COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

WARE TOWN COUNCIL

What's in the Policy:

Details of how communication, meetings & consultations are taken care of in a way that ensures all bodies are satisfied.

For more information please contact:

info@waretowncouncil.gov.uk

Telephone: 01920 460316

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1. **INTRODUCTION**
   Ware Town Council recognises the need to consider the impact of its actions on others and the surrounding environment. Whilst recognising that, not every individual or group will wish to engage, the Town Council will make it easier for those who do wish to be involved.

   1.1. The Council considers that the community of Ware comprises
      a. All residents of the town
      b. All users of Town Council services
      c. All those who work in Ware
      d. All young people who go to school or college in Ware
      e. All voluntary organisations, clubs, societies and community groups.

   1.2. The Council recognises that other bodies are crucial to the quality of life in Ware and will maintain strong working relationships with East Herts Council Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Police and local Town and Parish Councils.

   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.

2. **COMMUNICATION**

   2.1. The Town Council website is the primary source of information on the Council for the community and will be kept up to date with content and routinely monitored. The Council aims to actively publish a wide range of information on the Council and its activities.

   2.2. The Council will make the best possible use of social media.

   2.3. The Council will prepare regular press releases to be sent to local news providers.

   2.4. The Council will use its noticeboards at the Priory and around the town and will provide information for the noticeboard at Ware Library.

   2.5. The Council will continue to publish its e-newsletter.

   2.6. The Council will display leaflets about its activities and community activities in the reception at Ware Priory.

   2.7. The Council will take measures to reach out to those in the community who are not online.

3. MEETINGS

3.1. Meetings of the Council and its committees are open to the public and include the opportunity for members of the town to engage with councillors. All meetings permit public participation.

3.2. The Annual Town Meeting provides an opportunity for electors to engage with the Council and to ask questions about the work of the Council and local issues.

3.3. The Council will continue to provide opportunities for members of the public to discuss issues with councillors.

3.4. The Council will continue to appoint members to represent the Council on community organisations as required.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1. When the Town 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 timing of consultations will be considered for example to coincide with events or to avoid clashes with holidays.

4.7. The Council will consider the format of the consultation which may include:

   a.   Open consultation on the Council website
   b.   Consultation documents at key venues around the town
   c.   Direct consultation (eg letters/leaflets/social media etc)
   d.   Focus groups
   e.   Consultation engagement events (eg public meetings, exhibitions, at events)