

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY



Proposal to Town Council June 2018

Minute Reference C028/18

Policy Review Date: June 2019

INTRODUCTION

Newbiggin by the Sea Town Council has developed a Community Engagement Strategy which aims to support the Council in consulting and engaging with residents, local authorities, businesses, visitors and any individual or group which is able to influence and make positive change for the town..

The Council recognises that it must provide services which reflect the needs of its residents and which endeavour to improve their quality of life. It aims to give local people a voice in the process of taking decisions which affect the community.

The Council aims to engage with its residents and encourage their participation in decision making, securing better services, being engaged with the local democratic process and creating a more active and informed community.

AIMS

1. To work more closely with residents, community groups, businesses and the principal authority.
2. To be inclusive in engaging with as many people as possible.
3. To actively encourage residents' involvement.
4. To listen to views and have regard to them in enhancing services.
5. To raise the profile of the Town Council.

OBJECTIVES

1. To encourage effective local community engagement.
2. Ensure that embedded throughout the Council there is a clear understanding of the need to engage with communities about decisions which affect them.
3. Adopt modes of communication which enables as many people as possible to be reached.
4. Enable the aspirations/comments/suggestions etc. obtained from community engagement to have an impact on decision making and the way in which services are being delivered.
5. To inform residents of the role of Town Councillors and the Town Council.
6. To enhance the well- being and prosperity of the town.

ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

- The Town Council cannot force any individual or group to become involved but it can, and will, make it easier and more attractive to do so.
- The Council will always be clear, before the start of any participation or consultation event, to what extent the result will inform a decision.

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- If the outcome of a participation or consultation event is intended to inform a decision and a different decision is taken, the reasoning behind that decision will be clear and published.
- All involvement will be time-bound and collated results will be published openly.
- Not every decision requires community involvement.
- Consultations will be targeted at the relevant group or groups.
- If an event calls for wider public involvement the event will be advertised locally allowing people time to organise their engagement with the event.
- Specific, non-leading questions will be asked in any consultations. Questions can be open but not open-ended.
- Care will be taken to ensure that no one voice is given greater weight than any other.

CURRENT METHODS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1. *Communication*

- The Town Council Website will be updated regularly and will contain Agendas, Minutes, Council information documents and other information as required.
- Meeting minutes and reports are available in both hard copy in the Parish noticeboard and electronically for residents and community groups.
- Information leaflets will be produced as required and will be available locally and electronically.
- Meetings are publicised and open to the public with an opportunity for residents to bring items to the council's attention.
- The Annual Town Meeting is an opportunity for residents to discuss issues and inform the Town Council of needs.
- The annual External Audit provides the opportunity for questions to be asked about the latest Statement of Accounts (are available as printed copies, in the noticeboard and on the website).

2. *Consultation*

- Consultation on important issues will be key in obtaining precise information and views and will be undertaken by questionnaires and surveys, use of the website and by approaching local organisations.
- Consultation will be as inclusive as possible and will seek to consult everyone including minority and hard to reach groups .

3. *Support*

- To support local organisations and engage with them in meeting their own targets and aims.
- To support local projects and participate in local events to raise awareness of the Town Council and its aims.

4. *Partnership*

- Partnership with local organisations will ensure appropriate and acceptable outcomes.
- Partnership will further the aims of the council to improve the environment and the quality of life for all residents.

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- Partnership will raise the profile of the Town Council and its work
- Partnership with the Principal Authority and surrounding local councils will enhance the service the Town Council is able to provide.
- Some Members and officers act as representatives for Outside Bodies comprising community groups, local organisations, and other government agencies, and regularly attend their meetings.
- Unlike other tiers of local government, Town Councillors always live within 3 miles of the town they serve and therefore have close ties to their electors and local voluntary and community organisations on a day-to-day basis, making them uniquely placed in terms of informed representation.

THE COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Newbiggin by the Sea Town Council has a commitment to provide a democratic representational voice for the people of parish through engaging with the local community in a proactive and meaningful way and collaborating in effective partnerships in order to meet the aims as embodied in the Council's Mission Statement.

Newbiggin by the Sea Town Council – Mission Statement

Sustainability through Collaboration

Aims of Newbiggin by the Sea Town Plan dated 2017

- 1. To raise the aspirations and prosperity of all our constituents, especially the young.*
- 2. To improve our environment, providing a clean, tidy and aesthetically pleasing place to live, work and visit.*
- 3. To encourage and support an increase in tourism.*
- 4. To increase the skills base within the town, supporting adults into work.*
- 5. To support an aging population.*

FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Newbiggin by the Sea Town Council is committed to improving community engagement by abiding by the engagement principles and:

- Improving relationships with community groups and developing measures to harness the views and opinions of people and groups who are often missed out of community engagement activities.
- Identifying and embracing opportunities to work with other local community groups, as and when the need arises.
- Extending and developing the range of electronic communication including a presence on social networking media such as Facebook, Twitter etc.
- Participating in local networks to share knowledge and experience of community engagement activities in other areas.
- Publicising the positive results that have been achieved from working relationships between the Council and other community groups; in order to encourage new relationships to be formed and raise community spirit.
- Ensuring that appropriate evaluation is carried out following consultation exercises to ensure that lessons learned are carried forward and an assessment of how effective and useful the consultation was.