

264K

residents across
Aberdeenshire

1.8 million

allocated toward a
leisure centre

2021

year the platform
deployed

OVERVIEW

Stretching from the mountains to the sea — from the fishing towns of Banff and Buchan to the rolling hills of Formartine — Aberdeenshire is a place of contrast and diversity. Serving a population of just under 264,000 across the county's six distinct regions, **Aberdeenshire Council** takes a unified approach to community engagement. However, implementing a unified approach across a rural area is challenging. Granicus' engagement solution helps Aberdeenshire Council bring people together by making it easy for everyone to have their say — no matter where they live — offering one place online for feedback, ideas, and updates. This means the council can hear from more voices and make better decisions that reflect the needs of different areas.

SITUATION | A FRAGMENTED APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Before Granicus' solution, the council's community engagement was decentralised and operated independently across areas and services. Aberdeenshire's residents did not have a unified platform or interface for communication, making interactions with the council and its staff less straightforward.

Likewise, the council had no way to communicate feedback or information to its residents and no oversight as to how many had interacted with the authority over any given period.

SOLUTION | A PLATFORM FOR CENTRALISED ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Ricki Lyon, engagement and consultation officer with Aberdeenshire Council, explains that Granicus was chosen by the local authority as a solution to meet these challenges. The platform's engagement and sentiment capabilities offered a means of enhancing online engagement by providing a central point for resident participation via community panels, focus groups, and internal consultations. The aim, he says, "was to improve consultation planning and reporting, ensure consistent presentation and data collection, and offer a cost-effective approach to stakeholder engagement."

MUST HAVE SOLUTION

Engagement and
sentiment

We can now
offer a central
platform for
all community
engagement,
ensuring there
is a consistent
approach
toward our
engagement
activities,
regardless of
service."

Ricki Lyon, Engagement
and Consultation Officer,
Aberdeenshire Council



RESULTS | IDEAS, INITIATIVES, AND A CENTRAL POINT FOR ENGAGEMENT

The organisation's **Engage Aberdeenshire** portal has served as the primary engagement platform for Aberdeenshire Council since its deployment in 2021. As Ricki explains, it is now used by all services within the council "to engage with residents over a wide range of topics, including housing, health and social care, playparks, travel routes, budgets, and much more."

Serving as a central point for engagement between the council and its residents, he says projects on Engage Aberdeenshire also often complement other engagement initiatives, including its lived experience forum and its community council's endeavour.

"The platform has been used to generate ideas to increase footfall in town centres, which has led to community groups receiving funding to carry out such events. It has also been used for participatory budgeting where communities vote on how money is spent," Ricki says. "One example is where £1.8 million was allocated toward a leisure centre based on public votes."

In addition to this, the engagement and sentiment capability ensures that residents can engage with the council with ease. But with feedback such a key part of Aberdeenshire's engagement strategy, the platform also allows the council to offer information and detail on the outcome of past projects, all while presenting new ones in a visually appealing manner. In addition to this, the functionality means that — via its Engage Aberdeenshire portal — the council can easily keep track of the number of residents who have engaged with it during any given period.

While some of the council's services use the platform to build a wider network of contacts with a view to future engagement, Ricki emphasises that, "The main benefit of using Engage Aberdeenshire is that it provides a central platform for all services to use, which helps to achieve a consistent approach across the organisation. It also helps teams share good practice."

Offering a central point for consultation, Engage Aberdeenshire encourages officers to have open and transparent engagement on all areas of council services across all of Aberdeenshire.

The platform has been used to generate ideas to increase footfall in town centres, which has led to community groups receiving funding to carry out such events. It has also been used for participatory budgeting where communities vote on how money is spent."

Ricki Lyon, Engagement and Consultation Officer, Aberdeenshire Council