

West Itchenor Parish Council COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

West Itchenor Parish Council has developed a community engagement strategy with the aim of constructing a standard for engagement with its residents and partners.

It recognises that the services it provides must reflect the needs of its parishioners and the locality.

West Itchenor Parish Council strongly believes that its residents should be involved in decisions affecting them and their neighbourhood and in shaping the future of their parish.

AIMS

The aim of the strategy is to improve the way in which the Council engages and consults its residents and partners on important issues by

- Informing, consulting and involving
- being inclusive and engaging with all of its residents and partners
- ensuring views are listened to and used to develop, enhance and improve services, the environment and the quality of life for residents.

OBJECTIVES

To improve, plan and shape the future of the parish according to local needs and priorities

- To improve the quality and delivery of services
- To use engagement to inform decision making, ensuring decisions are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the parish
- To enhance the well being of the parish.
- To be a stronger, more active and cohesive parish

HOW THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED

Community engagement will be achieved by West Itchenor Parish Council by communicating, consulting, supporting and working together with its residents.

Communication

Communicating with members of the parish will be achieved in many ways to ensure all sections of the community are reached.

The Newsletter, which is delivered to every house in Itchenor, informs residents on important issues and will be developed as a medium for consultation and include articles from members of the parish on topical issues.

The parish website has a wealth of local information and is updated on a weekly basis. Special events and important notices will continue to be added regularly. All agendas are advertised as required under the Local Government Act 1972, including on the website, and minutes of meetings are included on the website within a calendar month of the meeting.

Information leaflets are available from the parish clerk and where possible can also be downloaded from the website. New leaflets will be added as necessary.

Meetings of the Council and its Planning Committee are open to the public and include an opportunity for members of the parish to engage with councillors. All meetings include an opportunity for public participation at the start of each meeting.

Consultation

Consulting all parishioners on important issues will be key to the strategy. It will ensure those most affected are able to put forward an opinion and given an opportunity to make a difference.

Ensuring consultations include all members of the parish by identifying the hard to reach groups such as youths, the elderly, the housebound, the disabled, ethnic minorities etc. This may require establishing different engagement channels for them.

Support

Supporting local organisations and engaging with them will assist them in meeting their own aims and objectives.

Supporting local projects and participating in local events will raise the awareness of the Council and its aims and objectives.

Supporting members of the parish in shaping the future of their parish will bring about a more cohesive community.

Acting Together

Acting together with residents and partners in finding solutions to local problems will ensure they will be accepted and fit for purpose.

Acting together to carry out agreed action plans, will engage the community in working with the Council to enhance the environments and the quality of their lives.

Acting together in decision making and policy drafting will ensure they have a voice and can make a difference.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Success will be measured by predefined targets, including annual reviews of consultation outcomes, monitoring residents' participation in consultation processes and increases in their involvement in local projects and events.

STRATEGY REVIEWS

Annual reviews of the consultation processes and results will be used as a continual improvement process for changes or amendments to the strategy.

ACTION PLAN

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Activity	Action	Statement
Raise awareness of consultation processes	Promote it through the Newsletter, the Website, and local media.	Promoting the strategy will be an ongoing priority.
Investigate setting a website consultation or forum facility	Investigate the possibility, usefulness and disadvantages of such a facility.	Access levels to the website could be a serious security issue and must be thoroughly researched.
Work with Police and Partner Authorities	Strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones.	Working with partners is already a priority and there is regular communication between the Parish Council and Police.
Identify minority/hard to reach groups	Identify these groups and identify channels of contact and consultation.	These groups are often the forgotten few. Identifying them will ensure they are included in consultation processes.
Identify consultation/focus groups	Identify members of the parish with specific skills who can be consulted on specialist subjects.	This will enable smaller consultations to be initiated where specialist advice is required to inform decision making.
Identify consultation needs, priorities and importance	Establish need, priorities and importance of consultation	This will ensure there is no overkill, overlap or misuse of the consultation process.
Identify benefits of consultation	Identify whether there is a real opportunity for people to influence decisions	No consultation should be undertaken unless the outcome can be influenced. Unless this is possible a consultation will be meaningless and residents will become disinterested in the process.
Feedback on consultations	Agree methods of feedback to residents and partners and ensure this is adhered to and includes details of the use of information gained.	This will keep all parties involved in the process and updated with the situation.

Ensure outcomes of consultations are used to inform decisions and policies	Use the outcome of consultations to inform decision making and shape policies.	All consultations will be undertaken to judge the best possible outcome for parishioners, locality and the environment.
Review outcome of key consultations	Review consultation outcomes annually to highlight any failings in the processes.	This will enable identification of any changes and amendments required to the strategy.