



Community Engagement – Statement of Intent

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Highworth Town Council aims to ensure that through the use of a wide range of approaches to public consultation and community engagement it actively encourages residents to inform its decision-making process and make an input into decisions which affect their day to day lives in the town.

Highworth Town Council is committed to creating and maintaining effective working relationships with all sectors of the community. The Council recognises that there are different levels of engagement and will endeavor to involve the community in the following ways:

- Inform people about its work and the services it provides
- Consult with and seek out the views of the community
- Encourage community participation in local government
- Collaborate with individuals, community groups and organisations where appropriate, to achieve agreed aims for the benefit of the town.
- Build up effective working relationships within the community and encourage a sense of ownership of assets, infrastructure and new projects.

THE COMMUNITY

Highworth Town Council seeks to engage with all sections of the community regardless of age, ability, gender, ethnicity, faith or sexual orientation i.e. parishioners (particularly hard to reach groups such as the young, disenfranchised, disaffected and the elderly), the local business community, the many clubs, organisations and societies which are active in the parish, its partners such as Swindon Borough Council and the neighbourhood policing team, the churches and our elected ward members for Swindon Borough Council. The Town Council is also committed to engaging with any persons or organisations who appear to have an interest in matters relating to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area.

PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO THE COMMUNITY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Highworth Town Council recognises that members of the community may wish to engage with it at different levels and in a variety of ways, from the occasional email or letter with a suggestion on how a service could be improved, to attendance at meetings etc.

Highworth Town Council will therefore use many ways to actively seek the views of its parishioners and involve them in its work:

Reviewed Date: 24th January 2023

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Publications: The Town Council will communicate with parishioners through regular articles in the monthly Link Magazine, as well as the annual report which will contain up to date information about payments and receipts and monies held by the council on parishioners' behalf, and the local press when appropriate.

Website: The Town Council website <http://www.highworthtowncouncil.gov.uk> is a community resource which publishes the town information, its Council, and the many organisations which flourish in Highworth. Town Council agendas, minutes, accounts and other documents will be regularly posted on this website for information. Parishioners are invited to contact the Town Council via the website, or email at admin@highworthtowncouncil.gov.uk . Highworth Town Council is committed to develop and improve the website and will actively encourage parishioners to use it to exchange information through the Town News and Notice Board as a means of improving communication.

Direct Access: Highworth Town Council will display a list of all Town Councillors (addresses and telephone numbers included) together with other important points of contact on all of its notice boards. This medium will also be used to directly advertise other important events e.g., notices relating to the annual audit of accounts, casual vacancies, elections and forthcoming meetings etc. Details of the Town Council's publication scheme and the address of the Swindon Borough Council Monitoring Officer will also be displayed on the website for parishioners' information.

Co-option: With the exception of the Full Council, Highworth Town Council encourages the involvement of the community in the work of the Council through co-option. Any standing committee or working party of the council is empowered to co-opt interested members of the community onto it.

Meetings: Notice of all Council meetings is given on the town notice boards and on the website. Parishioners are encouraged to attend Full Council and Committee Meetings and time is set aside at all meetings for public participation. Parishioners are also actively encouraged to attend the Annual Parish Meeting, which is advertised as above.

Surveys: Highworth Town Council will undertake surveys and other related forms of information gathering from time to time to ascertain the community's views on a particular issue.

Specific Projects: From time-to-time Highworth Town Council will undertake specific projects for the benefit of the community. The normal method for undertaking these is via working parties set up under a standing committee. Co-option (see above) is used to ensure that the community is fully represented and involved.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FORMAL REPRESENTATIONS TO THE COUNCIL

Representations to Highworth Town Council will normally be considered at the next meeting of the relevant standing committee. If, however, they require the provision of information only, then the clerk will provide it in accordance with the

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council's publication scheme. The Town Council has a Code of Practice for handling complaints, which is available from the Clerk, published on the website and reviewed annually. The publication of agendas on the Town Council's notice boards and website gives parishioners the opportunity to make representation to the council before agenda items are discussed. All formal representations received are responded to in writing.

ROLE OF COUNCIL MEMBERS AND OFFICERS IN CONSULTATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Elected members are powerful advocates for their community and their leadership role enables them to have a major input into the consultation and engagement process. The council maintains a Consultation Group consisting of the committee chairman and representatives from each committee that reviews and responds to consultation documents from a wide range of local and national bodies.

Highworth Town Councillors are very accessible:

- Their contact details are published on the noticeboards, on the website in the annual report to parishioners and in the Link Magazine.
- They are available to talk to parishioners during the public session prior to each Full Council and at the Annual Council Meeting.
- In a private capacity, they belong to many other local clubs, societies and organisations, where they may, if they so wish promote the work of the Town Council and be available to parishioners.