

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY 2022

Introduction

Great and Little Whelnetham Parish Council is committed to community engagement at all levels and encourages all residents to share their views, aspirations and wishes for themselves, their families and other community members with the council.

Great and Little Whelnetham Parish Council acknowledges that the services it provides must reflect the needs of its parishioners and the locality. The 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.

This document sets out the Parish Council's policy on how it will communicate with the local community, what it aims to achieve and how it wishes to achieve these. The Parish Council encourages everyone to participate in the decision-making process, listening to their comments, acting on feedback, and keeping people informed about the parish council's activities and local issues.

Who do we need to engage with?

Great and Little Whelnetham Parish Council recognises the need to engage with everyone within the boundaries of the parish. This includes people of all ages, any organisations, groups, and individuals within it. The Council understands that there are statutory and non-statutory organisations crucial to the local quality of life and it strives to achieve excellent working relationships with these bodies including village organisations, the Police, neighbouring councils, and other tiers of local government.

How will we communicate?

Communicating with members of the parish will be achieved in several ways to ensure all sections of the community are reached. New opportunities will be identified and considered when they arise to keep the Parish Council up to date with new technologies. These methods include but are not limited to:

- **Parish Council Meetings** – every parish council meeting has a public forum where any member of the public can ask questions or make comments about items on the agenda or raise issues for future consideration.
- **Annual Parish Meeting** – the parish annual meeting brings the community together and allows residents to question and review how the elected members help shape the community. The main objective of the annual meeting is to provide a forum for two-way communication between the community and the Councillors.
- **Public Meetings** – on occasions the Council may decide that an issue requires being dealt with via a specially convened public meeting. The Parish Council Chairman is expected to chair any public meeting. If this is not possible the Chairman is permitted to appoint a deputy.

- **Publication Scheme** – the Council is committed to transparency in its decision making and to this end a publication scheme has been adopted which allows public access to policies, financial records, and other documents. The Council is registered with the Information Commissioner’s Office. Many documents are freely available on the website; others by contacting the Clerk.
- **Noticeboards** – all agendas, minutes and other information will be posted on the noticeboards. In Little Whelnetham this is situated alongside the post box and in Great Whelnetham the main noticeboard is outside the village post office.
- **Website** – information about the Parish Council, its’ business, and policies, together with local news, events and general information will be published.
- **Surveys, face to face** - from time to time the parish council may wish to seek views from everyone so will issue a survey for comments and feedback. These will be delivered door to door. This may also promote a face-to-face communication to discuss any issues.

Great and Little Whelnetham Parish Council’s short, medium, and long term aims

Short-term

- Continued use and updating of all current forms of communication
- Regular reviews of feedback
- Aim to acknowledge receipt within 24hrs, of communication received from the public and provide feedback within an appropriate time period depending on nature and complexity of the enquiry.
- Using the village Facebook page to inform the community of parish council activities

Medium-term

- Looking for hard to reach groups and a means of communicating with them, i.e., those without internet access
- Developing a quarterly newsletter with updates on parish council activities
- Raising the profile of the parish council
- Publicising the role of local councillors and encouraging people to stand in local elections
- Publicising the services and amenities provided by the parish council

Long-term

- This policy should be reviewed during the lifetime of each council so at least once every four years.
- The Council must keep up to date with evolving methods of communication

Role of Councillors

Councillors are the decision-makers of the Council. The contact details for all councillors are available from the Clerk and are also published on the Council’s website. Councillors welcome contact from members of the public and will listen to the representations you make to them at

council meetings whether you attend in person, ask another person to raise matters for you or provide your comments in letter, email, or via telephone.

Role of the Clerk

The contact details for the Clerk to the council are published on the council's website, and the noticeboards in Great and Little Whelnetham. The Clerk is the Proper Officer of the council and is the appropriate contact in most cases for raising matters with or requesting information from the council.