



Morecambe Town Council

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Proper Officer: Mr Luke Trevaskis

Community Engagement Policy Adopted on 29 April 2021

1. Introduction

1.1 The council recognises an engaged electorate is key to success and the council is committed to giving local people a voice and engaging with residents regarding decisions which affect them - developing an empowered and resilient community.

1.2 The council cannot coerce any resident to engage in communication, however will make it as easy as practicable for those residents who wish to do so.

1.3 The council is always open to receiving both positive and negative feedback and is committed to encouraging the community to engage with it.

1.4 The council considers that the community comprises all residents, all users of town council services, all those who work or own businesses within the council area, all young people who go to school in the area and all voluntary organisations, clubs and societies operating within the area.

1.5 This policy sets out the council's approach to communications and engagement and provides guidance to councillors and residents.

1.6 During election periods the council is required to ensure it does not do anything which could influence the outcome of the election. This is known as the purdah period. The council will follow the guidance issued by the Government, the National Association of Local Councils, the Society of Local Council Clerks and the Local Government Association and vary its communications accordingly during these periods.

1.7 All communications will be factual and approved in line with the Standing Orders.

2. Objectives

2.1 The objectives of the policy are to:

- Encourage effective local community engagement;
- Ensure that there is a culture within the council that understands the need to engage with communities about decisions that affect them;
- Ensure clear and open communication is easily accessible to all groups;
- Enable comments and suggestions obtained from community engagement to impact decision making and the way services are delivered;
- Identify how the council can enhance its profile by improving engagement with the wider community and in particular hard to reach groups.

3. Communication

3.1 The council recognises its role in facilitating communication across the community and where appropriate will support third parties in disseminating information to the community.

3.2 The council's website is its primary source of council information for the community and it shall be kept up to date, along with contact details and information on how residents can participate in meetings.

3.3 Regular news bulletins will be created and the public will be at all times invited to participate in, or comment on, matters of council business.

3.4 The council will:

- distribute a regular newsletter and advertise a list of full council meeting dates
- utilise and update noticeboards with information and contact details
- develop the Annual Meeting of the Electors as a forum for greater community discussion
- publish its agendas and minutes on the council website, alongside information on how residents can put forward any motions for consideration
- publish an annual report of its activity

3.5 The council shall continue to set aside time at every Council and Committee meeting (excluding Personnel) for members of the public to make representations to the Council regarding matters included on the agenda, unless otherwise inappropriate.

3.6 The council recognises that communication is a two-way process and it will always strive to promptly answer questions from, and listen to suggestions put forward by, members of the community.

3.7 The council will maintain social media accounts as an effective means of communication, enabling residents to easily access information via the newsfeed of their own profiles. Content will be non-political and used to promote the area and council activities. The council aims to use social media to support two-way communication. Whilst residents are encouraged to engage with content, the council recognises that it is not always appropriate or practicable to respond to every message/comment, publicly or otherwise.

3.8 The council will embrace opportunities to work with other local community groups, working to improve relationships with key stakeholders.

3.9 The council will promote elections and the importance of the democratic process.

4. Consultations

4.1 When seeking the views on a specific project or idea, the council will consider consultation with the community. The majority of consultations will be open to the whole community but on occasion consultations may be with specific stakeholders only.

4.2 In preparation for a consultation the council will:

- Identify the stakeholders for the consultation
- Determine the appropriate communications to ensure all stakeholders are aware of the consultation
- Determine the appropriate form of consultation
- Set a defined end date for submissions

4.3 Open consultations shall run for a minimum of four weeks. More focused consultations may run for a minimum of two weeks.

4.5 Consultations will use specific, non-leading questions.

5. Review

5.1 This policy shall be reviewed annually.