



Community Engagement Strategy

Introduction

Involving the community is central to Credition Town Council and its ethos of accurately representing the community it has been democratically elected to represent.

This strategy has been prepared to help guide the process of engaging with the community and stakeholders, to ensure that Credition Town Council maintains a robust and well informed Strategic Action Plan that has community ownership at its heart.

Why we need an Engagement Strategy

We need an Engagement Strategy because

- it explains the steps we intend to take to engage with the local community in a proactive and meaningful way
- it describes the processes and methods that we will employ in community engagement
- it specifies how we will inform, communicate with and involve the community

The objectives of the strategy

Our objectives are

- to make sure that we effectively communicate and engage with the entire Credition community so that we achieve a sound Strategic Action Plan whose policies fully reflect the community's views and aspirations
- to make sure that the local community becomes more aware of how the Town Council works and understands what can and cannot be done at a local level
- to promote community interest and engagement through active participation
- to include and encourage volunteers to take part in working groups, to collect and analyse information, investigate opportunities and work up ideas into creative new projects and policy proposals

Our Pledge

It is imperative that engagement with the community is not a one-off event and it is vital that people continue to be involved in the whole process. To do this we will embrace five key principles of community engagement:

1. **INFORM:** provide balanced and objective information
2. **CONSULT:** actively seek community views, input and feedback
3. **INVOLVE:** work with the community so concerns and aspirations are understood
4. **COLLABORATE:** work with the community to identify solutions
5. **EMPOWER:** enable appropriate and necessary actions to be undertaken



To help us fulfil the pledge we will:

- ensure everyone can take part by overcoming barriers that some individuals have
- be clear on what we are trying to achieve
- make engagement easy to understand
- analyse and evaluate all responses and views
- share engagement responses and views in a timely manner
- review the methods we have used and reflect on which elements worked well and where there are gaps and why
- analyse our engagement process and adapt it as necessary
- comply with the Data Protection Act when handling personal information

How we currently engage with the community

- Allocation of 'Public Question Time' at the beginning of each Council and Committee meeting. This provides an opportunity for local residents to ask questions about the work of the Council, including any items on the agenda.
- The publishing of a calendar of all Town Council meetings (including Committees) on the Town Council website.
- The publishing of agendas and minutes for all Council meetings on the Town Council website and on Town Council notice boards in the town.
- Publishing contact details of all Council members and officers on the Town Council website, notice boards and in the quarterly newsletter.
- Production of a quarterly Town Council newsletter highlighting the latest developments within the Council and wider community as well as promoting local events. This is also published on the Town Council website.
- The Mayor holds regular surgeries in Credition Town Square on the first and third Saturday of every month, when members of the public are welcome to come along and have a chat.
- The Council Office is open to the public Monday to Friday 10.00 am to 2.00 pm and at other times by appointment.
- A "contact us" form is available on the Town Council website
- Facebook and Twitter accounts have been set up and are used as a means of immediate two way communication with the community.
- Active involvement in the Annual Town Meeting
- The annual External Audit provides the opportunity for questions to be asked about the latest Statement of Accounts. A copy of the Council's Income & Expenditure Account is published within the Annual Report and uploaded to the finance page on the Town Council website.
- Consultation exercises, surveys and questionnaires are undertaken for specific projects and tasks such as the Credition Neighbourhood Plan.
- Inviting members of the public to actively participate in projects and Committee Meetings such as the Peoples Park Wildlife Area and Christmas in Credition.



- Use of e-mail groups (e.g. town businesses, local community groups and organisations) to help publicise Town Council events and initiatives, and to seek views on current issues.
- Regular press releases featured in local media keep the general public informed of community events, projects and other Town Council items of interest.
- Councillors and officers act as representatives for Outside Bodies comprising community groups, local organisations, and other government agencies, and regularly attend their meetings.
- The ability to provide Town Council information, when requested, to those with a need for alternative formats or languages.

Future community engagement

Promoting the Council's community engagement strategy will be an on-going priority and the Council is committed to maintaining and improving the above activities and services in the future.

When considering community engagement the Council will consider when, who, how and where it will consult and further details regarding these elements are detailed below.

When we will consult

We will aim to set up public meetings and events as and when required. We will attend meetings of target groups at times convenient to them. We will use various methods of engaging the public in places, at a variety of times, to achieve as wide a coverage of the general population as possible.

Whom we will consult

- Schoolchildren (aged 7 - 16)
- Young people (aged 17 - 25)
- Older groups
- Commuters (people living in the community but working outside)
- Housing estate representatives
- Community groups and societies
- Single parent families
- People with physical needs
- People with learning needs
- Faith groups
- People employed in the community
- Local businesses
- Minority ethnic groups
- Families
- Migrant workers
- Voluntary bodies acting in the area



- Visitors/tourists
- Head teachers

Other bodies

- Mid Devon District Council
- Devon County Council
- The Environment Agency
- English Heritage
- Natural England
- Emergency Services
- Adjoining parishes
- Highways Agency
- Medical Services

How we will consult

- Self-completion questionnaires
- Public meetings
- Focus groups
- Stakeholder seminars
- Exhibitions
- Ward councillor contact
- In depth interviews/face to face
- Questionnaires – ‘open’ questions
- Stakeholder meetings
- Forums – area, local, website
- Community meetings
- Workshop or group events
- Open day events
- Social Media – Facebook/Twitter

Methodology

Several methods of engagement may have to be used to get the whole community involved. We will ask ourselves the following questions before embarking on a chosen method:

- What are we trying to find out?
- From whom is the information required?
- How would they prefer to respond?
- What information do they need before they can respond?
- Is something more than a simple exchange of information required?



- How will this information be recorded?
- What resources are needed and what resources do we have?
- How much time is needed and how much time do we have?

Where we will consult

We will use different venues to help reach the whole community, for example:

- Council Chamber/Offices
- Community centres
- Schools
- Pubs
- Churches
- Supermarkets
- Library/other public buildings
- On the street
- Community/festival events
- Clubs/society meeting rooms

Our commitment to you

Data protection

When we deal with feedback we will comply with the Data Protection Act 1998. Details will be held by Credition Town Council and will remain secure and confidential. Details will only be used for research purposes and will not be passed on to any third parties or used for marketing purposes in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. In all our dealings with the public, we are committed to following the Human Rights Act 1998.

Freedom of Information Act

When we deal with feedback we will comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000. We will publish a summary of the information gathered and detail how the results are being used.

Equal Opportunities

We will comply with Equal Opportunity legislation. We recognise that the provision of equal opportunities in all our activities will benefit Credition. All members of the public will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against.

Health and Safety Act 1974

We will ensure any events and activities take into consideration the health and safety of everyone involved. Risk assessments will be carried out as and when required.



Safeguarding

We are committed to safeguarding the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and will ensure that appropriate safeguarding measures are built into the design of events involving children, young people and vulnerable adults. Where necessary, DBS checks will be carried out on anyone working directly with this section of our community.