



Thaxted Parish Council

Community Engagement Policy

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INTRODUCTION

Thaxted Parish Council recognises the need to consider the impact of its actions on others and the surrounding environment. Whilst the Parish Council cannot force any individual or group to become involved it can, and shall, make it easier and more attractive for them to do so. Improving communication with residents and maximising engagement between the Parish Council and the community is a key priority of the Parish Council.

1.1 The Council considers that the community of Thaxted comprises of the following:

- a. All residents of the Parish
- b. All users of Parish Council services
- c. All those who work, or own businesses within Thaxted
- d. All young people who live/go to school in Thaxted
- e. All voluntary organisations, clubs and societies as well as groups or organisations representing sections of the community.

1.2 The Council recognises that other bodies are crucial to the quality of life in Thaxted and it will maintain the strong working relationships with Essex County Council and Uttlesford District Council, the Police and other local neighbouring councils, and beyond.

1.3 The Council defines communication as the process of informing the community about decisions that have been made or the passing on of information.

1.4 The Council defines engagement as involving the community to help form opinion and review decisions.

1.5 The Council is always open to receiving both positive and negative feedback and has a commitment to encouraging the community to engage with the Council.

1.6 All communications will avoid, jargon and misleading public information.

COMMUNICATION

2.1 The Parish Council will actively seek to maintain and improve upon its communication by:

- a. Publishing reports in each edition of the Parish Newsletter highlighting the council's activities.
- b. Utilise social media and other digital platforms as a means of communicating with residents.
- c. Enhance its website to ensure it offers up-to-date information on the council's activities at all times.
- d. Publish an Annual Report each April; reviewing the year and reporting on the council's achievements.
- e. Review the effectiveness of our communications and look for new ideas to maximise the number of residents we reach.

ENGAGEMENT

- 3.1 The Council shall continue to set aside time at every Council and Committee meeting for members of the public to address the Council.
- 3.2 The Council shall continue to develop the Annual Parish Meeting to a key event for the sharing of community news and engaging the public.
- 3.3 The Council shall continue to provide opportunities for members of the public to discuss issues with councillors.
- 3.4 The Council shall continue to appoint members to represent the Council on community organisations as requested.
- 3.5 The Council shall continue to utilise its website for receiving and responding to comments from the community.

CONSULTATION

- 4.1 When the Parish Council is seeking views on a specific project or idea it will consult with the community.
- 4.2 Whilst the majority of consultations will be open to the whole community it may on occasion consult with specific stakeholders only.
- 4.3 When planning a consultation, the Council will identify the key stakeholders for that specific consultation exercise to ensure they are directly consulted.
- 4.4 Consultations will be publicised as widely as possible and will have a defined end date for submissions.
- 4.5 The Council will be clear about why it is consulting and how the consultation will be used in the Council's decision-making process.
- 4.6 The Council shall consider the format of the consultation which may include:
 - a. Open consultation on the Council website.
 - b. Consultation documents available at key venues around the Parish
 - c. Direct consultation (e.g. letters/leaflets/social media etc)
 - d. Focus groups
 - e. Public Meetings/Exhibitions/Market stalls

A Full Guide to Community Engagement published by the Local Government Association can be downloaded here:

https://thaxtedpc-my.sharepoint.com/personal/clerk_thaxted_co_uk/Documents/Council/Community%20Engagement%20LGA/New%20Conversations%20Guide%2012.pdf