



1. Aims and Objectives

The Town Council exists to serve the community of Buckingham and the Town Council believes it can operate more effectively by engaging the community in its decision making and the provision of its services to those residents. The Town Council also considers it necessary to develop and maintain dialogue with residents and their representative groups.

This strategy is part of the Council's commitment to creating and maintaining effective working relationships with all sectors of the community, based on trust, openness and constructive challenge.

To achieve this, the Town Council therefore aims to:

- Represent and promote the interests of Buckingham and all its people in all forums
- Pay particular attention to the needs of our young people, other minority and vulnerable groups
- Provide the best possible amenities and services by the efficient use of available resources
- Actively involve local people in decisions affecting activities and assets in the area
- Promote equality of opportunity and oppose discrimination
- Be open and accountable in all it does
- Support development which is environmentally, socially and economically sound and sustainable

In order to achieve these aims, the Council will:

- Work closely with residents, students, businesses and community groups
- Engage with as many people as possible who want to participate in decision making, monitoring services and planning for the future
- Ensure, that through the use of a wide range of approaches to public involvement and community engagement, we actively encourage the involvement of residents, to capture their views and learn their concerns and effectively use those views as an integral part of the decision-making process
- Ensure that residents have the opportunities to be heard at every stage, and the capacity to be effective citizens

The outcomes the Council hopes to achieve are:

- Improved communication with the local community
- A better understanding among the community of the role of the Town Council and of its councillors
- Local people actively contributing to decision making
- Improved satisfaction with local public services

2. Defining the Community

The Council considers the community of Buckingham to consist of:

- All residents of the town
- All users of the Town Council's services
- All those who work and study within the town
- All those who own businesses within the town
- All young people who live and/or go to school within the town
- All local voluntary organisations, clubs and societies
- Any group or organisation that represent some or any of the above sections of the community

Additionally, the Council recognises that there are certain bodies that are crucial to the quality of life in Buckingham and aims to maintain excellent working relationships with these bodies, including: the Police, NHS, the other tiers of local government and other Town and Parish Councils in Aylesbury Vale and surrounding areas.

3. Provision of Information to the Community

Information is provided by the Town Council to the community in a number of ways, including:

- The Town Council offices at Verney Close, Buckingham, open Tuesday to Friday, and can provide a wide range of information both on Council services and other Buckingham activities and issues
- The Town Council's website www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk contains copies of Council documents, such as agendas, minutes, details of Councillors, and provides information both on the work of the Town Council and on other services, local events, local groups and organisations
- The Town Council Notice boards outside the Council Chamber and in the library are used to display agendas for Council meetings and contact details for local Councillors as well as other information of interest to the local community.

Additionally, various Notice boards around the town display local events •

The Town Council's Newsletter, published quarterly and delivered to households. This is also available from the Town Council offices, the local library, the Tourist

Information Centre and on the Town Council website

- The Town Council publishes an Annual Report which summarises its activities over the preceding year and its accounts. It is available at the Annual Town meeting and from the Town Council offices, or the Town Council website
- All meetings of the Town Council and its committees and sub-committees are open to the public and a period is set aside at the beginning of each meeting for public questions relating to items on the agenda. Public questions may also be asked on matters which are not on the agenda, provided that notice has been given to the Clerk at least three working days before the date of the meeting
- All Council meetings are streamed to YouTube using Zoom. This means that members of the public may attend the public session and address councillors virtually if they are not able to be present physically. Recordings of meetings on YouTube remain available to be viewed after meetings
- Public meetings, called to gauge public opinion about important issues affecting the town such as major planning applications or future plans
- Questionnaires, sometimes used to ask local people's opinions about specific matters; these are distributed to local residents or associations
- Social media channels including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

4. Opportunities for Formal Representations to the Council

Formal representations to the Council may be made at any time in writing to the Town Clerk.

5. Involvement in Partnerships

The Town Council often works in partnership with other organisations such as the District Council, County Council (and Buckinghamshire Council once in place), Youth Council, Police and local schools. It is represented on the following local organisations:

- Access For All
- Aylesbury Vale Association of Local Councils
- Buckingham & Gawcott Charitable Trust
- Buckingham & Villages Community Board
- Buckingham Community Wildlife Project
- Buckingham General Charities
- Buckingham Youth Centre
- Christmas Parade Committee
- Citizen's Advice
- Dementia Action Alliance
- North Bucks. Parishes Planning Consortium
- Pontio (Town Council and Buckingham University)
- River Wardens

- Swan Practice Focus Group
- Tree Wardens
- Twinning Association

6. Role of Council members and Officers

Council Members (councillors) are the elected decision makers of the Town Council. Their contact details are available from the Town Council offices and on the Town Council website. Members of the public are welcome to contact Councillors to raise any issues.

The Council's officers are staff who are employed to carry out the day to day functions of the Council and make sure that its services are provided for the local community. The Town Clerk is the Proper Officer for the Council which means the Clerk has overall responsibility for the provision of Council services.

ACTION PLAN

| <i>Item</i> | <i>Task</i> | <i>Responsibility</i> | <i>Status</i> |
|----------------------|---|------------------------------|----------------------|
| Mayor | Mayor to fulfill a civic role and encourage community organisations to invite the Mayor to events | Mayor and Staff | Ongoing |
| Minutes | Ensure copies of minutes are available, both as hard copy and electronically, for residents and community groups, including a copy on the Town Council Notice board | Staff | Ongoing |
| Annual Report | Ensure Report is available both as a hard copy and electronically for residents and community organisations and a summary included in the newsletter | Staff | Ongoing |
| Office Opening Hours | Publicise office opening hours in newsletter, on website and Notice boards | Staff | Ongoing |
| Annual Town Meeting | Publicise the meeting widely and liaise with stakeholders to encourage good attendance | Staff & members | Annually |

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| Public Forum | Encourage residents to raise any matters of interest or concern via the public participation element of all Full Council and Committee meetings | Staff & members | Ongoing |
| Notice Boards | Regularly update notice boards with council and community activities | Staff | Ongoing |
| Website | Maintain website with information on council services and activities | Staff & members | Ongoing |
| Newsletter | Produce and deliver a newsletter quarterly | Staff & members | Quarterly |
| Youth Council | Co-ordinate and support Buckingham Town Youth Council | Staff & members | Ongoing |
| Businesses | Engage with businesses and business organisations including through the Economic Development Working Group | Staff & members | Ongoing |
| Local Democracy | Encourage residents to both vote at and stand for the Town Council in local council elections | Staff & members | Ongoing |
| Press | Liaise regularly with the press sending details of Council meetings and Council activities, including through the fortnightly update and regular press releases | Staff | Ongoing |