



Somerton Town Council
Policy Documents
Community Engagement Policy
& Statement of Intent
Adopted: September 2018
Readopted: September 2021
Review Date: February 2024

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY & STATEMENT OF INTENT

Inform Consult Involve Engagement Action

INTRODUCTION

To achieve its vision for Somerton, the Town Council is committed to working closely with the public. Everyone should be involved in making Somerton the type of community they want it to be, whether they are a resident, a local group or business. Informing, consulting and involving people in the work of the Town Council is key when it comes to decision-making; securing better services; the local democratic process, and creating an empowered and active citizenship.

AIMS

The Town Council strives to:

Inform by providing information about what is happening to help local people – including young people and hard-to-reach groups - understand an issue, service or planned actions, options or solutions. This will be done by:

- Posters, fliers, banners, advertising and publications
- Local newspaper press releases, publications, radio and TV, interviews
- Viaduct monthly newsletter (sent to every household and business in the parish), letters, leaflets
- Information stalls, i.e. at Town Council events/open days/exhibitions
- Public and specific meetings, presentations, briefings
- Town Council website detailing all Council services and activities
- Somerton website
- Tourist Information centre
- Facebook and other social media

Consult by asking for feedback, advice or opinions on a particular issue. This will be done by:

- Questionnaires and surveys, feedback forms
- Online surveys and questionnaires
- Face-to-face interviews/telephone interviews
- Residents' user panels and community groups
- Discussion/focus groups/forums
- Written consultation through letter or email
- Consultation events/workshops/exhibitions/general events/shows
- Online consultation
- Public, neighbourhood or specific meetings or surgeries
- Documents or information available at the Town Council office at Edgar Hall, other public buildings and online

Involve by ensuring that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered, encouraging people to put forward ideas, options, initiatives and actions. This will be done by:

- Public or specific targeted discussion meetings with interested parties
- Public or stakeholder workshops to identify issues and shape options
- Public events, interactive displays
- Community-led plans and working groups
- Comments and complaints
- Council Surgeries
- Interaction with Somerton Town Councillors and staff, Somerset Councillors, and other local government-led organisations

All forms of communication will be clear, factual and appropriate; use plain English and, where appropriate, adhere to the Town Council's corporate design and logo.

The Town Council will inform, consult with and involve our partners and stakeholders, and co-ordinate our community engagement efforts, through:

Being actively involved in various community organisations, including:

- Somerton Business and Trades Association
- Somerton Tourism and Heritage
- Somerton Twinning's Association
- Somerton Community Association
- CA outreach service

The profile of the Town Council will be raised through:

- Inviting residents to be actively involved in our meetings via Public Question Time
- Encouraging residents to link to the Town Council's Facebook page, and other social media feed
- Widely publicising the Annual Town Meeting
- Encouraging use of the Council website
- Issuing press releases covering activities of the Council
- Involving residents in events and activities such as the Viaduct, Lights Brigade and the many commemorative events

Every Town Councillor will be enabled in maximising their role as elected representatives and community leaders through:

- Receipt of a comprehensive New Members Pack and a tailored induction programme.
- Mentoring for new Councillors
- Making copies of agendas and minutes of Council meetings widely available
- Encouraging Councillors to represent the Town Council on community groups and organisations

Every employee will be enabled in understanding the Town Council's priorities through:

- Regular team meetings
- Regular Performance Management Reviews
- Being encouraged to provide input into the decision-making process
- Being encouraged actively to represent the Town Council at community events

ENGAGEMENT

Listed below are the individuals/organisations with whom the Council wishes actively to engage:

- Residents of Somerton
- Businesses and business organisations
- Community, voluntary, special interest and residents' groups
- Older people
- Young people
- Hard-to-reach groups
- Public and private sector stakeholders
- Schools
- Health Agencies (commissioners and providers)
- Visitors

Action Plan

Action Plan item	Task	Responsibility	Status / Frequency
Chair	Chair to fulfil a community leadership role and encourage community organisations to be involved with initiatives.	Chair / Vice Chair	Ongoing
Minutes	Ensure copies of Minutes are available - hard copy, electronically, and on the Town Council website	Clerk's Office	Ongoing
Annual Report	Ensure Report is available - hard copy, electronically and on Town Council website - and a summary included in the newsletter	P&C /Clerk's Office	Annually
Office Opening Hours	Publicise STC office opening hours in newsletter and on website and notice boards	Clerk's Office	Ongoing
Annual Town Meeting	Publicise the meeting and liaise with stakeholders to encourage good attendance	P&C / Councillors/ Clerk's Office	Annually
Public Forum	Encourage residents to raise any matters of interest or concern via public participation element of all Full Council and Committee meetings	Clerk's Office and Town Councillors	Ongoing
Notice boards	Regularly update notice boards with Town Council and community activities	Clerk's Office	Ongoing
Website	Maintain website with information on Town Council services and activities	Clerk's Office	Ongoing
Newsletter	Produce and deliver a regular newsletter to all households.	Viaduct Team. P&C, Clerk's Office	Monthly

Businesses	Engage with businesses and business organisations. Representative on SBTA	Designated Town Councillors/ Clerk's Office	Ongoing
Local Democracy	Encourage residents to both vote at and stand for the Town Council in Local Council elections	Clerk's Office and Town Councillors	Ongoing but higher priority in six months leading to local elections
Press	Liaise regularly with the press sending details of Council meetings and	Clerk's Office	Ongoing
Liaison Meetings	Meet with Unitary Authority Councillors.	Clerk	Quarterly
Social Media	Use Facebook and other social media to promote Town Council meetings, activities and events	Clerk's Office	Ongoing