



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The local community has a fundamental role to play in developing the work of its local council. A priority for Neston Town Council is to ensure that the local community is informed about issues that affect them, that there is effective two-way communication and that the community is able to get involved and influence local decision-making.
- 1.2 Community engagement should not be something that is only carried out at particular times or to meet targets, but should instead be integral to the way a council operates. Engagement might take a variety of different forms, but its fundamental purpose should always be to make a council more effective and relevant, build stronger communities and increase involvement in local democracy.
- 1.3 For the purposes of this policy, communities will be defined both as geographical (where people live) and groups (people who share interests, values, concerns or similar situations).
- 1.4 Consistent and effective community engagement will help the Town Council to achieve its Vision:

*An engaged community working together and with others, to bring about continuous and sustained improvement which ensures the town is an attractive place with a strong identity where people want to live, work and visit.*

## 2. Objective

- 2.1 To ensure that local communities are well informed about local issues and are provided with opportunities to comment, get involved and influence local decision-making.

## 3. Facilitating Community Engagement

- 3.1 Neston Town Council will pro-actively develop a network of local relationships with residents, groups, businesses and public sector organisations, thereby fostering effective communication.

- 3.2 The Town Council will seek to harness the views and opinions within the local community whilst acknowledging that not everybody wishes to engage.
- 3.3 All Council and Committee meeting agendas will be publicised in advance and meetings will include public participation sessions.
- 3.4 The Town 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.
- 3.5 Information will be communicated to the community clearly, utilising a variety of methods including Town Council website, noticeboards, social media, newsletters, press releases, leaflets and posters.
- 3.6 Councillor contact details will be published on [www.neston.org.uk](http://www.neston.org.uk) and displayed on all five Town Council noticeboards and Town Councillors will attend regular surgeries to engage with residents.
- 3.7 Councillors will be involved in a range of representational roles within the community.
- 3.8 Consultation exercises, surveys and questionnaires will be utilised for specific purposes or projects and members of the community may be invited to open forums or panels, depending on the nature of the issue under consideration. Results will be published.

#### **4. Standards for Engagement**

- 4.1 The Town Council will prioritise inclusiveness by:
  - taking into account the particular needs of people, especially in hard-to-reach groups, and providing an opportunity for them to participate;
  - listening to and respecting all opinions; and
  - using plain English in all written communication.
- 4.2 The Town Council will ensure transparency and clarity by:
  - being clear about the nature and purpose of any consultation;
  - using consultation only when there is a genuine opportunity to influence decision-making; and
  - providing feedback following engagement.
- 4.3 The Town Council will aim to ensure that those directly affected by decisions, policies and plans are aware of the opportunity to engage.