

ASHINGDON PARISH COUNCIL



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Community Engagement Strategy

Introduction

Ashingdon Parish Council is committed to engaging residents by encouraging them to become actively involved in decisions that affect them and the community, to delivery better services and to improving quality of life of residents by creating a more active and informed community.

Aims

The aim of this strategy is to:

- Improve the way in which the Parish Council communicates with members of the community;
- Work closely with residents, businesses and community groups;
- Listen to the views of residents on important issues;
- Use these views to deliver better services;
- Ensure that local democracy is enhanced by getting closer to the local community;
- Ensure that residents have the opportunity to be heard at every stage;
- Improve the long term social, economic and environmental wellbeing of residents;
- Plan future development of the parish in accordance with the needs and priorities of the community.

Objectives

This strategy is part of the Parish Council's commitment to creating and maintaining effective working relationships with all sectors of the community, based on trust, openness and constructive challenge.

Outcomes of the strategy will include:

- Improved communication through the establishment of new channels of engagement;
- Residents understanding the role of a Parish Councillor to get the best effect;
- Improved engagement with local community groups, with more people feeling that they are involved in decision making and a higher percentage of people involved in volunteering ;
- To work in partnership with other organisations to deliver improved services;
- To use a variety of methods to make information available;
- To actively facilitate and encourage community engagement;

- To proactively engage with all sections of the community;
- To ensure that decisions meet the needs of the community by involving members of the community in the decision making process

Communicating with the community

Information will be made available in a variety of ways to ensure that all sections of the community are reached.

- Messages can be left at any time via the office telephone or email;
- The names and contact details of all Parish Councillors are published on the website, in the quarterly newsletter and in the Annual Report;
- The Parish Council website contains all information an individual might wish to know about the work of the Parish Council, including minutes from previous meetings, policy documents, financial statements, annual reports and contact details for the Parish Council;
- The Parish Council produces a quarterly newsletter which is delivered to every household in the parish;
- Information such as agendas for Parish Council meetings are published on the Parish Council notice boards and on the website;
- The Neighbourhood Constable, Police Community Support Officer, Essex County Councillor and Rochford District Councillors along with members of the press and public are invited to attend all meetings of the Parish Council;
- An annual report is prepared and published in the quarterly newsletter and is available to view on the Parish Council website.

Opportunities for Community Involvement

- Members of the community may wish to engage with the Parish Council at different levels, from an email or letter with a suggestion on how a service can be improved, to regular attendance to a Parish Council meeting;
- Hold regular Councillor Surgery, which allows members of the public to come and talk directly to Council members;
- Parish Council meetings are open to members of the public and there is a public participation session during each Parish Council meeting;
- An Annual Parish Meeting is held in May of each year, giving the public and local organisations an opportunity to participate in the full meeting. This meeting is advertised widely and is used by the Parish Council to report on the work carried out during the year. It is also an opportunity for views to be sought from the residents on any matter that affects the community;
- The Parish Council undertakes consultations by questionnaire, public meetings as appropriate, for specific issues;
- The Parish Council is always considering practical ways of engaging with people and community groups;
- The Parish Council will continue to support and participate in community events.

Involvement with partnerships

The Parish Council has a representative on the following:

- Ashingdon & East Hawkwell Memorial Hall Trust;
- Wyvern Community Transport;
- Rochford Association of Local Councils;
- Neighbourhood Action Panel/meeting;

Contact the Parish Council

The Council and members may be contacted via the Parish Clerk:

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