Involving Communities: A Central Role For Our Councillors

A Central Role for Our Councillors

This Guidance
- This guidance aims to give some pointers about how to ensure that councillors play a central role in involvement activity.
- It gives a top tip for achieving this

Kirklees Partnership Involving Communities Framework
The Kirklees Partnership Involving Communities Framework states that all local involvement activity will be guided by a number of key principles, one of which is:

A central role for our Councillors: as community leaders, our elected Councillors are and will be increasingly central to our approach to involving communities. As decision makers it is they who must balance conflicting messages with broader consideration across the area

The Importance of Councillors
Locally elected Councillors play a central role in engaging with the communities across Kirklees. Ward Councillors take one of the most active leadership roles at a local level. Some of the key roles they perform include:

- a contribution to the good governance of the area
- actively encouraging community participation and citizen involvement in decision making
- effectively representing the interest of the ward and of individual constituents.

Other key roles that Councillors carry out around community engagement involve:
- acting as community or authority advocates (depending on the issue)
- transferring information from the Council to communities
- providing two-way communication between organisations
- explaining the context and rules of what is possible
- alerting local people to proposals, issues and policies that will affect them and signpost services and process in the council and other partner organisations
- interpreting results and taking decisions on priorities
- communicating results back to communities involved in engagement activities
- acting as a link with partner organisations for joint consultation

Click here to find information about our local Councillors

The Benefits and Methods of Councillor Involvement
Given the unique role of locally elected councillors, making decisions as democratically elected leaders and also empowering individuals and community groups; their role will assist communities to shape:

Services: ensuring that residents have an input to decisions so that the services we provide better meet their needs
Priorities: involving residents on decisions relating to key programmes and spending plans
Plans for the future: providing opportunities to participate in developing a thriving, vibrant community whether it be in the towns or rural areas of Kirklees.
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It is important to recognise that Councillors are responsible for facilitating and leading debates and engagement with communities, as part of their Ward Councillor roles and in other “decision making capacities” e.g. Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny, the Kirklees Partnership, Area Committees etc.

Councillors also need to be a key reference point for involvement and engagement activity that is service-led. For example it is essential to involve Councillors at the early planning stage if you are intending to engage with communities in their patch. Again here it may be appropriate to tap into councillor-led mechanisms such as area committees.

Also councillors who are in a decision making capacity will want to know how wider involvement and engagement as has informed the thinking about an issue on which they will make a formal decision. Click here to find more about working with Councillors.

**Top Tip**

The role of Councillors in involvement in crucial and therefore it is important that you involve them from the beginning of any issue or project.