



# Community Engagement Policy

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to set out the Town Council's commitment to engagement with all sectors of the community in a transparent and open way. The Town Council wants to encourage parishioner involvement and this policy sets out a strategy for creating a more actively informed community.

## 2.0 Definitions

- 2.1. **Community** includes all sectors of the population of the Town of Lowestoft. The community in Lowestoft is divided into eight wards; Elmtree, Gunton, Harbour and Normanston, St Margaret's East, St Margaret's West, Kirkley, Pakefield and Tom Crisp and is served by 20 Councillors. The community also includes partner organisations, the District and County Council, community groups, schools and businesses based in Lowestoft.
- 2.2. **Engagement** is how we communicate with the community the Council serves and the way the community communicates with the Council. Crucially this is a two-way process.

## 3.0 General Principles

The Town Council will:

- 3.1. Represent and promote the interests of the area and all its people
- 3.2. Conduct its community engagement and other activities with due regard for equality and diversity
- 3.3. Be transparent and open in all that it does.
- 3.4. Work closely with and listen to residents, businesses and community groups.
- 3.5. Engage with as many people as possible who want to participate in decision making, local service delivery and plan for the future.
- 3.6. Be accessible to all parts of the community, including older and younger people and those in social deprivation.
- 3.7. Communicate information in a clear, timely, factual and appropriate manner.
- 3.8. Ensure that involvement is actively encouraged by using a range of methods
- 3.9. Enhance communication with partners and be actively involved in relevant networking organisations and partners.
- 3.10. Promote the image and raise the reputation of the Town Council.
- 3.11. Ensure that resources, training, advice and assistance are available to meet the above objectives.
- 3.12. Promote standing for election and co-option as a councillor and ensure any Council processes are accessible and have due regard to equality and diversity.

## 4.0 Specific routes for Community Engagement

- 4.1. When undertaking community engagement, the Council will make meaningful efforts to reach out to people whose voices may not usually be heard, and make every effort to ensure that a diverse range of views are represented when listening to community feedback and developing services, budgets, and planning for the future. The Council will consider environmental implications when determining its routes for community engagement.
- 4.2. Attendance at meetings - residents, community organisations and businesses are encouraged to attend meetings and raise concerns and ideas during the public participation session of a meeting.
- 4.3. Publication of information on the Council's website - the Council will routinely and in conformity with specific legislation publish:
  - 4.3.1 Contact details for the Council
  - 4.3.2 Photographs and email addresses for individual Councillors
  - 4.3.3 Agendas and relevant papers for meetings



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- 4.3.4 Minutes of meetings
- 4.3.5 Policies and procedures
- 4.3.6 Schedules of meetings
- 4.3.7 Information about facilities and services
- 4.4 The Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan, which includes a full commitment to consultation and engagement will form the basis of the planning priorities.
- 4.5 When undertaking consultation, the Council will be mindful that not all people will have access to the internet and consider creative ways to ensure people can have their say and be involved.
- 4.6 Noticeboards - key communication will be posted on the Council's noticeboards.
- 4.7 Councillors will be appointed to represent the council on relevant outside bodies.
- 4.8 The Council will respond to relevant consultations.
- 4.9. The Council will actively engage with community and volunteer groups, including "Friends Of" groups.

### **5.0 Engaging with "Friends Of", Community and Voluntary Groups**

- 5.1. The Town Council recognises the vital work that local "Friends Of", Community and Volunteer groups in supporting the Town and the work of the Town Council, especially through fund-raising, community engagement, practical work (such as gardening, cleaning and litter-picking) and promoting the use of the Council's buildings and open spaces.
- 5.2. The Council will actively involve the community in projects and management of assets, including through encouraging "Friends Of" Groups and volunteers.
- 5.3. The Council will look at offering support for "Friends Of", Community and Voluntary Groups with their projects and events. This could include funding support (through grants), permissions to use Town Council-owned land and equipment support.
- 5.4. "Friends Of", Community and Voluntary Groups are responsible for ensuring that they have the relevant permissions, risk management and insurance for activities. The Council will assist and advise groups on what is required to satisfy these requirements.

### **6.0 The use of Media**

- 6.1. The Council's website will be the first point for the publication of all information.
- 6.2. The Council will post on its Facebook page and welcome comments. The Council will not enter into an open dialogue via Facebook and will use this media for the publication of information only.
- 6.3. The Council will publish a weekly editorial in the Lowestoft Journal Community News pages
- 6.4. The Council will consider the use of other social media as appropriate.

### **7.0 The role of Councillors**

- 7.1. Councillors will be accessible and will encourage and engage with the community on Council matters.

### **8.0 Legislation**

- 8.1. The Council is subject to requests under the Freedom of Information Act and will process requests in a timely manner as per the Council's Publication Scheme (available on the Council's website).
- 8.2. The Council will abide by the Data Protection Act of 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations as set out in the Town Council's Data Protection Policy (available on the Council's website).
- 8.3. The Council complies with the relevant Transparency Code.



## Community Engagement Policy

Revisions	
Date	Amendment
February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Amended Clause 4.9 to <i>“The Council will actively engage with community and volunteer groups, including “Friends Of” groups.”</i></li><li>-Added Section 5.0 Engaging with “Friends Of”, Community and Voluntary Groups</li><li>-Removed reference to Officers in Section 7.0</li></ul>