



Community Engagement Strategy

1. Introduction

Sprowston Town Council has developed a community engagement strategy with the aim of constructing a standard for engagement with its residents and partners.

It recognises that the services it provides must reflect the needs of its residents and the locality.

Sprowston Town Council strongly believes that its residents should be involved in decisions affecting them and their neighbourhood and in shaping the future of their town.

2. Aims

The aim of the strategy is to improve the way in which the Council engages and consults its residents and partners on important issues by:

- informing, consulting and involving
- being inclusive and engaging with all of its residents and partners;
- ensuring views are listened to and used to develop, enhance and improve services, the environment and the quality of life for residents.

3. Objectives

- To improve, plan and shape the future of the town according to local needs and priorities.
- To improve the quality and delivery of services
- To use engagement to inform decision making, ensuring decisions are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the town
- To enhance the wellbeing of the town
- To be stronger, more active and cohesive town

4. How this will be achieved

Community engagement will be achieved by Sprowston Town Council by communicating, consulting, supporting and working together with its residents.

The Council will be open and accountable in its dealings with residents and the community. It will make information on its policies and procedures freely available.

4.1 Communication

Communicating with members of the town will be achieved in many ways to ensure all sections of the community are reached.

Sprowston Matters, which is delivered to every house in Sprowston, informs residents on important issues and will be developed as a medium for consultation and include articles on topical issues.

The Council's Website has a wealth of local information and is updated on a weekly basis. Special events and important notices will continue to be added regularly. All agendas are advertised as required under the Local Government Act 1972, including on the website, and minutes of the meetings are included on the website within a calendar month of the meeting. It may be possible to develop the website to include a forum or weblog, however, the potential for breach of security must first be explored.

Information leaflets are available from the Council's office and can also be downloaded from the website. New leaflets will be added as necessary.

Meetings of the Council are open to the public and include an opportunity for residents to engage with councillors. All meetings include an adjournment for public participation and start at 7:30pm.

Council's Noticeboards will be used to convey details of contact for residents wishing to address members, the office opening times and dates of meetings.

Town Council Office is required to play a neutral role so that residents can be fully involved and be confident that they are receiving unbiased information and support. This neutral involvement allows more flexibility in the service and the personal element of the contact hopefully encourages more involvement from the hard to reach members of the community.

4.2 Consultation

Consulting all residents on important issues will be key to the strategy. It will ensure those most affected are able to put forward an opinion and given the opportunity to make a difference.

Ensuring consultations include all members of the town by identifying the hard to reach groups such as youths, the elderly, the housebound, the disabled, ethnic minorities etc. may require establishing different engagement channels for them.

4.3 Support

Supporting local organisations and engaging with them will assist them in meeting their own aims and objectives.

Supporting local projects and participating in local events will raise the awareness of the Council and its aims and objectives.

Supporting residents in shaping the future of their town will bring about a more cohesive community.

The Council will be receptive to requests from residents or communities and will attempt to be flexible in order to ensure their opinions are known not only to the town council but also to other organisations. This may be by including an item for discussion on an agenda, allowing a group to put their opinions into an official report undertaken by the Town Council or by meeting young people at a local playground.

4.4 Acting Together

Acting together with residents and partners in finding solutions to local problems will ensure they will be accepted and fit for purpose.

Acting together to carry out agreed action plans, will engage the community in working with the Council to enhance the environments and the quality of their lives.

Acting together in decision making and policy drafting will ensure they have a voice and can make a difference.

5. Measuring Success

Success will be measured by predefined targets, including annual reviews of consultation outcomes, monitoring residents' participation in consultation processes and increases in their involvement in local projects and events.

6. Strategy Reviews

Annual reviews of the consultation processes and results will be used as a continual improvement process for changes or amendments to the strategy.

7. Action Plan

Activity	Action	Statement
Raise awareness of consultation processes	Promote it through Sprowston Matters, the website, local media	Promoting the strategy will be an ongoing priority
Investigate setting a website consultation or forum facility	Investigate the possibility, usefulness and disadvantages of such a facility	Access levels to the website could be a serious security issue and must be thoroughly researched
Work with Police and Partner Authorities	Strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones	Working with partners is already a priority and has seen involvement of the SNAP panel.
Identify minority/hard to reach groups	Identify these groups and identify channels of contact and consultation	These groups are often the forgotten few. Identifying them will ensure they are included in consultation processes

Identify consultation/ focus groups	Identify members of the town with specific skills who can be consulted on specialist subjects. Identify members of the town willing to be included in surveys	This will enable smaller consultations to be initiated where specialist advice is required to inform decision making
Identify consultation needs, priorities and importance	Establish need, priorities and importance of consultation	This will ensure there is no overkill, overlap or misuse of the consultation process
Identify benefits of consultation	Identify whether there is a real opportunity for people to influence decisions	No consultation should be undertaken unless the outcome can be influenced. Unless this is possible a consultation will be meaningless and residents will become disinterested in the process
Feedback on consultations	Agree methods of feedback to residents and partners and ensure this is adhered to and includes details of the use of information gained	This will keep all parties involved in the process and updated with the situation
Ensure outcomes of consultations are used to inform decisions and policies	Use the outcome of consultations to inform decision making and shape policies	All consultations will be undertaken to judge the best possible outcome for residents, locality and the environment
Review outcome of key consultations	Review consultation outcomes annually to highlight any failings in the processes	This will enable identification of any changes and amendments required to the strategy