



# DOVER TOWN COUNCIL

## Community Engagement

### Policy & Procedure

2026 Version

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Dover Town Council believes that involving its citizens in decisions that affect their lives is a means to develop an empowered and strong community and recognises that effective communication and community engagement is key to delivering this.

This Policy sets out the Council's approach to Community Engagement, with the aim of providing opportunities for people to participate in order to influence the Council's service delivery, priorities and policies.

The Policy covers the work of Dover Town Council and is applicable to both councillors and staff. In the context of the Policy, "Community" is defined as all those living, working or taking part in organisations, based in or around the Town ward of Dover.

## **SCOPE OF THE POLICY**

This Policy covers all ways the Council can engage with the community through: -

- **INFORMING** – communicating Council news and information to the community
- **CONSULTING** – Seeking and considering the views of its community
- **PARTNERING** - collaborating with members of the community, both individuals and groups
- **EMPOWERING** – enabling and supporting partners to lead on projects for the benefit of the community

This Policy does not deal in depth with the Council's policy on communicating, this can be obtained from the separate Communications Strategy and the Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy.

## **LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

There is no direct legal duty on the Council to engage with the Community.

However, community engagement will often involve publicity and, whilst it is not legally-binding, Dover Town Council has committed to abiding by the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (2011), the guiding principles of which are: -

- Be lawful
- Be cost effective
- Be objective
- Be even-handed
- Be appropriate
- Always have regard to equality and diversity
- Be sensitive during periods of heightened sensitivity, e.g. pre-election periods

## **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives and benefits of the Council's community engagement are to: -

- Ensure better connection between the 'Dover Place Plan' and what happens in practice
- Ensure decision-making takes account of views expressed by the community
- Improve feedback on strategic proposals and generate new ideas
- Improve the community's understanding of Local Government
- Ensure representation for groups which may be marginalised or otherwise unheard
- Improve residents and stakeholders' involvement of local affairs by empowering them
- Engage individuals/groups in the resolution of their own problems

With the above aims in mind, The Council is committed to the following: -

- I. Partnerships – Dover Town Council has a strong tradition of individuals and groups from the local community taking the lead on local initiatives. The council is committed to maintaining this. Some

examples of partnership working are with; Dover Harbour Board, Future Foundry, Little Artlings and WCCP.

- II. Business Support – The Council is committed listening to the needs of local businesses, working closely with the local Town Centre manager.
- III. Consultations – The Council is committed to undertaking public consultations through its Talking Shop initiative. Input from the community can help shape the delivery of a project or facility. The Council will fully-consider the responses to consultations and keep an open mind as to any decision reached. An example of consultation through Talking Shop, is the proposed acquisition of a grade II listed building within the Town, that can be used for NHS Clinics, a Community Centre and a performing arts space.
- IV. Access to councillors and staff – The Council is transparent by allowing members of the public direct access to councillors and senior officers through publicising their direct contact details on the Council's website.
- V. Access to Meetings – Members of the public are welcome to attend Council meetings. They can submit a request to speak or a question in advance, to the Chair of the Committee, or just attend as observers. All meeting dates are publicised on the Councils Website and all minutes of meetings, agendas and all supporting papers are uploaded to the Website, with the exception of any confidential papers.
- VI. Annual Town Meeting – The Council shall continue to host the public Annual Town Meeting where any individual or local organisation from the Community are welcome to attend. They can ask questions, report back on their activities or raise items of concern or interest. This Meeting is not a formal meeting, but is chaired by the Town Mayor.
- VII. Communications – The Council continues to deliver a wide range of communication channels, including its website, social media, noticeboards, posters and community magazine.
- VIII. Providing Support – Funding is a direct form of community empowerment.