

Camborne Town Council

Community Engagement Strategy

Reviewed November 2021

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Community Engagement Strategy

This strategy and supporting policies have been developed to support Camborne Town Council deliver its strategic mission.

Mission: 'Community First'

Values:

1. Empowering our Community
2. Trusting & Collaborative
3. Creative
4. Ambitious
5. Efficient & Responsive
6. Sustainable

'Camborne Town Council Strategic Plan 2022-2027'

What is the Consultation and Community Engagement Strategy?

Consultation is defined as 'the dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based on a genuine exchange of views, with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action'¹. Consultation and community engagement are about giving local people the opportunity to play an active role in influencing decisions and shaping the future. It aims to support strong, active, inclusive communities and to enable the Council to improve public services to enhance the quality of life for everyone in the Camborne parish.

Levels of engagement

Different individuals or communities will want to be involved in different ways. Community engagement is not a single process but a range of activities to facilitate involvement.

Information

Provision of clear, accurate, easy to understand information helps people make informed decisions.

Consultation

Consultation is a two way process which provides a number of options to allow individuals or groups to voice their opinion. The results will influence the decision that is taken.

Involvement

A joined up approach between the Council and individuals or groups to identify and discuss issues, make decisions and deliver actions together.

¹ A Murrell (2010), The Consultation Charter, Bedfordshire: The Consultation Institute, p.2

Empowerment

The Council helps to build capacity in communities and gradually eases away over time so that community groups are able to manage a responsibility for themselves.

1.0 Policy Background

1.1 Camborne Town Council has developed a community engagement strategy with the aim of constructing a standard for engagement with its residents and partners.

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

1.3 Camborne Town Council strongly believes that its residents should be involved in decisions affecting them and their neighbourhood and in shaping the future of their town.

1.4 This policy document forms the Town Council's Community Engagement Strategy. It sets out:

1.4.1 The role of community engagement and its importance

1.4.2 How Camborne Town Council Engages the wider community and identifies the needs and aspirations of the community

1.4.3 How the Town Council can improve community engagement.

2.0 Aims

2.1 The aim of the strategy is to improve the way in which the Town Council engages and consults its residents and partners on important issues by:

2.1.1 informing, consulting and involving

2.1.2 being inclusive and engaging with all of its residents and partners

2.1.3 ensuring views are listened to and used to develop, enhance and improve services, the environment and the quality of life for residents.

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Camborne Town Council is committed in its objectives to provide a democratic representational voice for the people of the Parish of Camborne.

3.2 The objectives of this strategy are to:

3.2.1 Encourage effective local community engagement.

3.2.2 Ensure that within the Town Council there is a clear understanding of the need to engage with communities about decisions which affect them.

3.2.3 Enable the aspirations/comments/suggestions etc. obtained from community engagement to have an impact on decision making and the way in which services are being delivered.

3.2.4 Identify how the Town Council can enhance its profile by improving engagement with the wider community (with specific reference to hard to reach groups).

3.2.5 To improve, plan and shape the future of the Parish according to local needs and priorities.

3.2.6 To improve the quality and delivery of services.

3.2.7 To enhance the well-being of the Parish.

3.2.8 To be a stronger, more active and cohesive Parish.

4.0 What is Community Engagement

4.1 Community engagement is concerned with giving local people a voice and involving them wherever possible in decisions which affect them and their community. This may include giving the opportunity for individuals, voluntary and community organisations as well as other public sector bodies to get involved.

4.2 It provides an opportunity for local people to talk to the Town Council about their aspirations and/or needs in their community. It allows the Town Council to consult with and inform people about what services it provides, how its priorities and policies are determined and how well it is performing.

4.2.1 Consultation forms an integral part of community engagement and can be defined as: "The act of consulting or a conference for discussion or the seeking of advice" (Collins, 1995).

4.2.2 Without consultation, addressing a particular need is a hit and miss affair as there is no way of establishing what is required to address the problem.

4.2.3 There are a wide range of consultation methods such as surveys, neighbourhood meetings, questionnaires, public enquiries and planning for real exercises.

4.2.4 Equality and diversity are two main principles of community engagement and the equality and diversity policy underpins this communication engagement policy.

4.3 The term 'stakeholder' makes reference to a wide range of people and groups (these might include residents, visitors, businesses, government, voluntary organisations, public service organisations etc.) all of which have an interest in the Town Council's services and projects.

4.3.1 'Hard-to-reach groups' refers to those who experience social exclusion and are sometimes perceived as being disempowered. Some examples include young people, elderly people, or those with a physical disability, language, financial constraints, cultural differences or social expectations. Sometimes organisations do not put enough effort into seeking their views, but it is important to note that sometimes they have excluded themselves through personal choice.

4.4 The key aspects of community engagement include:

4.4.1 Development of a network of relationships between the Town Council, individuals, voluntary and community groups

4.4.2 Clear and open communication to ensure that information is made accessible to all groups.

4.4.3 Listening and understanding to a range of people to identify aspirations, needs and problems of local people and groups.

4.5 Effective and meaningful community engagement can provide a number of benefits:

4.5.1 The problems and needs of local people are clearly identified in order that appropriate new or improved facilities/services can be provided.

4.5.2 It builds trust between the council and the electorate.

4.5.3 Those participating feel empowered by being involved in decision making in their local community and having an opportunity to influence decisions that will affect them together with potential for an increased sense of ownership and pride in the new facilities/initiatives.

4.5.4 It may result in a renewed respect for the Town Council; enhanced leadership and greater interest in elections or for standing for Council.

5.0 How this will be achieved

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

5.2 The Town Council currently facilitates community engagement in the following ways:

5.2.1 Allocation of a 'Public Participation' session at all Town Council Meetings including committees. This provides an opportunity for local

residents to make representations to the Council or ask questions relating to items on the agenda.

5.2.2 Publishing contact details of all Council members and officers on the website.

5.2.3 Production of a regular newsletter (Kammbronn Connected) highlighting the latest developments within the Town Council (available on the website and in the Town Council's Office/Library).

5.2.4 Ensuring that agendas and minutes of meetings are available on the website or copies available on request.

5.2.5 Ensuring that the Annual Report and Statement Accounts are available on the website.

5.2.6 Involvement in partnerships with Cornwall Council to provide improved services i.e. Local Maintenance Partnership for the maintenance of Public Footpaths.

5.2.7 Surveys to seek public opinion on local issues (Commonplace).

5.2.8 Council press releases are featured in local newspapers to keep the general public informed on events, projects and other items as necessary.

5.2.9 Councillors and officers attend resident association meetings and the meetings of community partners (where they exist).

5.2.10 The Town Council has an office conveniently located in Camborne Town and is open Monday to Friday from 10:00 until 3pm.

5.3 Unlike other tiers of local government, Town Councillors always live in or close to or work within the area they serve and have close ties to their residents and local voluntary and community organisations on a day-to-day basis, making them uniquely placed in terms of informed representation.

6.0 Barriers to Community Engagement

6.1 Inevitably there will always be barriers to effective Community Engagement. The Town Council is aware of the following;

6.1.1 Capacity and ability of different sections of the community to participate

6.1.2 Hard to reach groups as mentioned above

6.1.3 Levels of communication infrastructure

6.1.4 Range of methods needed

6.1.5 Gaps in information

6.2 To overcome these barriers identified in 5.1.1-5.1.5 inclusive (and others), the Town Council will consider;

6.2.1 A variety of techniques and engagement methods

6.2.2 Independent facilitation

6.2.3 Location and accessibility of venue and use of other venues

6.2.4 Number and type of engagement venues

6.2.5 Timings to accommodate range of community including working hours childcare needs

6.2.6 Use of established social media groups

6.2.7 Providing councillors with clear information they can use to actively engage with own constituents in a consistent manner across the parish.

7.0 Communication

7.1 Communicating with members of the Parish will be achieved in many ways to ensure all sections of the community are reached.

7.2 'Kammbrohn Connected' informs residents on important issues and will be developed as a medium for consultation and include articles from local groups and members of the Parish on topical issues.

7.3 The town council website has a wealth of local information and is updated on a regular basis. Special events and important notices will continue to be added regularly. All agendas are advertised as required under the Local Government Act 1972, including on the website, with minutes of meetings being put on the website within ten days of approval.

7.4 Information leaflets are available from the Town Council Offices and Library Service and can also be downloaded from the website. New leaflets will be added as necessary.

7.5 Meetings of the Council and its standing Committees are open to the public and include an opportunity for members of the town to engage with councillors. All meetings permit public participation.

7.6 Councillors are a rich and important source of two-way communications between the Council and its residents. Members of the Council will continue to inform their ward and residents of the Council's vision, priorities and aspirations. In turn these Members will be receiving valuable feedback from their residents which will assist in shaping the vision and priorities. Consideration will be given to identifying a Councillor Communications Champion to lead the Strategy from the Members' perspective.

7.7 Camborne Town Council is committed to improving community engagement by:

7.7.1 Continuing all the above activities and services into the future and improving relationships with community groups including developing measures to harness the views and opinions of people and groups who are often missed out of community engagement activities.

7.7.2 Considering a wide range of methods including use of social media, harnessing existing relevant social media groups and looking at innovative and creative ways of encouraging engagement through a diverse range of modern channels such as digital, print and oral.

7.7.3 Ensuring that any information published is clear, concise and widely available.

7.7.4 Identifying and embracing opportunities to work with other local community groups, as and when the need arises.

7.7.5 Participating in local networks and to share knowledge and experience of community engagement activities in other areas.

7.7.6 Publishing the positive results that have been achieved from working relationships between the Council and other community groups; in order to encourage new relationships/partnerships to be formed and raise community spirit.

7.7.7 Ensuring that appropriate evaluation is carried out following consultation exercises to ensure that lessons learned are carried forward and an assessment of how effective/useful the consultation was.

8.0 Consultation

8.1 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 an opportunity to make a difference.

8.2 Ensuring consultations include all members of the town by identifying the hard to reach groups such as youths, the elderly, the housebound, the disabled, ethnic minorities etc. may require the establishment of different engagement channels.

9.0 Support

9.1 Supporting local organisations and engaging with them will assist them in meeting their own aims and objectives.

9.2 Supporting local projects and participating in local events will raise the awareness of the Town Council and its aims and objectives.

9.3 Supporting members of the town in shaping the future of their town will bring about a more cohesive community.

10.0 Acting Together

10.1 Acting together with residents and partners in finding solutions to local problems will ensure they will be accepted and fit for purpose.

10.2 Acting together to carry out agreed action plans, will engage the community in working with the Town 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.

11.0 Measuring Success

11.1 Success will be measured by predefined targets, including annual reviews of consultation outcomes, monitoring residents' participation in consultation processes and increases in their involvement in local projects and events.

12.0 Action Plan

12.1 Below is the action Plan:

(a) Raise awareness of consultation processes - Promote it through Kammbroon Connected, the Website, local media. Promoting the strategy will be an on-going priority.

(b) Strengthen existing and develop new partnerships with a range of organisations who can assist in consulting with hard to reach groups as they already have developed relationships with different areas of the community e.g. national charities and other social enterprise organisations, Police, health and other Government organisations etc. As well as coordinating consultation through others' consultation strategies to ensure there is no 'consultation fatigue'.

(c) Identify minority/hard to reach groups - Identify these groups and identify channels of contact and consultation. These groups are often the forgotten few. Identifying them will ensure they are included in consultation processes.

(d) Identify consultation/focus groups - Identify members of the Parish with specific skills who can be consulted on specialist subjects. Identify members of the Parish willing to be included in surveys. This will enable smaller consultations to be initiated where specialist advice is required to inform decision making.

Surveys are a useful tool to judge general opinions without the need for a full consultation process.

(e) Identify consultation needs, priorities and importance - Establish need, priorities and importance of consultation. This will ensure there is no overkill, overlap or misuse of the consultation process.

(f) Identify benefits of consultation - Identify whether there is a real opportunity for people to influence decisions. No consultation should be undertaken unless the outcome can be influenced. Unless this is possible consultation will be meaningless and residents will become disinterested in the process.

(g) Feedback on consultations - Agree methods of feedback to residents and partners and ensure this is adhered to and includes details of the use of information gained. This will keep all parties involved in the process and updated with the situation. Ensure outcomes of consultations are used to inform decisions and policies. Use the outcome of consultations to inform decision making and shape policies. All consultations will be undertaken to judge the best possible outcome for residents, locality and the environment.

(h) Review outcome of key consultations - Review consultation outcomes annually to highlight any failings in the processes. This will enable identification of any changes and amendments required to the strategy.

13.0 Strategy Review

13.1 This strategy will be reviewed at regular intervals (at least once every two years) and amended as necessary based on good practice or evidence taken forward.

14.0 Conclusion

14.1 The adoption of a Community Engagement Strategy will assist in improving communications between the Council and the wider community. This will enable the Council to better understand the needs and aspirations of local residents/groups, and in turn, facilitate appropriate projects to meet those needs and create an enhanced community spirit.

15.0 Alternative Formats

15.1 Equality Act 2010 – copies of this document in large print (A3 Format) or larger font size can be made available for those with sight impairment on request from the Town Council Office or by telephoning 01209 612406 or e-mailing enquiries@camborne-tc.gov.uk

16.0 Freedom of Information

16.1 In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this Document will be posted on the Council's Website www.camborne-tc.gov.uk

This strategy links to:

Camborne Town Council Corporate Plan
Local Government Transparency Code 2015
Camborne Town Council Social Media Strategy
Camborne Town Council Social Media Policy
Camborne Town Council Code of Conduct

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Camborne Town Council - Official Policy/Procedure Document

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