



The Clerk to Hilton Parish Council
c/o Mrs Clare Orme
P O Box 8094
Swadlincote
Derbyshire
DE11 1FR
Tel/Fax: 01283 730969

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY AND PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

Hilton Parish Council has developed a Community Engagement Policy with the aim of constructing a standard for engagement with its residents and partners. It is recognised that the services it provides must reflect the needs of its parishioners and the locality.

Hilton 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.

Hilton Parish Council is accountable to members of the public and has a duty to convey its decisions and actions through various media. All communications will be conveyed in an open and straightforward manner.

The Parish Clerk is the Proper Officer to Hilton Parish Council and is responsible for all formal communication between the Council, the press and members of the Public.

Hilton Parish Council has a duty to provide a safe working environment for all staff. The Council will not tolerate abusive, aggressive, bullying or harassing behaviour in any communication channel.

2. AIMS

The aim of the policy is to improve the way in which Hilton Parish Council will engage and consults its residents and partners on important issues by:

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

3. 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

4. HOW THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED

Community engagement will be achieved by Hilton Parish Council through communicating, consulting, supporting and working together with its residents and partners.

• Communication

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

Informal arrangements:

- Councillors will attend one Hilton Village Hall Coffee Morning a month, this is to be available to take any questions or queries that residents may have. The dates of the Coffee Mornings that the Parish Council will be in attendance at will be advertised on our Notice Board, Website, Facebook Page, Spotted Hilton and advertised in the Hilton and Dove Life Magazine.
- Councillors will hold one Parish Forum a month to be available to take any questions or queries that residents may have. The dates of the Forums will be advertised on our Notice Board, Website, Facebook Page, Spotted Hilton and advertised in the Hilton and Dove Life Magazine.
- Hilton Parish Council will facilitate an Annual Parish Meeting between the months of 1st March and 1st June each year.
- The Parish Council will advertise in the Hilton and Dove Life Magazine, which is delivered to every house in Hilton. The Parish Council will advertise any information that they feel is important or helpful to residents.
- The Parish Councils website has a wealth of information and is updated on a regular basis. Agendas and minutes of all Parish Council meetings are included on the website, along with Financial Information and Policies and Procedures of the Council
- Residents Letters may be used in particular circumstances to ensure that residents directly affected are reached.
- The Parish Councils Facebook page will provide regular communications on day to day matters and important consultation issues.
- Residents can contact the Parish Clerk by telephone, email, letter or by booking an appointment to visit the Clerk at the Parish Council office

Formal arrangements:

- Meetings of the Parish Council are held on the last Wednesday of each month at Hilton Village Hall commencing at 7pm (except August, where there is not meeting). Parish Council meetings are open to the public and press and include an opportunity for members of the public to engage with the Council at the start of the meeting for 15 minutes. After the public Speaking part of the meeting has closed, members of the public can only observe the Parish Council Meeting and cannot participate any further in the Councils business. (see our Policy on Public Participation at Parish Council Meetings)

• **Engagement**

Currently four levels of engagement will be used:

Level 1 – If the Parish Council receives a question or query through the Coffee Mornings or Parish Forums, the information will be fed back in a number of different ways, for example:

- At the next available Coffee Morning or Parish Forum
- On the Parish Council Website
- On the Parish Council Facebook Page and Spotted Hilton Facebook Page
- Through the Parish Council Meetings, where the Q&A sheet will be available along with the agenda of the meeting.

Level 2 – Residents can contact the Parish Clerk either by telephone, email, letter or by booking an appointment to see the Clerk at the Parish Council Office.

Level 3 - Consultation of residents prior to a decision of the Council, where substantial investment is required, for example to install a new play area. This will normally take the form of a range of options being presented to residents in advance of any decision being taken by the Council.

Level 4 – Communicating decisions of the Council to the community. All projects requiring planning consent will be identified as requiring Level 3 engagement. The level of engagement required for each project will be agreed by the Council.

• **Consultation**

Consulting all residents on issues identified as requiring Level 3 or 4 engagement will be key. It will ensure that the wider community as well as 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. may require establishing different engagement channels for them.

Members of the Council will consider residents consultation responses on the grounds of material considerations which will include: Significant changes to the 'street scene' of any site, proximity of dwellings, health & safety issues, over development of the site, law & order and bio-diversity.

In the decision-making process Councillors will take a balanced view and an informed decision on all issues. Residents responses to any consultation will almost invariably show a difference of opinion across the community. Therefore, it is important to recognise that any final decision of the Council will not necessarily reflect the consultation response provided by an individual resident (or group of residents).

- **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 environment and the quality of their lives.

Acting together in decision making will ensure residents have a voice and can make a difference.

5. MEASURING SUCCESS

Success will be measured in many ways, including formal reviews of consultation outcomes, monitoring residents' participation in engagement processes and increases in their involvement in local projects and events.

6. POLICY REVIEWS

Initially three to six monthly reviews of the engagement processes and results will be used as a continual improvement process for changes or amendments to the Policy.

7. ACTION PLAN

ACTIVITY	ACTION	STATEMENT
Raise awareness of consultation process, Coffee Mornings and Parish Forums	Promote it through the Parish Council Website, Facebook Page, Hilton and Dove Life Magazine	Promoting the policy will be an ongoing process.
Investigate setting a Website, Facebook Page or Hilton and Dove Life Magazine Consultation	The possibility, usefulness and disadvantages of such a facility will be assessed when required	The Provision of on line consultations or via the Hilton and Dove Life Magazine may be used in some circumstances to support other methods of consultation
Working with Police and other Partner Organisations	Strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones	Working with partners is already a priority and has seen Councillors attending Coffee Morning and Parish Forums being formed with the support of the Council
Provide opportunities for the whole community to become engaged for example, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Process, Parish Forums etc	Identify minority and hard to reach groups, this is currently being undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group a Committee of the Parish Council	Identifying hard to reach groups will ensure they are included in any consultation process
Identify consultation/focus groups where possible	Identify stakeholder groups within the Village who can be consulted on specialised subjects for example, this is currently being undertaken by the Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group a Committee of the Parish Council	This will enable smaller consultations to be initiated where specialist advice is required to inform decision making but without the need for a full consultation process
Identify engagement objectives	Establish need, priority and importance of engagement	This will ensure there is no overkill, overlap or misuse of the consultation process
Feedback on any consultation, Coffee Mornings and Parish Forums	The Parish Council to agree methods of feedback to residents and partners and to ensure this is adhered to by way of a tracker system	This will keep all parties involved in the process and updated with the situation
Ensure that outcomes of any consultation, Coffee Mornings and Forums are used to inform decisions and policies where necessary	Use the outcome of Consultations, Coffee Mornings and Forums to inform decision making and shape policy where necessary	All Consultations, Coffee Mornings and Forums will be undertaken to judge the best possible outcome for the residents
Review outcome of key Consultations, Coffee Mornings and Forums	Review Consultations, Coffee Mornings and Forums every quarter to highlight any failings in the process	This will enable identification of any changes and amendments required to the policy

Review Date: May 2019

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