

Community Engagement Strategy of St Ender Parish Council

1 Introduction

1.1 This document forms the Council's Community Engagement Strategy. It sets out:

- The role of community engagement and its importance
- How St Ender Parish Council engages the wider community and identifies the needs and aspirations of the community
- How the Council can improve community engagement

1.2 The objectives of this strategy are to:

- Encourage effective local community engagement.
- Ensure that embedded throughout the Council there is a clear understanding of the need to engage with communities about decisions which affect them.
- Enable the aspirations/comments/suggestions etc obtained from community engagement to have an impact on decision making and the way in which services are being delivered.
- Identify how the Council can enhance its profile by improving engagement with the wider community (with specific reference to hard to reach groups).

2 The Council's Commitment to Community Engagement

2.1 St Ender Parish Council is committed in its Vision and Key Corporate Objectives to provide a democratic representational voice for the people of St Ender Parish, central to this ethos is engagement with the local community in a proactive and meaningful way.

3 Community Engagement – an overview

3.1 Community engagement is concerned with giving local people a voice and involving them in decisions which affect them and their community. This may include individuals, voluntary and community organisations as well as other public sector bodies.

It provides an opportunity for local people to talk to the Council about their aspirations and/or needs in their community and neighbourhood. It allows the Council to consult with and inform people about what services it provides, how its priorities and policies are determined and how well it is performing.

- 3.2 Consultation forms an integral part of community engagement and can be defined as:
"The act of consulting or a conference for discussion or the seeking of advice".
(Collins, 1995)
Without consultation, addressing a particular need is a hit and miss affair as there is no way of establishing what is required to address the problem.
There are a wide range of consultation methods such as surveys, neighbourhood meetings, questionnaires, public enquiries and planning for real exercises.
- 3.3 The term 'stakeholder' makes reference to a wide range of people and groups (these might include residents, visitors, businesses, government, voluntary organisations, public service organisations etc) all of which have an interest in the Council's services and projects.
'Hard-to-reach groups' refers to those who experience social exclusion and are sometimes perceived as being disempowered. Some examples include young people, elderly people, or those with physical disability, language, financial constraints, cultural differences or social expectations. Sometimes organisations do not put enough effort into seeking their views, but it is important to note that sometimes they have excluded themselves through personal choice
- 3.4 The key aspects of community engagement include:
- Development of a network of relationships between the Council, individuals, voluntary and community groups.
 - Clear and open communication to ensure that information is made accessible to all groups.
 - Listening and understanding to a range of people to identify aspirations, needs and problems of local people and groups
- 3.5 Effective and meaningful community engagement can provide a number of benefits:
- The problems and needs of local people are clearly identified in order that appropriate new or improved facilities/services can be provided.
 - Those participating feel empowered by being involved in decision making in their local community and a sense of ownership and pride in the new facilities/initiatives.
 - It may result in a renewed respect for the Council; enhanced leadership and greater interest in elections or for standing for Council.

4 Current Engagement

The Council currently facilitates community engagement in the following ways:

- Allocation of a 'Public Representation' session during each Full Council meeting. This provides an opportunity for local residents to make representations to the Council or ask questions relating to items on the agenda.
- Allocation of a 'Public Representation' session at the during each Committee meeting. This provides an opportunity for local residents to make representations or ask questions relating to items on the agenda.
- Publishing contact details of all Council members and officers on the website.
- Production of regular newsletters highlighting local events and latest developments within the Council and the wider community (available on the website)
- Ensuring that agendas and minutes of Committee meetings are available on the website or copies available on request.
- Uploading the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts onto the website.
- Consultation exercises with local residents. With specific reference to the St Enoder Neighbourhood Plan, with questionnaires & open days.
- Council press releases are featured in the local press to keep the general public informed of community events, Parish Council projects and other items as necessary.

Unlike other tiers of local government, Parish Councillors always live within the parish they serve and/or have close ties to their constituents and local voluntary and community organisations on a day-to-day basis, making them uniquely placed in terms of informed representation

5 Communication

St Enoder Parish Council is committed to improving community engagement by:

- Continuing all the above activities and services into the future and improving relationships with community groups including developing measures to harness the views and opinions of people and groups who are often missed out of community engagement activities.
- Ensuring that any information published is clear, concise and widely available. (This includes making information available in appropriate formats for people

with visual impairments, learning disabilities, poor literacy or people who require language translation.)

- Identifying and embracing opportunities to work with other local community groups, as and when the need arises.
- Participating in local networks to share knowledge and experience of community engagement activities in other areas.
- Publicising the positive results that have been achieved from working relationships between the Council and other community groups; in order to encourage new relationships/partnerships to be formed and raise community spirit.

Ensuring that appropriate evaluation is carried out following consultation exercises to ensure that lessons learned are carried forward and an assessment of how effective/useful the consultation was.

6. Linking with other Council Policies

How will this link to other policies?

6.1 This strategy is cross-cutting affecting many, if not all, of the Council's policies and Strategies including:

- Equality and diversity is integral to good governance, leadership and appreciation of the diversity in our community.
- A Community Engagement Strategy is a requirement for the accreditation of the Local Council Award Scheme.

7. Review

This strategy will be reviewed regularly (not less than bi-annually) and amended as necessary based on good practice or evidence taken forward.

8. Conclusion

The adoption of a Community Engagement Strategy will assist in improving communication between the Council and the wider community. This will enable the Council to better understand the needs and aspirations of local residents/groups, and in turn, facilitate appropriate projects to meet those needs and create an enhanced community spirit.

9. Alternative Formats

9.1 Disability Discrimination Act 1995 – copies of this document in large print (A3 Format) or larger font size, or recorded onto tape as a 'talking book' can be made

available for those with sight impairment on request by telephoning 07126 883614 or emailing clerk@saintenoderparishcouncil.org.uk

9.2 This document can also be made available in other languages.

10. Freedom Of Information Act

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this Document will be posted on the Council's Website www.saintenoderparishcouncil.org.uk and copies of this document will be available for inspection on request to the clerk.

October 2015