

Shalford Parish Council

Community Engagement Policy



Adopted June 2018

Review date May 2020

Community Engagement Policy

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;

The Council supports both financially and through direct activities the following specific communications mediums;

- **Parish Magazine** – Printed monthly and delivered where practical to every home in the parish as well as business premises
- **Newsletter** – When necessary to highlight specific issues the Council produces a newsletter which may be delivered to all homes in the Parish and displayed on notice boards and main meeting areas – shops, schools, pharmacy, doctor surgery, bus shelters and pub.
- **Web site** – implemented more than 10 years ago. A report will be produced by the web master monthly to inform Councillors of the type 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.

Parish Council Meetings

Each and every Parish Council meeting begins with a public “Questions from Registered Electors” session. Sessions are normally restricted to 15 minutes in total however at the Chairman’s discretion a period 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 Councils Standing Orders ensuring good practice is maintained.

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.

The Parish Council Chairman is expected to chair any Public Meeting but under exceptional circumstances the Chairman can appoint a deputy to this role. The Chairman will determine who will take the minutes if the Parish Clerk is not able to attend the meeting or carry out

this function. In all respects the minute format and content will follow the agenda and comply with Standing Order requirements.

Consultation Programmes

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;

- Establishing a Parish Plan or Village Design Statement
- Neighbourhood Planning – Consultation at many levels is an inherent part of producing a Neighbourhood Plan.
- Village Road Safety planning
- Boundary change proposals

In all cases the Council will be tasked with reviewing the need for a consultation programme and decide whether a consultation 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. In some cases, the consultation programme will need to engage with the wider community and this activity if required would normally fall to the working party to analyse any results and report to the Council with the outcomes.

Village News Distribution

It is important that what happens in the community and how the Parish Council administers the village is widely publicised. Whilst not essential that Councillors play an active part in producing any distributed material such as the village bulletin or newsletters funding these items should be available if required. If produced well these publications can become almost self-funding using advertising income. The Council has a duty of care to ensure that accurate and relevant village news has a medium made available that is not solely reliant on advertising funding.

Annual Meeting

The Parish Annual 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, Borough and County Councillors both 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.

Consultation Programmes.

It is important the village as a whole is consulted when significant projects are planned for the village. On occasions consultation may form part of a statutory requirement such as the adoption of a Neighbourhood Plan.

This Community Engagement Policy provides the framework for how consultation messages and detail can be distributed and therefore must be reviewed and updated as appropriate.

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 PC meeting through to formal consultation programmes where information must be disseminated widely, 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.