



STOW ON THE WOLD TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

Good communications and community involvement are critical to earning and maintaining the respect and good will of the community the council serves. Community engagement is a significant factor in building local trust, improving the level of satisfaction of local residents and providing the council with a greater understanding of the needs and view of the local community. Good community engagement also builds trust with council's partners and can lead to better cooperative working.

The council is committed to engaging with residents by encouraging them to become actively involved in decisions that affect them and the community, to delivering better services and to improving the quality of life of residents by creating a more active and informed community.

Aims

The aims of the Community Engagement Strategy are to:-

- ❖ Improve the way in which the council communicates with all members of the community
- ❖ Listen to the views and engage with residents on important issues
- ❖ Use these views to deliver better services
- ❖ Improve long term social, economic and environmental well being of residents
- ❖ Plan future development of the parish in accordance with community priorities and needs
- ❖ To produce a parish newsletter

Communicate with key individuals, groups and organisations to improve communication and engagement including:-

- ❖ Young people and youth
- ❖ Retail and other businesses in the community to actively try to get a Business Association set up
- ❖ Interest groups, clubs and societies
- ❖ Voluntary and support organisations
- ❖ Groups of people defined by a common factor such as age, disability, faith and other groups

Objectives

The objectives of the Community Engagement Strategy are to:-

- ❖ Use a variety of methods to make information available
- ❖ Actively facilitate and encourage community engagement
- ❖ Proactively engage with all sections of the community
- ❖ Ensure that decisions meet the needs of the community by involving members of the community in the decision making process
- ❖ Work in partnership with other organisations and authorities to improve the quality and delivery of services
- ❖ Enhance the wellbeing of members of the community
- ❖ Listen and respond to views and needs of residents and address their priorities

- ❖ Encourage and facilitate public meetings when issues of significant concern arise
- ❖ Provide grants to groups and organisations only where there is a perceived direct benefit to the community
- ❖ Enable every councillor to maximise their role as elected representatives and community leaders
- ❖ Ensure that the clerk has access to the right resources and is effectively trained to meet the needs of the council and ultimately those of the community
- ❖ Achieve Local Council Award Scheme status working through Foundation and then Quality to ultimate aim of Quality Gold award
- ❖ Ensure that the council fulfils its legal obligation to account to the community for its achievements against plans

Current communication and engagement methods

- ❖ To appoint councillors to act as the council's representative on local groups and organisations
- ❖ The council office is open to the public on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 10.00 am to 1.00 pm and at all other times by appointment only.
- ❖ Council website regularly updated to provide access to a range of information, including contact details for councillors and officers, agenda, minutes, policy documents, calendar of meetings/events, financial information etc in line with Openness and Transparency legislation and the Freedom of Information Act.
- ❖ Council has an answer phone facility for when the office is not manned which is available 24/7
- ❖ Annual Town Meeting which is organised/run by the council
- ❖ Alongside more traditional methods of communicating to maintain a social media presence and via website
- ❖ Encourage residents to ask questions and/or make statements during the time set aside for public participation at council and committee meetings
- ❖ To send out press releases to local press including Stow Times
- ❖ Communicate with residents and businesses via Stow Loop
- ❖ Place information on council notice board, in The Square, agenda, minutes of meetings, statutory notices etc
- ❖ Engage with neighbouring parish/town councils to find a solution to any common problems
- ❖ Continue to publish council Newsletter "Stow Matters", if possible, on a quarterly basis
- ❖ Encourage and support community volunteers

Work in partnerships with the following organisations:-

- ❖ Housing Associations (including Stow Almshouse Charity & Reynold Teague Homes) and Stow Community Land Trust
- ❖ Members and officers of Cotswold District Council and Gloucestershire County Council
- ❖ Stow Visitor Information Centre
- ❖ Local Police & Fire Service
- ❖ Stow Primary School
- ❖ Stow Community and Family Hub
- ❖ Stow and District Civic Society
- ❖ Spring Gardens Allotments Association
- ❖ St Edward's Hall Committee
- ❖ Stow Social Club
- ❖ Stow Royal British Legion

Consultations

Consultations and surveys on important issues will be carried out. The council will ensure that those most affected by an issue will be given the opportunity to voice an opinion by using various means of mixed communication methods.

The council will ensure that all members of the community are included in the consultation by identifying the hard to reach groups such as the elderly, youth, the housebound, the disabled etc. Council is also mindful that not everyone has access to the internet or wishes to use this form of communication.

Results of all such consultations or surveys will be made available to all members of the parish via various means.

The Annual Town Meeting will continue to be used to obtain the views of residents on matters affecting the community.