



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

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1. Introduction

Petersfield Town Council has developed a community engagement strategy with the aim of producing a standard for engagement with the residents of Petersfield and other partners.

Petersfield Town Council recognises that the services it provides must reflect the needs of its parishioners and the locality and believes that its residents should be involved in decisions affecting them and their neighbourhood.

2. Aims

The aim of the strategy 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 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 maintain and enhance the well being of the town
- To be a strong, active and cohesive town

4. How This Will Be Achieved

Petersfield Town Council will achieve community engagement by communicating, consulting, supporting and working together with residents and other partners.

- **Communication**

Social Media, particularly the Town Council's **Facebook** and **Twitter** feeds, open up communication channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration.

The aim of Social Media as a method of communication is to interact more immediately with residents, for advertisement of events, communication of projects and notable developments. It is also used as a means of obtaining and responding to feedback from residents on local issues of importance and the quality of services being provided.

PTC News, the Town Council's quarterly newsletter is delivered to households in Petersfield. It is also available at the Town Council office and the Library. It is published on the Town Council website. Articles from other tiers of local government are included together with articles from voluntary sector organisations and local groups. Local information and event leaflets are available in the Town Council reception area.

The Council's Website, www.petersfield-tc.gov.uk, has a wealth of local information. It also includes agendas, minutes, a calendar of meetings, the annual report and information on Councillors and Officers of the Council. Questionnaires will also be published together with other forms of consultation. Members of the public are able to comment on specific posts or report on anything else via the website.

Meetings of the Town Council and all committees are open to the public and include an opportunity for members of the public to engage with councillors in the form of public participation at the beginning of each meeting. The Town Council will hold meetings for users of its Public Halls, Allotments and Grounds. The Community Partnership Meeting, administered by East Hampshire District Council, includes

representatives from the Town Council, the Police, East Hampshire District Council and the Hampshire Youth Service.

The Annual Town Meeting is an opportunity for all of the Town's inhabitants to attend and hear about the events in the Council's year as well as to ask questions or raise issues of concern.

Community Events Town Council members attend events such as the Secrets of the Heath or the May and August festivals in the Town Square, with the Town Council's gazebo so that they are clearly visible to the public.

Members of the Council are liaison members with a wide range of outside organisations in the Town, such as the Open Air Swimming Pool, Friends of Petersfield Heath, Agencies Working Together, the Community Centre and Petersfield Town Football Club.

The Local Press is encouraged to attend Council meetings and the Town Council values their contribution. Press releases are produced regularly.

- **Consultation**

Consulting parishioners on important issues will be key to the strategy. This ensures that those most affected are able to put forward an opinion and are given an opportunity to make a difference.

Questionnaires on important issues will be produced, distributed and analysed.

Public Meetings on specific issues may also be held on major issues affecting the community.

The Neighbourhood Plan was put together with the involvement of members of the community, was the subject of public consultation and was approved by the inhabitants of the Town in a referendum.

The Town Development Committee has several members of the community, with various backgrounds and areas of expertise, who have been co-opted onto it (both with and without voting rights).

The Council will endeavour to communicate with Hard to Reach Groups such as the elderly, young people, the housebound, the disabled etc. which will be identified and, if necessary different channels of engagement will be established for them, in partnership, if necessary, with other Local Authorities and the Voluntary Sector.

- **Support**

The Council will support local organisations and engage with them in meeting their own aims and objectives.

The Council will support local projects and participate in local events to raise the awareness of the Council and its aims and objectives.

The Council will support local organisations through grant aid.

5. Management

No religious or political views should be expressed.

Privacy of posts on social media should be set to public so that they can be viewed and shared freely.

Whilst public engagement is encouraged, any inappropriate comments and/or language will be removed from conversational threads. This may include abusive language, comments which may cause offence or anything which may contain potentially libellous comment.

6. Measuring Success

Success will be measured periodically by obtaining feedback and gauging participation through public consultation. De-brief and wrap up meetings will be held following events and local projects.

7. Strategy Reviews

This strategy document will be reviewed annually.