

***KENTCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL***

**Community Engagement Strategy**

1**. Introduction**

Kentchurch 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.

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.

2. Aims

The aim of the strategy is to improve the way in which the Parish 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.

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 the 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 Kentchurch Newsletter, which is delivered to every house in the parish, 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 regularly. 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. It may be possible to develop the website to include a forum or weblog, however, the potential for breach of security must first be explored.

Information leaflets are available from the Clerk and can also be downloaded from the website. New leaflets will be added as necessary.

Meetings of the Parish Council are open to the public and include an opportunity for members of the parish to engage with councillors.

All meetings include an item for public participation for approximately 10 minutes.

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 house-bound, the disabled, ethnic minorities etc. 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 Parish 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. Action Plan

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| ACTION PLAN | | |
| Activity | Action | Statement |
| Raise awareness of consultation processes | Promote it through Newsletter, the Website, local media | Promoting the strategy will be an on-going 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 |
| 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.  Identify members of the parish willing to be included in surveys | This will enable smaller consultations to be initiated where specialist advice is required to inform decision making.  Surveys are a useful tool to judge general opinions without the need for a full consultation process |
| 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 |

Parish Councillor Chairman Mr John L Pring

Signed……………………………………………………..

Date 20th July 2016