



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY



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1. 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.

We are eager to hear the views of our community to help us best facilitate a wide range of activities which promote the wellbeing and priorities of our community. We aim to bring local people together to help make things happen and protect and promote the identity of our town.

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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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

5. 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 how each agency; public, private or voluntary, can work together to encourage community engagement activity.

6. 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
- 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

7. 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.
- Work with the voluntary and community sector to ensure they play a key role in community engagement.
- 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

8. THE LADDER OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

We will use the Ladder of Citizen Participation¹ and Engagement as a directional tool.



9. HOW WILL WE INFORM?

We will provide information on our current projects, events, issues and proposed future projects through a variety of methods including:

- Quarterly newsletters delivered to every property in Faversham, also being available as a digitally accessible version on our website.

- Website news section will be regularly updated.
- Social media – Facebook, Instagram and Nextdoor.
- Accessible council offices in the Market Place with open door policy.
- Posters in our noticeboards.

10.HOW WILL WE CONSULT?

We will gather feedback on a variety of subjects and proposed projects, using various methods of engagement such as:

- An annual residents' satisfaction survey.
- Regular straw polls shared on social media and our website.
- Set up petitions on matters of importance to the community.
- Focus groups on single issue items.

11.HOW WILL WE INVOLVE?

We will work with residents and community groups to guarantee their concerns and aspirations are met through:

- Ensuring our meetings are open and accessible to residents, including virtual attendance.
- Encouraging attendance at our meetings and participation during public sessions.
- Networking with community groups.
- Engaging with hard-to-reach groups.

12.HOW WILL WE COLLABORATE?

We will work directly with residents and community groups to include them in projects and events, some examples are:

- Attend stakeholder meetings.
- Appoint town council representatives to community groups.
- Appoint community representatives to our committees and working groups.
- Involve the community groups in our events.
- Work on shared projects.
- Promoting participation in the Faversham & District Lottery.

13.HOW WILL WE EMPOWER?

The highest level of community engagement occurs when the final responsibility for decision-making lies with communities, this can be achieved by:

- Promoting democratic elections – ensuring everyone has an equal opportunity to stand as a local councillor.
- Providing community grants to local organisations to action their own projects.
- Working in partnership with Kent County Council and Swale Borough Council to see desired improvements to Faversham.

14. HOW WILL WE MEASURE SUCCESS?

Measuring community engagement helps track the quality of participatory activities, improve related processes, and show residents and stakeholders how their input influences decision-making. We do this:

- 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 other social media.

15. WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

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

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

By telephone: 01795 503286

By post:

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12 Market Place
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Or visit our website: www.Favershamtowncouncil.gov.uk

ⁱ Arnstein's Ladder of Participation (1969)