



# Lowestoft Town Council

## 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 Be transparent and open in all that it does.
- 3.3 Work closely with and listen to residents, businesses and community groups.
- 3.4 Engage with as many people as possible who want to participate in decision making, local service delivery and plan for the future.
- 3.5 Be accessible to all parts of the community, including older and younger people and those in social deprivation.
- 3.5 Communicate information in a clear, timely, factual and appropriate manner.
- 3.6 Ensure that involvement is actively encouraged by using a range of methods
- 3.7 Enhance communication with partners and be actively involved in relevant networking organisations and partners.
- 3.8 Promote the image and raise the reputation of the Town Council.
- 3.9 Ensure that resources, training, advice and assistance are available to meet the above objectives.

### 4.0 Specific routes for Community Engagement

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.

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 Publication of information on the Council's website - the Council will routinely and in conformity with specific legislation publish:
  - 4.2i Contact details for the Council
  - 4.2ii Photographs and email addresses for individual Councillors
  - 4.2iii Agendas and relevant papers for meetings
  - 4.2iv Minutes of meetings
  - 4.2v Policies and procedures
  - 4.2vi Schedules of meetings
  - 4.2vii Information about facilities and services



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4.3 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.

4.4 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.

4.5 Noticeboards - key communication will be posted on the Council's noticeboards.

4.6 Councillors will be appointed to represent the council on outside bodies.

4.7 The Council will respond to relevant consultations.

4.8 The Council will actively involve the community in projects and management of assets, including through encouraging Friends Of Groups and volunteers.

### **5.0 The use of Media**

5.1 The Council's website will be the first point for the publication of all information.

5.2 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.

5.3 The Council will publish a weekly editorial in the Lowestoft Journal Community News pages

5.4 The Council will consider the use of other social media as appropriate.

### **6.0 The role of Councillors and Officers**

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

6.2 Officers will be responsible for the timely publication of information and are the appropriate route for formal contact with the Council.

### **7.0 Legislation**

7.1 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).

7.2 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).

7.3 The Council complies with the relevant Transparency Code.