

Our Public Participation Commitments

Our community, our people, our voices.



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

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Introduction

Local democracy is more than voting every few years - it's about the Council and community working together to ensure local services and decisions best meet the needs of people who live, work or study in Kensington and Chelsea.

This commitment marks a new chapter in how the Council and the community will collaborate and work together.

We are excited to continue this journey with you, and we look forward to hearing your voices as we shape the future of our borough together.



Our principles

Our approach to public participation is guided by the core principles that we will uphold in all our engagement with the community:

- **Accountability:** We take responsibility for our actions and promises. We will be open about who is accountable for decisions and engagement activities. All Council staff are expected to deliver on these commitments in their daily work, but where we fall short, we will acknowledge it, apologise, and do our best to put things right.
- **Transparency and honesty:** We will communicate openly and clearly. Information will be easy to find and understand. We will be honest about what can and cannot change and when we ask for your input, we will tell you the scope upfront. After decisions are made, we will explain how your views were considered including what ideas were accepted or not, and why.
- **Inclusion and accessibility:** We value the diversity of our local community and believe that everyone should have a fair chance to be heard, regardless of background, language, or ability. We will remove barriers to participation and actively reach out to under-represented voices and come to you where possible when we want to hear what you have to say. This means providing information and engagement opportunities in multiple languages and formats such as Easy Read and large print. Our meetings and events will be held in accessible venues, and we will offer support to enable everyone, including those who may need extra help, to contribute effectively.
- **Collaboration and shared responsibility:** By working together with the community, we aim to develop a sense of shared ownership of problems and solutions. We will actively look for opportunities to collaborate with residents, community groups and other stakeholders in designing and delivering services. In turn, we all share responsibility for successes.
- **Consistency and fairness:** Our commitments will be applied consistently and fairly across the Council. Everyone, whether you live, work or study here, will have the opportunity to participate.



Working together: A two-way commitment

Making our community better is a shared responsibility.

- **Staying informed and engaged:** You can make use of the information and services we provide by checking the Council website and our social media platforms for updates, meeting information and consultations. We'll do everything we can to make information accessible.
- **Using your voice:** We strongly encourage you to vote and beyond elections, consider participating in public life in other ways - join local forums, attend events, respond to surveys, or volunteer in community initiatives.
- **Giving constructive feedback:** We want you to share your views and tell us when we get it wrong. Whether through consultations, contacting your councillors, or submitting feedback - hold us to account. We welcome challenge and criticism when it's aimed at making things better. By speaking up about issues and ideas, you help the Council improve.
- **Helping improve our community:** Everyone can contribute to making the borough a better place. This could mean starting a community project, helping a neighbour, keeping your street tidy, or any act that strengthens our community. We will support community-led efforts wherever possible.



Our commitments to you

Flowing from the above principles, we commit to:

- **Involving you early and being transparent:** We will give local people a chance to be involved at the earliest possible stage of any major proposal or decision, allowing enough time for genuine participation. We will explain why we use a particular participation method for each issue (e.g. engagement, consultation, co-design or co-production), and local people have the right to ask if it's the most suitable approach.
- **Using a variety of engagement methods:** We understand that not everyone wants to engage in the same way, so we will use multiple, accessible ways to hear from you. This might include public meetings, surveys, drop-in sessions, online platforms, social media and hybrid meetings. We will use local venues where people naturally gather and build on existing community meetings and forums. By using varied approaches, we aim to hear from a broad cross-section of voices that better reflect our whole community. The table at the end of this document sets out what you can expect from each approach, so you can choose how and when to take part in a way that works for you.
- **Being clear and honest about what's possible:** From the start, we will explain the purpose and limits of each engagement. We will tell you what can be changed or influenced by your input and what cannot, so you have a realistic understanding. If a decision has constraints, for example, legal or budget limits, we will be up front about it. And if we must make a tough choice that not everyone supports, we will explain how we arrived at that decision and how your views were considered.
- **Providing feedback and following up:** If you take the time to give us your views, we will keep you informed about the outcomes of consultations and involvement.
- **Never making you jump through the same hoop twice:** We will do everything possible not to ask you for information you've already given us. We know it's frustrating to repeat yourself, so we will improve how we share data and insights within the Council. Your time is valuable, and we don't want to waste it.
- **Respecting your time and efforts:** We will coordinate internally so that different Council teams join up their engagement efforts. Wherever we can, we will combine or synchronise activities to avoid 'consultation fatigue'. We will also ensure that ward councillors - your elected local representatives - are kept informed about issues in their area.
- **Valuing your time and lived experience:** We will take a flexible approach to recognising and rewarding local people's contributions. This includes, in special circumstances, direct payments. This helps to better reflect your feedback, support more participatory engagement, and help deliver the Council's Grenfell Inquiry commitments. See the Rewards and Recognition Guidance on our website.
- **Learning and improving continuously:** We will constantly review how we engage and look for ways to do it better. After each major engagement, we will reflect on what worked and what didn't, and we'll share these lessons across the Council. We are committed to training our staff so that our engagement keeps improving.

How you can get involved

We want it to be easy for everyone to know how and when they can participate in Council decision-making. Some of the main ways you can get involved:

- **Shaping plans, policies and projects:** For big plans or changes such as new policies, services or developments, we will involve you as early as possible to gather ideas before drafting proposals. Once there's a draft, we will put it out for public consultation - usually for at least six weeks - sometimes longer - so you have plenty of time to comment. All ongoing consultations will be advertised in one place on our Consultation Hub for easy access <https://consult.rbkc.gov.uk>. Your feedback will be considered as we finalise any plan. We'll also clearly state on our website how we run consultations and what you can expect when you take part.
- **Attending Council meetings:** We welcome you to come to Full Council, leadership team and committee meetings to see local democracy in action. We will give at least five working days' notice of these meetings and publish the agenda and papers online in advance. Meetings are held in public (except for a small number of confidential items), there will be opportunities for you to speak or ask questions. You are also free to film, photograph or record the public parts of any meeting. After meetings, minutes and decisions will be published on our website so you can see what was decided. Some Council meetings are also live streamed on YouTube.
- **Participating in reviews (Scrutiny):** The Council's scrutiny process is here to hold decision-makers to account and improve services and we want residents to be a part of it. We will focus on those issues that matter most to local people and provide opportunities for interested community members to get involved in scrutiny reviews. We will publicise topics under review and invite contributions.
- **Knowing what's coming (Forward Plan):** To avoid surprises, we keep a Forward Plan of upcoming key decisions. 'Key decisions' are major decisions (for example, those involving large expenditures or affecting multiple wards) that the Council's leadership team intends to make. We will publish notice of these big decisions at least 28 days in advance. The Forward Plan is available on our website for anyone to view. This gives you a chance to see what important choices are on the horizon and to share your views or concerns before those decisions are made.
- **Petitions and feedback:** If you feel an important local issue isn't getting the attention it needs, you could organise a petition. We welcome petitions from residents and community groups on matters of concern. We have a petitions scheme on our website that explains how to submit a petition and how we will respond. We will consider and respond to every petition we receive.

Keeping us accountable

Our commitments in this document are more than words; they have been developed in partnership with residents and are designed to encourage real participation and engagement.

To ensure we live up to our residents' challenge, we have put in place measures to monitor and report on our progress. This includes tracking how well each principle is being followed, for example, checking that consultations are happening early enough and that feedback is being given.

We plan to regularly review how we're doing and publish updates on our performance to make sure it's working as intended. A panel of community representatives will be involved in reviewing our progress. We are exploring the best way to do this.

When this new way of working together leads to a positive change - an improved service, a neighbourhood project, or a decision that reflects community input - we will highlight it and thank those involved.

We invite you to hold us accountable. If you ever feel we are not honouring these commitments - if we're not listening, not being transparent, or not following through on what we said - please tell us.



Our Public Participation Commitments

Public Participation	Engage	Consult
	The process of working with and involving communities on an ongoing basis to build relationships, listen to views, and act together over time.	A formal process by which people are invited to express their views and opinions about a particular service or proposed change, before any final decisions are taken.
Use when	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share information with local people e.g. those who live, work and study in the borough • Build awareness and trust • Create dialogue and listen openly • Prepare for consultation, co-design or co-production <p>Key test: ‘Do we mainly need to inform, connect or listen to residents before moving into decision-making?’</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals/ plans already in development • Scope for change limited • Statutory duty to consult or there is a strong precedence for doing so • Final decision rests with the Council <p>Key test: ‘Are we mainly seeking views on a proposal we’ve already developed?’</p>
Timing	Council officers should be engaging continuously with local people on our plans and what we’re delivering, as well as local people’s experiences and views, to ensure our services are relevant to need.	All consultations must go through the Consultation Support Gateway before they launch and remain open for at least six weeks.
Foundations of public participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All information will be published in digital and print formats with online and in person ways of hearing and responding. • We will make materials available in other formats e.g. Easy Read and in commonly spoken community languages by request. 	
What residents can expect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local people should expect clear communication about the process, including being informed, understanding the rationale, receiving information in an accessible format and hearing about what has changed as a result of their input. • Local people should be able to understand why a particular participation approach is being used for a specific issue and be entitled to question whether that is the right approach. 	

Public Participation	Co-design	Co-produce
	<p>When people who have lived experience of a service work with people who work in the service to design something together.</p>	<p>A way of working where service-users, carers and professionals share power as equal partners to create services or decisions together from start to finish.</p>
<p>Use when</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem/ opportunity recognised • Solution not yet designed • Local people’s ideas improve options • Authority open to shaping this together <p>Key test: ‘Is there time, space and interest to look at this question in partnership with our residents?’</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local people share responsibility • Equal partners in decisions with the Council • Joint delivery or governance • Long term collaboration needed <p>Key test: ‘Are residents equal partners about a decision we are taking?’</p>
<p>Timing</p>	<p>Typically, a borough-wide an end-to-end co-design and co-production process takes a minimum of six to 12 months to plan and deliver. Sufficient time must be built in from the start to make this feasible. We have agreed to explore more co-design and co-production as one of the Grenfell Inquiry commitments.</p>	
<p>Foundations of public participation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All consultations will be advertised in one place on the Council’s website. 	
<p>What residents can expect</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We should make it clear that local people have the right to question and expect transparency about the Council’s decision-making process for public participation. • Local people should be able to challenge or raise questions if they feel the chosen approach does not reflect their needs or the issue’s significance. 	

For more information about our Public Participation Commitments, please visit our web pages www.rbkc.gov.uk/ppc or go to our Consultation and Engagement hub at <https://consult.rbkc.gov.uk>

You can contact the consultation and participation team to request a copy of this document in another format or language by emailing consult@rbkc.gov.uk or calling 020 7361 3000.