Community feedback summary

Community engagement policy review



We are reviewing our Community Engagement Policy, which guides how we involve people in decisions affecting communities. This includes how we share information, seek feedback and consider views from communities when making decisions.

This summary outlines what we heard during the initial phase of community consultation.

How we consulted with communities

- a community survey, which received 77 responses
- a general community focus group
- focus groups with the Manningham Disability Advisory Committee, Youth Advisory Committee and Multicultural Communities Advisory Committee
- engagement with students aged 12 to 17 from two secondary schools.

Survey respondents were predominantly residents aged over 65 (67%). 38% were aged 45 to 65, 12% were aged 25 to 45 and 3% were under 25. Respondents were 54% female, 41% male and 4% another gender identity. Most survey respondents had previously participated through Your Say Manningham or online surveys. Smaller numbers had taken part through workshops, focus groups, community panels, pop-ins, written submissions, petitions, meetings and community groups.

In focus groups with community advisory committees, we workshopped what the community engagement principles should look like in practice. These directly informed the development of intentions in our practice that are now listed under the principles in the draft policy.

Community consultation will continue with the policy draft published and available for community feedback in September and October 2026. See more information, read the draft and complete the survey on the Your Say Manningham Community Engagement Policy review page.

Experiences of engagement are mixed

Of the 74 survey respondents who rated their previous experience of engagement with us, 43% were neutral, 38% were happy or very happy, 19% were unhappy or very unhappy.

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What we heard	How feedback informed the draft
Engagement needs to meaningfully inform decision making	
People want to be involved before key decisions are made or a preferred option is developed. Some feel we engage too late, limiting their ability to influence the outcome. People also want us to clearly explain what they can influence, what has already been decided and any limits on the process. Young people want opportunities to contribute at different stages, including commenting on draft decisions, policies and plans.	The policy commits us to involving people early, when their input can make a meaningful difference. We will clearly explain the purpose and scope of each engagement, what people can influence, what cannot change and how we will use their feedback. A new section also explains how formal engagement connects with our decision making.
Closing the loop is essential to building trust	
People want to know what happens after they provide feedback. They want us to explain what we heard, what changed as a result, what did not change and why we made the final decision.	The policy recognises that reporting back is essential to building trust. We commit to explaining what we heard, how people's feedback informed our decisions and why final decisions were made. A new section clearly outlines our responsibility to report back, with this commitment also reflected in how we put the community engagement principles into practice.
Trust depends on transparency and honest communication	
People generally understand that we cannot act on every suggestion or meet everyone's expectations. However, they want to know what information we considered, how we balanced different views and why we chose some options over others. People in communities see engagement as a two-way process: we ask for feedback, listen and consider what they tell us, then explain our final decision.	A new section explains how formal engagement connects with our decision making and places greater emphasis on reporting back to communities on how we used inputs. The policy also gives greater recognition to the relationships, connections and partnerships we build with people outside formal engagement activities. These ongoing relationships also play an important role in building trust in our engagement.

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People need different ways to participate	
Online surveys were the most common engagement method used by survey respondents, and many people were comfortable continuing to use them. However, participants said surveys are not appropriate for every topic or every person, and that accessibility of engagement approaches should be planned for from the outset.	We place greater emphasis and provide clearer language that commits us to inclusive and accessible engagement in the community engagement principles section. Feedback about accessibility and different participation preferences informed intentions to provide more than one way to participate, including an online option and at least one alternative.
Accessibility involves more than publishing information online	
People said information about engagement and decisions can be hard to find. They want timely, accessible and easy-to-understand communication. Engagement should support different needs through options such as plain English, Easy Read, visual activities, more time to respond, support to participate and in-person opportunities.	The policy commits us to engaging and communicating in a way that plans for and meets different accessibility needs. Practical intentions under the six community engagement principles guides how we engage, including providing timely and accessible information, along with support such as accessible formats and venues and access to interpreters.
Representation matters	
People want engagement to include a broad and relevant mix of participants. This includes people affected by a decision, users of a place or service, nearby residents and people who do not usually participate. Participants raised concerns that vocal, well-connected or highly motivated participants can dominate feedback. People want us to explain who participated, how this compares with Manningham's broader population and which groups or views may be missing.	We strengthened how the policy describes how we target engagement to be representative and inclusive of communities in Manningham. This is addressed through a stronger focus on people most affected by decisions and groups that may be underrepresented. The policy requires us to consider whose voices are included, reduce overrepresentation and underrepresentation, and seek a range of perspectives rather than only the loudest or most familiar voices. This is evident in the intentions section and the 'When we engage' section.

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