

This document sets out the terms of reference and governance arrangements for Newton Abbot Town Council's **Community Engagement Group (CEG)**. This document will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Terms of Reference and Governance Arrangements

Purpose

To provide an opportunity for local residents and communities in Newton Abbot to come together to discuss local issues and have a say on service delivery, so people feel they are involved in civic society and enabled to take part and influence how the Council and other public services are run.

Aims

- To create a local group for the town where everyone feels able to participate and engage, knows how and where to make their voice heard and make a difference;
- To help create cohesive, active and sustainable communities;
- To enable locally elected representatives, as leaders of their communities to engage with people and respond to the local community's needs;
- To put citizens at the heart of public services with dialogue and consultation with community leaders so they are more able to take responsibility for their own communities and service needs;
- To create opportunities for residents to have greater interaction with public service providers and partners.

Objectives

- Develop a shared understanding of local issues and priorities for improving the quality of life of local people, their neighbourhoods and the wider community;
- Drive improvement in public services by advising the public sector bodies on relevant service delivery;
- Refer issues of local concern to the relevant organisation / partnerships, in order for them to ensure the resolution of issues;
- Maintain and enhance strong and robust links with local communities, developing a mechanism to support community engagement, providing opportunities for meaningful consultation and participation in a constructive and inclusive manner;
- Communicate issues of local partnership arrangements across the wider community supporting information dissemination;
- Encourage strong local democracy and citizenship so local people are able to take responsibility and make informed choices about services;
- Support the implementation of local plans and strategies;
- Represent a cross section of interests.

Operating Principles

The CEG will:

- Provide an opportunity for genuine dialogue and open discussion, enabling and encourage an informal and participatory approach to community engagement;
- Encourage debate on 'hot topics' of local interest;
- Be open, transparent and inclusive;
- Will encourage bottom-up involvement from the community in decision making through an accessible format and style of meetings;
- Ensure wherever possible, practical and lawful, that each Council representative will not withhold from discussion, matters of service delivery or local concern that are of genuine public interest;
- Ensure that as elected representatives of the community, members of the Town Council will have the primary role of engaging with the CEG and taking delegated decisions/recommendations as appropriate;
- Provide a critical friend - challenge to decision makers through developing a constructive working relationship with the Town Council as well as other public sector agencies.

Attendance

The forums are open to all members of the community to attend, plus:

- Voluntary and Community Sector representatives
- Local elected members of Teignbridge District Council and Devon County Council, as appropriate;
- Representatives from public sector partners;
- Private sector partners;
- Voluntary and community sector partners;
- Local community groups;
- Youth Forum and any youth advisory group representatives.

Role and Responsibilities of regular attendees

- To be champions in their organisations, for the CEG and the localism agenda;
- To support the CEG, encouraging and supporting multi-agency working within their organisation;
- To ensure that relevant information is fed back through their organisation and that where required information is shared at a suitable level between partners that will improve the workings of the CEG;
- Commitment and attendance at meetings. If a designated member is unavailable, a briefed deputy should be sent in their place.

Accountability

The CEG is part of the structure of the Town Council for feedback and two way dialogue.

Standing Agenda Items

- Welcome and introductions
- Apologies for absence
- Declaration of Interest

- Feedback on Notes of Last Meeting
- Question Time
- Hot Topics

There will be two meetings per annum which will deal exclusively with the Museum and Newton In Bloom issues (one in the spring & one in the autumn for each topic).

Consideration to be given to appointing **Councillor 'Champions'** to promote and coordinate discussion and outcomes on topics of particular interest.

Governance

The Community Engagement Group will report and feedback via the Community & Heritage Committee.

Meetings

Meetings will be held in accordance with the Town Council's Calendar of Meetings at Newton's Place or other appropriate venues that are accessible, in agreement with the Chair and Vice-Chair.

Before the meeting:

- Requests for agenda items will be advertised four weeks before the CEG;
- Two weeks before the CEG, the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and officers will liaise to prepare the agenda for the next meeting and a work programme for future meetings. The CEG may also hold private meetings to consider business related to the CEG (e.g. planning agendas, venues, actions) where the public/press are not invited;
- The agenda will be publicised at least one week prior to the CEG meeting via NATC website, email and in hard copy;
- Invites and posters to publicise any meetings not held in Newton's Place will be promoted at least two weeks before the meeting.

At the meetings:

The Chairperson will be responsible for the order and timekeeping of the meeting and encouraging open and accessible dialogue with support from the support and lead officers.

After the meeting:

The report of the meeting will be issued and published no more than two weeks after the meeting, but an attempt will be made to make it one week.

Procedures

- All meetings are expected to last no more than two hours;
- People attending CEG meetings must sign the attendance list or ensure their presence is recorded;

- The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson are to be elected every year, from the membership of the Group
- Terms of reference reviewed annually.

Appropriate Behaviour

Meetings of the Community Engagement Group are public meetings, and will be conducted in a good manner. Any improper or offensive behaviour will not be tolerated. The Chairperson will ensure meetings are conducted accordingly. This may include suspension of the meeting.

Conflict of Interest

All participants are expected to consider whether they have a personal and/or prejudicial interest in any matter under discussion on the agenda and declare it accordingly at the relevant part of the meeting.

Rights to Attend and Speak

Meetings of the Engagement Group are open public meetings, and all citizens and community groups are warmly invited to attend and speak.

Attendance of officers at meetings

Council officers are expected to attend any CEG meeting when asked to do so by the Chairperson. Such requests must be reasonable in terms of notice, demand and expectation.

Actions

These will be recorded, and copies will be held on the web site of the Town Council. The CEG support officer (Principal Administrator) will pursue actions resulting from meetings.

Resourcing

- The Town Council shall bear the costs incurred in the operation of the CEG;
- The Town Council will provide support services for the CEG and work in partnership with the Community Interest Company;
- Assistance from statutory and other agencies may be required in preparation of papers and reports as required;
- The Town Council will be responsible for the administration of the meetings; timely preparation and distribution of agendas, papers and feedback; and booking of meeting venues and any appropriate refreshments.

Publicity

The CEG will be publicised in an accessible way to encourage attendance.

Measuring Success

This will be measured through numbers participating and outcomes arising for the reports. The CEG will be evaluated annually through an annual report to Council.

Risk Management

A risk assessment for each CEG meeting will be undertaken as appropriate by the CEG Support Officer to ensure any risks identified at CEG meetings are mitigated.

Town Clerk
February 2016

Reviewed: 17th May 2017, 13th July 2022, 12th July 2023