

**Sefton Borough Partnership**

**FINAL DRAFT**  
**Business Engagement and**  
**Consultation Framework**

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## **1 What this Framework will do**

This Business Engagement and Consultation Framework explains how we will work with Sefton businesses as part of our Economic Development and Sustainability strategy. This Framework gives us clear information on how to speak with and listen to our businesses and get them involved in the work we do.

We, and the following organisations, will follow this framework.

- Sefton MBC
- Sefton Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Business Link North West
- South Sefton Business Forum
- Sefton Economic Forum
- Sefton Business Village Partnership
- Southport Tourism Business Network
- Sefton Construction Partnership
- South Sefton Development Trust
- [Any other partner organisation that adopts this framework]

By using this framework, we and the above organisations agree to:

- follow a set of principles and standards that influence the way we speak with and listen to our businesses; and
- support and develop ways of working that will give us detailed information on businesses located in Sefton.
- Use the information we receive productively to support sustainable business growth in Sefton

The aim of these principles, standards and ways of working is to make sure that we can improve the way we speak with and listen to our businesses. This framework will give us better information, which we can share with our partners. It will also stop us from doing the same job twice, which will then save us money.

## **2 Our main aims**

We want to make sure that we support our businesses to get them involved in the public services they receive.

Our main aims are to:

- know and work with our businesses and understand their needs
- make sure that we involve our businesses in identifying issues that are important to them;
- ask our businesses whether or not we have achieved the things that are important to them; and
- work with other partners (people using this framework) when we want to speak with or listen to our businesses, and tell our businesses about what we find.

The SBP Partnership Consultation Panel will check that we are achieving these aims.

## **3 The Public Engagement and Consultation Panel**

Our Public Engagement and Consultation Panel makes sure that the way we speak with and listen to our communities is of a high standard.

The Panel is made up of:

- the Cabinet Member for Performance and Governance;
- the Cabinet Member for Communities;
- a representative from the Labour Group
- a non-executive member from NHS Sefton;
- representatives from the Community Empowerment Network;
- a representative from Merseyside Police;
- a representative from Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service;
- a representative from Sefton Young Advisors (paid professional young people aged 15-21 who advise adults on how to work with young people)
- representatives from Sefton businesses

The Panel will also receive feedback, assessment reports and presentations from our partners. This feedback will be about:

- how we carried out our work;
- the opinions of the businesses taking part on how they found the process;
- the number of businesses who took part and the costs of the different methods of getting them involved; and

- how successful different methods were at getting the views of businesses who are not normally heard, for example small businesses (less than 10 employees) who do not have the time to participate in consultation; businesses located in disadvantaged communities including social enterprises.

For an activity to be successful, there must be proof that our work has made changes to how we provide a service.

The Partnership Engagement and Consultation Panel will report to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Governance and the NHS Board.

#### **4 Important principles**

To maintain high standards in the way we work with our businesses, we will use the following important principles in everything we do.

We will:

- put businesses at the heart of how we develop a service
- treat the involvement of our businesses as a developing process, which grows and improves over time;
- monitor, assess and improve the way we speak with and listen to our businesses by sharing information with our partners;
- give stakeholders (people who have an interest in our organisation) feedback on the results of the work we do;
- work in a fair and clear way
- recognise difference and make sure that every business has the opportunity to be involved;
- make sure that any business we speak with and listen to has all the information they need to get involved;
- make sure businesses know how they can influence the decisions we make; and;
- set standards for how we work with our businesses, and keep to them.

The Partnership Public Engagement and Consultation Panel will make sure we keep to these standards.

## **5 The standards**

We will use these standards to make sure that the work we do with our businesses is of a high quality and fair. These standards will help us get a better understanding of our business community and stop us from doing the same work twice.

### **Standard 1:        *The way we want to speak with and listen to our businesses is clear***

We will make sure that our work:

- has clear aims that explain what we are asking businesses views on, what we are not asking businesses views on and any limits we have to work within.
- Includes a review of the other work we are currently doing, so we know this work is needed;
- is linked with other similar work, so we don't do the same work twice;
- includes information on the influence businesses are likely to have, and the expected costs and benefits; and
- follows all relevant policy and legal requirements – for example, the Freedom of Information Act, Data Protection Act.

### **Standard 2:        *We identify all businesses that are likely to be affected or interested***

We will make sure that we:

- maintain and regularly update a database of Sefton businesses
- make the work we are doing easy to get involved in, and clearly target the businesses we want to speak with and listen to.
- provide different forms of consultation to increase participation e.g. On line “virtual consultation panels” to seek contribution to and endorsement of business regeneration projects, Sefton Economic Forum events, Social Enterprise Networks.
- provide a ladder of participation for business people to support the wider community, including participation in the Sefton Borough Partnership.

### **Standard 3:        *We have a business engagement and consultation plan that is value for money***

We will make sure that:

- we upload onto eConsult (an online calendar) the plan details, aims and realistic timescales;
- the plan includes actions, methods and approaches which are appropriate for the target audience;
- the plan allows everyone interested to give us their feedback;

- we choose an officer who has the relevant skills and knowledge to lead the work we are doing; and
- the plan includes an equality impact assessment (an analysis to help us decide how our decisions will affect different groups).

**Standard 4:**        ***All information is available in appropriate formats and written in plain English for businesses who want to see it***

We will make sure we:

- make all background documents and supporting information available at the time we carry out the work, including our reasons for carrying out the work;
- clearly discuss the decisions we make; and
- use all appropriate public resources.

**Standard 5:**        ***We record all responses accurately and fairly***

We will make sure that we:

- accurately record all the information we find from the work we do; and
- upload information onto eConsult.

**Standard 6:**        ***We have a clear plan for giving feedback on the results from our work with businesses***

- have a list of businesses who took part and their views and comments;
- give everyone who took part in our work the chance to see the results we found;
- have a clear process to give feedback to businesses who did not take part but who are still affected; and
- tell businesses about the suggestions we cannot use and explain why.

**Standard 7:**        ***The results of our work with businesses and how it has influenced our policies and plans***

We will make sure that we:

- use the information we have found to develop our policies and service plans; and
- tell businesses about any changes we make

**Standard 8:            *Assessing how effective our work is***

We will make sure that we:

- assess how effective and efficient our work has been; and
- share what we have learnt, and use this for the next time we want to speak with and listen to our businesses

**6            What we mean by ‘engagement and consultation’**

The words ‘engagement’ and ‘consultation’ can mean different things. To us, engagement is more than simply making information available or gathering opinions and attitudes. We should use the views and opinions we receive to help us make decisions on or changes to our service plans.

We believe it is important to get our businesses involved in designing and assessing our services. This should improve things for local businesses.

We must consider what we can do to communicate effectively with all local businesses, so that everyone can have their say. It is important that businesses understand how they can get involved in activities before they start, and that they feel able to do so. It is also important that we keep local businesses informed throughout the process, and tell them:-

- What is going to happen with the information they have given us;
- What changes we will make as a result of the work we have done with them;and
- How else they can get involved

For this partnership engagement and consultation framework, businesses can get involved at five levels:

**Informing**

We will make sure that our businesses are fully aware of local initiatives, issues and opportunities to get involved in our work. We should be able to give local businesses information before we provide any activities for them to get involved in.

**Consulting (getting businesses views)**

We want to get the views of Sefton businesses, so we can put together our plans and services.

**Deciding together**

Making decisions using our businesses views.



## Acting together

We have long-term partnerships where local businesses are involved in making decisions and reviewing plans or services.

## Supporting local initiatives

Businesses can get involved in leading, delivering or developing local initiatives. Adapted from 'The Framework for Participation', Wilcox, 1994

## 7 How will we know if it is working?

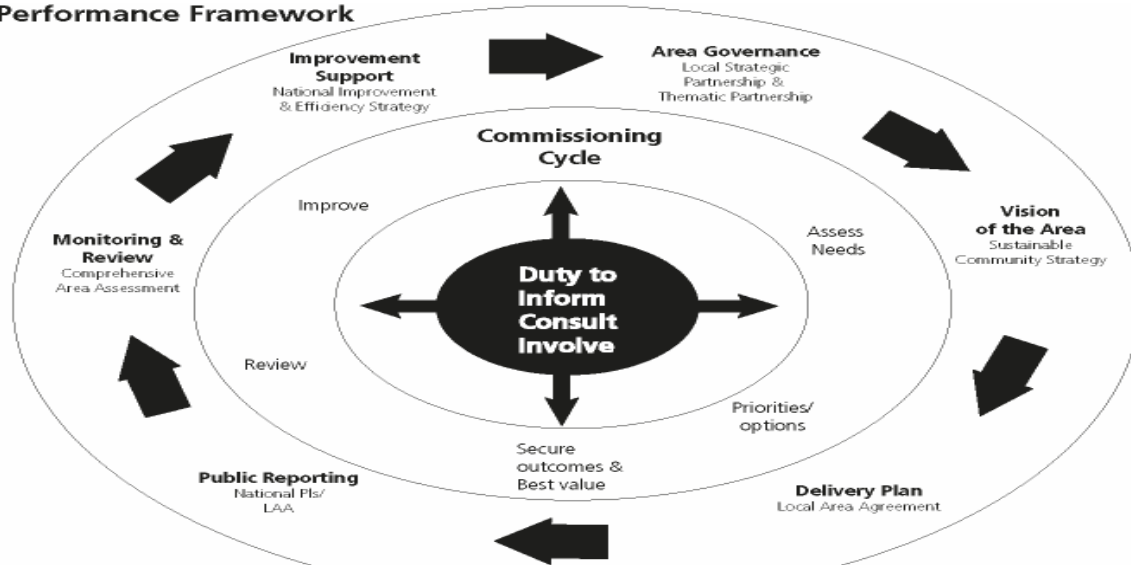
By reviewing our progress, we can make any changes or improvements we need to. We will also be able to make sure that local businesses are receiving the best possible services.

We understand that everyone has a part to play in creating strong, safe, successful and healthy communities that put businesses at the heart of what we do. A new performance framework has been developed by the Department of Communities and Local Government.

### Performance Framework Model

Taken from: Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities. Statutory Guidance 2008

#### Performance Framework



## 8 Measuring our performance

The Partnership Engagement and Consultation Panel are responsible for managing how we perform against this framework. To check whether or not the framework is having an effect, the panel will use the following scorecard to identify areas we need to develop, and also areas where we are showing good practice.

<b>Results of the business engagement and consultation framework</b>	<b>How we will know we have been successful</b>
<b><i>We know and work with our businesses and understand their needs.</i></b>	<p>We have completed a business survey to better understand their needs and get them involved in our work.</p> <p>We have provided services that help meet our businesses needs</p>
<b><i>We have made sure that we have involved our businesses in identifying the issues that are important to them.</i></b>	<p>We can show that we have spoken with and listened to local businesses according to the Standards for Engagement and Consultation</p>
<b><i>We have asked our businesses whether we have achieved the things that are important to them</i></b>	<p>We can show that we have made changes to how we can deliver services, as a result of the work we carried out with local businesses.</p>
<b><i>We have worked with other partners when we have wanted to speak with and listen to our businesses, and we have told our local businesses about what we have found.</i></b>	<p>We can show that we are working with partners to plan, design and deliver our work with local businesses, and that we are sharing the results of the activities.</p> <p>We can show that we have financial control and we are making the most of the resources we have available.</p>

## 9 Associated documents

Sefton Borough Partnership' Your Sefton Your Say'-A Public Engagement and Consultation Framework  
Version 1, September 2009

## **10 Contact details**

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**Sefton Borough Partnership**

**Sefton Council** 