



Horley Town Council

Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan

1. INTRODUCTION:

- 1.1** Community engagement covers the many different activities carried out with the people of Horley.
- 1.2** Horley Town Council has developed a community engagement strategy with the aim of constructing a high standard for engagement with its residents and partners.
- 1.3** It is recognised that the services it provides must reflect the needs of residents and the community.
- 1.4** Horley Town Council firmly believes that:
- residents should be involved in decisions affecting them and their community and in shaping the future of their town;
 - residents deserve a high quality of public services, designed around their needs; and
 - the requirement to provide appropriate opportunities for residents to participate at whatever level they wish to influence service delivery, decision making and policy development, is of fundamental importance.

2. PURPOSE:

- 2.1** 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.
- 2.2** The purpose of the strategy is to strive to improve the way in which Horley Town Council engages and consults its residents and partners on important issues by:
- informing, consulting and involving;
 - providing opportunities for people to participate at whatever level they wish in order to influence the Council's service delivery, priorities and policies;
 - being inclusive and engaging with all residents and partners; and

- ensuring that all views are listened to and where appropriate used to develop, enhance and improve services, the environment and the quality of life for residents.

2.3 The purpose of community engagement is to effectively involve people in the decision-making processes and work of the Town Council. It will give a voice to local people as individuals as well as community groups, public bodies, businesses, and anyone with an interest in the Town Council's services and projects. Engagement is a two-way process, which allows the public to talk to the Town Council about their views and needs and in return enables the Council to tell the community about its work, its priorities and how well it is performing.

2.4 Effective community engagement will help to clearly identify the needs of local people, empower the community in local decision-making, and create a greater level of interest in, and understanding of, local government.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY:

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

- 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;
- improve, plan and shape the future of the community according to local needs and priorities;
- to improve the quality and delivery of services;
- to use engagement to inform decision making, ensuring decisions are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the community;

- to enhance the wellbeing of the community; and
- to be a stronger, more active and cohesive community.

4. HOW TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES:

4.1 Community engagement will be achieved by Horley Town Council in communicating, supporting, consulting and working together with its residents.

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

4.3 The Town 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 Horley; and
- development and enhancement of skills and expertise in engagement and participation.

4.4 In all of our community 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; and
- ensure community engagement activities are voluntary.

4.5 **The key outcomes and expectations are:**

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

5. **COMMUNICATION:**

5.1 Communicating with Horley residents will be achieved in several ways to ensure all sections of the community are reached, as outlined below:

5.1.1 **The Horley Town Council website** has a wealth of local information and is updated on a regular basis. Important notices and special events will continue to be added regularly. Agendas, meeting papers and minutes of Town Council meetings are also included on the website (apart from confidential items). A reporting form is available for any issues wished to be raised, or to report any other relevant matters.

5.1.2 **The Horley Town Council eNewsletter** is produced and submitted at least bi-monthly, to inform residents about the Town Council's statutory business, community matters and other local issues. It also assists with promoting public consultations by the principal authorities and includes articles on topical issues. Most information is also linked to the Town Council website and other reliable social media platforms.

5.1.2 **Meetings of the Town Council, Standing Committees and Sub-Committees** are open to the public and include the opportunity for members of the community to engage with councillors. All meetings include a section for public participation (known as the 'Public Forum').

5.1.3 **Frequent Resident Forum meetings** are convened and represented by councillors from the three council tiers, i.e.. Surrey County Council, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council and Horley Town Council.

6 **TYPES OF COMMUNITIES:**

6.1 There are a variety of communities in Horley, including but not limited to young people, faith groups, older people, disabled people, ethnic groups, environmental groups and political groups.

6.2 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, continuous and fully promotes inclusion.

- 6.3 Consulting residents on relevant important issues will be key to the Town Council's Community Engagement Strategy. It will ensure that the wider community as well as those most affected are able to put forward an opinion and given an opportunity to make a difference.
- 6.4 The Town Council will further ensure that public consultations include all members of the community by identifying the hard to reach groups and people of all abilities, including, young people, senior citizens, ethnic minorities, and vulnerable people who might possibly require different engagement channels for them.

7 SUPPORT:

- 7.1 The Town recognises the importance to:
support local projects and participate in local events to raise the awareness of the Town Council and its objectives and aims;
- 7.2 support local organisations and engage with them will assist them in meeting their own aims and objectives; and
- 7.3 support members of the community in shaping the future of their parish will bring more a more cohesive community.

8 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS:

8.1 The main types of community engagement are:

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

8.2 There are many ways that community engagement can occur including:

- Focus Groups
- Through the arts
- Encouraging local people to research and inform the Council of their community's needs and priorities.
- Events and open days
- Consultations
- Newspaper, newsletters, website and social media platform
- Public Forums at meetings
- Councillors' Meetings with residents

8.3 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 and understanding the diversity of the people and places within the community.

8.4 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 and to deliver high quality relevant services to local residents.

8.5 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; and
- the policies and strategies of Horley Town Council should reflect local priorities, requirements and aspirations.

8.6 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.

9 **LEGISLATION:**

The [Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act \(2007\)](#) places emphasis on the importance of effective engagement with the community and facilitating inclusive and effective participation by individuals and organisations in local governance.

10 **VISION:**

This Community Engagement Strategy supports the Town 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.

11 **OUR COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:**

11.1 Horley Town Council will develop a full Action Plan which will be kept under regular review. It will ensure that community engagement and/or consultation with the community is carried out in a planned and appropriate way.

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

11.3 The Town Council's commitment to community engagement is incorporated within its strategy i.e.. to consult with, understand and represent the views and wishes of the citizens of Horley, through:

- a. regular consultation with residents, including town-wide surveys and representation on local voluntary organisations;
- b. assessing how well current services meet residents' needs;
- c. understanding how those needs are changing and responding effectively to those changes;
- d. consulting with and responding to Surrey County Council, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council and other local authorities and organisations on current services and planned changes, to ensure continuing improvement in services consistent with local need;
- e. helping to create a socially inclusive and caring community, which embraces all its residents equally;
- f. seeking to develop residents' well-being, knowledge, understanding, and mutual co-operation;
- g. encouraging community associations and other voluntary organisations which actively engage in projects that contribute to social inclusiveness and community cohesion; and
- h. engaging with the Reigate & Banstead Community Safety Partnership and other government authority sponsored or voluntary organisations to provide for the needs of more vulnerable or isolated groups in Horley.

11.4 The Town Council will engage with its community using the following methods:

- a. Following the Information Commissioner's Office "[Model Publication Scheme](#)", which commits the Town Council to producing and publishing the method by which specific information will be made available, so that it can be easily identified and accessed by the public.
- b. Council and committee agendas, reports and minutes are made available on the [Town Council website](#) and notice boards. Electronic newsletters are produced bimonthly and are also available from the Town Council offices and can be made available in large print upon request. Our [Annual Report](#) is received at our Annual Town Public Forum and this is available on our website along with our [five-year Town Plan 2022-2027](#) commitments and objectives. Press releases are sent to all local media outlets and news stories are published on our website and shared through reliable social media platforms.

- c. The Town Council holds frequent Resident Forums to enable members of the public to talk to County, Borough and Town Councillors in-person on any local issues. Contact details for all County, Borough and Town Councillors serving the Horley wards are available on the [Town Council website](#) or from the Town Council offices. There is an online contact form available to reach the [HTC Administrative Team](#); or by sending an email to: town.clerk@horleytown.com; or by telephoning 01293 784765; or by writing to:

Town Clerk

Horley Town Council

Council Offices, Albert Rooms, 92 Albert Road, Horley RH6 7HZ

The Town Council office is open to the public every Monday to Friday, from 10am to 4pm and Officers are available to provide assistance. We also monitor other social media streams and interact with the public using these formats and can also be contacted via our Twitter feed and Facebook page.

12. STANDARDS FOR ENGAGEMENT:

12.1 The Town Council will adhere to the following standards:

Inclusion:

- To use plain language
- To take into account the particular needs of people, especially in hard-to-reach groups, to enable them to participate
- To listen to, and respect, all opinions received

Clarity and Transparency:

- To be clear about what we are asking the public to comment on when seeking people's views
- To use engagement and consultation processes when there is a real opportunity for people to influence decision-making and services
- To provide feedback whenever possible

Visibility:

- To ensure that those directly affected by decisions, policies and plans are aware of the opportunity to engage

13. RESOURCES:

It is essential that adequate resources are provided to deliver the Community Engagement Strategy and for the Town Council to ensure that key stakeholders have a voice to influence strategies, policies and service delivery.

14. EVALUATION, RESULTS AND FEEDBACK:

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

15. ACTION PLAN:

The aforesaid Horley Town Council Action Plan is appended to this Community Engagement Strategy and is available overleaf.

This Community Engagement Strategy was adopted at the full Council Meeting on 7 March 2023 and will be kept under regular review.

Horley Town Council
Community Engagement Strategy

Action Plan

The Town Council's Community Engagement Strategy Action Plan is summarised in the tables outlined below and will be developed to continuously improve community engagement by communicating, supporting, consulting and working together with the residents of Horley.

AIMS	OBJECTIVES	STATEMENT
To raise awareness of the consultation process.	To promote through the Town Council website, eNewsletter and social media.	<i>Promoting the strategy will be an ongoing priority.</i>
To identify minority/hard to reach groups.	To establish good channels of contact and lines of communication,	<i>These groups are often left out. Identifying them will ensure they are included in the consultation process.</i>
To work with Police and Partner Authorities.	To strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones.	<i>Collaborative working with partners is already a priority for the Town Council through a variety of stakeholder and community engagement,</i>
To identify consultation/focus groups.	To establish links with key groups in the community that might be consulted on specialist matters.	<i>This will enable smaller consultations to be initiative where specialist advise is required to inform decision making, but not requiring the need for a full consultation process.</i>
To identify the benefits of consultations.	To promote the opportunity for people to influence decisions affecting them.	<i>No consultation should be undertaken unless the outcome may be influenced as this may cause people to become disinterested in the process.</i>
To feedback on consultations and ensure the outcomes are used to inform decisions and policies.	To agree methods of feedback to residents and partners, ensure these are met and include details of the use of information gained.	<i>This will keep all parties involved in the process and kept updated.</i>

This Action Plan further describes below what activities are required and sets out a framework for implementing the activities:

ACTIVITY	ACTION	TIME SCALE
Consultation & Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop a comprehensive database of community groups, businesses and voluntary organisations in Horley 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop an area on www.horleysurrey-tc.gov.uk website to enable ongoing consultation with the community on specific projects e.g. Gatwick Airport Northern Runway proposals and along with community projects identified in the Horley Town Plan 2022-27 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote regular use of reliable social media platforms to share important information, updates on issues of local interest etc. 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To issue the HTC eNewsletter at least bi-monthly on statutory business of the council; to update local residents and businesses; and to build up the subscriber database. 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue to develop good links with local community groups and organisations. 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue to support local community events e.g. St George’s Day, Remembrance Day Parade & Service, Councillors’ Christmas Hospitality, Carol Service and Horley Carnival through publicity on the council’s reliable communication platforms. 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To facilitate local events and community schemes e.g. Horley in Bloom, Awards Evening, Photographic Competition and Town Awards Scheme. 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage the local community to apply for grants from the Council Grants Scheme and Horley Edmonds Fund for worthy community projects and facilitate access to the Community Foundation for Surrey 	Ongoing

ACTIVITY	ACTION	TIMESCALE
Town Plan & Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To consult residents on the five-year Town Plan objectives, achievements and potentially new community projects for consideration and publish regular updates on progress, including Press Releases (Town Plan 2022-2027 published). 	Ongoing.
Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To consult with residents through online surveys on ideas for community projects through CIL Funds allocated to HTC. 	Online survey undertaken in 2021 and ongoing.
Emergency (Resilience) Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To contribute to the updating of an Emergency Plan in liaison with Reigate & Banstead Borough Council 	To be programmed.

Checklist:

Good Practice Checklist	Action	Timescale	Responsibility
Defining the Purpose	Identify the aims and objectives of engaging with the community.	Engagement Strategy adopted	Town Clerk
Communications Strategy	Identify all ways in which the Town Council will be able to engage effectively	Ongoing	Communications Sub-Committee
Engagement Process	Identify, develop and implement the most appropriate mechanisms	Ongoing	Town Clerk

This Action Plan accompanies the Community Engagement Strategy and was adopted at a Full Council meeting on 7 March 2023 and will be kept under regular review.