



## Principles of Authentic Engagement

**Inclusiveness:** encourage the participation of all stakeholders who have an interest in or who would be affected by a specific decision, including 'hard to reach' groups, such as young people, minorities, and socially mobile professionals.

**Transparency, openness and clarity:** ensure stakeholders are given all the information they need, tell them where information is lacking or things are uncertain, indicate clearly what they can or cannot influence by responding, and provide an indication of next steps.

**Independence:** using a neutral convener and independent facilitators, especially in highly polarised situations, can help to build the confidence of stakeholders. It is difficult for a sponsoring organisation, whether local authority or private company, to facilitate an independent process, and the attempt to do so may in itself arouse suspicions about the integrity of the process.

**Resourcing:** good engagement processes need both time and money. Running out of either is frustrating for all. Furthermore, it can actively undermine everything previously achieved. Spell out the resource implications at the outset and be wary of starting what cannot be properly completed.

**Commitment:** show respect for both stakeholders and taxpayers by giving engagement the appropriate priority and resources, and demonstrating that it is a genuine attempt to understand and incorporate other opinions even when they conflict with the existing point of view.

**Accessibility:** provide different ways for people to be engaged and ensure people are not excluded through barriers of language, culture or opportunity.

**Accountability:** as soon as possible after the end of engagement processes respond to participants with an unambiguous account of how and why their contributions have - or have not – influenced the outcome, and ensure there are routes for follow-up including reporting on final decisions, strategies and/or implementation plans.

**Responsiveness:** Those doing the engaging must be open to the idea that their existing ideas can be improved (or are wrong), and that they will, if necessary, be amended. Those being engaged must perceive that their voice will be taken seriously, and that things can be changed. If they do not perceive this, the engagement process will be regarded as a sham, and it will be harder to involve them the next time their views are needed.

**Willingness to learn:** all engagement should encourage everyone to learn from each other, and this means a style of process that is as interactive and as incremental as possible to build increasing layers of mutual understanding, respect and relationship.

**Productivity:** the ultimate purpose of all engagement is to make something better. How an engagement process will do this needs to be set out to encourage stakeholder participation and assure them that neither their time nor the sponsor's money is being wasted.