



BARNSTAPLE TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

The purpose of the community engagement strategy is to enable and empower the local community to engage with the Town Council in identifying, prioritising and responding to local needs. It seeks to involve local residents and partner organisations in the decision-making process thereby ensuring a strong and inclusive community and an improved quality of life for all.

Town Council's Vision

Barnstaple Town Council believes that:-

- All the community should be involved in decisions which affect their lives.
- Everyone deserves good quality services which respond to their needs.
- The Town Council's policies and priorities should reflect the needs and aspirations of the local community.
- The Town Council should be the voice of the community in discussions with partners, other local authorities, central government and outside bodies.
- The history and heritage of the town are to be cherished, but the needs of the 21st century community must be addressed.
- Barnstaple should be a safe and healthy community which supports all its residents regardless of age, gender or creed.

Objectives

- Develop meaningful and sustainable opportunities for the community to engage with Council.
- Develop a culture of consultation and engagement within Council.

- Work with partners, community groups, residents associations and others to identify and include those sections of the community which are not readily engaged.
- Provide feedback on the outcome of consultation processes.

Implementation

a) Existing methods

Council Surgery – held monthly in the Pannier Market and other locations throughout the town. An opportunity for residents to talk to councillors, raise issues of concern and give their views on current consultation processes.

Website – website will be used for consultation and feedback. “Ask Your Councillor” section to be added which will allow questions, concerns, comments on any issue to be sent to the Council.

Social Media – Facebook and Twitter accounts to be used to engage with the community.

Newsletter – published quarterly with information on Town Council activities and proposed future actions.

“Tidy Up Our Town” – a Town Council initiative which links council with residents groups, individuals, schools, police and community groups in a weekly event to improve the built and natural environment of the town. Areas of concern are identified by the community and volunteers then do what they can to clear or clean the area.

b) Future plans

Website – further opportunities for involvement by the community. A proposed local events page will enable local groups and organisations to co-ordinate their events, thus maximising opportunities and publicity and encouraging more volunteers to take part.

Focus Groups –

- i) proposals to introduce a “Green Team” bringing together all the local organisations which are working to improve the town’s environment and to make a local impact on climate change.
- ii) Rock Park Residents group – to ensure that future entertainments planned for Rock Park do not adversely affect nearby residents.

Partnership working – the Town Council will continue to seek partnership opportunities with the voluntary sector and social enterprise organisations to improve the quality of life for local residents.

Councillor training – a robust training programme for members will be introduced to enable them to use existing powers more effectively and to promote the culture of consultation and engagement with the community.

Evaluation

The Town Council's Corporate Governance Group is responsible for the overall evaluation of the community strategy, making recommendations to Council, via its parent committee, Finance & General Purposes, on the effectiveness, or otherwise, of existing procedures and the opportunities available for improved communications. In doing this, the Group will be mindful of current and proposed legislation, e.g. Sustainable Communities Act, General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, and will actively seek out training opportunities to allow members to use their skills more effectively and to engage with the community in the decision making process.

The Group will also rely on feedback from Council committees on the effectiveness of targeted consultations and what, if anything, could have been done to improve the system.

Finally, the Group will rely on feedback from the community, or part of the community, engaged in a specific process on how they perceive the consultation to have been implemented.

Adopted by Full Council 14th December 2009

Reviewed and amended by Corporate Governance Working Party February 2013.

Next review: February 2014

Next review: February 2015

