

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Effective and meaningful community engagement is at the heart of the Government's drive to secure better services, a stronger public realm and more cohesive communities. Understanding the full remit of activities that combine to deliver effective community engagement provides a framework on which we can build an engagement strategy that meets the needs of our community.
- 1.2 The strategy sets out an approach to the way that the Council engages with the community to enable us to involve and work with local stakeholders and partners to deliver the shared vision for Leighton-Linslade as set out in Big Plan II.

2. What is Community Engagement?

- 2.1 Community engagement is about giving local people a voice and involving them in decisions that affect them, their communities and their neighbourhood. This might involve communities in the planning, development and delivery of services and can include individuals, voluntary and community organisations as well as principal authorities and other public sector bodies. At the heart of community engagement is the development of relationships, open and clear communication, listening and building understanding of the people and places within the town.
- 2.2 Engagement is not a single process and can happen in a number of ways; from the simple provision of information through to community empowerment 'letting go' and allowing others to take the decisions and make things happen. The Government drive to improve community engagement centres on developing the processes around empowerment, involvement and participation. These need to be supported by sound approaches to the delivery of good engagement – information, communication and consultation.



[Understanding types of engagement](http://www.improvementnetwork.gov.uk) – www.improvementnetwork.gov.uk

3. Objectives

- 3.1 To work to create a well informed community where everyone can contribute to the ideal of a town to be proud of, where people will choose to live, work and visit.
- 3.2 The challenge is to continue to build on the level of community engagement that the Council achieved during the production of The Big Plan and Big Plan II.
- 3.3 To provide high quality services and promote a sense of well-being by making the right choices.
- 3.4 To provide quality and efficient services by :
 - 3.4.1 engaging and consulting with the community to achieve effective and informed views (*Representation*)
 - 3.4.2 building a vibrant and sustainable environment through partnership working (*Environment*)
 - 3.4.3 promoting social well-being and a sense of community (*Community Development*)
 - 3.4.4 providing quality services and value for money (*Services*)
 - 3.4.5 supporting and promoting local business development (*Business*).

4. Guiding Principles

- 4.1 To meet the challenge, and the expectation of the community, the Council will need to use the most appropriate ways to communicate and engage with the community and our guiding principles should be :
- 4.1.1 All communication and consultation should be clear concise and relevant avoiding jargon and unnecessary information. We should also be clear about the purpose of the activity.
 - 4.1.2 Communication and involvement should provide everyone with the opportunity to get involved if they want to.
 - 4.1.3 To ensure that we are clear about what can be achieved and provide the opportunity for people to be involved effectively where they can influence the outcome.
 - 4.1.4 Promote a positive approach which is constructive and encourages ongoing involvement but also demonstrates clear links between the activities and the benefits to the community.

5. What we do now

- 5.1 Sub-Committees and Task and Finish Groups to take forward particular items from Big Plan II.
- 5.2 Public question time at all meetings of the Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Task and Finish Groups
- 5.3 Consultations/Questionnaires/Public Exhibitions
- 5.4 Website - contains details of Councillors and contact details for officers of the Council. Has the facility to run online surveys as appropriate. Communicates information about the Council and the community.
- 5.5 Facebook – communicates information and allows the public to interact with Council officers.
- 5.6 Bi-monthly Newsletter – this contains details of all Town Councillors to enable residents to contact councillors.
- 5.7 Tactic (Teenage Advice and Information Centre) - helps with ‘hard to reach’ teenagers who would not consider joining other more formal organisations.
- 5.8 Councillors’ Surgeries – combined surgeries with Central Bedfordshire Council held monthly surgeries in the library.
- 5.9 Notice Boards – various boards throughout the town.
- 5.10 Central Bedfordshire Council – works closely with the principal authority e.g. Partnership Committee, Let’s Talk Together public meetings.

- 5.11 Formed a closer working relation with the business community.
- 5.12 Signed up to the Bedfordshire and Luton Compact.

6. What we will do

- 6.1 We need to provide more feedback to residents to demonstrate the value of the engagement processes and the benefits to the community.
- 6.2 Continue to explore new ways of involving the public in the Council's activities.
- 6.3 Work to set up a weblog or online forum to enable residents to have contact with Councillors and officers to deal with their questions and queries.
- 6.4 Consider broadening the use of social networking media.
- 6.5 Review working with the community via the Partnership Committee or a similar forum.

Adopted on 25 June 2012.