

Motion to council – Councillor Charles

Citizen Engagement

This Council Believes

- 1, We are facing rapidly deteriorating public confidence in the democratic process.
- 2, That our corporate plan values of being “Open” and “Fairer” should be signalled by our willingness to embrace a range of ways for us to engage in a constructive ongoing engagement with the citizens we serve.
- 3, That in the formulation and implementation of policy and service change we can gain insight and lived experience from developing mechanisms that allow us to work alongside citizens in understanding their views and accepting or feeding back on changes recommend by the population of north somerset.
- 4, That involving citizens on an ongoing basis in the work of the council is not a threat to representative democracy but a valued addition to the effectiveness of service delivery.

This Council Notes

- 1, That a recent Local Government Association perception survey showed trust in local authorities in the areas of service delivery, value for money and listening to residents’ concerns are at an all-time low.
- 2 Recent data from the Office for National Statistics show that only around a third of people feel they have a say in what their government does.
- 3, That across the world governments have increasingly used innovation in democratic engagement by using deliberative democratic practices such as the Citizens Assembly on Abortion in Ireland and in the UK through Assembly North and its work on devolution.
- 4, That in neighbouring Bristol the council has successfully run a petitions scheme that allows citizens to petition for a debate an issue of concern at full council if they successfully reach the threshold of signatures of eligible citizens.

This Council Resolves to

1. To adopt a right to petition along the lines of the scheme used by Bristol City Council where upon receipt of the specific threshold of eligible citizen signatures a debate on the issue stated shall be called for the next available meeting of full council.
2. Ensure that any acceptance of recommendations made by citizens from the petition or refusal of said recommendations should be communicated widely to the public within North Somerset alongside any timetable for implementation of recommendations.
3. The threshold of signatures shall be 1.5% of eligible voters within north somerset at last census.
4. To instruct the monitoring officer to make the necessary constitutional changes and administrative adjustments to ensure the effective implementation of the scheme.
5. To have scheme in place by the end of 2024 at the latest.

6. To instruct the executive to develop plans for a citizen review of North Somersets Citizen engagement structures using the internal Council Engagement policy as a starting point for discussions. The review shall be conducted using deliberative democratic methodology.
7. To instruct the Executive to have plans in place to run said review in the spring of 2025 at the latest.