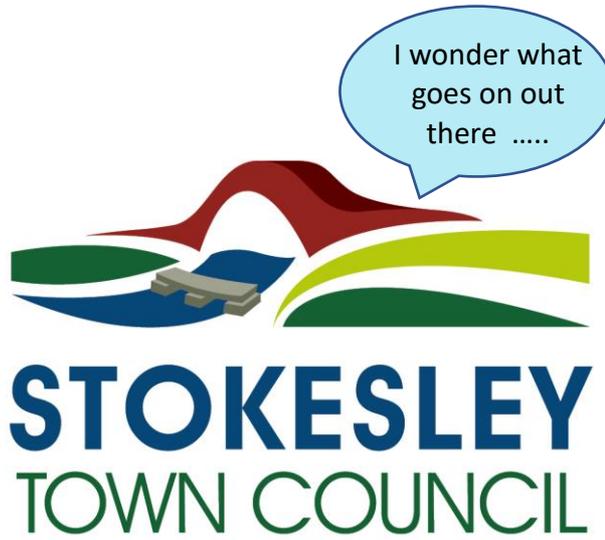


Inform

Consult



Collaborate

Involve



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Adopted 14 June 2016

STOKESLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Document Version Control

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STOKESLEY TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

INDEX

INTRODUCTION	4
CURRENT MEANS OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMUNITY	4
ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS AND VIEWS OF THE COMMUNITY	6
AIMS FOR IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT	6
MONITORING AND REVIEW	6

STOKESLEY TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Community engagement as defined by the National Association of Local Councils “is about giving local people a voice and involving them in the decisions that affect them and their community. It is about the development of relationships and clear communication to deliver better services and projects.”
- 2 The aim of Stokesley Town Council’s community engagement strategy is to engage residents and encourage their participation in decision making to secure better services and to create a more active and informed community.
- 3 This strategy sets out how Stokesley Town Council (‘the Council’) currently engages, and plans in the future to engage, with its community across a broad range of its activities and sets out short, medium and long term aims for further engagement.
- 4 This policy is based round the following topics:
 - Current communications and consultations with the community
 - Assessment of the needs and views of the community
 - Aims for improving Community communication and engagement
 - Monitoring and Review

CURRENT MEANS OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMUNITY

- 5 Communication is a two-way process that also involves interactive engagement. It covers the Council providing information to residents, receiving comments from residents and engaging in dialogue with residents. Currently the Council communicates and engages with residents and other interested parties within the parish in the following ways:
- 6 The **Council Newsletter** is published twice yearly. It includes:
 - the names and contact details of the Clerk and all the councillors,
 - details of forthcoming meetings and surgeries,
 - information on local issues and council activities.

The newsletter is distributed personally by councillors to all residential dwellings and businesses in the parish. Additionally, copies are available for collection, including by visitors, from the Town Hall. From time to time adhoc newsletters are published and distributed on specific important topics e.g. result of the parking survey and neighbourhood plan updates.

- 7 The **Council Website**, whose address is <http://stokesleypc.org.uk>. Information on the website is updated regularly and includes information on the Council and its activities, local amenities and organisations, current issues and events. The website content also includes details of the Council’s aims and policies, local planning applications, the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, agendas for, and minutes of, the meetings of the Council and its committees, accounts and newsletters, the Town Hall’s facilities, management and upcoming events and links to local businesses, societies and charities.

STOKESLEY TOWN COUNCIL

- 8 The **Annual Town Meeting** is held on the on a date between 1 March and 1 June each year and gives electors of the parish a chance to air their views and ask questions on matters relating to Stokesley and the Council.
- 9 The **Annual Report from the Chairman of the Council** is presented to the Annual Town Meeting. It includes details of council activities, achievements, organisation, grants awarded and a summary of accounts.
- 10 An open **Public Forum** precedes each meeting of the full Council where members of the public, the Police, and County and District Councillors are invited to speak. This provides all residents with the opportunity to speak on local issues including, but not limited to, those items which are on the agenda for the meeting. There is no requirement to make a formal request to speak prior to the forum.
- 11 **Contact with the Clerk or Assistant Clerk** can be made by calling into the Town Office in the Town Hall – no appointment is necessary - or by telephone between 0900 and 1200 hours Monday to Friday, as well as by e-mail and post. An answerphone service is provided outside these office opening hours and the Clerk responds to all messages as appropriate. Additionally, a steward is always available when the Town Hall is open to provide information and / or take requests from the public for the clerk to contact them later.
- 12 A **Town Council Surgery** is held from 1100 to 1200 hours on the first Saturday of each month in the Town Hall. This day in the month has been specifically chosen as it is the day of the popular monthly Farmers' Market which attracts a high footfall of residents and visitors to the centre of the town. Holding it outside the working week also facilitates greater attendance. Two members of the council are available at each surgery to speak to residents about local matters.
- 13 **Consultation Events** are held on specific issues of importance to residents. Recent examples include the potential closure of the Library, the increase in the precept to fund the Library Manager, feedback from businesses to parking survey, major planning applications, the development of a Neighbourhood Plan, the construction of the Jubilee Bridge.
- 14 There are five **Notice Boards** on the walls of the Town Hall and a further one at the end of Bridge Road. These are used to provide information on current news items, the agendas and minutes of council meetings, the aims and principles of the Council, councillors and their contact numbers, surgery dates, committee membership, the address of the website, town hall and parish office opening hours, town hall charges and future events and map of Stokesley with places of interest.
- 15 **Questionnaires** are distributed to all residents and businesses on important issues the Council is seeking to address. The most recent example is the survey on future options for time limiting parking in the town centre. Response levels to the questionnaires are monitored to assess residents' engagement with the process.
- 16 The **Resident Representatives** on specific Council Committees. Current examples are. the Allotments Committee, the Town Hall Management Committee and the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

STOKESLEY TOWN COUNCIL

- 17 **Press Releases** which are distributed to and published by local newspapers and magazines and posted on other websites. Examples include the Evening Gazette, the Darlington and Stockton Times, the Market Place and the Totally Stokesley Facebook page.
- 18 **Council Representation on Local Community Bodies** examples of which include the Preston Educational Trust, Lady Hullock's Charity, Stokesley River Leven Group, Stokesley Community Care Association, and of partnership bodies, e.g. Stokesley and Villages Community Partnership, Hambleton Area Committee.....

ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS AND VIEWS OF THE COMMUNITY

- 19 In addition to the above more formal methods of communication and engagement, councillors, in their interaction with residents, routinely seek to establish what the community wants or expects from the Council and how content residents are with the existing services provided by the Council.
- 20 All relevant and appropriate comments received by the Council from any of the above ways and by councillors less formally are fed back and considered by the Council or one of its committees or working parties.
- 21 Currently if few responses are made on any subject or issue it is assumed that the majority of people, including hard to reach groups and young people, are satisfied with the work being carried out by, and the services provided by, the Council.

AIMS FOR IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- 22 The following short term aims have been identified to improve communication and community engagement:
 - To publish the Annual Report of the Council on the website within two weeks of the next and all future Annual Town Meetings.
 - To complete the uploading of councillor and staff photographs to the website and to add details of committee memberships to each councillor's profile.
- 23 In addition, the following medium term objectives have been identified:
 - To promote the development of a public wifi facility for Stokesley town centre.
 - To proactively seek feedback from the community on the quality of the Council's services, seeking comments on the services that it provides and identifying any shortfalls as the basis for developing forward plans
- 24 In the longer term the Council seeks to provide welcome packs to new residents on new housing developments containing information about community groups, facilities offered in the parish and the services provided by the Council and will examine ways to improve communications to and engagement with hard to reach groups, including young people

MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 25 This policy will be monitored and reviewed annually.