

Westerham Town Council

Communication & Community Engagement Policy

Engaging for the future

Purpose

Westerham Town Council ("the Council") is committed to communicating and engaging with the communities in Westerham and Crockham Hill to take their views into account and work with them in a collaborative way for the benefit of the community.

This Policy sets out the principles for all of the Council's communication and engagement activities and outlines the plan covering the period of Council's 3 year Business Plan.

Successful engagement is a conversation not a survey – a process not an event. Engagement should be a meaningful two-way conversation that achieves visible, transparent, positive and more collaborative change.

Principles

The Council will:

- provide information in a timely manner, encourage and facilitate informed comment from residents, interested individuals and groups so that decisions reflect the needs of the community;
- ensure that channels of communication are clear and easy to access
- use a mixed media approach to include using social media, digital platforms, website, notice boards, leaflets and banners to ensure that all groups within the community have the opportunity to participate;
- review the Policy regularly to ensure that it remains appropriate and effective.
- build the trust of residents to ensure participation in consultation so that longer-term engagement is constructive.
- ensure all communications come from the office.

Putting Principles into Practice

In order to make these principles 'real', Council has drawn up a plan for both communication and engagement covering the period of the Business Plan.

The aim of the plan is to build on current activities, expand the means by which residents can interact with the Council and to reach out to other groups within the community.

The pandemic has highlighted the need to expand the channels of communication used by Council to include the greater use of digital and this policy now includes digital engagement concepts.

ADOPTED: Council 15th March 2021
REVIEWED Four yearly

Westerham Town Council: Communications and Community Engagement Plan 2019 – 2023

Area	Current activity – 2020-21	Short term development	Action taken/Proposed	Priorities 2021/22/23
Communication	Website	Review and update website	Quote obtained for update.	Assuming update agreed by Council, resource and funding will need to be built into Business Plan.
	Facebook (followers doubled now 751)	Focus on information posts.	Facebook used increasingly.) To build on positive interaction with the community.	To target quicker, more frequent communications
	Instagram	Use the same posts as Facebook. Build an Instagram identity, there are more business users.	A tablet has been purchased to allow staff to use Instagram.	Build up business users to enable better communication with local business.
	Councillors	To consider whether each cllr has the IT equipment necessary. To consider drop-in surgeries.	To put on Council Agenda for discussion. To put on Council Agenda for discussion.	Keep under review. Build into Business Plan. Keep under review.
	Council meetings	Promote agendas on social media. Explore continued use of virtual meetings in addition to face to face meetings when they can resume. To consider going paper light.	Use Instagram as well as Facebook to promote WTC message. To put on Council Agenda for discussion.	Promote greater attendance at meetings through advance publicity on items likely to be of interest. Explore use of Jamboard for digital meetings. To consider IT equipment needed for meetings in order to be able to go paper light. All above have budgetary implications and if agreed would need to be built into Business Plan.
	Council agendas	Highlight key issues at each	Each meeting identifies items to	Continue, but focus on

		meeting	be publicised using the appropriate medium.	speedy communications
	Annual Report	Produce 'short form' for wider circulation	Reports put in TN16/Edenbridge Magazine over two months following meeting	Produce 'headlines' for immediate publication
	Annual Town Meeting	Encourage greater level of attendance (publicity). Explore using a virtual platform for 2021.	Stalls format worked initially; new ideas needed.	Consult residents on how best to engage with at Annual Meeting.
	TN16	Review publication use	Monthly inserts in TN16	Continue.
	Edenbridge Magazine for CH	Regular insert in magazine	Notices in local pub also effective	Continue
	Notice Boards	Maintain and manage,	Noticeboards kept up to date CH NB determine ownership?	Continue
	Banners	To use when required	Remove when no longer relevant	Continue
Engagement	Consultations on specific topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KGF Pavilion • KGF Play Area 	Continue as needed on specific issues. Develop digital consultation, explore use of Commonplace (cost involved)	Development of King George's field, using face to face, paper & on-line (survey monkey), use a digital platform and continue a presence at community events.	Grow on-line community Increase visibility and availability of Councillors – online, at events, through other organisations
Planning consultations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government White Paper • Local Plan? 	Await further details on system of consultation on major planning issues which better meets District & County timetables	Closer communication with SDC resulted in ability to engage residents of both Westerham and Oxted to reflect the views of residents on major planning application.	Build relationship with local landowner.
Councillors	Links with specific groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Club • School Council • Town Partnership • Westerham Hall • Senior Citizen groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with Residents' Forum • Develop links with retired communities • Develop role of Youth Forum • Develop online surveys • Develop digital platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forget-me-not Cafe. Via Community Warden • New Youth Bus and improved youth Club • Links with new Headteacher established 	Continue to build on all.