

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document forms the Council's Community Engagement Strategy. It sets out:
- The role of community engagement and its importance.
  - How Grampound with Creed Parish Council engages the wider community and identifies the needs and aspirations of the community.
  - How the Council can improve community engagement.
- 1.2 The objectives of this strategy are to:
- Encourage effective local community engagement.
  - Ensure that embedded throughout the Council there is a clear understanding of the need to engage with communities about decisions which affect them.
  - Enable the aspirations/comments/suggestions etc. obtained from community engagement to have an impact on decision making and the way in which services are being delivered.
  - Identify how the Council can enhance its profile by improving engagement with the wider community (with specific reference to hard-to-reach groups).

### 2 The Council's Commitment to Community Engagement

- 2.1 Grampound with Creed Parish Council is committed to providing a democratic representational voice for the people of Grampound. Central to this ethos is engagement with the local community in a proactive and meaningful way.

### 3 Community Engagement – an overview

- 3.1 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 an opportunity for local people to talk to the Council about their aspirations and/or needs in their community and neighbourhood. It allows the Council to consult with and inform people about what services it provides, how its priorities and policies are determined and how well it is performing.

- 3.2 Consultation forms an integral part of community engagement.

Without consultation, addressing a particular need is a hit and miss affair as there is no way of establishing what is required to address the problem.

- 3.3 The term 'stakeholder' makes reference to a wide range of people and groups (these might include residents, visitors, businesses, government, voluntary organisations, public service organisations etc.) all of which have an interest in the Council's services and projects.

'Hard-to-reach groups' refers to those who experience social exclusion and are sometimes perceived as being disempowered. Some examples include young people, elderly people, or those with physical disability, language, financial constraints, cultural differences or social expectations. Sometimes organisations do not put enough effort into seeking their views, but it is important to note that sometimes they have deliberately excluded themselves through personal choice.

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- 3.4 The key aspects of community engagement include:
- Development of a network of relationships between the Council, individuals, voluntary and community groups.
  - Clear and open communication to ensure that information is made accessible to all groups.
  - Listening and understanding to a range of people, to identify aspirations, needs and problems of local people and groups.
- 3.5 Effective and meaningful community engagement can provide a number of benefits:
- The problems and needs of local people are clearly identified in order that appropriate new or improved facilities/services can be provided.
  - Those participating feel empowered by being involved in decision making in their local community and a sense of ownership and pride in the new facilities/initiatives.
  - It may result in a renewed respect for the Council; enhanced leadership and greater interest in elections or for standing for Council.

## 4 Grampound with Creed Parish Council and Community Engagement

- 4.1 The Council currently facilitates community engagement in the following ways:
- Allocation of a 'Public Forum' session at the beginning of each Full Council meeting. This provides an opportunity for local residents to make representations to the Council or ask questions relating to items on the agenda.
  - Allocation of a 'Public Forum' session at the beginning of each Committee meeting.
  - Publishing contact details of all Council members and officers on the website and notice board.
  - Inclusion of reports highlighting council activity, to the *Grampound Times*. NOTE – the *Times* is also available on the website.
  - Ensuring that agendas and minutes of Committee meetings are available on the website, parish notice board and copies are available on request.
  - Uploading the Annual Report, including financial summary, onto the website.
  - Questionnaires have been issued, dealing with such matters as updating the Parish Plan. We have also consulted residents to identify the demand for affordable housing.
  - Inviting members of the public to request 'surgeries' with Councillors in order that they can be represented at a local level. NOTE – this opportunity was declined by the Parish Meeting.
  - Council press releases are featured in local newspapers to keep the general public informed of community events, Council projects and other items as necessary.
  - The Council enjoys a good working relationship with the local school. We make the Council Chamber available for occasional meetings of the School Council (i.e. the Children's Council).
  - A representative from the Police attends Council Meetings, quarterly.
  - The County Councillor for the parish attends Council Meetings and is copied into all correspondence addressed to Cornwall Council.
  - The Council has premises, conveniently located in the town centre, which is used for small Meetings, including local residents seeking help/guidance from the Council.

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Parish Councillors always live or work within the town they serve and have close ties to their constituents and local voluntary and community organisations on a day-to-day basis, making them uniquely placed in terms of informed representation.

## 5 **Communication**

5.1 Grampound with Creed Parish Council is committed to improving community engagement by:

- Continuing all the above activities.
- Ensuring that any information published is clear, concise and widely available.
- Identifying and embracing opportunities to work with other local community groups, as and when the need arises.
- Participating in local networks to share knowledge and experience of community engagement activities in other areas.
- Publicising the positive results that have been achieved from working relationships between the Council and other community groups; in order to encourage new relationships/partnerships to be formed and raise community spirit.
- Ensuring that appropriate evaluation is carried out following consultation exercises to ensure that lessons learned are carried forward and an assessment of how effective/useful the consultation was.
- Distribute materials publicising elections, by placing notices on local notice boards, the Grampound website and in the *Grampound Times*.
- Distribute materials encouraging people to register to vote, by placing notices on local notice boards, the Grampound website and in the *Grampound Times*
- Actively seek the views of young people, when undertaking local projects of interest to them.
- **Identify a Member of the Council to act as 'Democracy Champion' to be responsible for driving forward these initiatives.**

## 6 **Review**

6.1 This strategy will be reviewed regularly (not less than bi-annually) and amended as necessary based on good practice or evidence taken forward.

## 7 **Conclusion**

7.1 The adoption of a Community Engagement Strategy will assist in improving communication between the Council and the wider community. This will enable the Council to better understand the needs and aspirations of local residents/groups, and in turn, facilitate appropriate projects to meet those needs and create an enhanced community spirit.

## 9 **Alternative Formats**

9.1 Disability Discrimination Act 1995 – copies of this document in large print (A3 Format) or larger font size for those with sight impairment on request from the Parish Clerk by telephoning 01726-882145 or e-mailing [clerk@grampound.org.uk](mailto:clerk@grampound.org.uk)

## 10 **Freedom of Information**

10.1 In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this Document will be posted on the Council's Website [www.Grampound.gov.uk](http://www.Grampound.gov.uk) and copies of this document will be available for inspection on deposit in the Council Office.