve people more effectively, please contact us.

Principles for Community Involvement

Purpose - in each situation where Falkirk Council engages with the local community, we will be clear about whether we are informing, consulting or engaging. We will not consult people when decisions have already been taken.

What this means in practice:

- If there are reasons why we have to take a particular decision (e.g. because of the law), we will not consult you. We will tell you about the decision we have taken and why we have taken it.
- If we are consulting you, but there are only a limited number of options available, we will tell you what these are.
- If there are a wide range of options available and we want to discuss everything with you, we will make it clear that this is what we are doing. We will try to use a process that enables all the possible options to be explored.
- We will always publish all Council decisions on the Council website, whether there has been any community involvement or not.

Involvement - we will identify who might be interested in any consultation or engagement and encourage them to be involved. We will also try to overcome any barriers they may face so that no group or individual is excluded.

What this means in practice:

- If a consultation applies to the whole Council area, we will make sure that it is open to everyone. We will also try to identify groups or individuals who might be particularly interested and encourage them to be involved.
- If a consultation only applies to a particular area or group of people, we will try to make sure that they are aware of it. We will also try to identify particular groups within the area who might be particularly interested and encourage them to be involved.
- We know that some groups, such as disabled people, may face particular barriers if they want to get involved. This might be because they are less likely to find out about a consultation, or would find it more difficult to respond. We will try to overcome these barriers wherever we can.

Methods - we will use the right methods of engagement in each situation and ensure that timescales are long enough for people to participate effectively.

What this means in practice:

- We will try to use the most appropriate method for each consultation or engagement exercise. In some situations face to face discussion is essential, whilst in other situations, a survey may be the only practical way to get the views of a lot of people.
- We will always allow at least 6 weeks when we are asking community organisations to respond to a consultation or attend a consultation event. This is because we realise that community groups usually only meet once a month, so need 6 weeks notice to discuss things at their meetings.
- We will always allow at least 3 weeks notice when we are asking individual community members to respond to a consultation or attend a consultation event.

Information - we will share all the information necessary for people to participate and we will use clear, accessible language.

What this means in practice:

- We will try to give you all the information you need to get involved. This will include background information where you need it.
- We will try to use plain English in all consultations.
- We will make sure that you know how to get information in different formats if you need it.

Working together - we will treat all participants with respect and we will expect all participants to treat us and others with respect. We may require people and organisations that represent their communities to show us how they have collected the views of their community.

What this means in practice:

- We will expect all Council staff, Councillors and community members to treat each other as they would like to be treated.
- We will ask community organisations who are representing the views of their community to tell us what they have done to communicate with their community. This might include keeping the community up to date with what the group are doing, as well as trying to find out what people in the local community think about issues.

Feedback - we will always explain how people will receive feedback before they participate. We will always try to show how people's views have influenced the outcome.

What this means in practice:

- If you are filling in a questionnaire or attending a consultation event, we should be able to tell you when you will hear what has happened as a result of the consultation.
- In some cases we will be able to tell you how your individual views have made a difference. In other cases, we will only be able to tell you how everyone's views have made a difference. We will try to be clear about whether you will get individual feedback.

Improvement - we will monitor and evaluate our approaches to Community Participation so that we can improve over time.

What this means in practice:

- We will check that we are sticking to these Principles. We may not be able to check that every consultation or engagement exercise meets every Principle, but we will check a selection of them in detail. And we will check to see that our overall approach is making a difference.
- We will work with community members to evaluate our approaches to community involvement, where possible.

What happens if we do not stick to the Principles

We will provide a clear point of contact for you to raise questions and concerns. If you do not think we have stuck to the Principles during a particular consultation, you can raise your concerns with us. We will do what we can to address your concerns if the consultation is still live, and we will try to identify lessons for future work.

Action Plan for Better Community Involvement

This section sets out a number of things that we want to do over the next three years (2011-14) in order to improve how we involve communities. We have not put specific timescales on each action, but we will report on progress each year. The final section explains how we will do this and how we will involve community members in checking that we are making progress.

Communication

Good communication is vital for community involvement. We need to communicate clearly in ways that everyone can understand. And we need to tell people what happens as a result of their involvement.

What we aim to do:

- Reduce the amount of jargon and complicated language that we use when we are consulting or engaging with you.
- Make sure that you can get consultation documents in formats and languages that are right for you (e.g. Braille, large print, easy read, other languages).
- Tell you what has changed as a result of your involvement.

How we will do this:

- We will introduce training and clear guidance for staff on how to communicate in plain English.
- We will consider whether we can write all Council committee reports in plain English.
- We will make sure that all consultation documents include clear information about how to get them in different formats, including jargon and abbreviation-free versions.
- We will improve the 'Consultations' section of our website. So that you can see what has changed, we will publish the results of all past consultations in this format:
- We asked - what the consultation was about and what we asked you
You said - a summary of what you told us
- We did - what changed as a result of your views

If you have been involved in a consultation, we will tell you what has changed as a result of the consultation. We will try to give you this information in the same way you responded – i.e. if you responded in writing, we will send you information in the post. If we cannot respond to you individually, we will make this clear at the start.

We will use Falkirk Council News and other media to tell everyone about the changes that happen as a result of community involvement.

Consistency and co-ordination

We need to make sure that we coordinate our consultations, so that we don't waste your time or ours. We also need to make sure that all of the consultations we do reach the same high standards.

What we aim to do:

- Make sure that different parts of the Council do not ask you the same questions.
- Make sure that we do not set up different consultation events at the same time if people might want to go to both.
- Make sure that staff from all parts of the Council have the skills they need to involve you effectively.

How we will do this:

- We will set up a system for all Council services to record the consultations they are planning.
- We will try to make sure that we plan consultations well in advance.
- We will share the information from consultations across the Council, so that we do not ask the same questions twice.
- We will set up a calendar for all consultation and involvement events. If possible, we will make this public.
- We will continue the training about community engagement that we have been providing for Council staff and Councillors over the last 18 months. We will develop this training to meet the learning needs of staff and we will consider how we can involve community members in this training to make it more effective.

Citizens Panel

We have established a Citizens Panel for Falkirk Council, with more than 1000 local people volunteering to complete 3-4 surveys each year. This is an extremely important tool for us to gather the views of local people and improve our services. We want to further develop this Citizens Panel and make sure that it fits well with other ways in which we ask community members to participate.

What we aim to do:

- Continually recruit more people to the Citizens Panel so that it remains large enough to represent the views of the whole population of the Council area.
- Make sure that the membership of the Panel has the right balance of people from different areas and different groups.
- Make sure that the Citizens Panel has good links to other ways in which we ask you to participate.

How we will do this:

- We will promote the Citizens Panel through various means – e.g. the Council website, Falkirk Council News, leaflets in public buildings, etc.
- We will specifically try to recruit people to the Citizens Panel where particular groups are under-represented - e.g. encouraging more adults under 40 to join.
- We will check the membership of the Citizens Panel each year to see whether it has enough people from different areas and groups.
- We will develop links between the Citizens Panel and the ways in which we will involve young people. We recognise that young people may not want to join the Citizens Panel, but we need to make sure they can make their voices heard on issues they are interested in.
- We will offer Citizens Panel members the opportunity to discuss issues face to face where appropriate, so that they do not feel too isolated when completing questionnaires.
- We will provide Citizens Panel members information about other ways in which they can get involved (e.g. Community Councils, Tenants Associations, other consultation events, etc.)

Reaching everyone

We want to involve everyone from the communities that make up the Falkirk Council area. We know that some people will face barriers if they want to get involved, so we need to take extra steps to reduce these barriers. For most groups, this means that we will just need to adjust what we do already. For example, we might need to make sure that consultation events are held in venues that are accessible for disabled people. However, we realise that we may need to do something specific to involve young people, as the ways that we consult with adults are often not very attractive to young people.

What we aim to do:

- Make sure we communicate in ways that make sense to you.
- Make sure that you are not out of pocket when we are asking you to be involved. Make sure that we arrange events and meetings in ways that are open to everyone. Offer ways for young people to be involved that will be interesting to young people.

How we will do this:

- See the section above about 'Communication' – this explains how we will communicate in ways that are helpful to you.
- We will provide support with travel or care of dependants where you need this to be involved in something we have invited you to.
- We will try to ensure that all Council staff are aware of disability access issues when they are planning consultations. We already have guidance and a checklist for meetings, so we will promote this across the Council.
- Where we are running consultation events which are open to the general public, we will try to offer different times to fit around people's work, childcare, etc.
- We will set up systems for young people to make their voices heard on issues that are important to them, at a local level and across the Council area. We will talk to young people about how best to do this. We will make sure these fit with the existing Pupil Council system that has a voice in education matters.

Involving community organisations

Local community organisations are a very important mechanism for communities to have a voice. This includes a wide range of organisations such as Community Councils, Tenants Associations, Parent Councils, as well as more informal organisations. It is essential that we continue to support community organisations and that we make sure they are given opportunities to represent the views of their community.

What we aim to do:

- Continue to provide support to community organisations, particularly those with a statutory role such as Community Councils, Tenants Associations and Parent Councils.
- Make sure that we keep up to date information on all community organisations.
- Try to make sure that we are not creating 'consultation fatigue' by asking community organisations to respond to too many consultations.

How we will do this:

- We will continue to provide development support to community organisations to help them to organise themselves and represent the views of their local community.
- We will encourage community organisations to communicate with their wider community through a variety of means. We will continue to provide a small grants scheme which community organisations can apply to, in order to help them communicate with their wider community. We will also ask community organisations for some evidence of how they communicate with their wider community if they apply to us for running costs.
- We will establish an up to date database of all community organisations, so that we are contacting the right people as organisations change.
- See the section on 'Consistency and Coordination' above - this explains how we will try to avoid creating 'consultation fatigue'.

Working with other agencies

We know that other public sector agencies also consult and engage with communities (e.g. NHS Forth Valley, Central Scotland Police, Central Scotland Fire and Rescue, Falkirk and District Council for Voluntary Service). We will need to make sure that how we involve communities fits with what these other agencies do. We will start discussing this with these other agencies in the near future.

How we will know if we're succeeding

We need to be able to show that all of the changes in this plan are making a difference. We have decided on two overall things that we need to measure to see whether we are making a difference. In the long term, improving the way that we involve communities should also improve all of our services.

What we aim to do:

- improved approaches to involving communities.
- Increased number of improvements to services or strategies being made as a result of involving communities.

How we will know if we are achieving these overall aims:

- We will make a random selection of a number of consultation or engagement exercises each year. We will review these pieces of work in detail to see how well we have matched up to the Principles we have set.
- We will establish a community reference group, bringing together a number of people from community organisations and the Citizens Panel, to oversee our approach to involving communities.
- We will report on how we are involving communities to a Council committee each year.
- We will measure the changes to services through the 'we asked, you said, we did' system on our website.



Falkirk Council

www.falkirk.gov.uk/consultations

If you would like a copy of this document in another format (e.g. Braille, large print or audio-tape),
or in another language, please contact:
Email: citizenspanel@falkirk.gov.uk or Telephone: 01324-506011

如需投訴程序之翻譯版本，
請向地區政府工作人員查詢。

PROSZĘ ZWRÓCIĆ SIĘ DO PERSONELU RADY W
SPRAWIE UZYSKANIA KOPII PRZETŁUMACZONEJ
PROCEDURY ZWIĄZANEJ Z ZAZALENIAMI

ਸ਼ਿਕਾਇਤ ਦੀਆਂ ਸਾਰਣੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਤਰਜਮਾ ਕੀਤੀ ਗਈ
ਕਾਪੀ ਹਈ ਸ਼ੀਮਲ ਸਟਾਫ਼ ਤੋਂ ਖਤਾ ਕਰੋ ।

شکایت کے طریقہ کار کا اردو میں ترجمہ شدہ پرچہ کونسل کے عملہ سے طلب کریں