

# 'DIALOGUE - YOUR IDEAS'

**An easy to use on-line discussion platform for people in Penrith to get involved in addressing issues that matter to them or affect the town!**

**Just set a challenge, invite ideas and see how the conversation unfolds!**



## **Penrith Town Council**

Unit 1, Church House, 19-24 Friargate, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 7XR  
Tel: 01768 899 773 Email: [office@penrithtowncouncil.co.uk](mailto:office@penrithtowncouncil.co.uk)

# What is Dialogue For?

- ❖ Dialogue is a user-friendly digital tool for direct community engagement
- ❖ It will be used to involve the local community in issues that matter to them, their family or local community
- ❖ It's a different way of getting people involved – a place for conversations to openly discuss specific challenges and find better solutions to problems

# Key Dialogue Goals

- ❖ The Town Council wants to engage and involve the community, spark interest and encourage conversation and local interaction in social, cultural, economic and/or environmental issues affecting the town.
- ❖ To find out what people think and add new ideas/local views to inform the development of the Town Council's priorities, Officer Work Plans, Strategies and subsequent delivery work
- ❖ To provide a discussion platform for local people to get involved and feel they and the council are working well together to 'make a difference' in Penrith

# Using Dialogue

- ❖ First go to the Town Council's Dialogue site:  
<https://yourideas.penrithtowncouncil.co.uk>
- ❖ Read the different pages and hyperlinked information.
- ❖ You need to register with a username and password to participate in Dialogue
- ❖ Choose a memorable username. You may want to choose something anonymous. Alternatively, Members and Town Council Officers may use a consistent naming format e.g. Anna\_penrithtowncouncil
- ❖ Please note your User Name and Pwd for future use. However, if you forget them, you can use the 'Forgotten your Password' link on the Log-In page at the top right hand corner

# Challenges ↔ Comments and Ideas

- ❖ Challenges, ideas and comments are the key elements of Dialogue
- ❖ Challenges are essentially topics that need to address and inform some aspect of the Town Council's work/decision-making
- ❖ The Site Administrator (Town Council Officer) will set each challenge and may add a few ideas to help kick start conversation
- ❖ Participants can add their own constructive idea or ideas to help address the challenge set
- ❖ Participants can comment and refine any of the ideas, so promoting deeper conversation and understanding.
- ❖ Entirely new insightful ideas can flow from the conversations. They can then be added by participants for others to comment on.

# Meaningful Challenges

1. The challenges set need to be related to topics that are meaningful to the Town Council and that local community participants can identify with
2. They should be focused enough that people can easily provide solutions (Generic questions like "How can we improve science?" probably wouldn't work very well)
3. Language used needs to be succinct and accessible
4. Opening and closing dates need to be set

# Promoting and Moderating Dialogue

- ❖ The Dialogue challenge will be promoted and the importance of taking part emphasised
- ❖ Commenting on an idea someone else has posted is a form of promotion and can help encourage further participation
- ❖ By default, moderation on Dialogue is set to 'post-moderated'. This means new ideas and comments will be published right away.
- ❖ Site Administrators and Moderators have the ability to either reject an idea and/or remove comments that are inappropriate. A specific reason will be given.
  - ❖ Note: The Moderation Policy on the Home page provides guidelines

# Tips for Promoting a Dialogue Topic

- ❖ Promote by sharing and placing the direct links to the challenge wherever possible, including for example:
  - ❖ Face to face interaction. Share with family and friends
  - ❖ Newsletters, webpages, email signatures
  - ❖ Local radio & tv
  - ❖ Social Media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Online Advertising
  - ❖ Make use of existing mailing lists
  - ❖ Press Release, local community groups and bloggers – and ask people you know to append the link on their site

# Reporting

- ❖ When the challenge has closed, a report on outcomes can be generated
- ❖ Reports list numbers of participants, ideas and comments.
- ❖ Full comments and ideas are also included.
- ❖ The information in the reports will be used to progress or work towards Town Council strategies, work plans or delivery work.
- ❖ Collective information generated by the local community and communities of interest will aid Town Council decision-making

# Evaluation

- ❖ The Engagement Officer will evaluate use of Dialogue and share the outcomes with colleagues and Members to ensure lessons are learned and best practice continues to be followed.
- ❖ Interim evaluations will be conducted to feed into and improve ongoing use.
- ❖ Final evaluation questions might include the following:
  - Have we reached the target audience?
  - Are people engaged with the challenge(s)?
  - Have any outside factors contributed to or hindered the process?
  - Has any refinement of priorities/delivery plans evolved from discussions?
  - Have our key goals been achieved?
  - Do we continue use?

# Town Council's First Dialogue Challenge

- ❖ The Town Council's first 'challenge' was related to our 'Making Penrith Carbon Neutral by 2030' Strategy. The goal was to inform the work of PECCAN, the Group set up to support the strategy's implementation
- ❖ The challenge title was 'How can we learn locally about Climate Change Issues.' Link: <https://yourideas.penrithtowncouncil.co.uk/>
- ❖ Participants were asked first to 'Register,' then read the challenge, scroll to ideas and then comment on existing ideas or add their own
  - ❖ Note: To add a new comment participants click on the 'Add Idea' box. The new comment or idea shows immediately

# Synchronising Engagement Approaches

- ❖ It may be beneficial to run different methods of engagement at the same time, for example, Dialogue could run at the same time as an online survey (perhaps set up using the Cumbria '[Citizenspace](#)' platform) and/or any other face to face approach
- ❖ Synchronising different engagement methods at the same time as implementing a Publicity Plan helps to widen and deepen participation and will encourage more people to take part at a time convenient to them
- ❖ It's possible to include related information in the Dialogue and Citizenspace platforms, including links to the other exercises running at the same time, also to relevant strategies, websites, explanatory videos, previous reports and/or lessons learned elsewhere

# Survey or Dialogue

Survey	Dialogue
<b>Refinement</b> - A plan is on the table, you're considering tweaking the details	<b>Open-ended</b> - You're starting from a relatively blank sheet of paper
<b>Reactive</b> - You're providing information for people to comment on	<b>Creative</b> - You want to offer an initial prompt and see what people do with it
<b>Consultative</b> - You want to collect responses	<b>Conversational</b> - You want to interact with participants
<b>Individual</b> - You want to get people's personal input, a sample of what they currently think	<b>Collaborative</b> - You want to get people talking to each other to build towards some kind of consensus