

Totton & Eling Town Council

Community Engagement Statement

1. **Purpose**

The purpose of community engagement is to effectively involve people in the decision-making processes and the work of the Town Council. It gives a voice to local people as individuals, as well as community groups, public bodies, businesses, and anyone with an interest in the Council’s services and projects. Engagement is a two-way process, which allows the public to talk to the Council about their view and needs and, in return, enables the Council to tell the community about its work, its priorities and how well it is performing.

The aim of Totton and Eling Town Council’s Community Engagement strategy is to provide opportunities for people to participate at whatever level they wish, in order to influence the Council’s service delivery, priorities and policies.

Effective community engagement will help to clearly identify the needs of local people, empower the community in local decision-making, and create a greater level of interest in, and understanding of, local government.

1. **Legislation**

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007) places emphasis on the importance of effective engagement with the community and facilitating inclusive and effective participation by individuals and organisations in local governance.

**3. Our Commitment to Community Engagement**

The Town Council’s commitment to community engagement is enshrined within its Strategic Objectives and incorporated into its 5-Year Plan, Core Values and Mission Statement.

3.1 To consult with, understand, and represent the views and wishes of the citizens of Totton and Eling.

a) Through regular consultation with residents, including town-wide surveys, and representation on local voluntary organisations, assess how well current services meet residents’ needs, understand how those needs are changing and respond effectively to those changes.

b) Consult with, and respond to, District Council, County Council and other Authorities on current services and planned changes, to ensure continuous improvement in services consistent with local needs.

3.2 To help create a socially inclusive and caring community, which embraces all its residents equally, seeking to develop their well-being, knowledge, understanding, and mutual co-operation.

a) Encourage community associations and other voluntary organisations which actively engage in projects that contribute to social inclusiveness and community cohesion.

b) Engage and work with groups and other voluntary organisations to provide for the needs of more vulnerable or isolated groups in Totton and Eling.

**4. Engagement Mechanisms**

The Town Council will engage with its community using the following methods:

1. Provision of information to the community

Council and Committee agendas, reports and minutes are made available on the website and in the Council Office. Agendas are posted on the Council Office noticeboards and website. We produce an Annual Report which is distributed to every household and is freely available from the Town Council’s Information Office and facilities. This provides information on Town Council projects, Councillor contact particulars and details of the precept.

When press releases are sent, they will be sent to all appropriate local media and social media outlets and news stories will be published on the website [www.tottoneling-tc.gov.uk](http://www.tottoneling-tc.gov.uk) as appropriate.

1. Enabling the community to comment
* Via Public Sessions prior to Committee meetings.
* Councillors face-to-face.
* Councillor contact details are available on [www.tottoneling-tc.gov.uk](http://www.tottoneling-tc.gov.uk) and are published in the Annual Town Report which is delivered door-to-door.
* There is a period set aside for public questions at the beginning of every meeting of the Council and within the annual Town Meeting.
* Officers are available to speak to the public at the Civic Centre from 9am to 5pm Monday to Thursday and 9am to 4.30pm Friday.
* We have formal Councillor representation on a wide range of charitable and outside bodies, as well as working in partnership with agencies such as New Forest District Council, Hampshire County Council and Hampshire Police.
* Our annual external audit provides an opportunity for the public to ask questions about our Statement of Accounts and Balance Sheet.
* We carry out targeted consultation to ascertain people’s views on specific topics as and when the need arises.

**5. Standards for Engagement**

The Town Council will adhere to the following standards:

**Inclusion**

* Use plain language.
* Take into account the particular needs of people, especially in hard-to-reach groups, to enable them to participate.
* Listen to, and respect, all opinions received.

**Clarity and Transparency**

* Be clear about what we are asking the public to comment on when seeking peoples’ views.
* Only use engagement and consultation processes when there is a real opportunity for people to influence decision-making and services language.
* Provide feedback wherever possible.

**Visibility**

* Ensure that those directly affected by decisions, policies and plans are aware of the opportunity to engage.

**6. Responsibility**

The success of this strategy lies with all Councillors and Officers, who actively work to enhance community engagement in Town Council decision making and the Town Clerk who is responsible for overseeing its implementation.

**7. Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed on a four-year cycle. However, the policy may be developed and enhanced more frequently in light of ongoing experiences in engaging with the Community.