



# **Waltham Abbey Town Council**

## **Community Engagement Policy**

Adopted 9<sup>th</sup> January 2018 Minute Ref: 598/19

Reviewed January 2019

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Waltham Abbey Town Council recognises the need to consider the impact of its actions on others and the surrounding environment. Whilst the Town Council cannot force any individual or group to become involved it can, and shall, make it easier and more attractive for them to do so.

1.2 The Council considers that the community of Waltham Abbey comprises:

- a. All residents of the parish
- b. All users of Town Council services
- c. All those who work, or own business within Waltham Abbey
- d. All young people who live/go to school in Waltham Abbey
- e. All voluntary organisations, clubs and societies as well as groups or organisations representing sections of the community.

1.3 The Council recognises that other bodies are crucial to the quality of life in Waltham Abbey it will maintain the strong working relationships with Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, Corporation of London, the Police and other local Parish and Town Councils, and the local authority sector, through the Essex Association of Local Councils and the National Association of Local Councils.

1.4 The Council defines communication as the process of informing the community about decisions that have been made or the passing on of information.

1.5 The Council defines engagement as involving the community to help form opinion and review decisions.

1.6 The Council is always open to receiving both positive and negative feedback and has a commitment to encouraging the community to engage with the Council.

1.7 All communications will avoid gobbledeygook, jargon and misleading public information.

## **2. COMMUNICATION**

2.1 The Town Council website is the primary source of information on the Council for the community and will be kept up-to-date with content routinely monitored. The Council aims to actively publish a wide range of information on the council and its activities.

2.2 The Council will make best possible use of Social Media in line with the Council's IT Policy.

2.3 The Council will work with its contractor to produce regular press releases to be sent to local news providers.

2.4 The Council will utilise noticeboards around the town, including those at the Town Hall and the Tourist Information Centre.

2.5 The Council will continue to print and distribute the “Town Crier” quarterly newsletter.

2.6 The Council and its Committees shall routinely consider options for improving communication with the community.

### **3. ENGAGEMENT**

3.1 The Council shall continue to set aside time at every Council and Committee meeting (excluding the Establishment Review Subcommittee) for members of the public to address the Council.

3.2 The Council shall continue to develop the Annual Town Meeting with an aim of increasing attendance and providing a venue for open community discussion.

3.3 The Council shall continue to provide opportunities for members of the public to discuss issues with councillors.

3.4 The Council shall continue to appoint members to represent the Council on community organisations as requested.

3.5 The Council shall continue to utilise social media and its website for receiving and responding to comments from the community.

### **4. CONSULTATION**

4.1 When the Town Council is seeking views on a specific project or idea it will consult with the community.

4.2 Whilst the majority of consultations will be open to the whole community it may on occasion consult with specific stakeholders only.

4.3 When planning a consultation the Council will identify the key stakeholders for that specific consultation exercise to ensure they are directly consulted.

4.4 Consultations will be publicised as widely as possible and will have a defined end date for submissions.

4.5 The Council will be clear about why it is consulting and how the consultation will be used in the Council’s decision making process.

4.6 The timing of consultations will be considered for example to coincide with events or to avoid clashes with holidays.

4.7 The Council shall consider the format of the consultation which may include:

- Open consultation on the Council website
- Consultation documents at key venues around the town
- Direct consultation (e.g. letters/leaflets/social media etc)
- Focus groups
- The use of consultation engagement events:
  - i. Public meetings
  - ii. Exhibitions
  - iii. Stalls in the town centre, at events etc