

TIDENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY & STRATEGY

Introduction

Tidenham Parish Council is committed to community engagement at all levels and supports and encourages all community members to engage with the Council.

Policy Aims

The overall aim is to make Council communications a two-way process. The Council provides timely information to allow the community to understand what we do, whilst enabling the Council to make informed decisions using accurate information received from residents and partners.

Objectives of the community engagement policy

To improve, plan and shape the future of the parish according to local needs and priorities through active engagement with the community to understand needs and priorities.

- To use the process of engagement to inform decision making.
- To raise the profile of the Parish.
- To raise the profile of the work of the Parish Council.
- To use a variety of methods to provide information to the community.
- To engage with local and strategic partners on a range of matters of interest or concern to the community.
- To engage with young people and their parents to provide relevant support and activities in the Parish.

Who are the community and local partners and stakeholders?

Within the parish:

- Parishioners.
- Societies and organisations with interests in the Parish.
- Local businesses.
- Schools.

Wider groups and organisations:

- District and County Councillors, MPs.
- Neighbouring Parish Councils.
- Forest of Dean District Council Departments.
- Other public sector organisations such as those concerned with health, education, the police and emergency services.
- The media.

A strategy for engagement

The Council will achieve its communications objectives in the following ways using the methods of communication and engagement below:

- The Parish Clerk – The Clerk is a pivotal point of contact for residents in fielding and answering queries which arise. The Clerk's contact details are widely publicised and contact may be made by email and telephone.

- Parish Council Meetings – Parish Council meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month except August. A key aspect of the meetings is publicising the agenda in advance on the noticeboards and website. In all respects the Parish Council meetings must comply with the Council's Standing Orders ensuring good practice is maintained.
- Public consultation – the public are continually invited to attend all Parish Council Meetings. Each and every meeting includes a 'public consultation' session. Open questions are normally restricted to 15 minutes in total however at the Chair's discretion a period can be extended if deemed appropriate. Please see the rules of public participation.
- Parish Council Committee Meetings – All committee meetings are open to the public and agendas are published in advance of meetings, dates available on the noticeboards and website.
- Parish Council Contact Details – The Parish Council display contact details on the website and noticeboards.
- Calendar of Meetings – The Parish Council display the annual timetable for all meetings on the website and noticeboards.
- Annual Parish Meeting – The Annual Parish Meeting is the ideal opportunity to bring the community together and allow residents to question and review how the elected members help shape the community. To be successful good planning is needed and it is the responsibility of the Parish Clerk to both timetable an annual meeting date, organise the venue and ensure that Parish, District and County Councillors all attend and have a part to play. The Parish Council determines the "interest theme" for each annual meeting to encourage maximum turn out by the community. The main objective of the annual meeting is to provide and encourage two-way communication between the community and Councillors. The meeting is heavily advertised in advance on the website, noticeboards, newsletter if available and in local venues.
- Public Meetings – From time to time the Council may decide that an item warrants being dealt with through a specially convened Public Meeting. Public Meetings will be organised by the Clerk to set the meeting agenda and meeting content. The Clerk will arrange the meeting venue with any costs met by the Council.
- Public Consultation – A public consultation will be conducted if the Council concludes a particular event or programme that has an impact on the parish warrants a consultation programme. The intention of this exercise would be to better understand the needs of the parish.
- Community Engagement Hubs – The Council will host regular Hub events inviting community stakeholders to attend to enable the public to meet and engage with the Council and other organisations providing services etc. in the Parish.

Examples may include;

- Housing needs.
- Road Safety.
- Youth Engagement Project. (YETI)

In some cases, when a consultation programme needs to engage with the wider community a working party will be appointed to analyse any results and report to the Council with the outcomes. The Parish Council will have the option to accept all or part of any recommendation made by the working party by way of a majority decision by Councillors.

The Council will include an element of expenditure in its budget setting each year for community engagement, including the publication of its newsletters.

- Village Website (www.tidenhamparishcouncil.co.uk) – A wide ranging website with extensive information regarding the Parish Council and parish is in operation which includes news of the Parish.
- Social Media – Social Media is used to encourage rapid communication within the community. Facebook allowing short news items to be quickly distributed to those preferring to receive news through social media channels. The Facebook link is found on the Parish council website.

Evaluation

It is important that the Council measures its progress towards its stated objectives so that it may inform any future plans. Initially a benchmark of the current state will be required.

The following initiatives can potentially be monitored:

- Raised awareness of the Parish Council and the services it provides.
- Participation and engagement of community partners with Council projects, initiatives and consultation processes.
- Attendance at public meetings and organised events.
- Incidents of anti-social behaviour in the Parish.

This can be done by:

- Parish questionnaires or Facebook polls.
- Assessment of website usage.
- Measurement of press coverage following press releases.
- Number of likes and followers on social networking sites.
- Attendance at meetings.

Conclusion

The Council consults regularly with residents ranging from light touch opportunities such as the 'public consultation' session at each PC meeting through to formal consultation programmes where information must be widely disseminated and feedback obtained to shape the programme and demonstrate democracy in action.

For large or complex consultation programmes it may be necessary to form working parties – ideally consisting of Councillors and members of the public to organise the consultation programme. Outcomes from surveys and consultation draft material should be made available to the public through village bulletins and the web site for transparency purposes.

This Community Engagement Policy and Strategy provides the framework for how the Parish Council will communicate and engage with parishioners and other organisations. It must be reviewed and updated if necessary, annually.