Fermanagh & Omagh Community Planning Partnership

Communications Plan
2019 – 2021

Incorporating
Partnership Consultation & Engagement Protocol

Contents

1.0 <u>Introduction to Community Planning</u>

Community Planning is a legislative requirement placed on Councils and a number of statutory partners through the Local Government Act (NI) 2014. The Act also requires the Council and its community planning partners to seek the views of the community, encourage them to express their views, and take their views into account in the community planning process.

"Community Planning aims to improve the connection between all the tiers of Government and wider society through partnership working to jointly deliver better outcomes for everyone."
(Department for Communities)

In March 2017, following a process of co-design involving extensive community engagement, the Community Planning Partnership published a Community Plan for the district 'Fermanagh and Omagh 2030'. This plan identifies the long-term outcomes which the partnership will work to achieve across three themes with the aim of improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of our district and the people who live here.

The Community Plan Vision is of:

"a welcoming, shared and inclusive Fermanagh and Omagh district, where people and places are healthy, safe, connected and prosperous, and where our outstanding natural, built and cultural heritage is cherished and sustainably managed".

In 2018, an Action Plan was published setting out 53 partnership actions which the Partnership will take forward to support the achievement of the agreed outcomes.

Together these documents identify an overarching approach aimed at improving services and quality of life for all in our district by getting the public, private and community/voluntary sectors working together better towards our agreed, shared Vision and eight long term outcomes.

The Action Plan is currently being implemented and progress is being continually monitored through our governance arrangements.

The Fermanagh and Omagh Community Planning Partnership recognizes that effective internal and external communications will make a vital contribution to the success of the partnership. As such it has agreed to develop a Communications Plan for the partnership area that will ensure key stakeholders, including the local community, are engaged and fully informed as to the aims, outcomes and partnership actions being progressed, alongside the impacts achieved.

2.0 <u>Communications Plan Objectives</u>

This Communications Plan outlines how the Community Planning Partnership will communicate with key stakeholders and work to ensure a consistent approach to the way in which messages are designed and delivered.

The objectives of this plan are to provide a consistent partnership approach to:

i.   Improve understanding of Community Planning across key stakeholders in Fermanagh and Omagh through the provision of clear, consistent messages and accessible information.

ii.   Support effective partnership working through agreed approaches, standards and governance for partnership communications.

iii. Demonstrate effective partnership working by highlighting the work and impact made by partnership actions

iv.   Ensure effective, inclusive and participative approaches to citizen engagement.

Through adoption of this Plan, the partners commit to its implementation by:

- Communicating with 'one voice' by upholding the approaches, standards and governance for effective communications set out by the Partnership

- Presenting all communications in plain English, free from jargon

- Ensuring that partners commit to using their communications channels to maximise reach

- Sharing engagement opportunities, where practicable, to maximise benefit for partners and communities and minimize the potential for 'consultation fatigue'

- Supporting the use of three-way communication, ie, up, down and across partners and target audiences, to inform and support the work of the partnership.

3.0 **Communication Governance**

All partnership communications must be approved by the Chair of the Strategic Partnership Board (SPB) before issue. This can be facilitated through the Council's Community Planning Team. Where a Partnership communication relates to a specific action or programme this must, in the first instance, be approved by the Strategic Partnership Board representative whose organization acts as Action Lead for the area that it relates to, prior to seeking the approval of the SPB Chair.

Partnership communications should be shared across all partner communications contacts for their information.

Media queries/ Press statements/releases:

- The key contact for media queries in relation to the work of the Fermanagh and Omagh Community Planning Partnership will be the Council's Community Planning Team. The team will work with the Council's PR/Communications Team to develop and disseminate all statements and press releases on behalf of the Partnership, liaising directly with the key Partnership contacts for the specific area of work to which the media query relates. Ultimately, all responses to media queries will require the approval of the Chair of the Strategic Partnership Board.

- Media statements in relation to the Partnership will be attributed to the Partnership. Where there is a need for individual comments, these should be attributed to the Chair of the Strategic Partnership Board and, if necessary, the senior community planning representative of the service/action to which the query relates. Ultimately, authority for approval of all partnership media statements rests with the Chair of the Strategic Partnership Board.

- All media statements are to be shared across the media contacts for partner organisations, when agreed.

- The guiding principle is that all media statements and responses to media queries should be collaborative and consensual and reflect the remit and work of the Partnership as a whole.

- Press releases/statements will be hosted on the news section of the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council website and on relevant partner websites.

4.0 Key Stakeholders

We will communicate with the following key stakeholders:

- Residents of Fermanagh and Omagh
- Wider public service users not resident in Fermanagh and Omagh
- Employees across partner organisations
- Partners across all levels of the Fermanagh and Omagh Community Planning Partnership
- Organisations/groups not directly involved or represented on the Community Planning Partnership
- Northern Ireland Departments
- Press and media

5.0 Communication Channels

The following communication channels are available to support the delivery of key internal and external messages:

- Partner Social Media Platforms (eg Facebook, Twitter)
- Email Campaigns
- Websites
- Local Press
- Local Radio
- Print Materials (Leaflets, Flyers, Posters, Booklets etc)
- Direct Marketing (Post)
- Correspondence with Representative Groups
- Community publications (eg. CVS Newsletter)
- Internal and external publications by Community Planning Partners (eg FODC's residents' magazine 'InFO')
- Internal staff intranets
- Partnership minutes and reports available online

6.0 Identity (Branding)

To support building awareness and understanding of Community Planning in Fermanagh and Omagh, it is essential that branding is used consistently.

The Community Planning Partnership logo should be printed on promotional literature relating to the work or actions of the Partnership.   This identifies that the project / programme or service is working towards a shared 'vision' and the delivery of key priorities of the district. The use of the logo is a mark of authenticity that the project supports a partnership approach and celebrates collaborative working.

The agreed logo of the Community Planning Partnership is

7.0 Communications Advice, Guidance and Support

Advice, guidance and support on the range of communications channels and activities across the Partnership will be provided by the Council's Community Planning Team who will liaise with the Partnership's Communication Contacts across the statutory partner organisations.

Contact details:

Oonagh Donnelly
Community Planning Officer
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Tel: 0300 303 1777

Kim Weir
Community Planning Officer
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8.0 Review

The Partnership will regularly review its Communications Plan to ensure the effectiveness of internal and external communications and engagement activity. A key tool towards this will be the Performance Scorecards for individual actions which will report on any communications activities planned in respect of those actions. The Council will also conduct a Fermanagh and Omagh Residents' Survey every 2-3 years which will provide useful data in terms of communication and engagement with residents. Cognisance will also be taken of any relevant research or knowledge available from partner organisations in respect of communications activity.

9.0 Communications Action Plan

The following Action Plan will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis subject to input from partners in terms of proposed milestones, activities and any agreed performance measures. Progress reports will be presented to the Strategic Partnership Board.

Action	Timescale	Owner	Key Stakeholders Targeted	Channels
1. Press release following Strategic Partnership Board meetings	Ongoing – every 6 months	CPP Team	Residents and public; other organisations; press and media	Local press; websites; social media
2. Publication of Strategic Partnership Board minutes and reports	Ongoing – every 6 months	CPP Team	All	FODC website
3. Update for partner communication teams on content of Comms Plan when approved by Strategic Partnership Board	Following approval by SPB	CPP Team	Partners; Employees across partner organisations	Email; meetings of Policy & Performance Support Forum
4. Update for partners on content of Consultation and Engagement Protocol	Following approval by SPB	CPP Team	Partners; Employees across partner organisations	Email; meetings of Policy & Performance Support Forum
5. Review of community planning content on FODC website and examination of links to/content for partner	Every 6 months	CPP Team in conjunction with partners	All	Websites

websites				
6. Develop and implement a programme of internal communications for staff across partner organisations to help improve staff understanding and knowledge	Ongoing	CPP Team/Partner Communications Officers	Partners; Employees across partner organisations	Email; intranets; staff newsletters
7. Compilation of potential communications activities and milestones across all actions	Ongoing	Action Leads	Partners; Employees across partner organisations	N/a
8. Publication of Performance Statement	2 yearly intervals – first due Nov 2019	CPP Team in conjunction with partners	All	Websites; Press release; Email; Social Media
9. Research and examine different and better ways to communicate with service users and key stakeholders, particularly hard to reach and vulnerable groups	Ongoing	CPP Team in conjunction with partners	All	N/a
10. Preparation of update to Fermanagh and Omagh Residents'	Once every 2-3 years	CPP Team	All	N/a

Survey 2018 to understand effectiveness of communications				
11. Conduct regular briefings with CVS Forum	Quarterly	CPP Team and CVS partner reps	Partners and CVS Organisations/groups not directly involved or represented on the Community Planning Partnership	Meetings; CVS Newsletter
12. Develop a platform where information is hosted on all public consultations relevant to Fermanagh and Omagh	Ongoing	CPP Team and partner contacts	Residents and public; other organisations;	Website

<u>Community Planning Partners</u>

The following organisations have been identified as **statutory partners** [NB: see the Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016]:

- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Sport NI
- The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
- Western Health and Social Care Trust
- Tourism NI
- Police Service of Northern Ireland
- Invest Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service
- Libraries NI
- Health and Social Care Board
- Public Health Agency
- The Education Authority

- Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is identified as the lead partner in the Fermanagh and Omagh district and has a statutory duty to initiate, maintain, facilitate and participate in community planning for its district.

- Government departments are required to promote and encourage community planning and have regard to any implications of a community plan for the exercise of their functions.

- A number of support partners have agreed to participate in community planning on a voluntary basis, including community and voluntary sector and business sector representatives.

Fermanagh and Omagh Community Planning Partnership

Consultation and Engagement Protocol

'Our approach to consultation and engagement'

1.   Background

The partners who make up the Fermanagh and Omagh Community Planning Partnership are working together to deliver services that will improve quality of life for people in the Fermanagh and Omagh district.

> Our long term Vision is of a:
>
> **"welcoming, shared and inclusive Fermanagh and Omagh district, where people and places are healthy, safe, connected and prosperous, and where our outstanding natural, built and cultural heritage is cherished and sustainably managed".**

> One of our shared Values sets out our commitment to **Effective Engagement**:
>
> **'inclusive, participative and effective community involvement and engagement will be a feature of community planning'.**

The Local Government Act (NI) 2014 requires the council and its community planning partners to seek the views of the community, encourage them to express their views, and take their views into account in the community planning process.

2.   Why do we need a Protocol?

The approach set out in this protocol aims to positively influence the following data/indicators:

- **% of people living in Fermanagh and Omagh who feel they can influence decision making** which, in 2014/16, stood at less than one third of the population, ie, 29.4%.

- In addition, the Fermanagh and Omagh Residents' Survey, undertaken in 2018, identified that **only 2% of the population had engaged in a consultation exercise** over the last 12-18 months.

This protocol provides partner organizations with an agreed, consistent approach to:

- how we consult the people and communities of the Fermanagh and Omagh district
- how results are shared across partners and communicated back to the community
- how decisions inform service delivery improvements.

It also outlines what members of the public and other stakeholders can expect from partner organizations in terms of the consultation and engagement activities they undertake. Rather than a strategy, which sets out a plan of action designed to achieve a goal, we have developed a protocol which defines how something is to be done following an agreed upon approach or method. This protocol is based around best practice approaches.

3.   Aim of the Protocol

- To establish clear principles to guide partner organizations and help ensure the delivery of high quality consultation and effective engagement with people and communities in Fermanagh and Omagh.

- As a result, our people will have greater confidence in our activities, know how to get involved and have their say, and will be better informed of the results of consultation and engagement.

4. What is Consultation and Engagement?

The terms consultation, involvement and engagement are often used interchangeably. All are about listening to the views of local people in order to inform or shape decisions. For the purpose of this document, the following definitions are used:

(i) **Consultation** is the process of asking for and listening to the views of people or groups on a number of options with the aim of influencing decisions, policies or actions

(ii) **Involvement** is a process in which people actively participate, during which information is exchanged and views sought

(iii) **Engagement** involves an ongoing, two-way process between partners and stakeholders. Decision making may be shared.

It may be easier to think of these in terms of the rungs on a ladder. A well-established model of participation sets out 5 levels ranging from providing information right through to handing over decision making authority.

Ladder of Engagement:

Information	Giving people information about what we **WILL** do
Consultation	Giving people **OPTIONS** about what we **COULD** do - which the results of consultation can influence
Involvement	Asking others to help you plan or run an event, service or policy by putting forward different ideas or options and **JOIN IN WITH THE DECISION** about what to do
Partnership	Joining in **PARTNERSHIP** with others to provide a service
Supporting Local Initiatives	Giving people the **RESOURCES** to **ACT INDEPENDENTLY**

Substantial participation

It is not the case that one approach is better than the others, rather that everyone is clear on the level of participation being offered and that it is relevant to the issue under consideration. Different levels of participation will be appropriate for different initiatives and circumstances.

Further clarity on each of these levels of engagement is outlined in Annex 1 alongside some suggestions of engagement methods appropriate for each.

5. Consultation and Engagement Principles

The following best practice principles will be applied by partner organisations to their consultation and engagement activities:

Principle 1: Integrity
- We will communicate clearly and in a range of ways how the public can influence the decision-making process and have their say, clearly stating what can and cannot be influenced
- We will ensure that appropriate and relevant information is provided so that those consulted can understand the issues and provide informed responses.

Principle 2: Visibility
- We will promote engagement opportunities widely to individuals, representative groups and stakeholders, undertaking promotion and engagement activity in a timely manner and in ways that are acceptable, appropriate and accessible, taking account of available resources.

Principle 3: Accessibility
- We will ensure that there is fair and appropriate access to consultation and engagement and will take account of particular needs, helping to overcome difficulties that prevent full participation in engagement activity within the context of available resources. We will take additional action to involve hard to reach or seldom heard communities.
- We will make information accessible, using plain English, avoiding acronyms and limiting the number of questions and the length of documents to what is absolutely necessary.
- We will provide access to a range of formats upon request.

Principle 4: Transparency
- We will analyse findings and ensure accurate reporting of results
- We will ensure that the results and outcome of consultation and engagement are fed back to participants and available to the wider population.

Principle 5: Quality
- We will work to ensure that staff responsible for engagement have the appropriate knowledge, skills and capacity to achieve quality engagement.

Principle 6: Collaboration
- We will co-ordinate community engagement activity amongst partners wherever possible, avoiding duplication of effort and over-burdening participants
- We will share results across partner organisations, where relevant.

Principle 7: Data Protection
- We will comply with legislative requirements in respect of data protection and will store data securely.

Extract of information from http://partnerships.org.uk/guide/main1.html#RTFToC17 'The Guide to Effective Participation'

Level 1: Information

Information-giving underpins all other levels of participation and may be appropriate on its own in some circumstances. However, you are likely to hit problems if all you offer is information and people are expecting more involvement.

Basics

- The information-giving stance is essentially a 'take it or leave it' approach.
- People may not accept they can't have a say. Is there really no alternative to the ideas you are putting forward?
- Your information will be judged on who you are and your style as well as what you say.
- Even though you may not want much feedback, put yourself in the place of the people you are communicating with: the meaning of any communication lies in the response that you get - not what you say.

Where appropriate
Information-only may be appropriate when:

- You have no room for manoeuvre and must follow one course of action - for example, where there is a clear legal requirement.
- An authority is reporting a course of action which is essentially internal and doesn't affect others.
- At the start of a consultation or other process, with the promise of more opportunity to participate later.

Information-only is inappropriate when the following apply (alternative stances in brackets):

- You are seeking to empower community interests. Information is necessary for empowerment, but seldom enough on its own (3, 4 or 5).
- There are alternatives and others have a legitimate interest in developing them (3 or 4).

Methods
Consider the following:

- Print: leaflets, newsletters, etc.
- Presentations at meetings.
- Briefing the media through press releases and press conferences.
- Advertising through posters, radio, press.
- Film or video.

Avoid any methods which imply that people can have a say.

Level 2: Consultation

Consultation is appropriate when you can offer people some choices on what you are going to do - but not the opportunity to develop their own ideas or participate in putting plans into action.

Basics

- Consultation means giving people a restricted choice and role in solutions. You may consult on the problems, offer some options, allow comment, take account and then proceed - perhaps after negotiation. You are not asking for help in taking action.
- All the basics of information-giving apply, plus the need to handle feedback.

Where appropriate
The consultation stance is likely to be most appropriate when:

- You want to improve a service.
- You have a clear vision and plans to implement a project or programme , and there appear to be a limited range of options.
- These options can be set out in terms which community interests can understand and relate to their own concerns or needs.
- The initiator of the proposals can handle feedback and is prepared to use this to choose between or modify options.

It is inappropriate when the following apply (alternative levels in brackets):

- You aren't going to take any notice of what people say.
- You are seeking to empower community interests (3, 4 or 5).
- You are not clear what you wish to do and are seeking ideas (3 or 4).
- You don't have the resources or skills to carry out the options presented, or other means of implementing (choose level 4 or 5).

Methods

Consider the following methods for consultation:

- Surveys and market research.
- Consultative meetings.
- Consultative committees.
- Simulations where the options and constraints are clear.

These methods may be used in conjunction with information-giving and presentational techniques, for example:

- Advertisements.
- Media briefing.
- Leaflets and posters.
- Exhibitions.
- Videos.

Level 3: Involvement

Involvement is a difficult stance because it can mean giving people the power to choose without fully sharing the responsibility for carrying decisions through.

Basics

- Involvement means accepting other people's ideas, and then choosing from the options you have developed together.
- The basics of consultation apply, plus the need to generate options together, choose between them, and agree ways forward.
- The techniques are more complex.
- People need more confidence to get involved.
- The time scale for the process is likely to be much longer.

Where appropriate
Involvement may be appropriate when:

- It is important that other people `own' the solution.
- You need fresh ideas.
- There is enough time.

Involvement is inappropriate when the following apply (try alternative stances in brackets).

- You have little room for manoeuvre (1 or 2).
- You can't implement decisions yourself (4 or 5).

Methods

- Information-giving methods to start the process.
- Stakeholder analysis to identify who should be involved.
- SWOT analysis to understand where you are.
- Brainstorming, Nominal Group Technique, Surveys to develop some options.
- Cost/Benefit Analysis to make choices.
- Strategic Choice, Planning for Real, and other simulations as powerful overall techniques.
- SAST and Action Planning to decide what next.

Level 4: Partnership

Partnership may involve short-term collaboration or forming more permanent partnerships with other interests.

Basics

- Acting together in partnership involves both deciding together and then acting together.
- This means having a common language, a shared vision of what you want, and the means to carry it out.
- Partners need to trust each other as well as agree on what they want to do.
- Effective partnerships take a long time to develop - shot gun marriages are unlikely to work.
- Each partner needs to feel they have an appropriate stake in the partnership and a fair say in what happens.

Where appropriate
Partnership may be appropriate when:

- One party cannot achieve what they want on their own.
- The various interests involved all get some extra benefit from acting together.
- There is commitment to the time and effort needed to develop a partnership.

Partnership is not likely to be appropriate when the following apply (alternative stances in brackets):

- One party holds all the power and resources and uses this to impose its own solutions (1 or 2).
- The commitment to partnership is only skin deep (1 or 2).
- People want to have a say in making decisions, but not a long term stake in carrying out solutions (3).

Methods

Consider the following methods:

- Information giving methods to start the process.
- Methods for deciding together to create a shared vision.
- Team building exercises.
- Design exercises.
- Business planning exercises.
- Interim structures like working parties and steering groups as a focus for decision making and accountability.
- Longer-term structures through which you can work together.

Level 5: Supporting local initiatives

Supporting independent community-based initiatives means helping others develop and carry out their own plans. Resource-holders who promote this stance may, of course, put limits on what they will support.

Basics

- This is the most 'empowering' stance -provided people want to do things for themselves. They may, quite properly, choose a lower level of participation.
- Carrying through the stance may involve people in setting up new forms of organisations to handle funds and carry out projects or programmes.
- The process has to be owned by, and move at the pace of, those who are going to run the initiative - although funders and others may set deadlines.

Where appropriate
This stance may be appropriate:

- Where there is a commitment to empower individuals or groups within the community.
- Where people are interested in starting and running an initiative .

It is not likely to be appropriate when the following apply (alternative stances in brackets):

- Community initiatives are seen as 'a good thing' in the abstract and pushed on people from the top down. (1,2,3).
- Where there is no commitment to provide training and support.
- Where there aren't the resources to maintain initiatives in the longer-term.
- Where time is very short.

Methods

Consider the following methods from the

- An offer of grants, advice and support - perhaps conditional on some commitment being made by the other interests involved.
- Workshops for helping community groups create a shared vision and plan their action.
- Team building exercises.
- Commitment planning.
- Business planning exercises.
- Workshops on design, fund-raising and publicity.
- Visits to similar projects.
- Interim structures like working parties and steering groups as a focus for decision making and accountability.
- Longer-term structures controlled by community interests.
- Development trusts.