



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

A. INTRODUCTION

Cranbrook Town Council has developed a Community Engagement Strategy which aims to set a standard for engagement with residents, communities, businesses, voluntary organisations and other partners.

Cranbrook is special with a thriving community. It is developing quickly and will become the second largest town in Devon. To help the Town positively catch the opportunities and overcome the challenges, Cranbrook Town Council must ensure it works in a way that encourages and enables a strong and cohesive society that is empowered to work collectively.

B. WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement is the process through which the community is informed about and/or invited to contribute to proposals or policy changes relating to Cranbrook Town Council's responsibilities and services.

Community engagement is also about providing opportunities for people to have a say in reviewing, designing, influencing or commenting on the decisions, activities and services in the Town, while being clear that the Council is not always the statutory decision maker and cannot involve all residents.

C. AIMS

The aim of the policy is to ensure that Cranbrook Town Council sets clear and specific standards for community engagement in order to:

1. improve the community's understanding of how Cranbrook Town Council operates.
2. improve transparency and accountability.
3. identify what people's needs are and take action to meet those needs.
4. promote opportunities for people to provide their opinions and get involved.
5. improve people's experience of involvement and give them the power and confidence to be part of the solution to community problems and issues.
6. To build a stronger, more active and cohesive town.

D. OBJECTIVES

1. To encourage effective local community engagement.
2. Ensure that embedded throughout the Council there is a clear understanding of the need to engage with communities about decisions which affect them.
3. Adopt modes of communication which enable as many people as possible to be reached.
4. Enable the aspirations / comments / suggestions etc obtained from the community engagement to have an impact on decision making and the way in which services are being delivered.

5. To inform residents of the role of the Town Council and its Councillors.
6. To improve plan and shape the future of the town according to local needs and priorities.

E. WHO DO WE ENGAGE?

We will seek the views of anyone appearing to have an interest in any area in which we carry out a role or task, including:

1. local residents
2. service users, and people who might become service users
3. groups representing the public
4. elected representatives such as Principals of authority and MPs
5. local businesses
6. voluntary and charitable organisations
7. our staff
8. other public authorities and service providers

We recognise that when seeking views, some individuals or communities may be harder to reach than others.

F. HOW DO WE ENGAGE?

1. Communication
 - i. Publish contact details for all Council members and officers on the website.
 - ii. Council office, conveniently located in the town centre, opens from 10:00am until 2:0pm from Monday to Friday and outside of those times by appointment.
 - iii. Public participation at Council and Committee Meetings. This provides an opportunity for local residents to make representations to the Council or ask questions relating to items on the agenda.
 - iv. Publish agendas and minutes of Council and Committee Meetings.
 - v. Publish the Annual Report, Statement of Accounts and Annual Precept budgeting information.
 - vi. Publish local information, local events and latest development on Council websites and social media platforms, which are updated on a regular basis.
 - vii. Distribute press releases of Council events and campaigns and publish on the Council website.
 - viii. Answer public enquiries timely and professionally via the Council Office telephone, email and social media inbox and also via walk-in at the Council Office Reception.
2. Partnership
 - i. Partner with other authorities and community groups to provide improved facilities and services and enhance the town.

- ii. Some members and officers act as representatives for Outside Bodies such as community groups, local organisations, and other government agencies, and regularly attend their meetings. Representatives report back to Meetings of the Council.

3. Support

- i. Work closely with, and in support of, our town schools, and finding opportunities to engage with the students.
- ii. Work closely with, and in support of, our town community groups.
- iii. Support local projects and organisations and assist them in meeting their own aims and objectives.

4. Consultation

- i. Participate in town and community events providing the opportunity for the public to meet their councillors, raise awareness of the Town Council and its aims, and to undertake consultation on topical issues.
- ii. Consultation exercises with local residents to make provision their needs such as those conducted for the Cranbrook Plan.
- iii. Operation of the Younghayes Centre facilities, regularly used by a diverse variety of local groups and organisations, whose views can be easily collected when they visit the premises.
- iv. Town Councillors have close ties to their constituents and local voluntary and community organisations on a day-to-day basis. This makes them uniquely placed in terms of informed representation.
- v. Where appropriate use focus groups, identifying members of the town with specific skills who can be consulted on specialist subjects.