



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

GIVING PEOPLE A VOICE

Introduction

Godalming Town Council is committed to engaging residents by encouraging them to become actively involved in decisions that affect them and the community. This engagement supports the Council's corporate strategic aims of:

- Providing transparent, open and accountable governance;
- Ensuring that the Council's services are responsive to local needs;
- Supporting local democracy by encouraging public participation;
- Building community resilience through partnership and collaboration.

This Community Engagement Strategy outlines how Godalming Town Council will communicate, consult, and collaborate with the people it serves.

Aims

The aim of the Community Engagement Strategy is to improve the way in which the Council communicates with, consults, and involves residents and stakeholders on matters affecting Godalming. Specifically, the Council seeks to ensure:

- Residents are well-informed, actively consulted, and able to participate;
- All groups within the community, regardless of age, ability, or background, are included in engagement processes;
- Feedback is used constructively to inform service development and decision-making; and
- The Council is able to act as an effective advocate for its community with other agencies and tiers of government.

Objectives

The objectives of this strategy are to:

- Strengthen links between local residents and their elected representatives;
- Clearly communicate the Council's responsibilities and the services it provides;
- Understand the needs, priorities and aspirations of local people;
- Use community engagement to inform and shape policy and service delivery;
- Empower local councillors to act as effective community leaders and champions.

HOW THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED?

Informing the Community

Godalming Town Council will use a variety of communication tools to keep the community informed, including:

- Council Website – Providing access to all agendas, minutes, policy documents, service updates and event information;
- Annual Report – Distributed at the Annual Town Meeting, available at Council offices and online;
- Noticeboards and Digital Publications – Meeting notices, event publicity, and service updates displayed on noticeboards and in newsletters;
- Press Releases – Regular updates issued to local media to ensure widespread awareness;
- Community Engagement Events – Participation in events to promote Council services and gather views;
- Social Media Channels – Used to broadcast information and promote engagement opportunities;
- Mailing Lists – Targeted updates to stakeholders and residents in accordance with GDPR guidelines.

Consulting and Engaging with the Community

Councillors, as local residents themselves, are well placed to gather insight and act as a conduit between the community and the Council. In addition:

- The Council maintains a public office, open weekdays to the public from 10.00am to 3.00pm;
- Residents can contact the Council by phone, email, in person, or via the Council website;
- All Council and Committee meetings are open to the public, and members of the public have the right to speak at those meetings;
- Specific consultations may be undertaken on key issues using surveys, feedback forms, online polls or pop-up engagement stalls at events;
- Council Officers and Members monitor media coverage, correspondence and feedback to identify emerging issues and trends.

Reception and Handling of Feedback

Feedback Mechanisms Include:

- Council website 'Contact Us' facility;
- Email or telephone contact;
- In-person visits to the Council office;
- Letters;
- Feedback via Councillors.

Feedback Management:

- All feedback reviewed by Council staff;
- Issues requiring action are referred to the appropriate committee or addressed directly by the appropriate Officer or Town Clerk;
- Where applicable, responses or resolutions are communicated to those providing feedback.

REVIEWING AND ASSESSING EFFECTIVENESS OF THE STRATEGY:

This strategy will be reviewed bi-annually by the Policy & Management Committee. Effectiveness will be evaluated through:

- Engagement reach (e.g. event attendance, response rates);
- Quality and relevance of public input received;
- Responsiveness to community concerns;
- Councillor and Officer feedback.

The strategy itself may also be subject to public consultation from time to time to ensure it remains effective, inclusive, and reflective of local needs.