



Cainscross Town Council

Cashes Green & Ebley

Community Engagement Policy 2021/22

Approved FSP21/21 16 February 2021

Review June 2021

Cainscross Town Council Community Engagement Policy

Community Engagement is about giving local people a voice and involving them in the decisions that affect them and their community. It is about the development of relationships and clear communication to deliver better services and projects. —Taken from NALC guidelines

Aims and Objectives

Cainscross Town Council is an open and transparent Council which values and encourages the opinions of the community which it serves. It has historical links with the parish church, Cashes Green Community Centre, local schools and voluntary groups working for the good of the Parish.

- All parishioners should be given the opportunity to be involved in the decisions that affect them
- Town Council policies should reflect local priorities

Policy issues to be addressed:

- The way we currently communicate and consult with our community and how this can be improved
- How often we communicate with the community and for what purposes
- What perception and understanding of the Town Council is held by the local community
- How do we communicate with the hard to reach groups and how can this be improved
- How we can strengthen partnerships
- What role do the staff and Councillors play in community engagement?
- How can we continue to improve communication?

The way we currently communicate and consult with our community and how this can be improved

Cainscross Town Council has many avenues through which it communicates with the community.

- Contact details of all Councillors and the Clerk are published on the website and annually in the Fourwards newsletter
- Website which provides information about the Town Council, including agendas, minutes of meetings, Council policies, financial statements, contact details and links to other organisation - www.cainscross-pc.gov.uk
- Facebook and Twitter
- The Fourwards newsletter is produced 3 times a year and contains Council news, consultations, local information and useful contacts
- Agendas are published and displayed throughout the Parish on our 8 notice boards which invite the public to attend meetings and participate in the public session
- Consultations are in to the newsletter or carried out by Councillors / Staff face to face in relevant areas. Consultations are also carried out jointly with other bodies such as Stroud District Council.

1. How often we communicate with the community and for what purpose?

As previously mentioned the Town Council communicate on a regular basis by way of the Notice Boards, Website, Facebook, Twitter and Fourwards magazine. **We also hold open days and have an open door policy at the community hub.** Some controversial issues will automatically create community involvement and the Town Council are keen to hear parishioner's views and if necessary will call a public meeting.

2. What perception and understanding of the Town Council is held by the local community?

The Town Council play a very active role in a rather divided community. The Parish is split in to the four wards of Cainscross, Ebley, Cashes Green East and Cashes Green West. Residents seem generally happy with the standard of service and communication and the main issues concerning residents who contact the Town Council are dog fouling, litter and highway issues. The public see the Town Council as the first port of call particularly as we have a local office in Victory Park where residents can **drop** in. Although many of the issues reported to the Town Council are covered by District or County Council, the Town Council whilst appreciating the government spending cuts continue to raise issues on behalf of parishioners and make our feelings known. We are generally well respected in the Parish.

3. How do we communicate with the hard to reach groups and how can this be improved?

All groups can be hard to reach especially the local youth, busy working people and elderly residents. To this end there must be different types of medium to reach as wide a ranging audience as possible.

- Due to behavioural issues and not having our own premises, the Youth Club came to an end in early 2018. We do however continue to work closely with Stroud District Council's Youth Forum. We will support local youth and young people in the Parish. We endeavour to communicate items of interest to the local youth through our newsletter the Fourwards, **via social media** and we have a dedicated page on our website.
- Busy working people - Usually people in this group have less time to look at notice boards and read newsletters but are more likely to use electronic communications such as email and websites **and social media**. It is important that we continue to develop the website and social media to attract users and publish email addresses of Councillors and staff.
- Elderly residents - Many elderly residents may suffer hearing, sight or mobility issues. With this in mind notice boards, social media and websites are not necessarily the most effective medium of communication. To improve this, the Town Council offer large print newsletters and hold Councillor surgeries to discuss issues face to face at an accessible building within the parish. **(item for discussion – we no longer hold Councillor Surgeries and they were not particularly effective – should we consider having Councillors present and available at book swap morning / quiz afternoons / events etc once back to normal?)**

4. How we can strengthen partnerships?

The Town Council work well with other Government bodies, **schools, businesses** and local groups. We will continue to foster good relations.

5. What role do the staff and Councillors play in community engagement?

Staff during working hours should be accessible to members of the public and able to answer queries and deal with any issues. The Clerks mobile phone number is available on the office answer phone when the office is closed in emergency situations. Councillors must be prepared to be contactable by members of the public, by phone or email and willing to be actively involved in consultations.

All staff and Councillors to wear identification badge when attending community events for professionalism and security purposes.

6. How can we continue to improve communication?

Throughout this document the Council has identified areas that could actively improve communication. The Council will continue to monitor avenues of improving engagement with the community, when they meet on a monthly basis.

Reviewed and agreed by Council on May 13th 2019 at its Annual Meeting

Signed:

Councillor Carlos Novoth - Chairman

Minute Ref: 09/19