



# Community Engagement Policy

**DATE OF ADOPTION:** 17.10.23

**REVIEW CYCLE:** Every three years or earlier in the event of legislative changes

# **Community Engagement Policy**

## **1. Introduction**

Downham Market Town Council (DMTC) has developed a community engagement policy with the aim of constructing a standard for engagement with its residents and partners.

It recognises that the services it provides must reflect the needs of its residents and the locality.

DMTC strongly believes that its residents should be involved in decisions affecting them and their neighbourhood and in shaping the future of their town.

## **2. Aims**

The aim of the policy is to improve the way in which the council engages and consults its residents and partners on important issues by:

- Informing, consulting and involving.
- being inclusive and engaging with all of its residents and partners.
- ensuring views are listened to and used to develop, enhance and improve services, the environment and the quality of life for residents.

## **3. Objectives**

- to improve, plan and shape the future of the town according to local needs and priorities.
- to improve the quality and delivery of services.
- to use engagement to inform decision-making ensuring decisions are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the town
- to enhance the well-being of the town

## **4. How will this be achieved?**

Community engagement will be achieved by DMTC by communicating, consulting, supporting and working together with its residents.

The Council will be open and accountable in its dealings with residents and the community it will make information on its policies and procedures freely available.

## **4.1 Communication**

Communicating with members of the town community will be achieved in many ways to ensure all sections of the community are reached.

The Council's website has a wealth of local information and is updated on a regular basis. Special events and important notices will continue to be added regularly. All agendas are advertised as required under the Local Government Act 1972, including on the website and on noticeboards. Minutes of all public meetings are included on the website.

Meetings of the Council are open to the public and include an opportunity for residents to engage with councillors. All meetings include an item for public participation.

The main Council noticeboard will be used to convey details of upcoming meetings, contact for residents wishing to address members, the office opening times and dates of meetings.

The Town Council officers are required to play a neutral role so the residents can be confident that they are receiving unbiased information and support. This neutral involvement allows more flexibility in the service and the personal element of the contact hopefully encourages more involvement from hard to reach members of the community

Councillor interaction with community organisations, individuals and businesses. Councillors contact details are available on the DMTC website or are available from office.

Councillors provide a monthly 'surgery' on the market, making themselves available for discussion of issues affecting the town and its residents.

DMTC will use social media to convey information of general interest eg about DMTC events; Town, Borough and County-wide consultations; road closures etc.

## **4.2 Consultation**

Consulting all residents on important issues will be key to the policy. It will ensure that those most affected are able to put forward an opinion and given the opportunity to make a difference.

Ensuring consultations include all members of the town identifying the hard to reach groups, which may require different engagement channels.

## **4.3 Support**

Supporting local organisations and engaging with them will assist them in meeting their own aims and objectives.

Supporting local projects and participating in local events will raise awareness of the Council and its aims and objectives.

Supporting residents in shaping the future of their town will bring about a more cohesive community.

The Council will be receptive to requests from residents or communities and will attempt to be flexible in order to ensure their opinions are known, not only to the Town Council but also to other organisations. This may be by including an item for discussion on an agenda, allowing a group to put their opinions into an official report undertaken by the Town Council or by meeting young people where they congregate.

#### **4.4 Acting together**

Acting together with residents and partners in finding solutions to local problems will ensure they will be accepted and fit for purpose.

Acting together to carry out agreed action plans, will engage the community in working with the Council to enhance their environment and the quality of their lives.

Acting together in decision-making and policy drafting will ensure they have a voice and can make a difference.

#### **5. Measuring success**

Success will be measured by predefined targets including annual reviews of consultation outcomes, monitoring residents' participation in consultation processes and increases in their involvement in local projects and events.

#### **6. Strategy reviews**

Any reviews of the consultation processes and results will be used as a continual improvement process for changes or amendments to the policy.

#### **7. Aims and ambitions**

**Aim:** To communicate the Town Council's priorities and services to the local community

**Action:** For the Town Council to carry out a review of priorities that can be communicated and consulted upon.

**Aim:** To raise awareness of the consultation processes.

**Action:** to promote them through the website and local/social media.

**Aim:** To investigate online/ website consultation or community forum activity.

**Action:** To investigate the possibility, usefulness and disadvantages of each activity. Identify alternative methods depending on the matter to be consulted upon.

**Aim:** To work with local police and partner authorities eg SNAP, BCKLWN, NCC

**Action:** Identify key stakeholders and community partners, strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones.

**Aim:** To identify minority/hard to reach groups.

**Action:** identify these groups and identify channels of contact and consultation.

**Aim:** To identify consultation focus groups eg businesses, charities, community and other interest groups.

**Action:** identify members of the town with specific skills, who can be consulted on specialist subjects, identify members of the town willing to be included in surveys.

This will enable smaller consultations to be initiated where specialist advice is required to inform decision-making.

**Aim:** To clarify the benefits of consultation according to the matter at hand.

**Action:** identify whether there is a real opportunity for people to influence decisions.

No consultation should be undertaken unless the outcome can be influenced.

**Aim:** To ensure feedback on consultations.

**Action:** Project plans to agree methods of feedback to residents and partners and ensure this is adhered to and includes details of the use of information gained.

**Aim:** To ensure outcomes of consultations are used to inform decisions and policies.

**Action:** use the outcome of consultations to inform decision-making and shape policies to judge the best possible outcome for residents' locality and the environment.

**Aim:** To continue Councillor involvement in local partnerships

**Action:** To annually review the partner organisations and Councillor representatives.

To encourage two-way communication between the partners and the Town Council.