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Wickham St Pauls Parish Council

Community Engagement Policy

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The Parish Council is committed to community engagement at all levels and supports and encourages community members to share their aspirations and wishes for themselves, their families and other community members with the Council.

The Council achieves these objectives through the following:

Communications

The Council supports the following specific communications channels:

- **The Look Out Magazine** – printed quarterly and delivered where practical to every home in the parish as well as business premises;
- **Website** –if requested a report will be produced by the Parish Clerk to inform Councillors of the type of inquiries and number of times the web pages are accessed by users. This information will assist in evaluating the effectiveness of this communications medium and assist in financial decision-making for future website development;
- **Notice boards** – situated opposite the Victory Inn on The Village Green, and in the village hall notices are displayed as and when required.
- **Flyers** – distributed to all homes and businesses as and when required.

Parish Council Meetings

Each and every Parish Council meeting begins with a public “Questions from Registered Electors” session. Sessions are restricted to 15 minutes in total with 3 minutes per member of the public. At the Chairman’s discretion, the 3 minutes per member of public can be extended if deemed appropriate.

If the Chairman agrees a time extension, the Clerk will be responsible for ensuring that any extension granted will not unduly compromise the agenda and that follow-on agenda items are given sufficient time to be dealt with and discussed to an appropriate level. The Clerk therefore acts as a timekeeper for the “Have your Say Session”.

In all respects the Parish Council meeting must comply with the Council’s Standing Orders ensuring good practice is maintained.

Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting, is the main 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 Wickham St Pauls Parish Council Clerk to timetable an annual meeting date, organise the venue and ensure that Parish, District and County Councillors attend and have a part to play. The Parish Council should determine the “interest theme” for each annual meeting to encourage maximum turn out by the community. The main objective of the annual meeting must be to provide and encourage two-way communication between the community and Councillors.

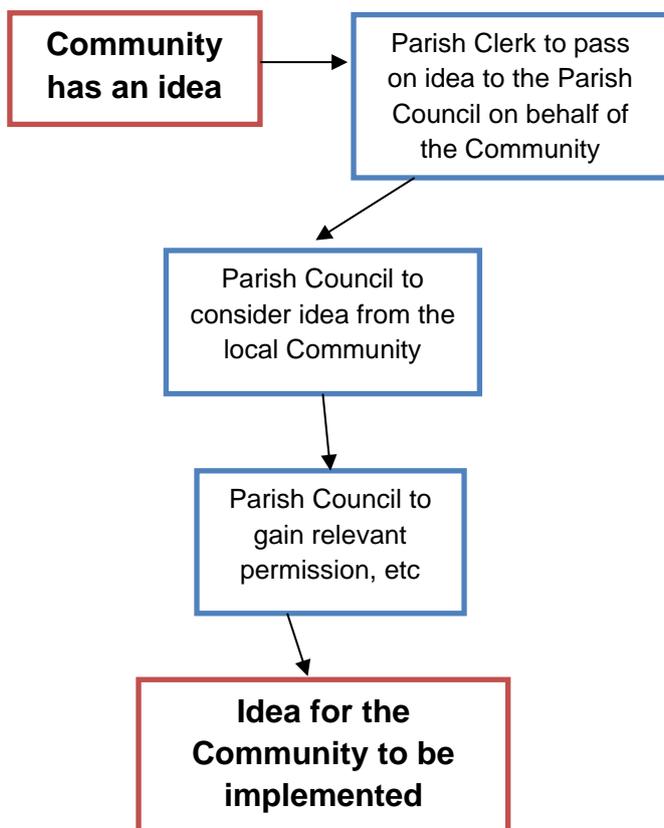
Public Meetings

From time to time the Council may decide that an item warrants being dealt with through a specially convened Public Meeting. The Clerk will arrange the meeting venue with any costs met by the Council. The Parish Council Chairman is expected to chair any Public Meeting but in exceptional circumstances the Chairman can appoint a deputy to this role. The Parish Clerk will prepare and post the agenda on the Parish web page and notice boards and take the minutes, but if the Parish Clerk is not able to attend the meeting, the chair will nominate an appropriate Councillor to undertake this function. In all respects the minute format and content will follow the agenda and comply with Standing Order requirements.

Consultation Programmes

The Council should aim to consult regularly with residents, ranging from light touch opportunities such as the “Questions from Registered Electors” session at the start of each Parish Council meeting to formal consultation programmes, where information must be disseminated widely and feedback obtained to shape the programme and demonstrate democracy in action.

Community engagement processes



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 the Look Out Magazine, notice boards and the website for transparency purposes.

The Council will decide if a particular event or programme that has a short, medium or long-term effect on the village warrants a specific consultation programme. Examples of this may include:

- Village road safety planning
- Boundary change proposals
- Proposed housing development.

In all cases a working group, initially made up of Parish Councillors, will be set up and tasked with reviewing the need for a consultation programme and present its recommendations to the Parish Council to make a decision.

The recommendations should include as a minimum:

- whether or not a consultation programme is required;
- the suggested working party makeup, which may include members of the public;
- objectives that apply, together with the scope and expected timeframe for the programme;
- whether or not the consultation programme will need to engage with the wider community;
- a working party 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 group by way of a majority decision by Councillors.

Post-community engagement

Keep parishioners informed – Engagement activities are often surrounded by a great deal of energy and enthusiasm, both in council and throughout local communities. However, once this energy has subsided, it is very important to ensure that parishioners are kept informed of the progress in the development of the community engagement project and any future opportunities for their involvement.

Access to data – To ensure that all processes surrounding the development of the community policy are transparent and accountable, if the Council receives multiple replies, the Council will hold a composite and hold the actual replies for 30 days before destruction by shredding. It is important to ensure that individual participants in the engagement process are not identified in the data.

Observe the timetable – Once the timetable is set and publicised, it is important to keep to the timetable and publicise if the timetable cannot be met. Parishioners will regard the various stages of engagement as milestones in the overall process, and it is most important to maintain community trust and support by meeting their expectations in this regard.

Evaluation – Following each round of community engagement, it is important for the Parish Council team to evaluate the community engagement process. An evaluation of these processes will enable the Parish Council to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of its approach to community engagement and will foster a ‘continuous improvement’ approach to planning and managing community engagement.

Review of the Policy This Community Engagement Policy provides the framework for how communications, consultations and engagement with the community will be undertaken and it will be reviewed annually and updated as appropriate.

Re-Adopted
Date 25th May 2021
Minute reference 20/057 Item G
SignedChairman
Review Date: May 2022