



1. Aims and Objectives.

Tenterden Town Council aims to:-

- Represent and promote the interests of Tenterden and its people.
- Pay particular attention to the needs of children and young people.
- Provide the best possible amenities and services for which it is responsible by the efficient use of available resources.
- Actively involve local people in decisions affecting activities in the area.
- Promote equality of opportunity and oppose discrimination.
- Be open and accountable in all it does.
- Support development which is strategically planned, environmentally, socially and economically sound and sustainable.
- Enhance quality of life by protecting and enhancing Tenterden's environment.

To achieve these aims, the Council has adopted this Community Engagement Strategy, designed to ensure it:-

- Works closely with residents, businesses and community groups.
- Engages with as many people as possible who want to participate in decision making, monitoring services and planning for the future.
- Actively encourages, through the use of a wide range of approaches to public involvement and community engagement, the involvement of residents to capture their views, learn their concerns and effectively use those views as an integral part of the decision making process.
- Provides opportunities for residents to be heard at every stage, and the capacity to be effective citizens.

The outcomes the Council hopes to achieve are:-

- Improved communication with the local community.
- A better understanding within the community of the role of the Town Council and of its Councillors, including its and their limitations and opportunities.
- Local people feeling that they are involved in decision making.
- Improved satisfaction with local public services.
- The promotion of local democracy and citizenship.
- The establishment of the Town Council as a hub for information and communication in and about Tenterden, not necessarily as a primary provider but by directing interested parties to other existing providers where appropriate.

The Town Council recognises that its engagement with its community depends on proper and effective engagement between councillors themselves and between councillors and council staff, and will strive to continuously improve internal communications to achieve this.

2. Defining the community.

The Council considers the community of Tenterden to consist of –

- everyone who lives, works, attends school or has business in the town or visits it,
- all local voluntary organisations, clubs and societies and
- any group or organisation representing any such constituents

Additionally, the Council recognises that there are certain other bodies that are just as crucial to the quality of life in Tenterden and aims to maintain excellent working relationships with these bodies, including the police, the other tiers of local government and neighbouring town and parish councils.

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

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

- Office: The Town Council office in the High Street is open from 09.00 to 14.30 on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays and from 09.00 to 17.00 on Thursdays and Fridays and provides a wide range of information on both Council services and other activities and issues.
- Website: The Town Council website www.tenterden.gov.uk provides comprehensive information on the work
- of the Town Council, with up-to-date news being available via the Town Council's Facebook page. The public can contact the Town Council through that website and public consultations and surveys can also be carried out through the website.
- Notice-boards: The Town Council provides two large, double-sided notice-boards (one outside the Town Hall and the other on St. Michaels recreation ground) which are used to display agendas and minutes for Council and committee meetings as well as other information of interest to the local community including events of local organisations. Attention is attracted to the Town Hall notice-board at appropriate intervals by the Town Crier. There is a third (smaller) notice-board outside the county and borough councils' "Gateway", mainly for agendas.
- Surgeries: Town Council surgeries are held six times each year: three times at the Town Hall and three times at St. Michaels village hall.
- Newsletter: The Town Council's Newsletter is published approximately quarterly and is available from the Town Council offices, on the website, by email and from the local library, leisure centre and doctors surgery. It is also hand delivered to every household in the town.
- Annual Report: The annual report is produced in April each year and is available from the Town Council offices, on the website and from the local library. It is also delivered to every home.
- Facebook page: This is at www.facebook.com/TenterdenTownCouncil. While it can be used to contact the Town Council, for a prompt or detailed response, it is better to use post, email, telephone or personal visits to the Town Hall office.
- Council, committee and sub-committee meetings: All meetings of the Town Council and its committees and sub-committees are open to the public and a period is set aside at each meeting for the public. The dates, times, venues and agendas for and minutes of such meetings, and non-confidential background papers, are publicly available from the Town Council's Office and website and by subscription to an email distribution list run by the Town Council's Office. Details of forthcoming sub-committee meetings are available from the relevant sub-committee chairman.
- Public meetings are called to gauge public opinion about important issues affecting the town, such as major planning applications.
- Questionnaires are sometimes used to ask local people's opinions about specific matters and these are distributed to local residents.

- The Town Council is also represented at PACT meetings and at a range of other forums.
- The Town Council has a formal Volunteers Policy to allow volunteers to take part in activities organised by the council.
- The Town Council will endeavour to arrange for youth organisations in the town, and other interested organisations, to be given guided tours of the Town Hall, incorporating a suitable explanation of the role and functions of the council and its place within local government.
- Where significant developments, projects or changes are envisaged, the Town Council will seek to involve affected and interested parties by all appropriate means.
- Council-hosted events, such as receptions, are treated as opportunities to invite representatives of local organisations and residents to meet the town councillors informally and to discuss issues with them.
- A list of organisations, to be invited to send representatives to such events, and other potential invitees will be kept by the council office and kept up to date, including email addresses where applicable so that email can be used as appropriate.
- The council will publicise council elections and procedures, and arrange suitable training for potential councillors and other interested persons.
- The council will periodically review the question of whether it should use social media as a means of engaging with members of the community.
- The council can act as liaison between members of the Tenterden community and other tiers of local government [on matters of general public interest (as opposed to individual matters)]

Opportunities for formal representations to the Council

- Residents' concerns and questions can be brought to the attention the Council at any time in writing to the Town Clerk, by post, email or hand.
- Residents can also address council and committee meetings in person (usually subject to giving prior notice).
- Residents may raise specific points with any Councillor, who will refer action points to the Town Clerk for consideration or action, as appropriate.

4. Involvement in partnerships.

The Town Council often works in partnership with other organisations such as the Borough Council, and also has representatives on the follow organisations:

- Ashford & District Volunteer Bureau.
- Ashford Borough Council Parish Forum.
- Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Confederation of the Cinque Ports.
- Doctor Curteis Charity.
- Homewood School & Sixth Form Centre.
- Kent Association of Local Councils.
- St. Michaels Community Group
- Tenterden & District Chamber of Commerce.
- Tenterden & District Day Centre.
- Tenterden & District Museum.
- Tenterden & District Residents Association
- Tenterden & District Twinning Association.
- Tenterden Charities.

- Tenterden Church School Charities.
- Tenterden Project Group.
- Tenterden Town & Rural Partnership.
- Tenterden Youth Project Group
- The Tenterden Forum (with the local County Councillor)
- William Judge Trust.

If any local organisation does not have an official Town Council representative, the Town Mayor (or Deputy) will endeavour to attend at least one function or activity of that organisation each year.

5. 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 offices and on the Town Council website. Members of the public are welcome to contact Councillors to raise any issues.

Individual Councillors will all be encouraged to take responsibility for a specific area of the Council's work and to liaise with the community in relation to that area: through the Council's newsletters and annual report, by arranging meetings and workshops where appropriate, and by any other suitable means.

The Council's Officers are members of staff who are employed to carry out the day to day functions of the Council and make sure its services are provided for the local community. The Town Clerk is the Proper Officer for the Council which means she has the overall responsibility for the implementation of the provision of Council services.