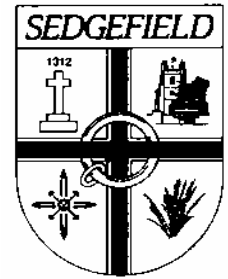


Sedgefield Town Council

Community Engagement: Statement of Intent

Published 1st June 2009



1 Summary

Sedgefield Town Council (STC) is committed to improving our engagement with everyone in the Community: - our residents, businesses, voluntary groups, young and elderly people, and local groups and organisations.

The overarching aim is:

To increase the involvement of people in the life of their communities and in the decision making processes that affect their quality of life and the services they receive.

2 Introduction

Sedgefield Town Council provides local leadership and administers a number of services.

These roles can only be pursued effectively if the Council engages with the Sedgefield community through providing information and encouraging and seeking residents' views.

The Council already employs a number of methods to do this:

- contact details for the Council, individual councillors, the Council office are available in The Council's quarterly newsletter, on the Notice Board and on the Council's website,
- the quarterly newsletter provides details about the opening times of the Council office;
- notices of meetings are posted on each of the Council's notice board and on its website,
- the notices remind members of the community of their entitlement to attend meetings and address the Council,
- copies of planning applications are available for inspection in the Council office,
- the Council publishes an Annual Report a summary of which is distributed to every household and business in the town
- the Council manages its website which provides details of council services and activities and gives access to a range of documents,
- the Council appoints representatives to local voluntary organisations and some Councillors are members of local voluntary organisations in their own right,

The Council has formulated a strategy of engagement which builds on and extends the methods of engagement listed above and to make clear its commitment to working with and through the community.

The Council will review the strategy from time to time to gauge whether residents have been encouraged to

- participate in decision making to secure better services;
- help the Council to better serve the community;
- create a more active and informed community.

3 Aims & Objectives

The council's aims and objectives for seeking community engagement and the outcomes it hopes to achieve are:

Aims to:

- To enable an involved, empowered and active citizenship through:
 - consultation with residents on local issues,
 - reaching out to hard to reach groups,

- seeking the views of young people.
- To communicate information to our community clearly, factually and appropriately through:
 - the management of a website detailing all council services and activities;
 - the publication of a quarterly newsletter distributed to every household;
- To improve our communication with our partners
- Actively being involved in various networking organisations ie: - Sedgefield Together, Residents forum, Development Trust etc.
- To raise the image and reputation of the Council through:
 - inviting residents to be actively involved in our meetings via the public participation
 - publicising widely the Annual Town Meeting
 - encouraging usage of the Council website
 - encouraging the press to attend Council meetings and report on them and, when appropriate, issuing press releases covering activities of the Council
 - Supporting the Town Mayor in representing the community
- To enable every Councillor to maximise their role as elected representatives and community leaders through:
 - the preparation of a comprehensive new members pack
 - uploading of agendas and minutes on the Council website
 - encouraging Councillors to attend meetings of community organisations
 - encouraging Councillors to take up places on community groups and organisations
- To ensure every member of staff understands the council's priorities through:
 - having regular staff appraisals
 - encouraging staff to provide input into the decision making process
 - encouraging staff to actively represent the interest of the Council at community events

4 Engagement

Listed below are the individuals and organisations which the Council wishes to actively engage with:

- Residents of the town
- Users of Town Council Services,
- Community Association.
- Parish hall users,
- Head Teachers and Governors of Infant and Primary Schools, and the Community College
- Young people who live and/or go to school in the Sedgefield
- Retail and other and Businesses in the community,
- Interest groups – clubs and societies e.g. WI, Rotary, Players etc.
- Voluntary organisations,
- Church Groups,
- Farming Community,
- Groups of people defined by a common factor such as age, disability, faith, and other groups,
- Councillors and public service representatives including Council Staff.

5 Action Plan

Town Mayor & Deputy Town Mayor	Encourage Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor to fulfil their civic role and encourage community organisations to invite the Mayor to events.	Staff, Mayor & Deputy Mayor	Ongoing
Minutes	Ensure copies of minutes are available in both hard copy and electronically for residents and community groups including copies lodged with the principal authority or their representatives.	Staff	Ongoing
Annual report	Ensure the Report is available by both hard copy and electronically for residents and the local library including copies lodged with the principal authority or its representatives	Staff	Annually
Offices: Opening Hours	Publicise office opening hours in newsletter and on website and notice boards	Staff	Ongoing
Annual town Meeting	Publicise more widely the meeting to ensure all Sedgfield residents are able to raise matters of interest or concern	Staff & members	Annually
Public Participation	Encourage residents to raise any matters of interest or concern at Council meetings	Members & Staff	Monthly
Noticeboard	Regular update with council and community activities	Staff	Ongoing
Website	Maintain web-site with information on council services and activities	Staff	Ongoing
Newsletter	Produce and distribute quarterly newsletter	Staff & members	Quarterly
Youth Activity	Maintain contact with local schools	Staff & members	Ongoing
Sedgfield Together	Liaise closely with Steering Group and the Partnership	Staff & members	Ongoing
Local Democracy	a) Encourage residents to both vote at and stand for the Town Council in local council elections b) publicise and promote registration as an elector	Staff & members	Ongoing but high priority in 6 months leading up to elections.
Press	Liaise regularly with the press sending details of council meetings	Staff	Ongoing
Principal Authority	Maintain contact with principal authority councillors for Sedgfield to ensure sharing of information	Staff & members	Ongoing