Ross-on-Wye Town Council

Community Engagement Statement of Intent

1 Aims and Objectives

The Town Council exists to serve the community of Ross-on-Wye and the Council believes it can operate more effectively by engaging the community in its decision making and the provision of its services to those residents. The Town Council also considers it necessary to develop and maintain dialogue with residents and their representative groups.

This strategy is part of the Council's commitment to creating and maintaining effective working relationships with all sectors of the community, based on trust, openness and constructive challenge.

To achieve this, the Town Council has the following aims, objectives and wished for outcomes.

Aims:

- work more closely with residents, businesses and voluntary groups to achieve agreed aims for the benefit of the town
- engage with as many people as possible who want to participate in decision making, monitoring services and planning for the future
- ensure that, through the use of a wide range of approaches to public involvement and community engagement, we actively encourage the involvement of residents to capture views and learn their concerns and effectively use those views as an integral part of the decision-making process
- ensure that residents have the opportunities to be heard at every stage, and the capacity to be effective citizens

Objectives:

- to develop the 5 Year Plan which involves public consultation and links a three-year rolling work programme to the annual budget setting
- to provide information either via the website, any appropriate social media, newsletter, local press, pop up stalls or Councillor surgeries
- to receive and consider information through the system of Councillor representation on groups; public sessions before Council meetings; and other communications
- to monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Communities Act in Herefordshire through the Communities, Markets & Tourism Sub-Committee, and play a full part in any initiatives arising from this

- to consider the needs of minorities and hard to reach groups when designing communications
- to ensure all Council meetings are fully accessible to the residents of Ross-on-Wye

Outcomes:

- improved communication through establishment of new channels of engagement
- residents understanding the role of the Council and Councillors and the differing responsibilities of the town and county councils
- improved engagement with local communities, with more people feeling that they are involved in decision-making and a higher percentage of people involved in volunteering
- improved satisfaction with local public services

2 Defining the Community

Ross-on-Wye is a small market town in Herefordshire, with a population of approximately 11,500. It has a large number of small, independent local shops and businesses, several national chain shops and building societies. It has a weekly market on Thursdays and Saturdays which is run by the Town Council. In addition, there are occasional markets throughout the year. There are a number of industrial estates providing employment. There are also a number of primary schools and one academy. The town is well served by doctors and dentists and benefits from a community hospital.

The community may be defined as consisting of:

- residents of the parish of Ross-on-Wye
- retail and industrial businesses in the area
- young people who live/attend school in the parish
- The local Police, Fire & Rescue and Ambulance Services
- Local clubs and societies
- Voluntary organisations
- Residents with disabilities or illness, both mental and physical
- Church groups
- Other groups of people defined by a common factor such as age, disability, faith etc.
- Councillors and public service representatives including Council staff and contractors
- Visitors to Ross for work, leisure or services

3 Provision of Information to the Community

The Town Council Newsletter is circulated electronically and hard copies can be collected from public outlets around the town, including the Library. It will also be available electronically on the Council's website.

There is a Town Council notice board, situated outside the Town Hall displaying contact details for the office, notices and agendas of all Council meetings and community

information. The notice board located at the cemetery is used for displaying regulations relating to the management and maintenance of the cemetery and there is one at the Bandstand to display events in the area.

Two electronic Visitor Information Points are located at the Market Place and the Library, which provide a wealth of local information and assistance for people visiting the town.

The Town Council website address is widely published, and the site contains all the information an individual might wish to know about the Town Council, including minutes of meetings, policy documents, accounts, annual report and contact details for the Mayor and Town Councillors.
Agendas and minutes of meetings are available in the Town Council Office, and to download from the website.

The Council's Facebook, Instagram and X pages and newsletter are useful tools for promoting events and passing on information to a wider audience.

4 Opportunities for Community Involvement

The Town Council engages with the community in a variety of ways, newsletters and use of notice boards, through the website and social media channels, through the Annual Town Meeting, pop up stalls, Councillor surgeries, occasional public meetings on specific issues and surveys on the website.

The Council welcomes feedback from members of the community and recognises a desire to engage with the Council at different levels, i.e., letter or e-mail, telephone or through the submission form on the website and attendance at Council meetings.

Town Councillors are available to talk face-to-face upon request.

5 Opportunities for Formal Representations to Council

During Council meetings 15 minutes is set aside for public participation and the Town Council invites and welcomes public participation. However, if a comprehensive and/or detailed response is required, it is suggested that the Committee Clerk is notified at least 10 days prior to the meeting to enable research to be undertaken.

6 Involvement in Partnerships

The Council recognises the benefits of corporate partnerships and the mutually beneficial relationships formed between organisations whose purposes are to pursue a common goal based on shared values.

The Town Council has committed its support to the work of the Community Development Trust (CDT) and the Talk Community Programme delivered through Herefordshire Council.

The Council pledged its support through the formal signing of the Armed Forces Covenant in 2020 in formal recognition of the value that the Armed Forces Community, Regular and Reserve Service Personnel, Cadet Force Adult Volunteers, service leavers, veterans and their spouses and families bring to our community.

The Town Council is involved with many voluntary and charitable organisations within the town through its representation on a wide range of Outside Bodies.

7 Role of Council Members and Officers

The Town Council consists of 18 Councillors whose contact details are made available to all residents in the newsletter and on the Town Council website.

Councillors actively engage in communicating with residents, face-to face, and respond to telephone calls and e-mails with swift follow-up action. In a private capacity, they belong to local clubs and organisations, where they may, if they so wish, promote the work of the Town Council and be available to residents.

The Town Council Office at Town Hall, Cantilupe Road is usually open each weekday from 09.30 until 13.00 and outside these times staff can be contacted by voicemail, e-mail or personal appointment.

The Council also employ grounds maintenance and other outdoor staff who work in a number of locations. Staff often have direct contact with the public and naturally have to field questions and enquiries. The ability to do this effectively and courteously is as important as any other element of the Council's work in the community and can provide good feedback on the views of people on the services offered by the Council.

8 Specific Areas for Community Involvement

The Town Council undertakes to consult the community should it resolve to facilitate any major projects within the town and to widely publicise these through the media and its own communication channels.

9 Other

If any resident is dissatisfied with the services of the Town Council, the Town Council has a complaints procedure for handling complaints which is available from the office or to download from the website.

This document will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Management Committee of the Town Council to ensure it reflects the changing aims and objectives of the Town Council.

Reviewed by the Management Committee July 2025