

## Swaffham Town Council

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

#### **Aims and Objectives**

Swaffham Town Council is the closest tier of local government to the community. The Town Council wants to work closely with the public, including all residents, community groups and businesses, to encourage participation in decision making. The aim is to secure better services and to create a more active and informed community.

#### **The Community**

The Town Council seeks to engage with *all* sections of Swaffham's community including the young, disenfranchised, disaffected and the elderly as well as the local business community, the many clubs, organisations, charities and societies which are active in the town, its partners such as Breckland Council, Norfolk County Council and the safer neighbourhood policing team, the local schools and churches. The Town Council is also committed to engaging with any persons who appear to it to have an interest in matters relating to the economic, social and environmental well being of its area. The Town Team and Icen Partnership, and ~~Swaffham Trade Association~~ are recognised as key partners.

#### **Information to the Community**

The Town Council lists details of all documentation available to the public under the Freedom of Information Act on its website [www.swaffhamtowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.swaffhamtowncouncil.gov.uk). This information is also available in hard copy from the office. The Town Council are committed to contributing regular editorials, reports and resources to a community newsletter delivered to all households in the town together with the Annual Report which includes a statement of the accounts. The full accounts are available for inspection from the Town Council office. All agendas and minutes of meetings are available on the website. There is a published Town Plan ADVANCE SWAFFHAM (documents available on the website from 2009) that details the priorities for the town. The Town Council are committed to producing a Neighbourhood Plan for Swaffham (due to be published in 2019).

#### **Opportunities for Community Involvement**

All Town Council and Committee meetings are open to the public and include a public session when residents can make representation to members. The Town Council arranges an Annual Town Assembly when the work of the Council and other key groups is showcased, and the public is given the opportunity to engage with councillors on different topics of current interest. All councillors are available for informal discussion and their telephone numbers and their contact details are to be found in the newsletter, from the Town Council office or on the website and now via social media through Twitter as [@SwaffhamClerk](#), [@SwaffhamMarket](#), [@SwaffhamCouncil](#), [@SwaffhamEvents](#) and [@SwaffhamNPlan](#) also via a Swaffham Town Council, Swaffham Market, [Swaffham Events](#) and Swaffham Neighbourhood Plan Facebook Pages, also [@Swaffham Clerk](#) Facebook Profile.

#### **Opportunities for Formal Representations to the Council**

Representations to the Town Council will normally be considered at the relevant committee meeting, unless they require the provision of information only, when the Town Clerk or a delegated member of staff will provide it accordingly. The Town Council has a Complaints Policy for handling complaints, which is available from the Town Clerk. The publication of agendas on the Town Council's website and notice board gives residents the opportunity to make representation to the council before agenda items are discussed. All formal representations received are responded to by letter or email. Petitions are often used as a method for members of the public to draw attention to a particular issue. The Town Council will deal with each Petition on its own merit at the earliest opportunity. As a guide the message must be consistent on each

sheet of paper signed only once by members of the public, with their name and address clearly shown. Fictitious names or abusive comments would be rejected.

### **Involvement in Partnerships**

The Town Council is committed to partnership working where it is clear that it will be of benefit to the town or to fulfil its statutory requirements. For example, the Town Council works in partnership with other local councils, i.e. the five Breckland Towns and is represented on various community groups within the town. The Town Council works closely with both Breckland Council and Norfolk County Council to improve service delivery in the town. The Town Team, [Swaffham Trade Association](#) and Icen Partnership all have a role to play, with Town Council involvement as appropriate in terms of leading, supporting or advising on projects. [There is also a bi-monthly Watton and Swaffham Focus Group, which is a collaboration of Watton and Swaffham Town Council's and Wayland and Icen Partnership's.](#)

### **Role of Council Members and Officers**

Elected members are powerful advocates for their community and their leadership role enables them to have a major input into the consultation and engagement process. Swaffham Town Councillors are very accessible, their contact details are published on the website and in the community newsletters to townsfolk. They are available to talk to residents during the public session at the start of each Town Council meeting and at the Annual Town Assembly. In a private capacity, councillors belong to many other local clubs, societies and organisations, where they may, if they so wish, promote the work of the Town Council and be available to townsfolk. The Town Clerk can be contacted at the Town Council Office in the Town Hall which is open from 9.30am - 1pm Monday to Friday, also 1.30pm - 4pm on Mondays only, contact by telephone or by email and by appointment at a mutually convenient time or via Direct Message on Twitter or the Swaffham Market, Swaffham Town Council and Swaffham Neighbourhood Plan Facebook Pages.

### **Specific Areas for Community Involvement**

The council will consult the community as appropriate should it resolve to undertake, initiate or facilitate any major projects or additional services in the town. The production of the Town Plan 'Advance Swaffham' was an example where a number of residents became involved in the process of producing a document which will influence how the town develops over a 10-year period. Similarly, the consultative work necessary for a Neighbourhood Plan will require further input from residents, as ultimately the Town will need to support the Plan at a referendum, to enable it to be adopted and used by the planning authority Breckland Council. It is hoped to conclude this process in [2018-2019](#).