

Newent Town Council

Community Engagement Policy

(Adopted by Council on 25th February 2019 and to be reviewed annual)

Statement of Intent as to Community Engagement

1. Aims and Objectives

Newent Town Council aims to build on the way it engages and consults on important issues by ensuring that it:

- Represents and promote the interests of Newent and all its people.
- Works more closely with residents, businesses and community groups, to understand their concerns and effectively use those views as an integral part of the decision-making process.
- Engages with as many people as possible who want to participate in decision-making, monitoring services and planning for the future.
- Ensures that residents have the opportunities to be heard.
- Promotes equality of opportunity and opposes discrimination.
- Is open and accountable in all it does (total transparency).
- Supports development which is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.
- Provide services and facilities that are more responsive to community needs

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. The outcomes the Council hopes to achieve include:

- Improved communication with the local community.
- A better understanding within the community of the role of the Town Council and of its Councillors.
- Local people feeling that they are involved in decision making.
- Improved satisfaction with local public services/and the inclusive discussion as to what additional services the council should look to implement.

2. Defining the Community

The Council considers the community of Newent to consist of:

- All residents of the parish, including residents of care or residential homes.
- All users of the Town Council's services.
- All those who work within the parish.
- All those who own businesses within the parish.
- All young people who live and/or go to school within the parish.
- All local voluntary organisations, clubs and societies.
- Any group or organisation that represents some, or any, of the above cross sections of the community.

Additionally, the Council recognises that there are certain bodies that are crucial to the quality of life in Newent and aims to maintain excellent working relationships with these bodies, including: the Police, the NHS and various voluntary care organisations, other tiers of local government and neighbouring town and parish councils.

3. Provision of information to the community and opportunities for community involvement

Information provided by the Town Council complies with The Transparency Code and General Data Protection Regulation legislation.

Information is provided by the Town Council to the community in a number of ways, including via:

- The Town Council Office; 1st Floor, Newent Community Centre, Ross Road, Newent, GL18 1BD, open to the public on Tuesday to Thursday 9.30 am – 12.00 pm and 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm.
- The Town Council's website www.newenttowncouncil.org.uk which provides comprehensive information both on the work of the Town Council and on other services, local events, local groups and organisations.
- Various notice boards around the town which are used to display agendas for Council meetings and contact details for local councillors as well as other information of interest to the local community.
- The Town Council's Newsletter, "The Market House" published monthly in the Newent Magazine which is delivered to properties as well as being available from various businesses in the town. A more detailed version is also published on the council's website.
- The Annual Report, produced in April each year and is given at the Annual Parish Meeting and included in the minutes.
- Public meetings, called to gauge public opinion concerning important issues affecting the town such as major road closures.
- The local community is welcome to attend Council Meetings and public participation is provided for on the agendas

4. Opportunities for Formal Representations to the Council

Formal representations to the Council may be made at any time in writing to the Town Clerk or at a Town Council/Committee Meeting.

5. Involvement in Partnerships

The Town Council often works in partnership with other organisations such as Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, the Police, the NHS, the local schools and many voluntary and charitable sectors.

The Town Council is also actively involved with the many local organisations including:

- Newent Initiative Trust
- British Royal Legion (Newent Branch)
- Citizens Advice Forest of Dean
- Newent Onion Fayre Committee
- Newent in Bloom
- Newent Doctors/Patients Discussion Group
- Newent Memorial Hall Committee
- Newent United Charity
- Newent Allotment Association
- Cliffords Mesne Village Hall Committee
- Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Tourism Association
- Forest of Dean Health Forum
- GAPTC
- Gloucestershire Rural Community Council
- Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum
- Gloucestershire Playing Fields Association
- Freedom Leisure Joint Users Group

6. Role of Council Members and Officers

Council Members (Councillors) are the elected decision makers of the Town Council.

Their contact details are available from the Town Council Office and on the Town Council website.

Members of the public are welcome to contact Councillors to raise any issues.

The Council's Officers are employed by the Council to carry out the day to day functions of the Council, making sure the Council effectively and efficiently service the local community.

The Town Clerk is the Proper Officer of the Council and is responsible for ensuring procedural/financial protocol is correct and has overall responsibility for managing the Council's affairs on a daily basis and its employees.