



Flitwick Town Council

Flitwick Town Council – Community Engagement Strategy

2026–2031

Working together for a thriving, connected, and inclusive Flitwick

FOREWORD

(Mayor / Town Clerk)

A welcome from the Mayor or Town Clerk highlighting the Council's commitment to meaningful engagement, listening and acting on feedback, and shaping services around residents' needs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose: To provide a clear framework for how Flitwick Town Council will engage with its community, ensuring residents' voices shape services, policies, and projects, and that engagement generates lasting social value.

Vision:

To make Flitwick a thriving, inclusive, and connected community where everyone has the opportunity to participate, contribute, and feel valued.

INTRODUCTION

Residents, community groups, councillors, voluntary sector organisations and local businesses all play a part in shaping our experience of Flitwick. This document outlines how Flitwick Town council aims to engage with our communities, and how we embed a person-centred and bottom-up approach to service delivery across Flitwick.

Community engagement is an overarching term that describes ways we can build and sustain relationships between the Council and our local community. This will be a catalyst to facilitate open dialogue, helping both Flitwick Town Council and residents to understand issues within and the actions needed to improve the experience of everyone in Flitwick.

The three essential principles to drive successful teamwork and organisational change by fostering transparent information flow, collective problem-solving, and shared dedication to goals. Effective communication ensures understanding, whilst collaboration leverages diverse strengths for collective success. Commitment for all parties to maintain momentum and achieve effective outcomes.

Communication



Clear, timely, accessible information that enables people to understand

Collaboration



Working alongside residents and partners to share ideas, strengths and responsibilities

Commitment



Following through on what we hear, building trust through action and accountability

PURPOSE

Community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with individuals and groups to address issues that impact their wellbeing. The Town Council recognises that strong engagement leads to better decisions, stronger communities and improved public confidence.

This strategy aims to:

- Establish a consistent approach to engagement
- Improve participation and representation
- Strengthen relationships between the Council and the community
- Build community capacity and resilience.

This strategy applies to all Council departments, elected members and partner organisations involved in engagement activity.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

This strategy aligns with:

- Town Council Corporate Plan 2025 – 2030
- Equality & Inclusion Policy

Flitwick Town Council has a duty to consult communities on key decisions and to ensure **fairness, openness and accountability in decision making**.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Flitwick is a growing market town with a diverse and active community. It benefits from good transport links, attractive parks and nature reserves, a leisure centre, community hubs, and a strong network of local clubs, volunteers, and businesses.

Demographic Information (2025 Estimates)

- Population: Approximately 13,800 residents in Flitwick parish.
- Age Structure: A balanced mix across under-18s, working-age adults, and older residents.
- Ethnicity: Predominantly White British, with small Asian, Black, Mixed, Arab, and other minority groups.
- Households: Around 5,800 households.
- Key Features: Flitwick Manor and Manor Park, Flitwick Moor, Flitwick Wood, The Rufus Centre, The Hub, Flitwick Leisure Centre.
- Transport Links: Excellent Thameslink rail connections to Bedford, Luton, London, Gatwick, plus M1 motorway proximity.

Flagship initiatives such as the Flitwick Community Fridge (reducing food waste and supporting families) demonstrate the Flitwick Town Council's commitment to community-led solutions.

Flitwick is home to a broad range of communities. This strategy recognises their diverse needs and contributions.

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement builds and sustains trusted relationships between the Council and local people. It means:

- Open, two-way communication.
- Involving residents in shaping decisions, not just consulting after decisions are made.
- Tailoring engagement to people, place and policy.
- Maximising social value by ensuring activities deliver wider benefits — for example, reducing waste, building skills, strengthening social networks and improving health.

We commit to key principles:

- Inclusion – overcome barriers to participation.
- Planning – clear purpose for engagement.
- Working together – effective collaboration.
- Methods – fit-for-purpose techniques.
- Communication – clear, regular, accessible.

- Impact & Social Value – measure how engagement improves wellbeing, sustainability, and local prosperity.

We will proactively reach out to groups who may experience barriers to participation — including disabled residents, people with SEND, older adults, minority ethnic groups and carers — to ensure their voices are heard and valued.

STRATEGIC THEMES

Here are the 5 themes that will underpin the strategy and be threaded through Flitwick Town Council's development plans and engagement methods.

1. Community Engagement & Inclusion

This theme focuses on ensuring everyone can access, participate in and influence Council engagement opportunities, regardless of background, ability or circumstance. We will use co-design and coproduction approaches to ensure residents, especially those whose voices are less often heard, help shape services and community initiatives.

- Provide regular opportunities for all residents, including disabled people, residents with SEND, older adults, and minority ethnic groups, to share views with the Council.
- Make engagement activities accessible and welcoming to all groups.
- Ensure that engagement contributes to social value by building skills, confidence, and connections.

What we have done:

One successful community engagement initiative has been the Annual Residents' Survey, which gathers feedback on Council services, priorities and what residents would like to see included in the Council programme. This survey enables a wide range of residents to share their views and helps the Council collaborate with the community when shaping future delivery.

What we will do:

The next Annual Survey will be issued in March 2026. In addition, we will hold community drop-in sessions in different parts of the town and use group feedback forms and targeted engagement activities to help shape service delivery and ensure more residents can influence decisions.

2. Health, Wellbeing & Leisure

This theme promotes physical, mental and social wellbeing by increasing access to health services, leisure opportunities and support initiatives across the town.

- Promote healthy, active lifestyles and wellbeing for all residents.
- Work with local partners to increase access to health and leisure opportunities.
- Use community projects like the Flitwick Community Fridge to tackle food waste and support vulnerable residents.

- **What we have done:**

The Council has supported initiatives such as the Flitwick Community Fridge, which helps reduce food waste, supports families, and provides volunteering opportunities that help reduce social isolation and improve wellbeing.

- **What we will do:**

We will continue working with local partners to promote health and wellbeing **events**, increase awareness of local leisure opportunities, and support community-based initiatives that encourage active and healthy lifestyles.

3. Events, Culture & Heritage

This theme celebrates Flitwick's identity by promoting cultural expression, community events and heritage awareness.

- Celebrate Flitwick's identity, culture and history.
- Increase opportunities for residents to take part in community events.

- **What we have done:**

The Council has supported and promoted community events and activities that bring residents together and celebrate Flitwick's identity, helping to strengthen community connection and local pride.

- **What we will do:**

We will continue to work with local groups and organisations to develop inclusive community events and cultural activities, ensuring opportunities are accessible and reflective of the town's diverse community.

4 Environment & Sustainability

This theme supports environmental responsibility and sustainable practise through community led action and Council leadership.

- Support community-led environmental projects.
- Reduce waste and promote sustainable practices at Council events and facilities.

- **What we have done:**

The Council has supported **community-led environmental activities**, including local clean-up efforts and initiatives that promote pride in the local environment.

- **What we will do:**

We will encourage further **volunteer planting days, litter picks and environmental improvement projects**, and promote sustainable practices at Council events and facilities to support a greener Flitwick.

5. Partnerships & Volunteering

This theme develops strong collaborative relationships and enhances the role of volunteers in delivering community outcomes.

- Strengthen relationships with local organisations, clubs and volunteers.
- Recognise and celebrate the contribution of volunteers.
- Ensure partnership working enhances social value outcomes for Flitwick residents.

- **What we have done:**

The Council works with a wide range of local organisations, voluntary groups and partners, supporting collaborative initiatives such as the Community Fridge and other community-led projects.

- **What we will do:**

We will strengthen partnership working through regular engagement with community organisations, promote volunteering opportunities, and continue to support collaborative projects that deliver positive outcomes for residents.

Methods of Engagement



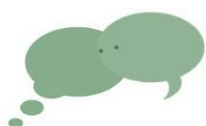
INFORM

What this means

We will keep people informed & up to date about services, decisions, opportunities and solutions.

Examples

Website, social media, newsletter, press releases, notice boards, public displays accessible formats and group networks



CONSULT

What this means

We will gather, listen to, acknowledge & use community feedback to inform our decision making.

Examples

Online & paper surveys, focus groups, public meetings, pop-up sessions, ensure accessible venues & translated/Easy Read materials.



INVOLVE

What this means

Working directly with people throughout the process to ensure concerns are understood and considered.

Examples

Workshops, forums, school assemblies, stakeholder roundtables, drop-ins at community hubs with inclusive practises.



COLLABORATE

What this means

We will look to the community for advice & innovation & incorporate both in our working together to the maximum extent possible.

Examples

Community needs analysis, focus groups, service user forums.



EMPOWER

What this means

We will support the community and implement what is decided together.

Examples

Delegated Decisions, Community assets transfer, grants & direct service delivery.

This diagram demonstrates the different levels of community engagement. It is important to know and understand what options are most suitable, depending on what needs to be

achieved. In some cases, the community only needs information; in others, helping to empower communities may be more appropriate. As objectives and priorities change over time, approaches can be adapted or expanded the needs of all involved.

PLANNING ENGAGEMENT EFFECTIVELY

Before any engagement, we will:

- Define its purpose.
- Identify who should be involved.
- Consider available time and resources.
- Plan how to evaluate success and social value.

We will ensure accessibility, inclusivity and fairness in all engagement processes.

COMMUNICATION & FEEDBACK

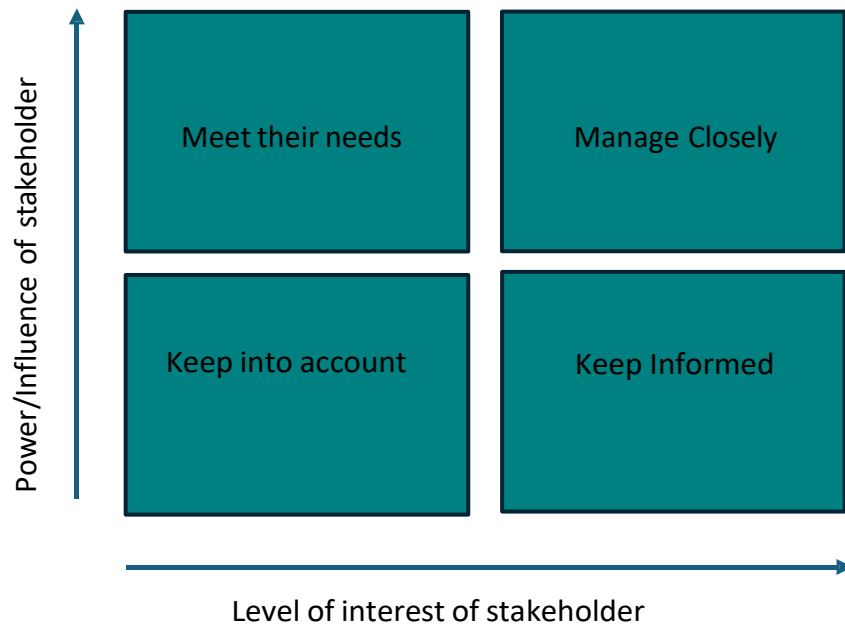


We will:

- Define purpose
 - Identify stakeholders
 - Allocate resources
 - Ensure inclusivity
 - Measure Impact.
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- Share opportunities widely via Council channels.
 - Provide feedback to participants on how their views shaped decisions.
 - Publish regular updates on engagement outcomes and social value achieved.

MONITORING & REVIEW

- Evaluate each engagement process to understand who we reached, how people felt, what changed, and what social value was created.
- KPIs – attendances, survey satisfaction, volume numbers, diversity measures
- Review progress annually and refresh the strategy mid-way to keep it relevant.
- Use the below to assess stakeholders' investment and engagement effectiveness.



Success will be measured through:

- Participation rates
 - Feedback satisfaction scores
 - Community Impact
- Diversity (focus groups) of participants
Number of engagements

Stakeholder Mapping

Stakeholder Group	Examples	Engagement Purpose
Residents	Homeowners, tenants and new housing residents	Ensure local voices influence decisions and services
Local Businesses	Retailers, hospitality, service providers, traders	Support economic development.
Children & Young People	Schools, youth clubs, young carers	Shape youth services and facilities.
Older Residents	Pensioners sheltered housing residents	Address accessibility, isolation and wellbeing.
Disabled Residents	Physical, sensory, learning disabilities.	Remove barriers and improve access
Minority groups	Faith groups, cultural organisations	Ensure culturally inclusive engagement
Community Group	Voluntary organisations, community clubs & charities	Co-deliver services and strengthen partnerships
Education Providers	Schools, Colleges, nurseries	Engage in youth and family services
Public Services	Police, health service, fire and rescue.	Integrated planning and community safety.
Elected members	Town councillors	Representation and governance
Developers & Housing Providers	Housing Associations, planning applicants	Influence sustainable growth and design.

Annual Reviews: Report progress each year; adapt actions based on results and feedback.