



## **Community Engagement Strategy**

The Town Council recognises that it is uniquely placed to represent the views of its constituents and provide community leadership. This strategy sets out how it engages with the local community to identify its needs and aspirations and how it can improve community engagement to give people a voice and involve them in decisions affecting their quality of life.

### **1. Loughton Town Council aims to:**

- Represent and promote the interests of Loughton and its people of all ages in all its activities;
- Provide the best possible amenities and services by the efficient use of available resources;
- Actively involve local people in decisions affecting activities in the local area;
- Promote equality of opportunity and oppose discrimination;
- Be open and accountable in all it does;
- Enhance quality of life by protecting and enhancing Loughton's ecological and environmental assets.

### **2. In order to achieve these aims, the Council will:**

- Work closely with residents, local businesses and community groups;
- Engage with as many people as possible who want to participate in decision making, monitoring services and planning for the future (particularly those hard to reach groups);
- Ensure, that through the use of a wide range of approaches to public involvement and community engagement, we actively encourage the involvement of residents to capture their views and learn their concerns, and effectively use those views as an integral part of the decision-making process;
- Ensure that residents have opportunities to be heard at every stage, and the capacity to be effective citizens.

### **3. Defining the community**

The Town Council considers the community of Loughton to consist of:

- All residents of the town;
- Users of the Town Council's services;
- Those who work or own businesses within the town;
- Young people who live and/or go to school and/or college within the town; and

- Local voluntary organisations, clubs and societies and any group or organisation that represents some or any of the members of the above sections of the community.

Additionally, the Town Council recognises that there are certain bodies that are crucial to the quality of life in Loughton and aims to maintain excellent working relationships with these bodies, including Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council, the Police and the neighbouring town and parish councils.

#### **4. How community engagement is facilitated**

The Town Council provides the following:

- A website with full details of the Council's work;
- A quarterly newsletter, Think Loughton, and annual report delivered to all residents and businesses across the town and also available from libraries and on the website;
- Regularly updated noticeboards promoting the work of the Council, its partners and other local organisations;
- Residents may contact the Town Council offices in person and by telephone Monday to Thursday 9am – 5pm and Friday 9am – 4.45pm with an answerphone provided for messages outside these hours.
- Details of how to contact the Town Clerk's office and Councillors are provided in the newsletter and on noticeboards and the website;
- Ensuring all meetings of the Council are open to the public and press with a period set aside for residents to speak;
- Community forums are held to address important issues affecting the community;
- Consultation events provide opportunities for residents to give their views on plans for new facilities or services in the town;
- Additional public meetings are arranged to address controversial issues;
- Holding a wide range of community events which provide opportunities to engage with the public and raise community spirit;
- Press releases to manage the media effectively to promote and defend the Council;
- Use of the Council logo to promote the work of the Council;
- Good internal communications – making sure staff and members are informed and give out consistent messages and representations on behalf of the community.
- Town Councillors represent the Council on various outside bodies to ensure good two-way communication with regular reports of these meetings made to the Council.
- Councillors hold regular surgeries and provide other informal opportunities for residents to speak to them.

#### **5. Improving community engagement**

The Town Council will:

- Publicise the positive results from working with the community and other partners;
- Work closely with Epping Forest Youth Council to ensure the views of young people are taken into account.

- Identify new opportunities to work with local community groups;
- Make full use of modern communication methods;
- Review the Community Engagement Strategy annually to ensure its relevance.

This policy will be reviewed by the Council's Resources and General Services Committee in April 2020, and reviewed annually thereafter.