

# **Draft Bicester Delivery Team Communications & Engagement Strategy 2016-2018**

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## **1. Aim of Strategy**

The purpose of this document is to provide a guide for The Bicester Delivery Team regarding communications and engagement in Bicester. It will outline the principles for consultation and engagement and enable us carry out focussed and meaningful engagement with residents, communities, groups and partners in Bicester.

This strategy will be used as the basis for a medium term action plan to guide the work of the team during the period 2016 – 2018 as Bicester develops as a garden town and healthy new town over the coming years.

This strategy sits alongside the Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire Council Corporate Joint Engagement & Consultation Strategy 2016 - 2019 documents and the Cherwell District Council Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

We will work closely with the Cherwell District Council Communications Team and the website, newsletters and social media communications for the Bicester Delivery Team will be managed by the Cherwell District Council Communications team with input from Bicester Delivery team members. The team will be guided by Cherwell Press Release Style Guide and a Bicester Delivery Team pro-forma document to outline the team's remit in regard to developer applications.

## **2. Bicester's context for growth**

Bicester has experienced significant growth in recent years and has been influenced by different plans and initiatives. "Eco Bicester" followed on from the December 2010 'Eco Bicester - One Shared Vision' document. This encompassed plans for a NW Bicester eco town development as well as plans to integrate the new development with the existing town by adopting a holistic approach to the development of the town and an emphasis on encouraging sustainable lifestyles.

Cherwell District Council has adopted its Local Plan (July 2015) which allocates housing and commercial sites for development in Bicester and covers the period from 2011-2031. Bicester currently has approximately 13,000 homes and a population of

about 30,000 people. Over the next 20-30 years a further 13,000 homes are planned which will effectively double the size of the population.

Bicester was awarded garden town status in 2014 which brought resource funding to Cherwell District Council in the form of a capacity grant. This funding enables the Council to commission key feasibility studies to facilitate the delivery of quality development and expedite Bicester's planned growth. The first studies have established the Growing Bicester website and refreshed the vision for the town with a new Bicester Masterplan currently being developed.

In June 2015, the NHS issued a prospectus to invite bids to participate in a Healthy New Towns Programme. On 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016 Bicester was chosen as one of the 10 successful towns and is working with a wider partnership of health sector organisations, local government, the voluntary sector, local universities and A2 Dominion the developer of NW Bicester.

### 3. Strategic objectives

The key aims of the Bicester Delivery Team Communications and engagement Strategy are to:

1. Raise the profile of Bicester for the benefit of current and future residents and existing local businesses and to attract new businesses and visitors to the town.
2. Communicate a coherent and positive set of messages about Bicester and the various projects undertaken in the town and provide a point of reference for all information relating to Bicester's development and future.
3. Develop strong partnerships within the town and local parishes to ensure a coordinated and sustainable approach to community engagement.
4. Attend, plan and support local engagement *and consultation* events in the town to ensure local people engage more fully *in decision making for shaping the future of Bicester.*

Underpinning these objectives are clear aims to:

1. Demonstrate a clear commitment to consultation and community engagement
2. Have a coordinated but flexible approach to consultation and engagement to ensure a consistent approach across the council
3. Work in partnership with others, including Bicester Town Council, Oxfordshire County Council and other key groups in the town to ensure joined up consultation and engagement
4. Undertake consultation in line with clear standards and good practice
5. Ensure our consultation and engagement is open, accessible and inclusive
6. Feedback the results of our consultation to service users

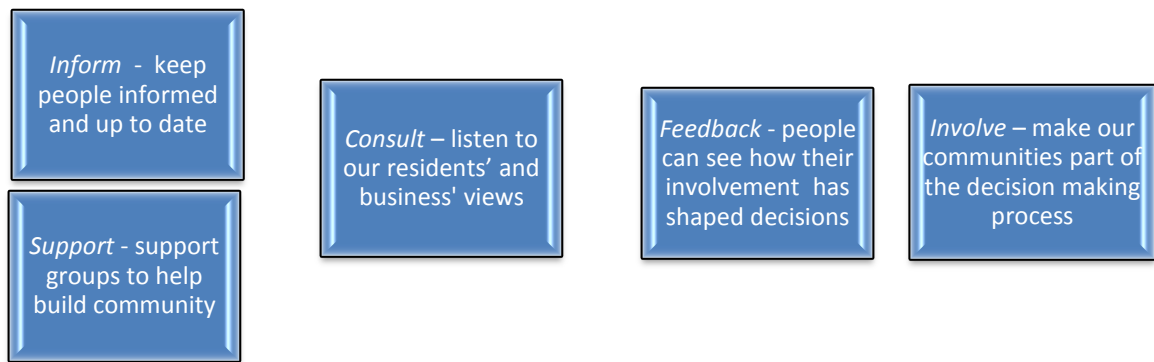
### **3.1 The need for a communication strategy**

Aspirations for Bicester are high and the focus on Bicester is bringing opportunities for the town. Designation of the town variously as eco town, garden town and healthy new town has caused some confusion for Bicester residents. It is necessary now to clarify, demonstrate and communicate to the public and partner groups how these initiatives and designations fully integrate to grow Bicester in a place where people choose to, *“live, to work and to spend their leisure time in sustainable ways.”*

### **3.2 How we will engage and consult**

We want to make sure the people of Bicester have the opportunity to influence and shape decisions and services that shape the town in which they live and work. This means we can ensure services work better and are based on the communities' needs promoting community wellbeing and resilience. We will feedback on any consultations we conduct and keep people informed of decisions that are made.

To enable community participation and engagement we should:



The council is determined to move away from consultation that speaks about “hard to reach groups” and to ensure our consultative approach is inclusive to all and effective in gathering feedback that can inform decision making for the town. Engagement with local people is vital. Engagement is part of the process of actively involving people in the delivery and development of services. When engaging with residents, we should:

- a) Ensure we listen and respond to resident, community and customer needs
- b) Follow the principles for effective engagement

### **3.3. Methods of consultation and engagement**

We will use a range of consultation and engagement methods, with an emphasis on partnership working. A new Bicester joint communications meeting is being held with representatives from different Cherwell District departments and the Town Council which will hopefully be a basis for greater collaboration between the various bodies who are active in the town. Consultation and engagement methods will include:

#### *Attendance at Events*

There are a number of key annual community events in Bicester including The Big Lunch, Bicester Bike Day, and Bicester Play Day which allow us to play a vital part in supporting community groups in the town.

### Connecting Community events

The Bicester Delivery Team will work with colleagues in Community Services to attend Connecting Community events in Bicester. These are events the public are invited to attend open events where teams can showcase what they can deliver alongside the services provided by connected agencies (Police, Fire Service, NHS, etc.), the Town/Parish and County Councils and voluntary groups.

### Presentations and Attendance at Meetings

Where appropriate we will deliver presentations, hold question and answer sessions or attend meetings of external groups and organisations, in order to consult or engage upon particular issues - for example regular attendance at meetings of Bicester Vision.

### Targeted Surveys

Working with the Performance and Insight team, we may use online surveys via Survey Monkey to contact residents either in targeted groups or as a percentage of all on the Land Registry database. Targeted surveys can also be set up for postal or telephone contact or indeed gathering information face to face. The method of delivery for a targeted survey will depend on the requirements of the residents, community or customers being asked and also with whom we need to consult and engage.

### Workshops/Focus Groups

Where appropriate, we will hold workshops or meetings with key stakeholders to discuss particular issues in depth. A small group of residents who responded to The “Love Bicester” questionnaire conducted early in 2016 indicated they would be happy to further engage with the team on future plans for the town. This group will be trialled as a community forum to conduct more in-depth engagement with ongoing plans and projects, contacted both by email and in person on a regular basis.

## 4. Communications

**Newsletters:** The Growing Bicester Newsletter, The Garth Gazette and Cherwell Link Magazine will publicise community engagement events, consultations and news about the town.

**Email/Letters/meetings:** The Bicester Delivery Team will communicate by email/letter or meeting with those who have agreed to be on our database and have requested to be consulted or engage with us within forums.

**Internet and Social Media:** We will raise awareness of consultations and engagement through social media including the Growing Bicester website, Twitter and Facebook.- through the CDC Communications team.

**Local Media:** We will prepare press releases to circulate to local media when appropriate to raise awareness of consultation and engagement events to encourage community involvement

## 5. Action plan

Significant engagement opportunities will arise from projects led by the Bicester Delivery Team and with internal and external partners – in particular Garden Town master planning and Healthy New town. Specific engagement plans will be drawn up on a project by project basis. However, other projects in Bicester will emerge which are initiated from outside the team. Other on-going work will include work with developers to support delivery in accordance with the Local Plan; bidding for funding for projects that will support engagement with different groups in the town and respond to local issues.

A community & engagement action plan has been drawn up to take forward short and longer term actions. Individual engagement plans will be formulated for specific projects, in particular for Garden Town Masterplan and Healthy New Towns.



## 6. Using the data collected

There is no baseline for previous community engagement conducted by the Bicester Delivery team since no specific monitoring has been in place for several years. However, a new spreadsheet has now been created which will capture all engagement going forward – and has been backdated to March 2016 in order to record the Garden Town masterplanning from the beginning of the process. It will record the locality of participants by town ward and from further afield. This should also reveal areas that we might target to ensure we are inclusive in our outreach.

All information collected through engagement and consultation activities will be treated appropriately to conform to data protection legislation. The information will be used to help:

- a) Capture ideas from residents, communities and customers that will help the Bicester Delivery Team with service design and resource allocation.
- b) Identify concerns that need investigation and resolution.

### **The Bicester Delivery Team currently comprises:**

Head of Service - Karen Curtin

Bicester Delivery Manager - Jenny Barker

Garden Town Delivery Manager - Maria Curran

Bicester Development Delivery and Project Manager – Dale Hoyland

Project Officer (Sustainability) – Sam Thomas (temporary secondment to September 2017)

Management Support Officer - Sue Cavalier

Bicester Infrastructure Delivery Lead - Caroline Clapson

Engagement and Liaison Officer - Gill Munday

## 7. Contact details

For information about the Bicester Delivery Team planned consultation and engagement events contact Gill Munday, Bicester Engagement & Liaison Officer

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