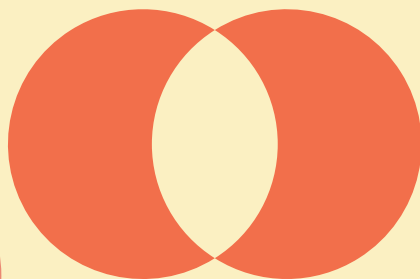




# City of Reykjavik Democracy Policy

2021-2030



The main goal of the **City of Reykjavik Democracy Policy** is to increase citizen participation. The policy is aimed at making it possible for every citizen to have a say in what matters to them. Access to information is a key factor in decision making and the opinions and views of citizens are important indicators. Gaining greater insights into the views and concerns of the people who live in Reykjavik helps inform the decision making of elected leaders. Decisions will build on the results of consultations and the agenda of the elected representatives.

The Democracy Policy applies to all sectors of the City. It has a clear connection to the **City of Reykjavik Human Rights Policy** which focuses on non-discrimination and equal rights with the aim to ensure human rights for all. It is also closely linked to the **City of Reykjavik Service Policy** emphasizing that all city services are determined by the needs and wishes of its residents. Collaboration and user feedback play a key role in the service policy.

# Statement of Purpose



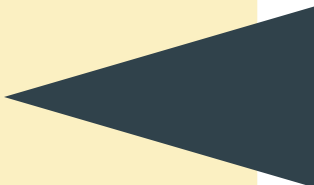
## For Residents



To **support participation** by citizens; to increase residents' opportunities to influence their community, decision-making and management of the municipality.

## For Elected Representatives

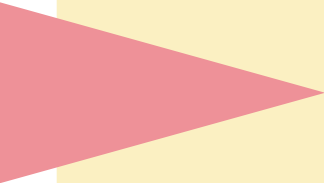
To support elected representatives to **gain insight into the opinions of residents** in each instance; in making decisions based on the best available information; in supporting decisions and in explaining how they were made. The Policy supports elected representatives in deciding how and when they should consult with residents on matters relating to policy.



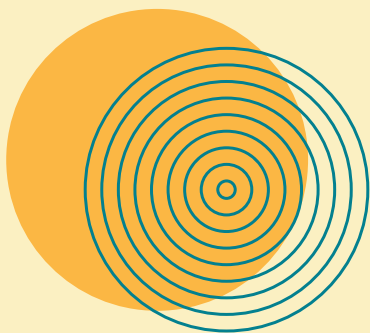
## For the Administration



To enhance the ability of City of Reykjavik administration to **prepare** and **conduct** consultation in cooperation with elected representatives and residents. The policy encourages good cooperation between residents, elected representatives, and Reykjavik City services.



**Effective collaboration leads to a successful outcome in a democratic city.**



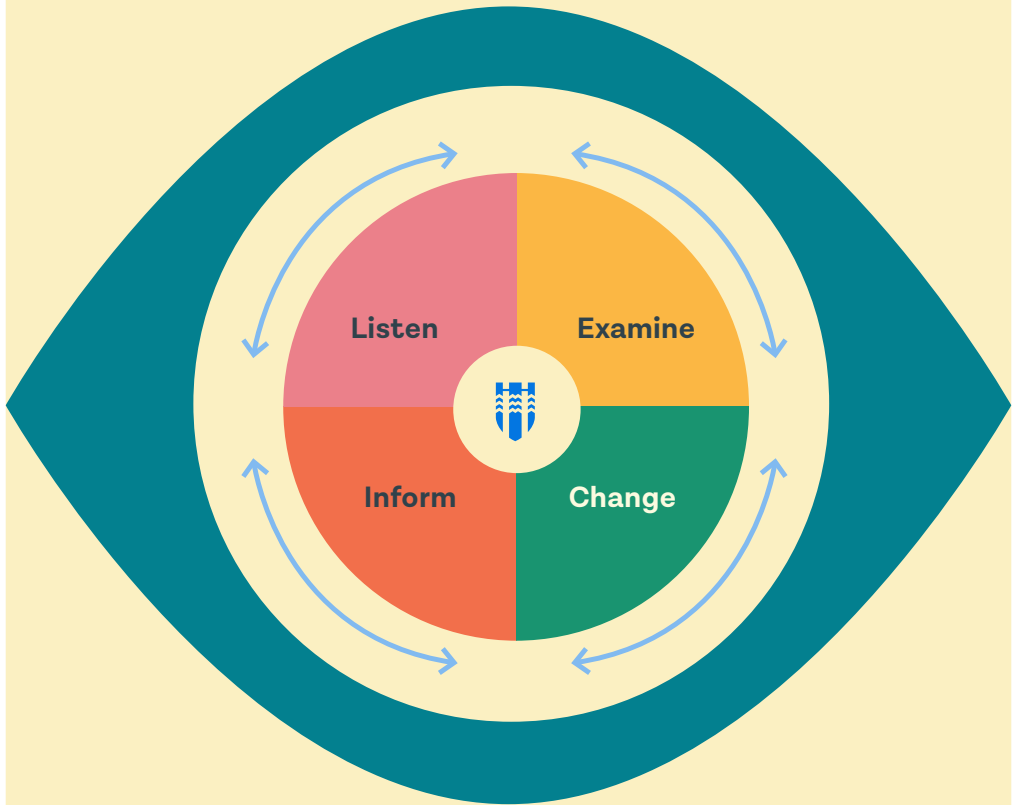
## Vision

The City of Reykjavik commits to strengthen democracy in the City, to **support and practice** democratic methods, and to **remove barriers for residents** to influence City issues.

The Goal of the Policy is:

- To **motivate** all residents to participate in policy and decision-making.
- To lay the foundations for **innovation** that can strengthen democracy in the City for the future.
- To **increase trust** in city administration through clear and transparent working practices.
- To **improve quality** of decision-making by finding out and considering various points of view and interests.
- To **meet people** as they are by ensuring participation in democracy for different groups.
- To always find the best way to **consult residents** on major decisions.
- To submit all policy to the appropriate **consultation procedure** at all stages.

# Main Objectives



The City of Reykjavik Democracy Policy is divided into four main objectives. Each objective should support improvements and positive changes. This is how policy goals will be achieved. The main objectives also describe the cycle of democratic processes at the City of Reykjavik. The following section shows what is emphasized for each main objective.

# The main objectives are the following:

**Listen** to differing voices through different channels.

**Examine** opinions. Be aware of the different views that people express.

**Change** where appropriate when reasonable views can improve the quality of decisions.

**Inform** participants at all stages of consultation and after a decision has been reached.

# Priorities

The following priorities describe in more detail the views presented in the main objectives. Measurable objectives and actions are based on these priorities.



## Listen

1. **Operate efficient channels** for residents to influence decisions. Use innovative methods that suit the residents.
2. **Ensure access** for all. This supports inclusion and non-discrimination. All groups of society will have equal opportunities to become involved in decision-making.
3. **Increase resident awareness** of the varying ways available to submit their views.
4. **Explain the varying levels of participation.** Inform about the decision-making process and create realistic expectations.





## Examine

5. **Discuss different points of views.** Improve ways for elected representatives to apply outcomes from consultation to improve decision making.
6. **Practice mediation.** Seek to reach conclusions that contribute to the greatest level of agreement.
7. **Apply expert knowledge** to improve process reforms. Base decision-making on data and knowledge.
8. **Assess results** of consultation processes regularly and learn lessons from them.







## Change

9. **Follow up on reasonable comments** that could improve progress in city projects.
10. **Increase cooperation with residents on improving services.** This applies to all city departments.
11. **Assist administration, elected representatives, and political parties** to base their work on democratic practices.
12. **Create a democratic culture** across all operations of the city through awareness of the value of democracy and consultation.





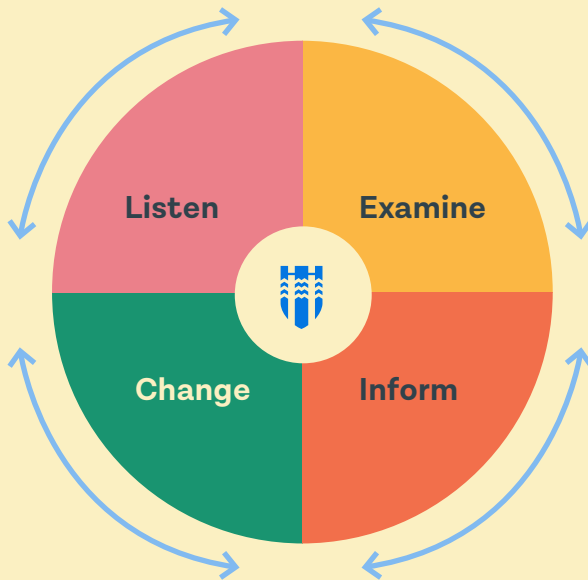
## Inform

- 13. Increase transparency and access to information** within the city system as part of effort to increase trust in city administration.
- 14. Increase traceability and provide information on status of cases.**  
Provide insights into how the city system works.
- 15. Reply to suggestions** received in the consultation process and provide information about the grounds on which a conclusion is based.
- 16. Provide purposeful information** to promote consensus on decisions.




# Overview of Policy Priorities

1. Operate efficient channels
2. Ensure access
3. Increase resident awareness
4. Explain varying levels of participation
5. Discuss different points of view
6. Practice mediation
7. Apply expert knowledge
8. Assess results



9. Follow up on reasonable comments
10. Increase cooperation on reforms
11. Support administration and elected representatives
12. Create a democratic culture
13. Increase transparency and access to information
14. Increase traceability and provide Information on status of cases
15. Reply to suggestions
16. Provide purposeful information

# Basis and Methods



**With this Democracy Policy, the City of Reykjavik takes more steps and goes further in the direction of giving residents the opportunity to influence their environment.**

The City of Reykjavik is governed in accordance with applicable laws and regulations on the administration of municipalities. Consultation with residents and their right to influence management of a municipality is prescribed in the Local Government Act.

The Act states that municipalities shall in general, seek to ensure that residents of the municipality and those that use its services, have the possibility to participate in and influence the management of the municipality and the preparation for policy making.

Provisions on consultation can also be found in other legislation and regulations that relate to other issues in Icelandic society, including the following:

- **In the acts on preschool, compulsory school, and upper secondary education, there are provisions on consultation with parents and students, and about consultation within the given school community in school boards and school committees of the municipalities.**
- **In the Youth Act there are provisions for municipalities to request that a youth council be formed which would have the role of advising municipalities on issues related to young people in the municipality.**
- **In legislation on issues related to the elderly, there is a provision that a senior citizens' council shall be active in each municipality.**
- **In legislation on municipality social services, it is prescribed that there shall be consultation with users of social services, thus making them active participants in preparing decisions and in policymaking.**
- **In planning legislation there are strict requirements for consultation with residents, users and stakeholders during the planning process.**
- **In legislation on issues related to the disabled, requirements are made on broad consultation with umbrella organizations for the disabled.**

The City of Reykjavik strives to conduct consultation in accordance with the law and has established a route for consultation on all levels of activity as appropriate in each instance and in cooperation with the appropriate stakeholders.

The Policy presented here assumes that The City of Reykjavik will fulfill all provisions of law and regulation on consultation and will endeavor to structure this arrangement even further and adapt it to the context, in order to support democratic working practices within the limits of the law and exceeding the statutory requirements.

# The Main Ways for Residents to Communicate with the City

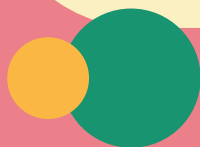
The City of Reykjavik has developed various ways to enter into dialogue and consultation with residents and other stakeholders regarding fundamental issues. Below is an overview of the methods available.

\* Information on appointments to committees and councils is based on the agreements in force in the year 2021.

## General Methods Open to Everyone:

**The City of Reykjavik Suggestions Portal** is on the City of Reykjavik website. Residents can send suggestions on any subject whatsoever, whether it is something that needs to be fixed in their street for example, something which could be done better in city services, or on some other issue that residents wish to draw attention to. The Suggestions Portal is always open.

**Better Reykjavik** is the City of Reykjavik consultation website. The site is used to collect ideas, comments, opinions, and position of residents to the various projects being implemented at any given time, not least with respect to policymaking.



**My District (*Í Hverfið mitt*)** is a consultation project between residents and the administration of City of Reykjavik. This is a project where residents are given the opportunity to influence their immediate environment by sending in ideas for new and smaller projects in all districts of the City, on which the residents then cast their votes electronically. Ideas are collected every two years and subsequently put to a vote.

**Neighborhood Plan** is a new planning device that is based on the Reykjavik Municipal Plan 2010-2030. It is meant to ensure a positive future for the city by encouraging modern urban development while also making the city's districts more sustainable and environmentally conscious.

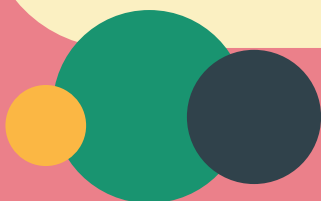
**Residents' Councils** operate in all City districts. Their purpose is to strengthen the link and shorten lines of communication between residents and city administration, more information giving to residents, to strengthen their opportunities to submit their ideas and to draw attention to challenges within districts. There are six representatives on each residents' council. City Council elects three representatives, one is appointed by residents' associations in the district, one is appointed by parent associations in the area, and one is randomly selected from district residents. Residents' councils meet once a month during the winter and meetings are open to all.

**Communications with city councilors** can take place in various ways. Email addresses and contact information can be found on the City of Reykjavik website.

**The City of Reykjavik online presence** has an important role in participation, consultation, and information sharing. The [www.reykjavik.is](http://www.reykjavik.is) website is continually updated, citizens can use that platform to connect with City staff, share ideas and complaints, and learn about ways to participate. There are also live streams and recorded videos from City Council meetings and other events. Furthermore, the **City of Reykjavik social media** provides a wide range of views on city life and opportunities for interaction.

**City of Reykjavik service centers** provide welfare services to individuals and families, specialist services to preschool and compulsory school children, day care advice for parents, recreation advice and preventative measures as well as general provision of information on City of Reykjavik operations.

**Service Center** provides service through telephone 411-1111, on-line chat on the City of Reykjavik website [www.reykjavik.is](http://www.reykjavik.is), email [upplysingar@reykjavik.is](mailto:upplysingar@reykjavik.is) and at the service desk in **Borgartun 12-14, 105 Reykjavik**.





## **Specific Channels Where Consultation Takes Place with Stakeholders on Given Issues:**

### **Accessibility and consultation committee for disabled people.**

Its function is to provide the City Council and City of Reykjavik committees and boards with advice on issues and interests of the disabled. The City of Reykjavik accessibility and consultation committee for disabled people comprises nine representatives. The City Council elects three representatives, OBI - The Icelandic Disability Alliance appoints three representatives, Iceland's National Association of People with Intellectual Disabilities appoints two representatives and the user-driven, personal assistance center NPA appoints one representative.

**Intercultural Council of Reykjavik.** Its function is to provide the City Council and City of Reykjavik committees and boards with advice on issues and interests of residents of foreign origin and who have a native language other than Icelandic. The Intercultural Council comprises five representatives. City Council appoints two representatives and elects the chairman of the Council. The Association of Women of Foreign Origin W.O.M.E.N., the Association on Bilingualism, and the Association of Employees of City of Reykjavik appoint one representative each.

**The Culture, Sport, and Leisure Council of the City of Reykjavik.** The Federation of Icelandic Artists and the Reykjavik Sports Union have observers at the Culture, Sport and Leisure Council with speaking and proposal rights.



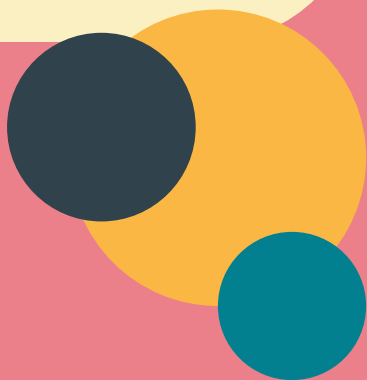
**Violence Prevention Committee.** The City of Reykjavik Violence Protection Committee operates on behalf of the City Council and shall advise, committees on actions and response to violence in the community. The Committee provides information and is responsible for cooperation between City of Reykjavik and stakeholder associations, form policy and make proposals to the City Council that relate to its scope of operations. The City Council elects three representatives, The Police Commissioner of the Greater Reykjavik Area nominates one representative, the Association against gender-based violence (Stígamót) appoints one representative, The Women's Shelter appoints one representative, and the Directorate of Health appoints one representative.

**Education & Youth Council.** Representatives of students, parents, teachers, school employees, school management and managers of recreation centers are observers at meetings of the School and Recreation Council with speaking- and proposal rights.

**School Boards.** It is stated in the Compulsory School Act that each school shall operate a school board. The role of the school board is to be a consultation forum for the head teacher and the school community on matters relating to school and recreation activities in the school in question. Teachers and other school employees and representatives of students, parents and the local community are members of the school board. The head teacher manages the work of the school board.

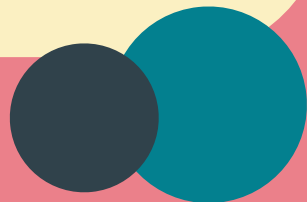
**Youth Council, Reykjavik Youth Council, and pupil associations in compulsory schools.**

In the Youth Act, there is discussion on municipalities operating youth committees to consult in the decision making by the municipality. Six youth councils operate in the City of Reykjavik. They are open to all interested young people in ages range 13 through 16 that wish to participate. The youth councils have a forum for consultation and cooperation - Reykjavik Youth Council. Two to four representatives from each Youth Council have a seat in the Reykjavik Youth Council. The Reykjavik Youth Council appoints observers that attend all meetings of the School and Recreation Council. Youth councils have the role of advising municipal councils on issues relating to young people in the municipality and give young people the opportunity to be heard and to contribute to work on young people's issues. Reykjavik Youth Council meet with the Reykjavik City Council once a year. Compulsory school pupils choose representatives in pupil associations which then choose their representative in the School Board.



**Elderly Affairs Council.** Elderly Affairs Council operates on behalf of the City Council and in accordance with the Municipalities' Social Services Act, which deals with services to senior citizens and with the implementation and development of issues related to ageing. The Council's function is to provide the City Council and City of Reykjavik committees and boards with advice on issues and interests of residents age 67 or older. The Elderly Affairs Council comprises nine representatives. The City Council elects three representatives to the Elderly Affairs Council, the Association of Senior Citizens nominates four representatives, the Association of Senior Residents in Grafarvogur nominates one representative, as does Primary Care of the Capital Area.

In addition to this, stakeholder observers have seats on various City of Reykjavik councils and committees and in some instances in groups of experts, on given matters, and working groups in policymaking within the city.



A decorative graphic in the top left corner of the page. It consists of a solid red circle at the center, surrounded by several concentric orange circles of varying thicknesses. The circles are arranged in a way that they appear to be expanding outwards from the center.

## Responsibility and Policy Implementation

The Human Rights, Innovation and Democracy Council is responsible for the City of Reykjavik Democracy Policy. The Reykjavik Human Rights and Democracy Office works according to objectives declared in the policy and has an advisory role. The Office supervises the policy action plan and implements it in cooperation with City departments and offices. A democracy advisor working at the Office handles daily tasks related to the Policy, provides training, and advises elected representatives and the administration.