



Community Engagement Strategy

Adopted Date	February 2017
Review Period	2 years
Last Review Date	March 2021
Next Review Date	March 2023

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Faversham Town Council's Community Engagement Strategy. This strategy sets out what community engagement is, why we do it and the aims and actions which support it.

This strategy is about building on the good practice which already exists in the Town and making it better. It also acknowledges the genuine desire of all partners within our community to work more closely together for the benefit of local residents.

Crucially, it seeks to ensure that the many 'communities' in Faversham have a voice in the debate around improving the delivery of local services and thus having a positive impact on life and work in the Town.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Community Engagement is a term covering many different activities carried out with people who make up our communities. It is about making sure that people can participate and engage in lots of different ways to make Faversham a better place. Community engagement can happen in many ways from Town Meetings, survey polls, questionnaires, big events, through to the arts, festivals and much more. Community engagement can also take place at a number of different levels from low involvement activity to high involvement activity. For example this can range from providing information to people, to consultation by asking for feedback on a particular service or policy, to participation when decision making is shared and through to empowerment which gives people ownership of the decisions and support to carry out their own activities.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY?

Communities can be:

- Communities of Place – people within a defined geographical area like the town wards of Abbey, St Ann's, Priory and Watling.
- Communities of Interest – People who share a particular experience or characteristic, such as young people, faith groups, older people, disabled people, ethnic groups or LGBT groups.

Communities may define themselves and definitions do change and people often belong to more than one community and communities themselves are often very diverse. The key point is that we always endeavour to engage with all residents.

WHY DO WE ENGAGE?

Community Engagement gives individuals, communities and partners a range of very important benefits:

- Developing a better understanding of relationship with communities through genuine dialogue
- Involving residents in public services and making sure their knowledge, experience and priorities shape those services so they are more responsive to need
- Encouraging more voluntary and community groups to become involved in planning and delivering local services
- Helping people to establish an improved sense of neighbourhood and more cohesive communities
- Engaging more people in local democracy

OUR PARTNERS

There are different partners involved in working together on community engagement:

- All residents of Faversham
- Councillors as elected representatives of their communities
- Voluntary and community groups both individually and through local organisations
- Private sector organisations, local businesses and social enterprises
- Public service providers

The approach to community engagement in Faversham is founded upon the principle that each agency; public, private or voluntary, is responsible for its own community engagement activity.

OUR PRINCIPLES WHICH SUPPORT ENGAGEMENT

Through this strategy and the engagement work we are all involved in across the town, we aim to:

- Have clear objectives for engagement and to communicate clearly and openly about decisions and actions and the reasons for them
- Seek to reach those communities and individuals not yet engaged
- Share information and expertise
- Engage in innovative and creative ways using 21st century media where appropriate
- Recognise and value existing channels and work to make these more responsive and effective
- Engage using a range of flexible methods to avoid relying on one source or route

OUR COMMITMENTS

Through this strategy we are committed to:

- Use the most appropriate level of involvement and participation for each activity
- Build on the existing skills of local people and communities so they are empowered to engage in decision making
- Develop the voluntary and community sector to play a key role in helping in delivering services
- Develop a culture where other peoples' views are valued and listened to and are part of the decision making process and help build cohesion in Faversham

HOW WE WILL DO IT

To help us achieve effective community engagement we will make use of:

- Noticeboards, the Faversham Town Council Newsletter, website, polls and surveys, Facebook and Twitter, public meetings, town forums, press releases.

HOW WILL WE MEASURE SUCCESS?

- Through attendance at meetings of the Council, committees and the Annual Town Meeting
- Responses received to questionnaires, surveys and polls
- Statistics from the website
- Statistics from Facebook and Twitter
- The activity of and interest in the town forums

The Town Council's Annual Report will include a section on community engagement.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

For more information on this strategy, or to find out more about becoming involved in putting it into action, please contact Louise Bareham, Town Clerk:

By email: louise.bareham@favershamtowncouncil.gov.uk

By telephone: 01795 503286

By post:

Faversham Town Council
12 Market Place
Faversham
Kent
ME13 7AE

Or visit our website: www.Favershamtowncouncil.gov.uk