



FROME TOWN COUNCIL

Chapter 17

Community Engagement Strategy



5 Palmer Street
Frome
BA11 1DS



01373 465757



admin@frome-tc.gov.uk

Date Adopted: 17 March 2010
Version: V01/2010
Review Date: March 2011

A copy of this document is also available in different formats such as large print, Braille, audio or in a different language, please contact the office if this is required.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

1 Objectives

The objectives of this strategy are to:

- Encourage effective local community engagement.
- Ensure that embedded throughout the Council there is a clear understanding of the need to engage with communities about decisions which affect them.
- Enable the aspirations/comments/suggestions etc obtained from community engagement to have an impact on decision making and the way in which services are being delivered.
- Identify how the Council can enhance its profile by improving engagement with the wider community (with specific reference to hard to reach groups).

2 The Council's Commitment to Community Engagement

Frome Town Council recognises the need to consider the impact of our actions on others and the environment around us. As a result our Strategic Plan is founded in the belief that our actions will help to protect and wherever possible enhance environmental quality and of equal importance, our decisions will be made ethically with regards to social and economic impact which together we believe will help to make Frome a better place.

Frome Town Council is committed in its Vision and Key Corporate Objectives to provide a democratic representational voice for the people of Frome, central to this ethos is engagement with the local community in a proactive and meaningful way, as embodied in the Councils Mission Statement.

2.1 Mission Statement:

***'Frome Town Council will work for and with local people
to make Frome a better place'***

2.2 Corporate Aims

Community Engagement is embodied in the delivery of the Councils Corporate Aims of:

1. Better Use of Resources
2. A Sustainable and Enjoyable Environment
3. A Safe Place to Live
4. Partnership with the Community

3 Frome Town Council and Community Engagement

The Council currently facilitates community engagement in the following ways:

- Allocation of a 'Public Forum' session at the beginning of each Full Council meeting. This provides an opportunity for local residents to make representations to the Council or ask questions relating to items on the agenda.

- The publishing of agenda of all Council meetings including committees and sub committees both on-line, and on various notice boards around the Town, for Council meetings.
- Ensuring that minutes are available on the website or printed copies available on request.
- The Town Council's involvement in the Annual Parish Meeting, with its public question time.
- The annual External Audit offers the opportunity for questions to be asked about the latest Statement of Accounts, and Balance Sheet. A synopsis of the financial accounts is published within the Annual Report
- The ability to provide Town Council information, when requested, to those with a need for alternative formats or languages
- Publishing contact details of all Council members and officers on the website, on various notice boards around the Town and in newsletters
- Production of regular newsletters highlighting local events and latest developments within the Council and the wider community in the local free newspaper, "The Frome Times" and on the website
- The Annual Report and Statement of Accounts available as printed copies and on the Councils website.
- Consultation exercises with local residents, children and other user groups. (Regarding the provision of play equipment, with specific reference to the Mary Baily Playing Field - residents etc. were invited to attend public meetings to express their aspirations for play equipment and assist in decision making).
- User surveys have been used to seek public opinion of Council facilities and services through questionnaire based research.
- Inviting members of the public to 'Meet the Mayor surgeries'.
- Council press releases are featured in local newspapers to keep the general public informed of community events, Town Council projects and other items as necessary.
- The Council enjoys an excellent working relationship with the local college, particularly with reference to the Twinning Youth Ambassador Scheme and with the Youth Council. In the process they obtain the views and opinions of both the youth and organisations involved with young people (typically hard to reach groups)
- Some Members and officers are involved in the Police and Communities Together panel (PACT) which are concerned with addressing crime and anti-social issues in the local area.
- Some Members and officers attend meetings of 'Outside Bodies' comprising community groups and other levels of local government and agencies
- The Council has an office conveniently located near the town centre and open from 09.00 until 17.00 on Monday to Friday.
- In addition, the Council allows its reception meeting area to be used by an array of different organisations and groups – which enables easy access to possible 'focus groups' if required for consultation exercises.

Unlike other tiers of local government, Town Councillors always live within 3 miles of the town they serve and therefore have close ties to their constituents and local voluntary and community organisations on a day-to-day basis, making them uniquely placed in terms of informed representation.

4 Future Improvements

Frome Town Council is committed to improving community engagement by:

- Continuing all the above activities and services into the future and improving relationships with community groups including developing measures to harness the views and opinions of people and groups who are often missed out of community engagement activities.
- Identifying and embracing opportunities to work with other local community groups, as and when the need arises.
- Developing a web-based blog resource to engage consultation with the local community and wider interested community.
- Extending the range of electronic communication including having a presence on interactive media such as Facebook, Twitter
- Participating in local networks to share knowledge and experience of community engagement activities in other areas.
- Publicising the positive results that have been achieved from working relationships between the Council and other community groups; in order to encourage new relationships to be formed and raise community spirit.
- Ensuring that appropriate evaluation is carried out following consultation exercises to ensure that lessons learned are carried forward and an assessment of how effective/useful the consultation was.

5 Linking with other Council Policies

How will this link to other policies?

This strategy is cross-cutting affecting many, if not all, of the Council's policies and strategies. Including:

- Equality and diversity is integral to good governance, leadership and appreciation of the diversity in our community.
- A Community Engagement Strategy is a requirement for the Accreditation of Quality Council Status and acquiring the Power of Wellbeing.

6 Review

This strategy will be reviewed regularly (not less than annually) and amended as necessary based on good practice or evidence taken forward.

7 Conclusion

The adoption of a Community Engagement Strategy will assist in improving communication between the Council and the wider community. This will enable the Council to better understand the needs and aspirations of local residents/groups, and in turn, facilitate appropriate projects to meet those needs and create an enhanced community spirit.