

Horley Town Council

Community Engagement Strategy

1. Introduction

Community engagement covers the many different activities carried out with the people that make up the Horley community. The aim is to make sure that people can participate and engage in a range of ways to help make Horley a better place to live, work, study and play.

The main types of community engagement are:

- Supporting community action
- Informing the community
- Researching
- Involving
- Consulting
- Devolving decisions

There are many ways community engagement can occur including:

- Focus group
- Through the arts
- Encouraging local people to research and inform the Council of their community's needs and priorities.
- Events and open days
- Consultation
- Newspaper, newsletters, website and social media
- Public forum at meetings

➤ Councillors' Meetings with residents

In order to enable effective community engagement to take place it is important to develop good solid relationships through open and clear community action, networking opportunities, listening to, having fun with and understanding the diversity of the people and places within the community.

Horley Town Council acknowledges the need to develop a Community Engagement Strategy as part of its desire to engage, consult and empower all parts of the community, to listen to and understand needs and to deliver high quality relevant services to local residents.

The strategy has been developed based on the belief that:

- All communities should be involved in the decisions that affect them.
- All communities deserve high quality public services, shaped around their needs.
- Horley Town Council's policies and strategies should reflect local priorities, requirements and aspirations.
- This Community Engagement Strategy recognises the diversity of our communities and the need to provide appropriate opportunities for local people to participate at whatever level they wish, to influence service delivery, decision making and policy development.

2. Types of Communities

There are a variety of communities in Horley, these include young people, faith groups, older people, disabled people, ethnic groups, environmental groups and political groups.

There is a great diversity in Horley which is extremely positive as it brings creativity and vitality to the town, which is why it is essential that community engagement is effective and continuous.

3. Horley Town Council's Vision

This Strategy supports the Council's vision of Horley being '**vibrant, inclusive, safe and sustainable**'. It will help provide a focus to deliver policies and processes to create an improved quality of life for local residents, through working with the community and responding to residents' needs.

4. What is the overall aim of the Community Engagement Strategy?

The Community Engagement Strategy aims to support strong, active and inclusive communities, who are informed and involved in decision-making and will enable the Council to improve public services to enhance quality of life in Horley. It is hoped that through this Strategy the following can be achieved:

- **Strong communities**, bringing people together to identify and help deal with their common concerns.
- **Active communities**, where people are supported to improve the quality of life in their own communities.
- **Inclusive communities**, where all sections of the community feel they have the opportunity to be involved in decision-making and influence the public services provided by the Town Council

5. What are our objectives?

The objectives below identify how the Council hopes to ensure that the Community Engagement Strategy delivers an effective and coordinated approach to community engagement for the benefit of all citizens.

- **Strengthen, develop and sustain opportunities** for local people and groups to influence what happens in Horley.
- Provide opportunities for communities to **shape and influence** the development and delivery of quality services and policies that reflect local needs and priorities.
- **Manage and coordinate** engagement activities to ensure consistency, quality and partner participation and avoid duplication.
- Ensure that community engagement activities **provide opportunities** for participation from all sections of the community, particularly from those people and groups that are often missed out of such activities.
- Listen to the community and ensure **feedback** to participants about the outcomes of consultation and engagement.

- Provide **variety and flexibility and choice** in community engagement activities.
- Listen and learn from our own and others' experience and share community engagement skills and the knowledge of how to put the citizen at the heart of decision-making.

6. How will we achieve the objectives?

The Council will develop an Action Plan that sets out how it will endeavour to achieve the objectives set out above. The Action Plan will be continually monitored and reviewed to ensure it is a flexible and evolving Plan that responds to the changing needs of our communities and community engagement activities.

The Council's initial priorities will include the following:

- Development of **coordination** of community engagement activities.
- Development of a **web-based resource** for consultation activities.
- **Development of expertise** to obtain the views and opinions of people and groups who are often missed out of community engagement activities.
- Improved coordination with **partners** in engagement activities.
- Raised awareness of **volunteering** opportunities in the Parish.
- Development and enhancement of **skills and expertise** in engagement and participation.

In all of our engagement activities we will:

- Endeavour to co-ordinate community engagement activities, whilst avoiding duplication and consultation fatigue.
- Ensure that future strategies, policies and service delivery take into consideration the views and needs of the local community.
- Take into account the particular needs and difficulties to enable all sectors of the community to participate.
- Aim to include those sectors of our community usually excluded.
- Adhere to Health & Safety Regulations.

- Only use community engagement and consultation processes when there is a real opportunity for people to influence, change and influence decisions and services.
- Be open and honest about the aims of community engagement activity and what it hopes to achieve.
- Ensure that community engagement activities are realistic and that expectations are not raised unnecessarily.
- Have clear processes to feed back on community engagement activity and outcomes and give reasons if unable to deliver on expectations.
- Ensure participants understand the nature of their participation and how the information will be used.
- Ensure confidentiality within the constraints of the existing legislation.
- Ensure community engagement activities are voluntary.

7. Key Outcome Expectations

- To endeavour to ensure that people can influence what happens locally.
- To improve the way in which the Council informs people of activities and services.
- To ensure that all direct consultation is carried out in accordance with good practice principles.
- To ensure that proper feedback is given on all consultations within a reasonable time.

8. Delivery of Community Engagement

Horley Town Council will develop a full Action Plan which will be updated on an annual basis. It will ensure that community engagement and/or consultation with the community is carried out in a planned and appropriate way.

In order to ensure that Community Engagement is effective the Town Council will need to involve the right people at the right time. It is essential to reach the community directly and not just community group leaders.

Therefore the Town Council will do its utmost to consult with:

Stakeholders: People who have an interest in the well-being of Horley. This includes residents of all ages, visitors, businesses, government, public service organisations and voluntary organisations.

Our Communities: These include communities of place (geographic) and communities of interest (interest groups).

“Hard to Reach” Groups: These include those communities who experience social exclusion and have been disempowered. However, it should be noted that these groups are not necessarily hard to reach and do not necessarily consider themselves as such. It is often that organisations have not put enough effort into seeking their views or that the groups have excluded themselves through personal choice and do not wish to be involved.

9. Resources

It is essential that adequate resources are provided to deliver the Community Engagement Strategy if the Town Council really does want to ensure that key stakeholders have a voice to influence strategies, policies and service delivery. Therefore a budget will need to be included annually by Horley Town Council to ensure that this aim is achieved.

10. Evaluation, Results and Feedback

The process for discussing, communicating and acting on the results of Community Engagement will integrate into the development of the Parish Plan, Council Development Strategy and service planning.

11. Action Plan

Please see attached Action Plan.

Approved by Full Council: February 2016
Next review date: April 2019