

RUYTON XI TOWNS PARISH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

GIVING PEOPLE A VOICE

Adopted: 1 September 2020

Next review: Sept 2021

INTRODUCTION

For the Parish Council to achieve the aims and objectives set out in its Action Plan, the Council wants, and needs, to work closely with the local community. The Council recognises that when community members are actively involved in decisions which affect them

- decision making is enhanced, enriched, and evidence-based
- better services are secured and delivered to the community
- strategies and policies are likely to result in better outcomes for the community

By following this Community Engagement Policy the Parish Council hopes to foster a more active and informed community, and whilst it cannot force any individual or group to become involved, it can, and shall, make it easier and more attractive for them to do so.

1. The Council wishes to actively communicate and engage with the following groups:
 - a) All residents of Ruyton XI Towns Parish
 - b) All users, potential users, and non-users of Parish Council services
 - c) All those who work, or own businesses within the parish, as well as business organisations
 - d) Community, tenant, and resident groups
 - e) All young people who live/go to school in the parish
 - f) Interest and Pressure Groups
 - g) Voluntary organisations, clubs, societies, etc.
 - h) Hard to reach groups
 - i) Public and private sector stakeholders
2. The Council defines communication as the process of sharing information relevant to the community and informing the community about decisions that have been made.
3. The Council defines engagement as involving the community to help form opinion, as well as influence and review decisions.
4. The Council aims to be proactive in communicating and engaging with all sections of the community. Groups that typically don't participate e.g. young people, could be encouraged to share their views through social media, online questionnaires, etc., whereas the housebound, elderly, or those who do not use the internet may require information in print and/or home visits.
5. The Council is always open to receiving both positive and negative feedback and is committed to encouraging the community to engage with the Council.

DESIRED OUTCOMES OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

1. Members of the community feel they have had adequate opportunity to express their views and feel their interests have been considered in the planning, decision making, and implementation of Council activities.
2. Parish Council decisions have a stronger basis in evidence, as the Council will better understand the views of the community when making decisions on their behalf.
3. An improved sense of community ownership in terms of the decisions made by the Council.
4. Active collaboration between the Council, relevant organisations, community groups, partners and stakeholders to work more effectively in the community's interests.
5. Feedback to the community on how their input has affected Parish Council decisions.

COMMUNICATION

1. The Parish Council will aim to improve communication with the community by:
 - a) Keeping the Council website up to date with activities and relevant information affecting the community
 - b) Publishing its Action Plan on the website and updating it throughout the year to communicate objectives, actions, and progress with the local community
 - c) Publishing an annual calendar of Council meetings and locations on the website
 - d) Publishing agendas and minutes on the website and on notice boards
 - e) Ensuring that information relating to agenda items is also made available
 - f) Providing regular updates on Council activities and Parish matters in the e-newsletter
 - g) Where appropriate, issuing press releases relating to Council activities and Parish matters
 - h) Where information affects a specific group within the community, ensuring that the information is shared directly with the relevant organisations, and through appropriate platforms
 - i) Ensuring all Council communication is factual, in 'plain English', and avoids technical jargon
 - j) Considering different methods of communicating with diverse sections of the community
2. The Council and clerk will also aim to improve communication with our partners and stakeholders, and coordinate community engagement efforts through:
 - a) Supporting the role and functioning of local groups, organisations, and partnerships including Local Joint Committees, and Area/parish partnerships
 - b) Actively being involved in various networking organisations e.g. Shropshire Association of Local Councils, Society of Local Council Clerks forum, North Shropshire Clerks forum, etc.

ENGAGEMENT

1. The Council will aim to maximise community engagement by:
 - a) Publishing contact details for the Council Clerk on the website, agendas, minutes, and newsletters
 - b) Publishing contact details for the councillors on the website (hard copies available on request)
 - c) Encouraging members of the community to suggest agenda items via the clerk or councillors via multiple platforms e.g. in person, phone, email, social media, post etc.
 - d) Providing opportunities for the community to discuss matters with councillors, (providing those matters are not sensitive/confidential, and do not involve a conflict of interest)
 - e) Continuing to set aside time for public participation at all Council and Committee meetings

- f) Developing and promoting the Annual Parish Meeting as a key opportunity to share community news, report on Council activities over the previous 12 months, and obtain the views of residents on community matters
- g) Ensuring continued Council representation within local community organisations e.g. Safer Roads Group, Multi-Agency Group, Yardley Liaison Group, Cliffe Crew, Village Hall Committee, etc., and listing Council representative's names on the Parish Council website
- h) Providing feedback on how community input influences Council decisions
- i) Evaluating the engagement process and outcomes

CONSULTATION

1. When the Parish Council is seeking views on a specific project or idea it will consult with the community.
2. Whilst most consultations will be open to the whole community, the Council may on occasion consult with specific stakeholders only.
3. When planning a consultation, the Council will identify the key stakeholders for that specific consultation exercise to ensure they are directly consulted.
4. Consultations will be publicised as widely as possible and will have a defined end date for submissions.
5. The Council will be clear about why it is consulting and how the consultation will be used in the Council's decision-making process.
6. The timing of consultations will be considered, for example to coincide with events or to avoid clashes with holidays.
7. The Council shall consider the format of the consultation which may include:
 - a) Open consultation on the Council website
 - b) Consultation documents at key venues around the Parish
 - c) Direct consultation e.g. letters/leaflets/questionnaires/social media etc.
 - d) Focus groups
 - e) Public meetings
 - f) Exhibitions in Village Hall etc.

BUDGET

1. Many aspects of the Community Engagement Policy can be delivered at relatively low cost to the Council through using the website, notice boards, e-newsletters etc.
2. Where future projects require a greater degree of engagement and consultation, e.g. a refreshing the Parish Plan, the Parish Council will consider budget implications and potential funding sources when preparing its annual Action Plan and during the budget setting process in October. Where this is not possible, the Council will take into account Financial Regulations, and ensure all spending decisions are open and transparent.

REVIEW PROCESS

The Council will review this policy annually in September, in advance of budget discussions for the coming financial year.

CONTACT THE PARISH COUNCIL

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Please note: The clerk only works 10hrs/week for Ruyton XI Towns Parish Council, so there may be a delay in response. In general, the clerk can be reached by phone or email from Monday - Friday between 9.00am and 4.00pm.

Councillors

Contact details for individual councillors are on the website, and hard copies can be made available upon request.