

SHILDON TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - STATEMENT OF INTENT

1. Introduction

Community engagement is about giving people a voice and involvement in decisions that affect them, their communities and their neighbourhood. Effective community engagement depends upon the development of strong relationships, open and clear communication and listening to the needs people and communities.

The principles within this Statement of Intent will be reflected in the community engagement undertaken to inform the consideration of a specific use of the Power of Well Being by the Town Council.

2. Aims and Objectives

Shildon Town Council's primary aim is, together with others, to improve the quality of life for the residents of, and visitors to, the town.

Shildon Town Council has also given a commitment to strive for continuous improvement in the level of services provided based upon outcomes.

Consequently, the principal aim of the Council with regard to engagement with the community is:

To increase the involvement of residents and visitors in the local community and in the decision making processes that affect their quality of life and the services they receive.

and in support of this aim the Council is committed to improving engagement with residents, businesses, community and voluntary groups, partner organisations and visitors.

3. What we do now

The Town Council provides local leadership and delivers a number of key local services. It is recognised that to deliver these roles effectively the Council needs to engage with the community by providing information and encouraging and seeking their views.

In order to do so the Council currently:

- Provides contact details for officers of the Council, individual elected Members and the Council Offices in its quarterly newsletter and on its website

- Publishes notices of meetings in local newspapers including a weekly community newspaper, on its noticeboard and on its website
- Advises the public of their right to attend meetings through the notices of meetings
- Publishes an Annual Report and Performance Plan
- Provides details of council services and activities on its website which also provides access to a range of policy documents
- Appoints representatives to local community and voluntary organisations
- Supports the administration of the Youth Council and the Shildon Children and Young People's Action Network (SCYPAN)
- Regularly attends, and engages with, multi-agency bodies e.g Area Action Partnership etc
- Has published a Parish Plan based upon the results of a comprehensive household survey

4. What we will do

The Council's strategy will build on the above to make clear its commitment to effective engagement with its community. The specific aims and objectives of the strategy are:

4.1 To develop an involved, empowered and active community by

- consulting with residents on local issues
- seeking to reach hard to reach groups
- seeking the views of young people via the Youth Council

4.2 To provide information to the community clearly and factually by

- the effective management of its website detailing council services and activities
- the publication of a quarterly newsletter delivered to all households
- complementing the quarterly newsletter by use of the weekly community newspaper and the daily press where appropriate

4.3 To improve communication with our partners and to be actively involved with relevant networking organisations i.e Area Action Partnership, SCYPAN, Community Safety Group etc

4.4 To raise the profile and image of the Council by

- inviting residents to be actively involved in Council meetings via public participation
- publicising the Annual Town Meeting
- encouraging use of its website
- encouraging press attendance at Council meetings and the issue of press release

- supporting the Town Mayor in representing the community

4.5 To enable the elected Members to fulfil their role as elected representatives and community leaders by

- the provision of an elected members handbook
- encouraging Members to attend meetings of voluntary and community groups
- encouraging Members to attend PACT, Area Action Partnership meetings etc
- the development of an elected Members training plan

These aims and objectives will be achieved by the implementation of the Action Plan attached as Appendix A.

This Statement of Intent and the attached Action Plan will be reviewed annually.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ACTION PLAN

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	ACTION	TIMEFRAME
Develop an involved, empowered and active community	To consult with residents on policy matters affecting service delivery	As and when required
	To continue to support, and seek the views of, the Youth Council	Ongoing
Provide information clearly and factually	To effectively manage and maintain the website	Ongoing
	To continue to produce a quarterly newsletter delivered to all households	Quarterly
	To issue press releases where appropriate	Ongoing
Improve communication with our partners and be involved with relevant networking organisations	To review information provided to partner organisations	Within 6 months
	To continue to active engagement with relevant networking organisations	Ongoing
Raise the profile and image of the Council	To encourage residents to raise matters of interest or concern at Council meetings	Monthly
	To publicise more widely the Annual Town Meeting	Annually
	To continue to liaise regularly with the press and to provide copies of agendas	Monthly
	To continue to support the Town Mayor as 'first citizen'	Ongoing

To enable members to fulfil their role as elected representatives and community leaders	To regularly review and update the members handbook	Ongoing
	To continue to encourage Members to attend meetings of voluntary and community groups and multi-agency bodies	Ongoing
	To develop a Member training plan	By June 2011