

New Mills Town Council - Community Engagement Policy



1. SCOPE

This policy sets out the role of community engagement and its importance, how New Mills Town NMTC (NMTC) engages the wider community and identifies the needs/aspirations of the community and how NMTC can improve community engagement.

Community engagement is concerned with giving local people a voice and involving them in decisions which affect them and their community. This may include individuals, voluntary and community organisations as well as other public-sector bodies.

It provides opportunity for local people to talk to NMTC about their aspirations and/or needs in their community and neighbourhood.

It allows NMTC to consult with and inform people about what services it provides, how it prioritises, how policies are determined and how well it is performing.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the policy are to:-

- 2.1 encourage effective local community engagement
- 2.2 ensure that embedded throughout NMTC there is clear understanding of the need to engage with communities about decisions that affect them
- 2.3 enable aspirations/comments/suggestions obtained from community engagement to have an impact on decision making and the way services are being delivered
- 2.4 identify how NMTC can enhance its profile by improving engagement with the wide community (with specific reference to hard to reach groups)
- 2.5 encourage feedback whether positive or negative.

In order that:-

- 2.6 the problems and needs of local people are clearly identified so that appropriate new or improved facilities/services can be provided
- 2.7 those participating feel empowered by being involved in decision making in their local community
- 2.8 there may be enhanced leadership and greater interest in elections and standing for NMTC.

3. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The key aspects of community engagement include:-

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- 3.1 development of a network of relationships between NMTC, individuals, voluntary and community groups
- 3.2 clear, honest and open communication to ensure that information is made accessible to all groups
- 3.3 listening and understanding from a range of people to identify aspirations, needs and problems of local people and groups
- 3.4 providing accurate and unbiased information that sets out the significance of the issues and makes it clear what can be influenced by parishioners and when parishioners input is particularly required.

4. NMTC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

NMTC will facilitate community engagement in the following ways:-

- 4.1 by holding an Annual Parish Meeting to allow residents to question and review how the elected members help shape the community. The main objective of the annual meeting must be to provide and encourage two-way communication between the community and Councillors.
- 4.2 providing opportunities for parishioners to have their say about decisions, services and plans. All meetings of NMTC and its Committees are open to the public and press. Residents can access agendas for meetings via the New Mills website and noticeboards.

Facilities also exist where residents can, where appropriate or necessary, make written reports, present petitions or have a case presented on their behalf to Councillors.

- 4.3 making relevant information available on what decisions are being considered and how residents can influence or contribute to the discussions in good time. Methods used to ensure engagement will be through the New Mills website, noticeboard, Twitter, Facebook, notices, agendas, word of mouth and such other methods as NMTC considers appropriate.
- 4.4 planning applications are considered at NMTC meetings. The opportunities for people to speak applies equally to these agenda items.

Equal opportunity is given to applications/supporters, objectors and local community groups.

- 4.5 the Town Clerk's 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.

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- 4.6** details of how to contact the Town Clerk are shown on the NMTC website
- 4.7** NMTC will produce and publish on its website a list of annual NMTC and Committee dates to include the start times of the meetings and the agenda for each meeting.
- 4.8** NMTC will be open and accountable in its dealings with residents and the community. It will make information on its policies and procedures freely available.
- 4.9** NMTC 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 NMTC but also to other organisations.
- 4.10** Councillors will continue to represent NMTC on various outside bodies to ensure that they are kept informed of the community's needs.

5. COMMUNICATION

NMTC is committed to improving community engagement by:-

- 5.1** continuing all the above activities and services into the future and improving relationships with community groups, including developing measures to harness the views and opinions of people and groups who are often missed out of community engagement activities.
- 5.2** NMTC will be proactive and will be willing to consider any reasonable opportunities that support its purpose of making information available and increasing contributions from the community, especially those difficult to reach.
- 5.3** when dealing with controversial issues that affect a particular community then consideration will be given to holding a public meeting or some other suitable form of public consultation.
- 5.4** consultations and surveys are to be considered when necessary and appropriate and results will be made available.
- 5.5** continuing to work with others to produce and review community-led policies.
- 5.6** identifying and embracing opportunities to work with other local community groups when the need arises.
- 5.7** publicising the positive results that have been achieved from working relationships between NMTC and other community groups in order to encourage new relationships/partnerships to be formed and to raise community spirit.

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5.8 promoting elections and the importance of the democratic process and the value of being a Councillor.

5.9 Promoting the value to the parish of volunteering.

6. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed three years after it has been adopted by NMTC.