

## **STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE 2024**

- 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.
- Kingswood Town Council is 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.

### **THE COMMUNITY**

- Kingswood Town Council seeks to engage with all sections of the community regardless of age, ability, gender, faith, ethnicity, sexual orientation. It will seek to engage with those who are seldom heard, disenfranchised or disaffected. It will also engage with the local businesses, community groups, clubs and 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.

### **THE PLANNING SYSTEM**

- The Town Council engages with 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.
- The town council has a Planning 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.

## PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO THE COMMUNITY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- 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 a number of different ways to actively seek the views of the residents.

- **Publications**

Kingswood Council will communicate with residents through articles in the monthly newsletter, as well as an annual report, published in May each year. The annual report will contain information about the finances of the council, and its future plans.

- **Website and Email**

[www.kingswood-tc.gov.uk](http://www.kingswood-tc.gov.uk) and [clerk@kingswood-tc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@kingswood-tc.gov.uk)

This website is a community resource which publishes 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 of the agendas, minutes and reports from town council meetings as well as being a central place for other local information.

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.

- **Social Media**

The Town Council has a Facebook page and uses this to publish its own information, as well as share other local relevant information.

- **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. The email addresses of all councillors are listed on the website. Councillors will attend pop-up surgeries in the Kings Chase Shopping Centre, and there is also an opportunity to see councillors in its public meetings.

- **Meetings**

Notices of all council meetings are published on the council's website in the week before the meeting. Each council and committee meeting has a period at the beginning of the meeting set aside for public question time. This is the opportunity to ask questions to the council. After the public question time, the council must attend to its business and any further contributions is 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.

- **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.

- **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).

- **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.

- **Specific Projects**

Kingswood Town Council will undertake projects that are for the benefit for the community. It will collaborate and work with the community groups within the town and ensure that the community is fully represented and involved in these projects.

- **Annual Town Meeting**

Each May there 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.

#### **OPPORTUNITY FOR FORMAL PRESENTATION TO THE COUNCIL**

- Representation to the council will be considered in the public question time at the beginning of each meeting. The publication of agendas gives locals the opportunity to make representation 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 publically available on the website.

- **HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS**

Kingswood Town Council has an adopted Complaints Procedure which is available on the website and from the clerk.

- **INVOLVEMENT IN PARTNERSHIPS**

Kingswood Town Council is committed to partnership working where it is clear that it will be of benefit to the residents, or it will fulfill its statutory requirements.

- **ROLE OF COUNCILLORS AND OFFICER IN CONSULTATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

- 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.
- Councillors are available to talk to residents during the public session in town council meetings and at the Annual Town Meeting.
- In a private capacity, the councillors belong to other bodies, societies and organisations, where they may, if they so wish, 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 full council or a committee of the council.