

Wimborne Minster Town Council Community Engagement and Partnership Work Strategy

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Wimborne Minster Town Council (the Council) aims to support a sustainable community built on the principles of cohesiveness, attractiveness and economic vibrancy. To achieve this we encourage our community (our stakeholders - residents, visitors, businesses, local groups, partner agencies) (see appendix 1) to have a say in the way Wimborne Minster (the Town) is managed and address community needs to build community capacity and well-being via participation, engagement and decision making in public matters.

To raise the image and reputation of the Council it is also vital our community is fully aware of the services and facilities we provide and the various ways you can engage with us.

By engaging with residents and encouraging participation in decision making, we aim to secure better services, enhance engagement in the local democratic process and create a more cohesive, sustainable, active and informed community. Engagement also empowers those participating by involving our community in the decision making processes of our Town, enhances the leadership role of the Council, generates greater interest in elections and increased levels of volunteering within the community.

Our engagement tools include:

- information on our website (www.wimbone.gov.uk) including our strategic documents (Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029 which will be published in due course, Scheme of Delegation, and Climate and Biodiversity Action Plan), published agendas and minutes, contact information for councillors and staff, calendar of meetings/events and financial information in line with the transparency legislation and the Freedom of Information Act
- use of Council notice boards (located at the Town Hall, outside Nationwide Building Society on the town square, outside Wimborne Library, Park Lane, Leigh Road, and St Johns Hill)
- at our Town Hall Council offices, where our employees are present Monday to Friday 9.30am to 1pm and an answer phone facility for when the office is not open which is available 24/7
- by supporting the role and functioning of local groups, organisations and partnerships via Council's service level agreements and Community Grant Scheme
- enabling and supporting every Councillor, as our elected representatives, to act as a voice for local people and represent views and opinions, via the provision of induction packs, training, and appointment onto outside bodies
- the annual external audit process which provides the opportunity for questions to be asked about the Council's latest statement of accounts (available as printed copies from our offices and on our website)
- promoting the civic role of the Town Mayor / Deputy Town Mayor by hosting and attending events throughout the county
- hosting and promoting events including the Annual Parishioners Meeting
- producing an annual report which is presented at the Annual Parishioners Meeting, press releases, brochures and event promotional material

- holding Council and committee meetings which are open to the public and a period set aside at the beginning of each meeting for public participation relating to items on the agenda
- working collaboratively with strategic partners including Dorset Council, Dorset Police, and neighbouring authorities including Bournemouth Christchurch Poole Council and town and parish councils
- pro-active press coverage
- involving Council employees via regular meetings and appraisal processes (linked to Council's Strategic Plan) and encouraging employees to actively represent the interest of the Council at local events
- use of social media platforms
- working groups made up of councillors, employees and individuals in the community with knowledge and experience to advise the Council on projects
- consultation processes that seek focused views on a specific subject, which are appropriate and aim to represent and capture views including those sections of the community that are hard to reach and isolated (e.g. children and young people, elderly residents). These processes may include household questionnaires / surveys, focus groups, public meetings and workshops delivered in a timely and varied way (online, face to face and post) where asking the right questions in the right manner is more important than receiving the "right" answers. Consultation, like participation, may be open or limited to relevant groups depending upon the issue or question(s)
- feeding back the results of any engagement processes to inform decisions made at Council and committee level
- a communication strategy (appendix 2) that communicates transparent information clearly, factual and appropriate to the audience

Appendix 1 – Defining the community of Wimborne Minster and stakeholders

- All residents of the parish of Wimborne Minster
- Visitors to Wimborne Minster
- All users of Council's services and facilities
- All those that work within the parish of Wimborne Minster
- All those that own or manage businesses within the parish of Wimborne Minster
- All children and young people who live and/or go to school within the parish of Wimborne Minster
- All local voluntary organisations, charities, clubs and societies
- Any group or organisation that represents some or any of the members of the above sections of the community

Additionally, the Council recognises that there are strategic partners that are crucial to the quality of life in the parish of Wimborne Minster. The Council aims to maintain excellent working relationships with these partners, including Bournemouth Christchurch Poole Council, Dorset Police, Dorset Council, the Environment Agency, Wimborne Business Improvement District, neighbouring town and parish councils, Wimborne Royal British Legion, Wimborne Militia, and the Minster Church of St Cuthburga.

The role of councillors, as the elected decision makers of the Council, have their contact details available from the Council offices and on the Council website. Members of the public

are welcome to contact councillors to raise issues relevant to the parish of Wimborne Minster. New councillors are supported via training opportunities, induction packs provided by officers and information made available via Council's electronic folder sharing system.

The Council's officers are employed to carry out the day to day functions of the Council and make sure that its services are delivered effectively to the local community.

Appendix 2 – Communication Strategy

1. We are committed to using the most appropriate channels of communications to reach our community and recognise most effective communication happens when the message being sent is interpreted by the recipient in the way intended by the sender via a two-way process.
2. We will therefore regularly listen, review and check that our communications are being understood by our community.
3. This strategy will give direction to all media, online, internal, marketing, publications and public relations communications activity undertaken on behalf of the Council.
4. All communications should be based on the principle of 'plain English' (clear and unambiguous language, without the use of technical or difficult terms) and avoid gobbledygook, jargon, acronyms and misleading public information (for more information please refer to Councils Editorial Guide).
5. All communication will consistently reflect the Council's branding in terms of logo, name and mission statement / values.
6. Communication methods should be identified and used that facilitate opportunities to work with our community including those individuals and / or groups that are isolated from the decision making process. We cannot force any individual or group to become involved but we can make it accessible to do so.
7. We will consider extending and developing a range of electronic communication that include a pro-active and neutral presence on social networking media platforms.
8. We will publicise consultation results in order to encourage further participation and engagement.
9. We will ensure appropriate evaluation is carried out following consultation exercises to ensure that lessons learned are carried forward and an assessment of how effective and useful the consultation was.
10. We will manage expectations and always be clear, before the start of any consultation exercise, to what extent the result will inform our decisions.
11. We acknowledge that not every decision requires community involvement.
12. If the outcome of a participation or consultation event is intended to inform a decision and a different decision is taken; the reasoning behind that decision will be published.
13. Consultation methods will be advertised locally.
14. When dealing with controversial issues as identified by Council that affect a particular section of the community then consideration will be given to holding a public meeting.
15. Communication methods may include:
 - national and local printed media via press statements / releases, news items and features
 - printed information via our governance documents, banners, posters, newsletters and leaflets
 - broadcast media including television and radio interviews
 - current and emerging social media platforms

- Council's website www.wimborne.gov.uk
- internal communications that keep councillors and employees staff informed, involved and engaged in achieving the Council's objectives
- electronic methods via intranet use
- a variety of face to face methods with members of the public, councillors and employees

16. We will aim to

- 16.1 Inform our community about our work, the services we provide and how people can get involved in shaping decisions.

We will achieve this by adhering to our statutory responsibilities in terms of publishing agendas, ensuring councillors report back to Council on meetings attended, encourage members of the public and groups to present updates at Council meetings, and investigate the additional potential for tapping into social media including video streaming meetings, blogs and podcasts.

- 16.2 Maintain a strong and recognisable Council identity.

We will achieve this by the consistent use of Council's logo, name and mission statement/values in all public facing communications; raise the profile of all councillors and their role; ensure press coverage of events including civic activities, and work with outside organisations to ensure correct and appropriate use of Council's identity.

- 16.3 Promote and uphold the Council's reputation.

We will achieve this by ensuring all Council communications recognise the role of the Town Mayor, Chairman and councillors in order to promote understanding of the democratic process; identify media opportunities to promote the Council and its services to local residents; deal with all media enquiries promptly, clearly and accurately, and investigate new ways in which the Council can provide information to residents and stakeholders and identify easier ways for them to interact with the Council.

- 16.4 Ensure our councillors and staff are involved and engaged in the work of the Council through good internal communications, so that they can represent and champion the Council in the community.

We will achieve this by the use of printed and electronic communication to promote issues and events; utilise technology throughout the Council to develop an effective dialogue to include councillors and employees; seek national recognition for communication and good governance through achievement of awards, and hold regular councillor and staff training events, and ensure communications are focused on corporate messages across the Council to enable councillors and staff to be ambassadors of the Council sharing the Council's key messages with communities across the parish of Wimborne Minster.

17. The Council also has representatives on a number local organisations – please visit our website for more information.

18. The Council support the Town Liaison Group which meets regularly to facilitate the exchange of information between stakeholders in order to advance the retail and commercial life of the parish of Wimborne Minster as well as improving the leisure experience for the benefit of residents, local businesses and visitors.

[End]