

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE 2025

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 Kingswood Town Council is committed to using a wide range of approaches to actively communicate with its residents. This is for the purpose of ensuring that the residents are well informed of the decision-making process and know how to make an input into the decisions that affect their day-to-day lives.

1.2 Kingswood Town Council is also committed to creating and maintaining effective working relationships with all sectors of the community. The council recognises that there are different levels of engagement and will endeavor to involve the community in the following ways:

- Inform people about its work and the services that it provides.
- Consult with and seek out the views of the community.
- Encourage community participation in local government.
- Collaborate with and support community groups and organisations, where appropriate, to achieve agreed aims for the benefit of the residents of Kingswood.
- Build effective working relationships with the community and community groups and encourage a sense of ownership of projects.
- Share information that is of value to the community and community groups.
- Celebrate all that is good in Kingswood.

2.0 THE COMMUNITY

2.1 Kingswood Town Council seeks to engage with all sections of the community regardless of age, ability, gender, faith, ethnicity, sexual orientation. It will engage those who are seldom heard and disaffected. It will also engage with local businesses, community groups, organisations and societies which are active in Kingswood, as well as partners at South Gloucestershire Council, elected members, the local policing team, schools and local churches. The town council is interested in engaging with others who have an interest in matters relating to the economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of the area.

3.0 ROLE OF COUNCILLORS IN CONSULTATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

3.1 Elected members can be influential advocates in the local community and their leadership role enables them to have an input into the consultation and engagement process. They often review and respond to consultation documents from a wide range of local and national bodies.

3.2 If you would like a councillor to attend one of your meetings, or to become a member of your organization, please contact the town clerk who will put that request to a council meeting, to see if a councillor has an interest in your request. Councillors are available to talk to residents during the public session in town council meetings and at the Annual Town Meeting.

3.3 In a private capacity, councillors belong to other bodies, societies and organisations, where they may promote the work of the town council. However, they are there in a private capacity and cannot commit the council to any activity or project that has not been formally approved by the council.

3.4 You can meet your councillor at council meetings, at events, or at the council's pop-up surgery, held on the first Saturday of the month in Kingswood Library. They are also available by email (from the website).

4.0 PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO THE COMMUNITY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT

4.1 Kingswood Town Council recognises that members of the community may wish to engage with the council at different levels and in a variety of ways, from attendance at formal meetings to receiving emails or visiting the website. Kingswood Town Council therefore will use several different methods to engage with you.

4.2 Publications: Kingswood Town Council publishes an article every month in the Kingswood Voice, which it uses to reach the residents of Kingswood in print form. A copy of the town council's article is also published on the town council website. It will also publish an annual report, in May each year. The annual report will contain information about the finances of the council, achievements over the last year and its future plans. Printed material is provided in the library and in the Skills Hub. A slide show, on a continuous loop, covering relevant monthly information is also displayed in Kingswood library.

4.3 Website and Email www.kingswood-tc.gov.uk and clerk@kingswood-tc.gov.uk. This website is a community resource, publishing information about the town, the town council and the organisations that are working to improve the lives of residents in Kingswood. The website is also the site for the agendas, minutes and reports from town council meetings. Residents and community groups are invited to email the council if they wish to add information to the website, or if they wish to exchange information. A QR code appears on printed council material, to drive the reader to the website.

4.4 Social Media: The Town Council has a Facebook page and an Instagram page which is very popular with residents and business alike. The number of followers is growing and there is a surge after a council event. It produces a What's On Wednesday, a weekly roundup of events and activities that are taking place and shares useful information and consultations from SGC.

4.5 Direct Access: Phone number 0117 4576531. The council does not currently have an office in the town, but residents can request, via the clerk, to meet a councillor locally. regularly phone the town clerk for advice and signposting and the clerk is easy to get hold of.

4.6 Meetings: Notices of council meetings are published on the council's website in the week before the meeting. At the beginning of each council and committee meeting there is a period set aside for public question time. This is the opportunity to ask questions to the council. After public question time, the council must attend to its business and any further contributions are at the discretion of the Chair. Council meetings are arranged for the Second Tuesday of each month, at 7pm, and take place in the Main Hall in The Park Centre, High Street, Kingswood BS15 4AR. Committee meetings also take place on a Tuesday in the same venue, but their dates will vary.

4.7 Annual Town Meeting: Each May the town council has a duty to arrange a public meeting for the benefit of the wider town. This is not a town council meeting, but a meeting for residents and community groups to come together and receive feedback from activities and projects undertaken in the town or hear about plans for the future. It is arranged by the Town Council and the Chair of the Council will host the meeting.

4.8 Councillor Vacancies: From time-to-time councillors move on from the council for various reasons, which creates a vacancy on the council. When this happens, the appropriate notices will be displayed, and residents have the opportunity to become coopted members of the council (providing they meet the necessary criteria). There are 15 councillor positions

4.9 Cooption: Apart from the full council (and staffing committee), there are opportunities for members of the community to become involved in some of the committee work, and further the projects that the council is pursuing. Any standing Committee is empowered to coopt interested members of the community.

4.10 Surveys: Kingswood Town Council will from time to time undertake surveys and other related forms of information gathering to ascertain the community's views on a particular issue.

4.11 Events: Kingswood Town Council has a designated Community Engagement and Events Officer who will arrange an annual calendar of events and activities that serve to meet the wishes of as wide a demographic as possible. These events are agreed by council and then publicised using all the communication methods above. There is an opportunity for collaboration with community groups, and for individuals to volunteer to steward at events.

4.12 Competitions. In order to drive more followers to social media, some low-key competitions are arranged (name that location etc) with small prizes. To engage with local families over the Christmas and Easter Period an interactive trail is created, in conjunction with SGC, that involves local shops and the library. A prize is offered to the winner. Competitions will continue to generate interest in the work of the council, and to drive residents to the council's website via the QR code which appears on all council printed material.

4.13 Random Acts of Kindness: In order to create some uniqueness and an element of surprise to those visiting the High Street, a local group of crocheters and knitters have made a new letter box topper on an almost monthly basis, which has created a real buzz and interest. As a result, individual crocheted items, linked to the theme of the letter box, are hidden in the High Street area for shoppers to find. A small gesture with huge rewards. The QR code drives people to the council's website.

5.0 OPPORTUNITY FOR FORMAL PRESENTATION TO THE COUNCIL

5.1 Representation to the council will be considered in public question time at the beginning of each meeting. The publication of agendas gives locals the opportunity to make representations at the meeting before the agenda item is discussed. If a resident writes to the council, they can expect a response in writing. If a resident or community group requires the provision of information, the clerk will provide it in accordance with the council's Publication Scheme. Some of the information might already be available on the website.

6.0 HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS

6.1 Kingswood Town Council has adopted a Complaints Procedure which is available on the website. If you have a complaint about the council, please phone the clerk in the first instance. If the complaint is about the clerk, then direct your complaint to the Chair in an email (details on the website, or from the clerk).

7.0 INVOLVEMENT IN PARTNERSHIPS

Kingswood Town Council is committed to taking an Asset Based Community Development approach to its work and will always collaborate with partners where it is clear that it will be of benefit to the residents, or it will fulfill its statutory requirements.

8.0 THE PLANNING SYSTEM

8.1 The Town Council engages in a range of activities that influence the planning system and, as a statutory consultee, has a say in how Kingswood is developed. This means promoting desirable changes and resisting unwelcome changes that are likely to have a significant negative impact on the town.

8.1 The town council has a Planning and Highways Committee that meets every four weeks (interspersed with Full Council meetings) where it considers the planning applications that have been received and processed for consideration by the Planning Authority, which is South Gloucestershire Council. People are encouraged to attend the meetings or write to the council to express their views on the applications to be considered. The agendas for these meetings will be published on the council's website the week before the meeting. If you would like to attend, please contact the clerk who will explain what you can expect from the meeting.