



## **Community Engagement Policy**

### **Aims and Objectives**

#### **Syston Town Council aims to:**

- Represent and promote the interests of the town of Syston and all its people;
- Provide the best possible amenities and services by the efficient use of available resources;
- Actively involve local people in decisions affecting activities in the area;
- Promote equality of opportunity and oppose discrimination;
- Be open and accountable in all it does;
- Support development which is environmentally, socially and economically sound and sustainable;
- Pay particular attention to the needs of our children and young people;
- Enhance quality of life by protecting and enhancing the town's ecological and environmental assets.

#### **In order to achieve these aims, the Council will:**

- Work closely with residents, businesses and community groups;
- Engage with as many people as possible who want to participate in decision making, monitoring services and planning for the future;
- Ensure, that through the use of a wide range of approaches to public involvement and community engagement, it actively encourages the involvement of residents, to capture their views and learn their concerns and effectively use those views as an integral part of the decision-making process;
- Ensure that residents have the opportunities to be heard at every stage, and the capacity to be effective citizens.

#### **The outcomes the Council hopes to achieve are:**

- Improved communication with the local community;
- A better understanding within the community of the role of the Town Council and of its Councillors;
- Local people actively contributing to decision making;
- Improved satisfaction with local public services.

## **2. Defining the community.**

The Council considers the community of Syston to consist of:

- All residents of the town;
- All users of the Town Council's services;
- All those who work within the town;
- All those who own businesses within the town;
- All young people who live and/or go to school within the town;
- All local voluntary organisations, clubs and societies;
- Any group or organisation that represents some or any of the members of the above sections of the community.

Additionally, the Council recognises that there are certain bodies that are crucial to the quality of life in Syston and aims to maintain excellent working relationships with these bodies, including the Police, the other tiers of local government and neighbouring town and other parish councils.

## **3. Provision of information to the community and opportunities for community involvement.**

Information is provided by the Town Council to the community in a number of ways, including:

- The Town Council offices School Street are open Monday to Friday and can provide a wide range of information both on Council services and other town activities and issues;
- The Town Council's website [www.systontc.org.uk](http://www.systontc.org.uk) provides comprehensive information both on the work of the Town Council and on other services, the history of the town, local events, local groups and organisations. The public can contact the Town Council through the website and public consultations are sometimes carried out through the website;
- The Town Council provides seven noticeboards which are used to display agendas for Council meetings and contact details for local Councillors as well as other information of interest to the local community. Additionally, the Council has a Town Information Board at Melton Road Car Park which can be used by local events organisers or groups;
- A new Town Council newsletter is being developed and will be produced quarterly;
- Town councillors' surgeries are held every month at the Community Centre, School Street.
- The Town Council's Newsletter is published quarterly and is available from the Town Council offices, on the website and from the local library;
- The Annual Report is produced in April/May each year and is available from the Town Council offices, on the website and from the local library and it is also presented at the Annual Town Meeting;

- All meetings of the Town Council and its committees are open to the public and a period is set aside at the beginning of each Full Council meeting for public questions relating to items on the agenda. Public questions may also be asked on matters which are not on the agenda, provided that notice has been given to the Town Clerk at least two working days before the date of the meeting;
- Public meetings are called to gauge public opinion about important issues affecting the town such as major planning applications;
- Questionnaires are sometimes used to ask local people's opinions about specific matters and these are distributed to local residents at public meetings or downloadable from the Town Council website;
- Social media sites: the Town Council can be followed on FaceBook and Twitter as well as Linked-in.

#### **4. Opportunities for Formal Representations to the Council.**

- Formal representations to the Council may be made at any time in writing to the Town Clerk;
- A period for public questions and answers is set aside at the beginning of each Full Council meeting.

#### **5. Involvement in Partnerships.**

The Town Council works in partnership with other organisations such as Charnwood Borough Council, Leicestershire County Council and the Police. It also has representatives on the following local organisations:

- Friends of Barkby Road Cemetery;
- St Peter and St Paul Church Yard Panel;
- Syston Christmas Celebration;
- Syston Bowling Club;
- BIFFA Liaison Panel;
- Leicestershire & Rutland Association of Local Councils (LRALC);
- East Midlands in Bloom Panel;

#### **6. Role of Council Members and Officers.**

Council Members (Councillors) are the elected decision makers of the Town Council. Their contact details are available from the Town Council offices, on Town Council noticeboard and on the Town Council website. Members of the public are welcome to contact Councillors to raise any issues.

The Council's Officers 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 she has overall responsibility for the provision of Council services.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

We need to understand whether our services are meeting everyone’s needs and that everyone who needs them has access to those services. We have developed an Equality Impact Assessment process for the assessment of any new or significantly changed policies, practices, procedures, functions and services.

Undertaking Equality Impact Assessments enables us to take action to prevent direct and indirect discrimination by ensuring that as far as possible any negative consequences for a particular group or sector of the community are eliminated, minimised or counterbalanced by other measures.

Our ultimate aim is to improve our services. By making sure we have considered the potential impacts of a policy, strategy or plan at an early stage potential barriers or problems can be avoided and actions put in place these it can be fully incorporated into any decisions and not just a ‘bolt-on’ at the end. Working in this way helps us to integrate and mainstream equalities into our work. Likewise, when reviewing the effectiveness and performance of our services, we can use this procedure to identify equality issues and opportunities as an integral part of our review.

### **Policy adopted by Syston Town Council at its meeting on**

**Signed** .....

**Chairman** .....