

PADDOCK WOOD TOWN COUNCIL

STATEMENT OF INTENT AS TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1. Introduction

1.1 Paddock Wood Town Council aims to provide high quality services and to represent the interests of the civil parish. Its conduct is governed by statute. This statement outlines the Council's intentions regarding community engagement.

2. The Community

2.1 The Council is directly responsible to the people of its area, who collectively form 'the community'. Within the community there are a variety of different bodies with whom the council must also engage.

2.2 This group includes:

- Business and their representative bodies.
- Those who use the services provided by the Council, whether residents or not.
- Non-residents working in the Town Council area.
- Visitors, whether tourists or those using the town's facilities and shops.
- Voluntary groups including church and youth organisations.
- Schools and other educational establishments.
- Other statutory bodies providing services within the Town Council area.

3. Aims

3.1 The Council aims to ensure that the community is appropriately involved in its decision-making process.

3.2 Whenever possible and practicable the Council will encourage the involvement of community members to identify their needs and concerns.

4. Opportunities for community involvement

4.1 As a matter of good practice, the Council engages with the community in a variety of ways, including:

- Providing access to the Council's office daily (Monday to Friday)
- A web-site www.paddockwood-tc.gov.uk which includes a wide range of information about the Council and its work as well as about the Council Members themselves;
- social media including Facebook and Twitter
- The publication of a regular report online,
- The publication of an Annual Report summarising activities in the year in question including accounts.

- Displaying throughout the area the agendas for all Council and Committee meetings, including a clear statement encouraging the public to attend; (meetings are currently held remotely and members of the public may join the meeting using the published links)
- Advertising the annual timetable of all Council and committee meetings.
- Issuing press releases to the local media
- Providing a specific period for public questions prior to start of each Council meeting.
- Nominating Councillors to attend meetings of other organisations and groups.
- Organising the annual town meeting open to all residents.
- Publishing contact details for councillors in the Annual Report
- Engaging with stakeholders
- Stakeholder engagement meetings (once Covid 19 restrictions have been lifted)

5. Opportunities for formal representation to the Council

5.1 The Council encourages the attendance at meetings of individuals or organisations.

5.2 On a day to day basis, the Town Clerk is generally available to meet those who may wish to attend the office to discuss matters of interest or concern. The town council address is The Podmore Building, St Andrews Field, St Andrews Road, Paddock Wood TN12 6HT. Tel 01892 837373 or email clerk@paddockwoodtc.co.uk The office is normally open between 9 am and 4 pm, but visitors should call in advance to make sure the clerk is available. (visitors are discouraged during the Covid 19 pandemic when access to the office is limited)

6. Involvement in partnerships

6.1 In addition to nominating representatives to attend meetings of voluntary groups and organisations, the Council often works in partnership with other organisations such as the Police, Borough and County Councils, where formal representation is required.

7. Specific areas for community involvement

7.1 The Town Council leads in the arrangements for the Annual Town Meeting and may invite presentations from guest speakers on a topic of current and particular interest to the community.

7.2 The Town Council holds, when necessary, consultations on major infrastructure projects which have an impact on the community.

7.3 From time to time particular topics arise which are of sufficient community wide interest to justify the organisation of a public meeting. The Council may also undertake consultation on a specific issue.

8. Role of Council Members and Officers

8.1 Councillors are the elected decision makers of the Council. Members of the public are welcome to contact Councillors to raise any issues.

8.2 The Council's officers are staff who are employed to carry out the day to day functions of the Council and make sure that its services are provided for the local community. The Town Clerk is the Proper Officer for the Council, which means he/she has overall responsibility for the provision of Council services.

This policy should be reviewed October 2021.