SWANSCOMBE AND GREENHITHE TOWN COUNCIL

(This Policy was reviewed by the full Council at its meeting held on 19 May 2016, minute 18/16-17)

"Working together to ensure the Town remains a vibrant and attractive place in which to work, live and visit."

This is our vision for our Town of Swanscombe and Greenhithe. Working together with the resident's of Swanscombe and Greenhithe, and other local providers to develop caring, quality services for the changing needs of the community at a cost we can afford.

What we believe in and what we want to achieve –

Our Aims:

- Creating and Maintaining a Quality Environment
- Making the Parish a Safer Community
- Encouraging Improvements to Health and Well Being
- Promoting and Encouraging a more Prosperous Community
- Acting as a catalyst to champion the Community's needs and interests
- Managing the Council's resources effectively

Our Core Values

At the heart of the Council organisation are our core values. These values guide how we do business with you and others:

Caring	We care for our residents, our customers, our staff and our environment
Partnership	We work as a team, (councillors, staff and contractors) and will work with other agencies to ensure that all services are provided to the highest possible standard
Communication	We will listen to you and make it easier for you to have your say about what we do
Performance	We will strive to improve the quality, efficiency and cost of local services and encourage other agencies to do the same. Whatever we do we will do it well, but will always be looking to do it even better. We will review our services regularly and will train our staff to deliver excellent services
Opportunities	We will provide equality of opportunities when we recruit and also in the provision of our services

SWANSCOMBE AND GREENHITHE TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Our Aims and Objectives

To achieve our aims and objectives for our parish it is important that we continue to listen to what local residents, groups and clubs and providers of services have to say. Being the closest sector of local government to our residents we receive direct feedback from our residents in a variety of ways. We aim to make it easy for residents to contact us and we aim to champion local needs with others to improve our parish.

Our Community

Our community is the parish of Swanscombe and Greenhithe. We aim to work with the voluntary sector, our local businesses and provide opportunities for our local residents, in particular the young and older residents to communicate with us. We will also work closely with our other partners to make sure that local views are communicated to these bodies and organisations.

Information we provide

We will continue to use a number of ways to communicate and provide information to our community.

- We provide access points at both the Council Offices and the Community Café 5 days a week.
- We will provide at least one notice board in each ward and update information including council agendas and other local community information from our partners.
- All of our meetings are advertised, including on the Town Council's website, and open to the public. We have public question time on each council meeting.
- We have an annual town meeting for any elector to attend and raise any matter with us.
- We have a web site and direct email contact.
- We produce budgets with details of expenditure that is considered by the Council in January or February each year and this information is available to residents.
- We have a complaints procedure in place.

Opportunities for Community Involvement

We believe that:-

- Our community should be involved in the decisions that affect them.
- Our community deserves high quality public services, shaped around their needs.
- Policies and strategies should reflect local priorities, requirements and aspirations.

We believe it is important for our customers and community to participate at whatever level they wish to influence service delivery, decision making and policy development.

We:-

- Provide opportunities for our councillors to hold local surgeries in Council venues.
- Have the opportunity for public questions at all Council meetings.
- Allow the use of our facilities for AGMs and other similar meetings of groups and organisations that we work in partnership with to allow local people to get involved.
- We have public access and reception at the Council Offices.
- When we carry out significant work or introduce new services we carry out surveys and seek the views of local people and groups as appropriate.

The Council receives petitions and other formal representations and will take these matters up with the other service providers as appropriate to support local needs

Involvement in Partnerships

The Town Council is very proactive in partnerships to improve our community life. We aim to make a difference. We will work with other organisations, such as the Police and Fire Services, Kent County and Dartford Borough Councils, neighbouring parishes and other public bodies, health service, housing associations and groups and individuals from the community, voluntary and private sectors to make sure that together we influence the future direction of our area.

We also know that we need to work closely with groups to encourage effective community engagement and ensure that processes and services are flexible enough to be tailored to different groups and individuals as not all of

Swanscombe and Greenhithe parish is the same and Swanscombe and Greenhithe is not the same as other areas of Kent. We understand that sometimes people are reluctant to get involved and we are working with other partners to ensure that community engagement is as straightforward as possible and targeted appropriately.

What do we mean by community engagement?

Community engagement can mean different things to different people, different communities and different services and situations. We have designed our Community Engagement Strategy to ensure that we can provide the most appropriate means for communities and customers to be involved and give feedback. The various means of community engagement are:

- Information supports all types of community engagement and keeps people informed about such things as decisions, services and local events (e.g. through the Town Council's numerous Notice Boards and also the Council's website with links to other).
- Consultation can be used when there is a decision to make about something or when there are a number of choices about the details (e.g. we carried out research into what our Community Hall users required most before working in partnership with funding stream opportunities to fulfil those requirements).
- Deciding together. This is when local people are involved in deciding which options to choose, but it is the council that will act on the decisions (e.g. we have worked with Dartford Borough Council on projects that enhance and help shape services for our area.).
- Acting together. This is when decisions are made by partnerships between local people or agencies and the Council. The people involved in making the decisions also take part in carrying them out (e.g. Police).

Every type of involvement is important in the community engagement process and different methods will be used depending on the activity and circumstances. Sometimes it may be appropriate to inform or consult on some activities, while at other times we will seek to involve communities and individuals in much greater depth.

Councillors and Officers in partnership

We aim to be one team for the benefit of our community. Complaints and feedback can be reported to local councillors or officers. Some matters can be quite easy to deal with, with other things taking longer and needing policy decisions or finance and may need to support of the Town Council or other public

bodies. We will involve county and borough Council officers and county, borough and ward councillors to meet the needs of our community.