

WINDERMERE & BOWNESS TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Adopted by Full Council on 13th December 2017, due for revision December 2019

INTRODUCTION

Windermere Town Council recognises the need to consider the impact of its actions on others and the surrounding area. Whilst the Town Council cannot force any individual or group to become involved it can, and shall, make it easier and more attractive for them to do so.

Improving communication with residents and maximising engagement between the Town Council and the community is a priority and is enshrined in the Windermere & Bowness Community Plan.

The Town Council recognises that other bodies are crucial to the quality of life in Windermere & Bowness and it will maintain strong working relationships with South Lakeland District Council, Cumbria County Council, Lake District National Park and Cumbria Police.

The Council defines communication as the process of informing the community about decisions that have been made or the passing on of information. It defines engagement as involving the community to help form opinion and review decisions.

The Council is always open to receiving both positive and negative feedback and has a commitment to encouraging the community to engage with the Council. All communications will avoid jargon and misleading public information.

COMMUNICATION

2.1 The Town Council will make all efforts to communicate its activities to the community. It will do this via:

- A regular column in the Kendal & Windermere Now publication;
- An up to date and easy to use website, containing agenda and minutes of meetings and which encourages user comments and communication;
- A current news and events page on the Council website & a weekly update in the Westmorland Gazette local column.
- Twitter and social media where appropriate.
- Up to date and informative notice-boards (5) in key community locations and a special notice-board in Windermere Library.
- The publication of a widely available Annual Report in May each year.

ENGAGEMENT

The Council shall continue to set aside time at every Council meeting for members of the public to address the Council. It will widely advertise the Annual Parish Meeting as a key opportunity for the community to have its say and publish clear contact details of the Town Clerk and Councillors to the public.

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It shall continue to appoint members to represent the Council on community organisations as requested. This will include the Lakes Administration partnership, the Lakes Line User Group, the Youth Project, Community Centres and Charities locally, including the key partnership with the Bowness & Windermere Community Care Trust to manage all the public toilets.

The Council shall continue to lead and manage the Windermere in Bloom event, including judging and funding and organising the Awards evening, one of the largest community events in the annual calendar.

Members of the public shall be encouraged to be part of Advisory Groups and to be involved in management of community assets. This includes stewardship of the 30 acres of woodland at Elleray Woods, Baddeley Clock and the War Memorial.

Engagement with voluntary groups will be a key focus, with Councillors taking part in voluntary activities (including the Friends of the 597 bus, the Lions, the WI, the Endowed Schools Foundation and the Goodly Dale Cottage Homes). The Council will actively encourage groups to apply for grant funding where appropriate.

Engagement with the business sector will continue to develop, building on the Windermere in Bloom partnership, where local businesses provide sponsorship for civic flower displays. The Shop Front Improvement Scheme grants will continue to provide a focus for keeping the high streets in our community clean, tidy and attractive and assist local businesses in this aim.

The Mayor will continue to have a high visual profile in the community, attending events as and when required.

The Town Steward will be active in the community 2 days per week, with a High Visual jacket containing the Council's logo. As he goes about his work of litter picking, cleaning signs, planting and maintaining beds and tubs throughout the area, he will encourage public and businesses to take an interest and get involved in whatever small way they can.

The Town Clerk will act as an ambassador for the community and the Town Council, representing the Council at professional events and making herself available to support and meet local organisations wherever possible.

The annual litter pick (Clean for the Queen) will be lead and organised by the Town Council in April each year, when voluntary groups of all ages come together to take pride in the appearance of the area.

The Town Council will continue to involve local schools in gardening and wildlife projects wherever possible. This is particularly the case in Elleray Woods.

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Civic events will be either organised or supported by the Town Council. This includes the Christmas Market and Christmas Lights, Remembrance services at the War Memorial and lighting of the Council beacon on Orrest Head.

The Town Council will continue to support an active Town Twinning Association, maintaining strong links with Diessen through annual visits and celebrations.

CONSULTATION

When the Town Council is seeking views on a specific project or idea it will consult with the community.

Whilst the majority of consultations will be open to the whole community it may on occasion consult with specific stakeholders only.

When planning a consultation the Council will identify the key stakeholders for that specific consultation exercise to ensure they are directly consulted.

Consultations will be publicised as widely as possible and will have a defined end date for submissions.

The Council will be clear about why it is consulting and how the consultation will be used in the Council's decision making process.

The timing of consultations will be considered for example to coincide with events or to avoid clashes with holidays.

The Council shall consider the format of the consultation which may include:

- Open consultation on the Council website
- Consultation documents at key venues around the Parish
- Direct consultation (e.g. letters/leaflets/social media etc)
- Focus groups
- The use of consultation engagement events, for example public meetings or exhibitions.