



Polegate Town Council

Statement of Intent as to community engagement

12th December 2011

1. Aims and Objectives

Polegate Town Council aims to:-

- Represent and promote the interests of Polegate and all its people in all forums
- Pay particular attention to the needs of our children and young people
- Pay particular attention to the needs of our elderly
- Provide the best possible amenities and services by the efficient use of available resources
- Actively involve local people in decisions affecting activities in the area
- Be open and accountable in all it does
- Support development which is environmentally, socially and economically sound and sustainable
- Enhance quality of life by protecting and enhancing Polegate's ecological and environmental assets

In order to achieve these aims, the Council will

- Work closely with residents, businesses and community groups;
- Engage with as many people as possible who want to participate in decision making, monitoring services and planning for the future; ensure, that through the use of a wide range of approaches to public involvement and community engagement, we actively encourage the involvement of residents, to capture their views and learn their concerns and effectively use those views as an integral part of the decision-making process; ensure that residents have the opportunities to be heard at every stage, and the capacity to be effective citizens.

The outcomes the Council hopes to achieve are:

- Improved communication with the local community
- A better understanding within the community of the role of the Town Council and of its Councillors
- Local people feeling that they are involved in decision making
- Improved satisfaction with local public services

2. Defining the community

The Council considers the community of Polegate to consist of:

- All residents of the town
- All users of the Town Council's services
- All those who work within the town

- All those who own businesses within the town
- All young people who live and/or go to school within and close to the town
- All local voluntary organisations, 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 certain bodies that are crucial to the quality of life in Polegate and aims to maintain excellent working relationships with these bodies, including the Police, the other tiers of local government and neighbouring town and parish councils.

3. Provision of information to the community and opportunities for community involvement

Information is provided by the Town Council to the community in a number of ways, including:

- The Town Council offices at 49 High Street are open Monday to Friday 9-1pm and can provide a wide range of information both on Council services and other Polegate activities and issues
- The Town Council's website www.polegate-tc.co.uk provides comprehensive information both on the work of the Town Council and on other services, the history of the town, local events, local groups and organisations.
- The public can contact the Town Council through the website and public consultations are sometimes carried out through the website and newsletters.
- The Town Council provides four notice boards around the town which are used to display agendas for Council meetings and minutes as well as other information of interest to the local community.
- The Town Council's Newsletter is published approximately quarterly and is available from the Town Council offices, on the website and from the local library
- The Annual Report is produced in May each year and is available from the Town Council offices, on the website and from the local library
- All meetings of the Town Council and its committees and sub-committees are open to the public and a period is set aside at the beginning of each meeting for public questions
- Public meetings are called to gauge public opinion about important issues affecting the town such as major planning applications
- Questionnaires are sometimes used to ask local people's opinions about specific matters and these are distributed to local residents, for example through organisations at public meetings, or downloadable from the Council website
- The Town Council submit frequent press releases/articles to the local papers
- The Town Council has initiated and updated a Town Master Plan where local residents have been invited to make comment.
- On Major matters of public concern the Town Council has liaised with local residents by means of public meetings and active feedback is sought at all times these events help to "spread the word"

on the role of the Council and encourage people to participate in local affairs with specific local issues being explored from time to time using the full range of communication techniques available

4. Opportunities for Formal Representations to the Council

- Formal representations to the Council may be made at any time in writing to the Town Clerk.
- A period for the receipt of petitions is set aside at the beginning of each Council meeting.

5. Involvement in Partnerships

The Town Council often works in partnership with other organisations such as the District Council neighbourhood watch and the Police.

It has representatives on the following local organisations:

- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Cuckmere Community Bus
- District Association of Local & Parish Councils
- Polegate Twinning Association
- Polegate Windmill
- Polegate Community Association
- Local Churches and Church groups
- Polegate School
- Willingdon Community School

6. Role of Council Members and Officers

Council Members (Councillors) are the elected decision makers of the Town Council.

Their contact details are available from the Town Council offices, on Town Council Notice boards and on the Town Council website. Members of the public are welcome to contact Councillors to raise any issues.

The Council's officers are staff who are employed to carry out the day to day functions of the Council and make sure that its services are provided for the local community. The Town Clerk is the Proper Officer for the Council which means she has overall responsibility for the provision of Council services. The Council employ a maintenance person, litter picker, cleaner/caretaker and office staff. They frequently have direct contact with members of the public and naturally have to field questions and enquiries. The ability to do this effectively and courteously is as important as any other element of the Council's work in the community and can give good feedback on the views of the people on the services offered by the Council.

The Council is always considering practical ways of engaging with people and the community

The Council is committed to creating and maintaining effective working relationships with all sectors of the community, based on trust, openness and constructive challenge.

Outcomes of the strategy will include:

- Improved communication through the establishment of new channels of engagement;

- More residents understanding the role of Councillors and getting the best effect;
- Improved engagement with local communities, with more people feeling that they are involved in
- Decision-making and a higher percentage of people involved in volunteering;
- Improved satisfaction with local public services.

Statement prepared for adoption by Polegate Town Council at its meeting on 12th December 2011

Signed by

Mayor of Polegate

Town Clerk/Proper Office/RFO