



Policy on Public Consultation

May 2019

Policy Statement

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out the guiding principles that underpin public consultations carried out by CultureNL. This policy complies with relevant legislation including: The Equalities Act (Scotland) 2010 and guidelines such as the Scottish Government Consultation Good Practice Guidance 2008.
- 1.2 Consultation is the process of dialogue with residents and stakeholders based upon a genuine exchange of views, with the objective of informing decisions, policies or programmes of action.
- 1.3 This policy is supported by a staff guidance note which offers practical advice to CultureNL staff on how to carry out public consultations.

Scope

- 2.1 This policy affects all customers, staff and members of the Board. It outlines the guiding principles on which effective and appropriate public consultation will be conducted.

Definition

- 3.1 Consultation should be a process of dialogue with residents and stakeholders based upon a genuine exchange of views, with the objective of informing decisions, policies or programmes of action.
- 3.2 CultureNL has adopted the following definition of consultation:

‘Consultation is the dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based on a genuine exchange of views with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action.’

Policy Content

- 4.1 Ensuring consultation we conduct is appropriate
 - 4.1.1 CultureNL is committed to undertaking consultation that is cost effective and appropriate. This means that sometimes it may not be necessary to consult, for example, for minor or technical amendments to regulation, existing policy frameworks or where adequate consultation has taken place at an earlier stage of the development of a policy.
 - 4.1.2 Consultation will take place at the appropriate time, when proposals are still at a formative stage, giving people sufficient time to respond and the service sufficient time to take account of responses in reaching decisions.
 - 4.1.3 We will use the most appropriate consultation methods; this will depend on the issue under consideration, the stakeholders to be consulted and the available time and resources.

4.2 Ensuring consultation we conduct is proportionate

- 4.2.1 We will take a proportionate and targeted approach to consultation, ensuring the scale and scope is commensurate to the significance or impact of the issue or proposal.
- 4.2.2 In allocating resources for consultation we will prioritise the sections of the community who have the greatest stake in the proposal or issue.
- 4.2.3 Timescales for consultation will be proportionate and realistic. The amount of time required will depend on the nature, complexity and impact of the proposal and will typically be between 4 and 6 weeks. We will have a clear rationale for shorter or longer timeframes, for example if engagement has already been carried, or further feedback is required.
- 4.2.4 We will work to ensure meaningful engagement with the local voluntary and community sector and adhere to standards on consultation outlined in the Scottish Government guidelines. Where it is appropriate, we will conduct 4 to 6 week formal consultations with clear explanations and justification for shorter timeframes or a less informal approach. Wherever possible we will give early notice of forthcoming consultations.

4.3 Ensuring consultation we conduct is accessible

- 4.3.1 We will seek to ensure that key consultation issues are clearly described and that objectives and timescales are clearly identified. Information will be easily accessible and presented using plain English.
- 4.3.2 We will avoid duplication by making use of the results of appropriate and relevant existing consultations and seeking opportunities to deliver joint consultations and share good practice with our partners.
- 4.3.3 We will publicise consultations using a variety of tools. The choice of tools will be appropriate in order to reach groups affected by the consultation. Increasingly we will be using web based tools and we will encourage use of online consultations to reduce costs. However we will also make use of more 'traditional' forms of communication e.g. newsletters, leaflets, local press etc.

4.4 Ensuring consultation we conduct is transparent

- 4.4.1 We will explain to people why they are being consulted, what they are being consulted about and how their views will contribute to the decision making process.
- 4.4.2 All responses to consultations will be available to inform decision making and we

will make clear how the views gathered have informed the final decision making process.

- 4.4.3 We will provide feedback on the findings and outcomes of consultations ensuring that consultees know that their input is being used constructively. The feedback provided will depend on the consultation issue, method and the target groups involved
- 4.4.4 We will ensure that interpretation of feedback is objective with disclosure of weightings if used.

4.5 Equalities in consultation

- 4.5.1 CultureNL has a duty to consult with, and consider the needs of, all sectors of the community when delivering services. It must also promote equality of opportunity and good race relations. These requirements are enshrined in a range of legislation, including: the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, and the Equalities Act 2010.
- 4.5.2 CultureNL will conduct Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) on all policies and functions to assess their potential level of impact on differential groups.
- 4.5.3 The EIA process enables CultureNL to assess whether its services and functions are meeting the needs and requirements of all members of the local community or whether the service should adapt current service provision.
- 4.5.4 As part of the consultation process, CultureNL may need to conduct consultation with specific groups within the community, to check that a policy or development will not cause them adverse impact, for example: people who have a disability, are from an ethnic minority or are on a low income.
- 4.5.5 Some minority groups in the local community may have very few members. In this case, consultation must be carefully managed to avoid 'overloading' individual consultees.

Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.1 Members of CultureNL Board will maintain an overview of key public consultations conducted and ensure consultation maintains a customer-focused approach which identifies opportunities to improve services in line with customers' needs.
- 5.2 Senior staff will seek the views of customers when commencing a new service or planning a significant change in policy or procedure that is likely to affect customers. They will seek the views of partner organisations and consider opportunities for joint working when commencing a new service or planning a significant change in policy or procedure.
- 5.3 Members of staff will maintain an open and approachable manner toward customers,

being ready to listen to any comment, suggestion or complaint, and record the details for the attention of their line manager or supervisor. They will continually review their contact with customers and the effectiveness of the Council's systems and procedures to see where improvements can be suggested.

Review Frequency

- 6.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years in order to evaluate its relevance and effectiveness. This policy was last reviewed in April/May 2019. Feedback on the policy can be sent to:

Feedback
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