

AYLSHAM TOWN COUNCIL



Community Engagement Strategy

1. Introduction

Aylsham Town Council has developed a community engagement strategy with the aim of constructing a standard for engagement with its residents, partners and other interested parties.

It recognises that the services it provides must reflect the needs of both its residents and the locality.

Aylsham Town Council believes that it is imperative that residents should be involved in decisions affecting them and their neighbourhood and in shaping the future of their town.

2. Aims

The aim of this strategy is to improve the way in which the Council is perceived and to ensure it engages and consults its residents and partners on important issues by:

- informing, consulting and involving
- being inclusive and engaging with all of its residents and partners
- ensuring views are listened to and used to develop, enhance and improve services, the environment and the quality of life for residents

3. Objectives

- To improve, plan and shape the future of the town according to local needs and priorities
- To improve the quality and delivery of services
- To use engagement to inform decision making, ensuring decisions are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the town and its residents
- To enhance the wellbeing of the town

4. How this will be achieved

Community engagement will be achieved by Aylsham Town Council by communicating, consulting, supporting and working together with its residents.

The Council will be open and accountable in its dealings with residents and the community. It will make information on its policies and procedures freely available.

Communication

Communicating with members of the town will be achieved in many ways to ensure all sections of the community are reached. These will include:

- Regular use of social media including the Aylsham Facebook page, Twitter and the Aylsham App (Discover Aylsham)
- Regular use of Just Aylsham, which is delivered to most houses and businesses in Aylsham, informs residents on important issues and news from the Town Council.
- The Council's Website has a wealth of local information and is updated on a regular basis. Special events and important notices will continue to be added when received. All agendas are advertised as required under the Local Government Act 1972, including on the website, and minutes of the meetings are included on the website within a calendar month of the meeting.
- Information leaflets are available from the Council's office and can also be downloaded from the website. New leaflets will be added as necessary.
- Meetings of the Council are open to the public and include an opportunity for residents to engage with councillors. All meetings include an adjournment for public participation and start at 7:00pm.
- Council's Noticeboards will be used to convey details of contact for residents wishing to address members, the office opening times and dates of meetings. Further noticeboards are planned for areas in the town and will also be added to new developments as they are completed.
- Town Council Office is required to play a neutral role so that residents can be fully involved and be confident that they are receiving unbiased information and support. This neutral involvement allows more flexibility in the service and the personal element of the contact hopefully encourages more involvement from the hard to reach members of the community.

Consultation

- Consulting all residents on important issues will be key to the strategy. It will ensure those most affected are able to put forward an opinion and given the opportunity to make a difference.
- Ensuring consultations include all members of the town by identifying the hard to reach groups may require establishing different engagement channels – one size does not fit all in this strategy.

Support

- Aylsham is a Cittàslow town and as such supporting local organisations and engaging with them is a cornerstone of the Cittàslow ethos. This will include assisting them in meeting their own aims and objectives.
- Supporting local projects and participating in local events will raise the awareness of the Council and its aims and objectives.
- Supporting residents in shaping the future of their town will bring about a more cohesive community.
- The Council will be receptive to requests from residents or communities and will attempt to be flexible in order to ensure their opinions are known not only to the town council but also to other organisations. This will not be achieved solely by including an item for discussion on an agenda, but will be targeted to the groups/individual's needs

Acting Together

- Acting together with residents and partners in finding solutions to local problems will ensure they will be accepted and fit for purpose and have a greater likelihood of success.
- Acting together to carry out agreed action plans, will engage the community in working with the Council to enhance the environments and the quality of their lives.
- Acting together in decision making and policy drafting will ensure they have a voice and can make a difference.

5. Strategy Reviews

Annual reviews of the consultation processes and results will be used as a continual improvement process for changes or amendments to the strategy.

Adopted by Aylsham Town Council January 2017

Reviewed December 2020

Next Review November 2022