



Seaham Town Council

Community Engagement: Statement of Intent



July 2014

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1 - Summary

1.1 Seaham Town Council (STC) is committed to improving our engagement with everyone in the community which includes our residents, businesses, voluntary groups, young and elderly people, local groups and organisations.

1.2 The Council's 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

2.1 Seaham Town Council provides local leadership and administers a number of services. These roles can only be pursued effectively if the Council engages with the Seaham community through providing information and encouraging and seeking residents' views.

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

- Contact details for the Council and individual Councillors are available in the Council's quarterly newsletter, the Seaham Reporter in the Town Hall and on the website.
- Notices of meetings are posted in the Town Hall Notice Board and on the website and the notices inform the community of their entitlement to attend meetings and address the Council.
- Copies of planning applications are available for inspection in the Town Hall,
- The Council publishes an Annual Report and Council Plan on the website and copies of the document are available from the Town Hall on request.
- 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.

2.3 The Council will review this Statement of Intent 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

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

- 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 such as Destination Seaham.
- 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:
 - 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 meetings
 - 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

4.1 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 Associations
- Head Teachers and Governors of Seaham Schools
- Young people who live and/or go to school in Seaham
- Retail and other businesses in the community
- Interest groups – clubs and societies e.g. WI, Rotary Club, Amateur Dramatic Groups 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	Continuous
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	Continuous
Annual Report and Council Plan	Ensure the Annual Report and Council Plan 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 Council premises.	Staff	Continuous
Annual Town Meeting	Publicise widely the meeting to ensure all Seaham residents are able to raise matters of interest and concern.	Staff & Members	Annually
Public Participation	Encourage residents to raise any matters of interest or concern at Council meetings.	Members & Staff	Monthly
Civic Office Window	Regular update with council and community actives.	Staff	Continuous
Website	Maintain web-site with information on council services and activities.	Staff	Continuous
Seaham Reporter	Produce and distribute quarterly newsletter.	Staff & Members	Quarterly
Youth Activity	Maintain contact with local schools.	Staff & Members	Continuous

Destination Seaham	Liaise closely with the Group.	Staff & Members	Continuous
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	Continuous but high priority in 6 months leading up to elections.
Press	Liaise regularly with the press sending details of council meetings.	Staff	Continuous
Principal Authority	Maintain contact with principal authority councillors for Seaham to ensure sharing of information.	Staff & Members	Continuous