

COPDOCK and WASHBROOK PARISH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

As representatives of the community, the Parish Council works to improve the quality and range of local services in the parish. We are, therefore, committed to becoming involved in all parts of our community by working closely with voluntary and community groups so that we can identify their needs. We will do this by working in partnership with our local authority and other agencies. By working together with residents and partners, it should be possible to find solutions to local problems, which will be accepted and fit for purpose. Working together to carry out agreed action plans should engage the community in working with the Council, to enhance their environment and the quality of their lives. Working together on decision making should ensure that residents feel they have a voice and can make a real difference.

Copdock and Washbrook Parish Council is committed to engaging residents by encouraging them to become actively involved in decisions that affect them and the community and to facilitate the delivery of better services by creating a more active and informed community. The Parish Council aims to achieve this by using the following strategies.

1. Objectives

- To engage parishioners with their local Council members
- To inform parishioners clearly and comprehensively about the range of services available
- To consult with parishioners about their needs and aspirations for the area they live in, and the services they wish to receive
- To improve the quality and delivery of services within the parish
- To improve, plan and shape the future of the parish, according to local needs and priorities
- To enhance the general well-being of the parish and its residents
- To strengthen the capacity of local councillors to act as leaders of the community they present
- To help create a stronger, more active and cohesive parish.

2. Informing the Community

This will be achieved in a number of ways to ensure all sections of the community are reached:

- Making information available on what decisions are being considered and how residents can give their opinions.
- Dates of meetings are published on the Council's website.
- Agendas of the meetings are posted on the noticeboard and on the website.
- Minutes of meetings are published on the Council's website.
- Parish Council meetings are open to members of the press and public and a time is set aside at the commencement of the meeting to give residents an opportunity to talk about items on the agenda.
- The website includes a comprehensive summary of the facilities and organisations available within the area.
- The Council reports and informs residents on important issues. Information will be available on the Parish council website, as well as publication in the village newsletter and any other media opportunities.
- As a small village, Councillors are well known and make themselves available informally to local residents.

3. Giving the People a Voice

One of the keys to a successful Community Engagement Strategy is providing parishioners the opportunities for their voices to be heard. Copdock and Washbrook Parish Council achieves this at/by:

- The Annual Parish Meeting at which the views of residents on matters affecting the community can be brought to the attention of the Parish Council. Notice of the Annual Parish Meeting is posted on the notice boards and on the website.
- Residents may give their view on a particular topic to the Clerk or any Council member. Details of how to contact the Clerk and Members of the Council are displayed on the notice boards and on the website.
- Where assistance has been requested, the Parish Council will, where appropriate, ensure that parishioners are referred to the correct department of Babergh District Council or other relevant authority organisations. Our website includes a link to the Babergh District Council web site.
- When dealing with other authorities or organisations regarding issues affecting the community, the Parish Council will ensure that the opinions of the members of the community are made known.
- The Council aims to be proactive in delivering information to, and obtaining the opinions of, all sections of the community – especially the hard to reach groups such as the elderly and the housebound.

4. Engaging with the Community

The Parish Council will undertake to deliver consultations on important issues which affect residents. This will ensure those most affected are able to forward their opinion and be given the opportunity to contribute. The Council is committed to ensuring that consultations include all members of the Parish.

- Where information affects a specific section of the community, the Council will ensure that the information is delivered directly to the village organisation representing that section e.g. the over 60's, mothers and toddlers, teenagers, youths and school children.
- Consultations and surveys will be carried out where appropriate and the results made available.
- The Parish Council will participate in community activities and events enabling the community to become more aware of who we are and what we do.

5. How can the Success of this Strategy be Measured?

Specific performance measures may include:

- Parishioners feeling that they are kept well informed by the Parish Council
- Parishioners feeling that the Parish Council listens to their views, and acts on their concerns
- Parishioners feeling that complaints are handled well
- Parishioners feeling that the Parish Council is trustworthy
- Parishioners feeling that the Parish Council involves them in making decisions about future priorities
- Parishioners feeling that they have opportunities to participate with the Parish Council, and can influence the decision-making process
- Parishioners feeling that they wish to be more involved in decision-making
- Parishioners being satisfied with the way the Parish Council runs things
- Parishioners feeling that the Parish Council provides value for money
- Parishioners exercising their right to vote at local elections.

This information could be obtained through a questionnaire delivered to individual households.

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