COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Adopted at the XXXXXXX meeting of Eastleigh Town Council

Subsequent amendments agreed as follows:

Version	Owner	Date Approved	Minute Ref	Action?	Website updated	Next review
V1-2025	Town Council	23/07/2025	30 / 25 / 2			

Aims and Objectives

Eastleigh Town Council aims to actively encourage residents and local organisations to engage in the decision-making processes that affect their daily lives. Through a wide range of consultation and engagement approaches, the council seeks to create opportunities for the community to provide input into the policies and services it delivers. The council is committed to fostering effective working relationships with all sectors of the community and recognises that engagement takes different forms. The council's objectives are:

- To inform people about the work and services provided by the council.
- To consult with and actively seek out the views of the community.
- To encourage community participation in local government processes.
- To collaborate with individuals, community groups, and organisations to achieve shared goals that benefit the town.
- To build lasting relationships within the community, fostering a sense of ownership and pride in local assets, infrastructure, and projects.

The Community

Eastleigh Town Council is committed to engaging with all sections of the community, including individuals and groups who share a protected characteristic, as well as those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage or who are traditionally underrepresented or harder to reach. The council wish to ensure that all can participate without barriers and have their voices heard.

The council also aims to engage with local businesses, clubs, organisations, and societies active in the town, as well as partners such as local authorities, business improvement districts, and

community organisations. Everyone with an interest in the town's social, economic, and environmental well-being will be given the opportunity to participate in the council's work.

Provision of Information to the Community and Opportunities for Community Involvement

Eastleigh Town Council recognises that people wish to engage with the council in different ways and at varying levels. From submitting a suggestion via email to attending public meetings, the council will ensure that there are multiple avenues for community involvement. Engagement methods include:

- **Website**: The council's website will be a key resource for residents, sharing the latest information about council activities, agendas, minutes, and documents. The website will encourage residents to get involved and will feature a community noticeboard for public announcements and events.
- **Social media**: The council will utilise social media platforms to share news, updates, and engage with the community in a timely and accessible manner.
- **Newsletter**: The Council is exploring the introduction of a newsletter to provide updates on council decisions, projects and upcoming events.
- **Co-option**: To encourage deeper community involvement, the council may provide opportunities for residents and representatives from local businesses and community organisations to co-opt onto working groups, enabling direct participation in council-led projects.
- **Meetings**: All council meetings will be advertised publicly, with time allocated for public participation. These meetings, including the Annual Town Meeting, provide a forum for residents to express their views and engage directly with the council.
- **Surveys**: The council will periodically undertake surveys to gather the community's feedback on various issues. These surveys will help guide the council's decision-making and will be evaluated to improve future engagement strategies.
- **Events:** The council will have representation at local events to build trust with diverse community groups, providing opportunities for live feedback and to promote upcoming work with interactive activities.
- **Specific Projects**: For specific community projects, working parties may be established. Community members will be invited to participate in these working groups, ensuring that local input is integrated into the planning and implementation of projects.

Opportunities for Formal Representations to the Council

Eastleigh Town Council welcomes formal representations from residents and organisations. These representations will typically be considered at the next relevant meeting of the council. In cases where the representation requires the provision of information only, it will be handled by the clerk according to the council's publication scheme. The council has a Complaints Procedure for handling complaints, which is available from the clerk and published on the website. Agendas will be published in advance of meetings, providing residents with the opportunity to make representations before items are discussed. All formal representations will receive a written response.

Involvement in Partnerships

Eastleigh Town Council is committed to working in partnership with other organisations when it is in the best interest of the community. The council will work with local authorities, business improvement districts, community groups, and other stakeholders to achieve shared objectives, fulfil statutory requirements, and ensure that community needs are understood. These partnerships may include collaborations with other government authorities, local businesses, and charitable organisations.

Role of Council Members and Officers in Consultation and Community Engagement

Elected members play an important role in advocating for the community and will actively engage with residents in their capacity as councillors. The council will review and respond to consultation documents from both local and national bodies.

Council members are accessible to residents through:

- Public sessions at council meetings, where residents can engage with councillors directly.
- Private engagements with local groups, organisations, and clubs, where councillors may promote council activities and remain available to constituents.

Council members will maintain regular communication with the community, ensuring that their feedback is heard and considered in the decision-making process.

By adopting this approach, Eastleigh Town Council is dedicated to ensuring that community engagement is at the heart of its work, enabling residents to have a direct influence on the decisions that shape their town.