

Ceredigion County Council Engagement and Participation Policy 2026



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Author and service: CM, Policy and Performance

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Introduction

It is vital that Ceredigion County Council encourages and enables local people to participate in our decision-making processes. Good engagement is the responsibility of everyone who works for the Council. It's a two-part process – we listen to the views and opinions of members of the public and we provide clear information about the functions of Ceredigion County Council.

Our commitment to engage effectively is underpinned by a range of legislation including:

- [The Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#) – the Council must encourage public participation in our decision making and to consult local people about the extent to which the council is exercising its functions effectively.
- [The Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) – the Council must involve people with an interest in achieving the National Well-being goals.
- [The Welsh Language Measure 2011](#) – the Council must ask the public for their views on the impact that our decisions will have on the Welsh Language.
- [The Equality Act 2010](#) – the Council must involve and engage with people who share Protected Characteristics.

We are guided by 'The Gunning Principles'. These set out the legal expectations of what is appropriate consultation with an emphasis on 'fairness'. The principles can be used in court to determine whether a public body has shown fairness in its engagement, consultations and decision making.

The Gunning Principles are:

- Consultation must take place when the proposals are still at a formative stage.
- Sufficient reasons must be put forward to allow for intelligent consideration and response.
- Adequate time must be given for consideration and response.
- The product of consultation must be conscientiously considered when finalising the decision

Background

This policy sets out our corporate approach to engagement with the people in Ceredigion. It builds on the progress that we have made since our previous policy which was approved in 2022.

Since 2022, the number of people that follow our corporate social media accounts has increased and we have established a method for people to watch Council meetings online as well as in person. We have established Ceredigion People's Panel and introduced a dynamic method of gathering feedback from people who contact us through our new Clic feedback survey. We have developed our use of online engagement platforms while maintaining the use of non-digital methods. We have established an e-petition system, and this will be available on our website soon.

We consult with relevant stakeholders when we make changes to our services and develop new policy and strategies. We also undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment. Our Integrated Impact Assessment helps us to consider the contribution that our proposed changes will make to our Corporate Strategy, to the 7 National Well-being Goals of Wales and to our Socio-economic Duty. It also ensures that we consider the impact of any changes on people that are protected by the Equality Act and on the Welsh Language.

An analysis of feedback from public consultations, an Integrated Impact Assessment and any other relevant information is included in reports to elected members to help them come to an informed decision.

Ceredigion County Council conducted a baseline assessment and a public engagement campaign during summer 2025 to help develop this policy.

Engagement and Participation Policy Aims

The aims of this policy are:

- **Increase Transparency and Feedback**
- **Enhance Communication and Promotion**
- **Improve Accessibility and Inclusion**
- **Simplify Engagement Materials**
- **Support Councillor Engagement**

Our action plan - [Appendix 1](#) - sets out what we will do to achieve these aims.

Ceredigion – Demographic Profile

Ceredigion covers an area of 1,900km² comprising agricultural land, moorland and forestry. The upland areas to the east form part of the Cambrian Mountains and the county is bordered by over 90km of coastline.

Ceredigion has a population of 71,475. If we imagine this population as a village of 100 people, it would include:

- 51 females and 49 males.
- 14 children aged 15 years, or younger and 6 young people aged 16 to 19 years.
- 54 people aged between 20 and 64.
- 22 people aged between 65 and 84 and 3 people aged 85+.
- 12 university students (estimate based on [Where do HE students study? | HESA](#))
- 1 person whose gender differs to their birth gender. 8 people would prefer not to tell you their gender identity.
- 5 people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual or queer. 10 people would prefer not to tell you their sexual orientation.
- 4 people from non-White ethnic backgrounds.
- 46 Christians, 2 people of other religions, 43 people with no religion. 8 people would prefer not to tell you about their beliefs or non-beliefs.
- 45 people who can speak Welsh, including 7 who are 65+.
- 22 people classed as disabled under the Equality Act; 9 of these significant difficulties with their daily activities.
- 11 people who provide unpaid care to family or friends.



Source: ONS [2021 Census Profile for areas in England and Wales - Nomis](#) ([nomisweb.co.uk](#))

This snapshot highlights the diversity of our population and the importance of inclusive engagement, especially for marginalised and seldom heard groups.

Community leaders and Stakeholder groups

We collaborate with various stakeholder groups who champion local issues. These groups are listed in our Engagement and Consultation toolkit for staff, ensuring that they receive timely updates and can share information within their community of interest.

- Town and Community Councils (currently 51; reducing to 49 in May 2027)
- Ceredigion Disability Forum
- Ceredigion Family Centre Network
- Armed Forces Veterans Forum
- Young Farmers clubs
- Ceredigion Youth Council
- Local Access Forum
- Local Nature Partnership
- Carers Alliance
- Early Years, Childcare and Play providers
- Food Banks, Community Café's and Warm Welcome Spaces
- Age Friendly Ceredigion Forum
- Green Lane Association

Ceredigion County Council has appointed 21 Member Champions. Their role is to identify good practice and challenges and to promote the issue that they champion, both within the council and in the community. They champion the following causes:

- 50+
- Anti-slavery and Ethical Employment
- Armed Forces
- Biodiversity
- Carers
- Children and Young People
- Combating Poverty
- Digital Champion
- Diversity
- Domestic Violence
- Equalities
- Health and Safety
- Learning Disabilities
- Member Development
- Mental Health
- Public Health
- Safeguarding
- Sustainability
- Age Friendly
- Menopause
- Peace Ambassador

Influencing decisions

The National Survey for Wales 2025 showed that just 19% of adults in Wales feel that they can influence decisions affecting their local area. This tells us that a lot of work is needed to ensure that people feel empowered and involved in local decision making. The following section sets out Ceredigion County Council's current engagement activities.

Contact details for all Ceredigion County Councillors are published on our website and our secure 'My Account' service. This makes it easier for people to contact them directly. The National Residents Survey 2024 showed us that 83% of respondents were aware of all or some of the responsibilities of local councillors and 70% of respondents know who their local councillor is.

Members of the community can suggest topics for scrutiny. The process is outlined on our website - [Overview and Scrutiny Committees - Ceredigion County Council](#). However, many of the subjects proposed fall outside the remit of scrutiny committees.

Our petitions protocol is listed in our constitution, and we have established an e-petition system (currently inactive due to technical issues).

Our improved Engagement and Consultation webpage helps residents find consultations and track progress of the matter being consulted upon. Consultation analysis reports are presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet to support the decision making process. The Cabinet decision is published on our Engagement and Consultation webpage - [Closed Campaigns - Ceredigion County Council](#)

We send regular engagement e-bulletins to people who have signed up to receive these and have established Ceredigion People's Panel.

A People's Panel is a group of residents who take part in surveys and other opportunities to express their views on Council services. Ceredigion People's Panel are asked to respond to regular 'snap surveys' throughout the year. They are invited to join occasional focus groups to help us gather feedback on a specific issue.

Becoming a county councillor is a powerful way to influence decisions. The next Local Government elections will be held in May 2027. To inform prospective candidates, we invite them to meetings with Democratic Services and have developed a 'Prospective Candidate Guide'.

Promoting awareness of the work of the Council

Information about services, plans, strategies and meeting minutes is available on our website - [Ceredigion County Council](#).

Our decision-making process is set out in our constitution. This is regularly reviewed and published on our website, along with a plain language guide - [The Council's Constitution - Ceredigion County Council](#).

We make good use of social media and the number of people following us is increasing. Training is provided to councillors on effective use of social media. We have established a monthly e-newsletter that people can sign up to and receive information about the work of the Council.

Despite strong performance metrics such as those identified in our Local Performance Profile, Self-assessment report and Panel Performance Assessment, public perception remains a challenge. Work is ongoing to improve the way that we feed back to the public and stakeholders on our progress.

Council meetings are accessible online and in person. We publish forward work programmes for Council Cabinet and Scrutiny meetings on our website and promote on social media. Meeting agenda and minutes are published on our website.

However, the National Residents Survey 2024 showed us that just 49% of respondents are aware that the public can attend Ceredigion Council meetings in-person or online.

The 2024 Panel Performance Assessment was positive but highlighted communication issues. We are revising our internal policies and now undertake regular analysis of interaction of social media posts, videos and corporate e-newsletters. Insight from this analysis is used to inform future strategies.

Complaints

Our Complaints procedures are outlined on our website: [Comments, Compliments and Complaints - Ceredigion County Council](#).

Complainants should receive clear explanations of the findings of an investigation and be informed of any resulting changes.

Complaints data is analysed and reported quarterly to senior leaders. Biannual reports are presented to Cabinet members and our Governance and Audit Committee. This enables council decision makers to regularly review the information when they plan and develop Council services.

Resources allocated to community engagement

Council services have varying capacity for community engagement. Our Equality and Inclusion team (2 officers) provides corporate oversight for community engagement. They present an annual Engagement and Participation report to Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

Since 2022 they have developed a staff toolkit and delivered staff training. This has improved the quality and consistency of our engagement and consultation campaigns.

They have improved our [Engagement and Consultation webpage](#) so that it's easier for the public to track the progress of our formal consultations. They have also revised and updated our Integrated Impact Assessment tool to support Cabinet decisions.

They support and advise all council services to ensure that our consultation and engagement work meets legal requirements and best practice, including:

[Children and Young People's National Participation Standards](#)

[National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales](#)

[Welsh Government Statutory Guidance on Public Participation Strategies](#).

Our Equality and Inclusion team are guided by the Gunning Principles (referenced above) and Brown's Principles.

Brown's Principles and 'Due Regard'

"Due regard" means that public bodies must actively think about how their decisions and actions affect people with protected characteristics (like age, disability, race, sex, etc.) before making those decisions. It's not just a box-ticking exercise - it must be a real and thoughtful consideration.

Brown's Principles Explained

These principles come from a legal case (R (Brown) v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, 2008) and help clarify what "due regard" really means in practice. Here are the six key principles:

1. **Awareness:** Decision-makers must know they have a legal duty to consider equality when making decisions.
2. **Timeliness:** Equality must be considered before and during the decision-making process—not afterwards.

3. **Substance, Rigour, and Open Mind:** The duty must be carried out seriously, thoroughly, and with a genuine willingness to consider equality impacts.
4. **Influence on Decision:** The equality duty must actually affect the final decision—it's not enough to just mention it.
5. **Non-Delegation:** The responsibility to consider equality cannot be passed on to someone else. The public body itself must do it.
6. **Ongoing Duty and Record-Keeping:** The duty is continuous, and keeping records helps show that equality was properly considered.

Implementation and Monitoring

We have developed an action plan to help focus improvements in areas identified by feedback from the public and the baseline assessment carried out in Summer 2025.

The action plan will be led by the Equality and Inclusion team. Progress will be monitored annually and reported to Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet. Further feedback from residents will be used to refine and improve engagement practices.

Action Plan

1. Increase Transparency and Feedback

Introduce clearer feedback loops showing how public input has influenced decisions.

Ensure clarity when engaging with the public by specifying which aspects are open for consultation and which are not.

Include more detail in consultations to explain the various factors that the Council needs to consider before making a final decision.

2. Enhance Communication and Promotion

Increase use of e-newsletters and social media to explain the work of the Council.

Increase the number of engagement e-bulletins to inform people when a consultation is due to close.

Schedule engagement activities to suit diverse availability.

Liaise with stakeholder groups to check their willingness to promote our engagement and consultation activities.

Develop Ceredigion People's Panel activities.

3. Improve Accessibility and Inclusion

Offer consultations in multiple formats

Use neutral venues and community hubs for drop-in sessions.

Develop ways to better engage with underrepresented groups (young people, men, people of global majority/ethnic minority and faith groups).

Ensure digital tools are accessible for screen readers and non-digital users.

Promote the role of scrutiny committees and relevant topics for discussion.

Review our petitions protocol and promote the process for submitting petitions and e-petitions.

4. Simplify Engagement Materials

Use plain language, avoid jargon, and ensure consultation questions allow for open responses.

Develop a single page on our website with brief descriptor and links to other useful pages that help explain the functions of the Council.

Deliver more engagement and consultation training to Council staff.

5. Support Councillor Engagement

Support councillors in using social media.

Promote councillor roles and how to become a candidate.

Develop guidance and promote the role of Member Champion.

Ensure that the relevant Cabinet portfolio holder views the content of any consultation before it is published.

For more information about Ceredigion County Council Engagement and Participation please contact:

Equality and Inclusion team
Ceredigion County Council
Penmorfa
Aberaeron
Ceredigion
SA46 0PA

Email: partnerships@ceredigion.gov.uk

Telephone: 01545 570881