

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

Updated on the 13 March 2023  
Next review due on the 13 March 2026

### **INTRODUCTION**

This document details how Chesham Town Council (the Council) engages with the town's community.

The purpose of community engagement is to engage and involve local people, as well as community groups, public bodies and businesses, in the work of the Council. Engagement is a two-way process, which allows the public to talk to the Council about their views and needs, and in return enables the Council to tell the community about its work, its priorities and how well it is performing.

The aim of this strategy is to confirm the actions the Council will take to ensure people can participate at whatever level they wish in order to influence the Council's service delivery, priorities and policies. The Council's commitment to community engagement is enshrined within its strategic aims. The Council has six strategic aims for the year ahead:

1. To preserve the unique identity of Chesham by promoting its heritage and environment, in consultation with the citizens of Chesham.
2. To promote and deliver climate change emergency initiatives that make a real difference to the local environment, in partnership with local groups.
3. To ensure residents enjoy high quality social, recreational, and cultural facilities by improving them in accordance with the desires expressed by residents.
4. To promote the economic vitality of Chesham by encouraging employment opportunities, housing and business facilities that respect the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and ensure that Chesham continues to be a destination of choice.
5. To help create a socially inclusive and caring community, which embraces all its residents equally, seeking to develop their well-being, knowledge, understanding and mutual co-operation.
6. To ensure that the money entrusted to us by the residents of Chesham is properly managed and spent efficiently and effectively on achieving the strategic aims of the Council.

### **ENGAGEMENT ACTIONS**

The Council will engage with its community using the following methods:

- a) Developing meaningful long-term relationships with community organisations:
  - Supporting a number of "friends" groups that enable community members to become directly involved in running and supporting the Council's facilities.

- Working with voluntary sector organisations in the delivery of projects that meet the Council's strategic objectives.
- Working in partnership with agencies such as Buckinghamshire Council, Thames Valley Police and the Environment Agency.
- Operating a Town Partner scheme to recognise the valuable contribution of organisations to Chesham and to encourage closer working relationships with them.
- Working with COPAG, the CAB, youth groups and other voluntary organisations to provide for the needs of more vulnerable or isolated groups in Chesham.
- Encouraging community associations and other voluntary organisations which actively engage in projects that contribute to social inclusiveness and community cohesion.
- Ensuring formal town councillor representation on a wide range of charitable and outside bodies.

b) Provide information to the community:

- Adopting the Information Commissioner's Office "Model Publication Scheme", which commits the Council to producing and publishing the method by which specific information will be made available, so that it can be easily identified and accessed by the public. To comply with this, the Council will publish the "Guide to Information Available from Chesham Town Council" each year on [www.chesham.gov.uk](http://www.chesham.gov.uk), which explains what information is routinely available and how it can be accessed.
- Providing access to Council and committee agenda, reports and minutes on [www.chesham.gov.uk](http://www.chesham.gov.uk) and ensuring meeting notices are posted on the Council noticeboards.
- Reporting the Council activities to the monthly yourChesham magazine, distributed door-to-door throughout Chesham and the surrounding area. The magazine is also available online. The articles can be made available in large print or Urdu upon request.
- Publishing an Annual Strategic Plan which provides information on the Council projects and performance against targets.
- Sending press releases to all local media outlets and publishing them on [www.chesham.gov.uk](http://www.chesham.gov.uk) and the Council's social media accounts.

c) Enabling the community to comment:

- Undertaking town-wide surveys.
- Making councillor contact details available on [www.chesham.gov.uk](http://www.chesham.gov.uk) and published in the annual Town Guide available both online and in hard copy, and in the yourChesham magazine four times a year.
- Ensuring the Council have a "Contact Us" facility on [www.chesham.gov.uk](http://www.chesham.gov.uk).
- Ensuring the Council can be contacted via our Twitter feed and Facebook page.
- Ensuring officers and councillors also monitor other social media streams and interact with the public using these formats.
- Ensuring a period set aside for public questions at the beginning of every meeting of the full Council and within the Annual Town Meeting.
- Ensuring officers are available to speak to the public at the Town Hall from 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday.
- Ensuring people know our annual external audit provides an opportunity for the public to ask questions about our Statement of Accounts and Balance Sheet.

- Carrying out targeted consultation to ascertain people's views on specific topics as and when the need arises, in order to avoid consultation fatigue. Consultation will be carried out in line with our Consultation Policy, Strategy and Procedure.

## **STANDARDS OF ENGAGEMENT**

The Town Council will adhere to the following standards:

a) Inclusion:

- Use plain language
- Consider the particular needs of people, especially in hard-to-reach groups, to enable them to participate
- Listen to, and respect, all opinions received
- Ensure that those directly affected by decisions, policies and plans are aware of the opportunity to engage

b) Clarity and transparency:

- Be clear about what we are asking the public to comment on when seeking people's views
- Only use engagement and consultation processes when there is a real opportunity for people to influence decision-making and services
- Provide feedback whenever possible

## **RESPONSIBILITY**

The success of this strategy lies with the following people:

- Councillors, who should actively work to ensure community engagement is at the heart of the Council's decision-making process.
- The CEO, who is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the strategy.
- The Council employees, who should deliver community engagement tasks, particularly those officers tasked with community projects and communications.