



Kirton in Lindsey Town Council

## **Policy 39: Community Engagement & Communication Policy**

Adopted September 2024 (v.20241) [FC2409/12]

This policy sets out how Kirton in Lindsey Town Council will manage general community engagement thought communications and consultations.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of this policy are:

- Actively involve Kirton in Lindsey residents in decisions affecting activities in the area.
- Encourage partnership working.
- Ensure all information published is clear, concise, and widely available.
- Provide opportunities for residents, businesses, services, and community groups to engage with Kirton in Lindsey Town Council.

### **Introduction**

1.1 Kirton in Lindsey Town Council (KLTC) strongly believes that involving residents in decisions which affect their lives is a means to develop an empowered and strong community and recognises that effective communication is a key component in creating an engaged community.

1.2 KLTC strongly believes that its residents should be involved in their community and in shaping the future of their town.

1.3 Whilst KLTC cannot force anyone to engage with it or the wider community, it will try to make it easier and more attractive for them to do so.

1.4 KLTC is always open to receiving both positive and negative feedback and is committed to encouraging the community to engage with it.

1.5 Unlike other tiers of local government, Town Councillors always live or work within the town they serve (or within a three-mile radius) and have close ties to their constituents and local voluntary and community organisations on a day-to-day basis. This makes them uniquely placed in terms of informed representation.

1.6 KLTC considers that the Kirton in Lindsey community comprises all residents of the parish, all users of Town Council services, all those who work or own businesses within Kirton in Lindsey, all young people who go to school in Kirton in Lindsey and all voluntary organisations, clubs and societies operating within the town.

1.7 This policy sets out KLTC's approach to communications and engagement and provides guidance to Councillors on member press engagement.

1.8 During election periods KLTC is required to ensure it does not do anything which could influence the outcome of the election. This is known as the pre-election period. KLTC will follow the guidance issued by the Government, the National Association of Local Council, the Society of Local Council

Clerks and the Local Government Association and vary its communications accordingly during these periods.

1.9 All communications will be in plain English avoiding jargon and misleading public information.

### **Community Engagement**

1.10 Community Engagement is concerned with giving local people a voice and involving them in decisions which affect them and their community.

1.11 It provides an opportunity for local people to talk to KLTC about their aspirations and/or needs in their community. It allows KLTC to consult with and inform people about what services it provides, how its priorities and policies are determined and how well it is performing.

1.12 KLTC will identify and embrace opportunities to work with other local community groups, and participate in local networks to share knowledge and experience.

1.13 Effective and meaningful community engagement can provide a number of benefits:

- The problems and needs of local people are clearly identified in order that appropriate new or improved facilities/services can be provided.
- Those participating feel empowered by being involved in decision making in their local community and a sense of ownership and pride in the new facilities/initiatives.
- It may result in a renewed respect for KLTC; enhanced leadership and greater interest in elections or for becoming a Councillor.

### **Communication**

2.1 KLTC recognises that it has a role to play in facilitating communication across the community and where possible will support external organisations in disseminating information to the community.

2.2 KLTC's website is its primary source of Council information for the community and it shall be kept up to date.

2.3 The Town Clerk shall prepare monthly updates as well as information for local and national newsletters and magazines when necessary and on occasion other Officers may be asked to prepare similar information for publication.

2.4 KLTC will:

- Distribute a monthly e-newsletter
- Utilise noticeboards at the Town Hall, Cornwall Street, Church Street, York Road and at KLASSIC Park to display posters / notices
- Develop the Annual Town Meeting as a forum for community discussion
- Publish its agendas, minutes and reports on the Council website
- Publish an annual report of its activity

2.5 KLTC shall continue to set aside time at every Council and Committee meeting for members of the public to address the Council. Comments can be in verbal form by attendance at the meeting and/or by writing in advance.

2.6 Issues received in writing may be included as a stated item on a future agenda, dependant on relevance and legality within the Town Council's duties, powers and responsibilities. Correspondence received from a member of the public is acknowledged wherever possible, within five working days.

2.7 KLTC recognises that communication is a two-way process and it will always strive to promptly answer questions from and listen to suggestions put forward by members of the community.

### **Social Media**

2.7 KLTC recognises that social media is an effective means of communication and will operate social media channels as part of its communications.

2.8 Social media messages will be non-political, uncontroversial and used to promote and notify the Town with accurate public information.

2.9 KLTC aims to use social media to support two-way communication with the community but recognises that it is not always appropriate to respond to every message/comment, publicly or otherwise. For complex or urgent issues users should be referred to traditional forms of communication e.g. email or telephone.

### **Consultations**

3.1 When seeking the views on a specific project or idea, KLTC will consult with the community. The majority of consultations will be open to the whole community but on occasion consultations may be with specific stakeholders only.

3.2 In preparation for a consultation the Council will:

- Identify the stakeholders for the consultation
- Determine the appropriate communications to ensure all stakeholders are aware of the consultation
- Determine the appropriate form of consultation
- Set a defined end date for submissions

3.3 Open consultations shall run for a minimum of six weeks. More focused consultations may run for a minimum of three weeks.

3.4 KLTC shall run consultations at times it feels are appropriate.

3.5 Consultations will use specific, non-leading questions.

### **Press Releases and Official Statements**

4.1 Press releases promoting Council activity will be issued as required under delegation to the Town Clerk. Press releases shall focus on promoting KLTC as a body and not promote the views of specific members/groups, publicise individual members or encourage the public to hold a particular view.

4.2 As a minimum, press releases will be published on the Council website in addition to the press. Press releases may be disseminated further depending on the subject matter.

4.3 When a press release is prepared on an issue that the Town Clerk considers is contentious, it shall be prepared with relevant members e.g. the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor or the Chairman of a Committee.

4.4 All requests received by Officers for statements on behalf of KLTC shall be referred to the Town Clerk who will provide a statement where there is a clear policy position/direction. All statements shall be matters of fact and demonstrate that the Council is:

- Open and accountable
- Professional
- Willing to listen and engage on issues in the community

Where there is no clear policy position/direction the request shall be taken to a meeting of the Town Council to be discussed and action agreed.

### **Statements of Correction**

4.5 There are occasions when it is appropriate for KLTC to submit a statement, for example to explain important policies or to correct factual errors submitted by other correspondents. These will be issued as required under delegation to the Town Clerk.

4.6 Such statements should be kept brief and balanced in tone and correspondence should not be drawn out over several weeks.

4.7 Members/Officers must not use statements as a means of expressing their personal views.

### **Member Press Engagement**

5.1 As civic leaders, it is to be expected that members will be approached by the media for comment and may wish to respond to local issues. In all engagement members must not purport to speak on behalf of KLTC unless.

5.2 Members speaking in their capacity as a Councillor must uphold KLTC's Code of Conduct and are expected to follow all relevant Council policies.

5.3 Members must be aware of what constitutes pre-determination and should not present themselves as having made their mind up on an issue before voting at a meeting.

5.4 Members should avoid being seen to anticipate decisions of KLTC and must not criticise any Council employees, fellow members or Council decisions.

5.5 Members should be careful not to disclose any confidential information, such as to include information given in confidence or discussions following a resolution to exclude the public and press at a meeting. Members must not share the detail of any legal advice received by the Council unless expressly authorised to do so by resolution at a Council/Committee meeting.

5.6 Members should demonstrate the democratic process of the Council and the decision-making process when engaging with the press.

5.7 If there is an issue that members would like to see an official press release prepared for, they should contact the Town Clerk, so that it can form part of a Council or Committee resolution.

**Statements to the Media**

5.8 Members are entitled to make statements to the media on issues in the community but must ensure that they communicate the capacity in which they speak e.g. individually, on behalf of a group, etc.

5.9 If a member is unsure about the facts of an issue, they should refer the media representative to contact the Town Clerk to respond to the request.

**Using the 'Councillor' title**

5.10 When a member is speaking in their capacity as a Councillor, they may sign off as Councillor.

5.11 The title should not be used when the issue is not of relevance to the member's role as a Councillor or when a member is not speaking as a Councillor.

Signed..... Town Mayor

Name.....

Date.....

Signed..... Town Clerk

Name.....

Date.....