

CLIVE PARISH COUNCIL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

GIVING PEOPLE A VOICE

Adopted: 20 October 2016

Last reviewed: 20 Feb 2024

Next review: Feb 2025

Introduction

In order for Clive 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 closely 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 the 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.

Limitations

Whilst the Parish Council will always aim to do its best to engage fully with the Clive community it should be recognised there are numerous limitations which should be taken into account:

Budget, expertise, time, and resources

Clive Parish Council is a small local authority, whose income derives predominantly from the Precept (Council tax), so all community engagement expenditure must be carefully considered and commensurate with potential benefit to the local community. Therefore, community engagement and consultation will ordinarily target electors living within Clive parish, and if wider engagement is needed, (e.g. those who live outside Clive parish), the Council will consider how best to achieve this given the potential financial impact on local taxpayers. It should also be noted that the Parish Council does not have access to the expertise, resources, or tools of professional market research companies; it is made up of a part-time clerk, and councillors who work on voluntary basis on behalf of the local community, often around full-time employment. Despite these limitations, the Parish Council will do its best with the funding, guidance, time, and resources at our disposal, and we welcome suggestions for improving community engagement and consultation. More information on budgets can be found under the Budget heading.

Data Protection

The Parish Council believes that when seeking the views of the local community, respondents should be able to share their views anonymously wherever possible, without fear of intimidation, victimisation, or discrimination. Collecting, processing, and recording personal data is also subject to stringent data protection regulation in the UK, which places additional burdens on Parish Councils in terms of time and resources. As such, the Parish Council will not ordinarily ask respondents for any personal data, (e.g. name, address, age, occupation, contact details, etc.) unless there is a clear business need for such data as part of a specific community engagement/consultation process. Any personal data included in questionnaire/survey responses will not be recorded or held by the Parish Council, unless we have specifically requested this information.

Definitions

1. Depending on the subject matter, the Parish Council may seek to communicate and engage with the following groups:
 - a) Residents of Clive Parish
 - b) Users, potential users, and non-users of Parish Council services
 - c) Those who work or own businesses within Clive, as well as business organisations
 - d) Community, tenant, and resident groups
 - e) Young people who live in Clive
 - 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 receiving and 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, influence and review decisions.
4. The Council aims to be proactive in communicating and engaging with all sections of the local community. Groups that typically don't engage with the Parish Council, e.g. young people, could be encouraged to share their views through social media, online questionnaires, etc., whereas other groups, e.g. those who do not use the internet, the elderly, or those who are housebound, may require information in other formats e.g. 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

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, news, 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 Clive & Grinshill newsletter, which is delivered to each household 6 times a year
 - 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 Area/parish partnerships
 - b) Actively being involved in various networking organisations e.g. Shropshire Association of Local Councils, Society of Local Council Clerks forum, 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 newsletter updates
 - b) Publishing contact details for the councillors on the website and notice boards. 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.
 - c) 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)
 - d) Continuing to set aside time for public participation at all public Council and Committee meetings
 - e) 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
 - f) Appointing members to represent the Council on community organisations e.g. Renshaw's Field Committee, Village Hall Committee, etc., and publishing names of representatives on the Council website and notice boards
 - g) Providing feedback on how community input influences Council decisions
 - h) Evaluate 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 the majority of consultations will be open to the Clive parish community as a whole, it 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.
8. When preparing surveys/questionnaires/information leaflets and other media for consultation purposes, care will be taken to ensure all text is factual, balanced, free from bias, and presented in a way that avoids “leading” respondents.

General

1. Where assistance has been requested, the Parish Council will deal with the request promptly or, where appropriate, ensure that the resident is referred to the correct department of Shropshire Council or to any other relevant authority or organisation.
2. When dealing with Shropshire Council, or any other authority or organisation, regarding issues affecting the community, the Parish Council will ensure that the views of the community are made known.

Budget

1. Many aspects of the Clive Parish Council Community Engagement Policy can be delivered at relatively low cost to the Council through using the website, notice boards, newsletters, etc.
2. Other consultation methods, e.g. surveys, may involve expenditure in terms of printing and postage costs, as well as staff and councillor time spent analysing consultation responses.
3. Where future projects require a greater degree of engagement and consultation, the Parish Council will consider budget implications and potential funding sources when reviewing the 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

The Council will review this policy annually in the autumn as part of the budget-setting process for the coming financial year.

How to contact the Parish Council:

Parish Clerk: Mrs Lydia Bardsley
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Contact details for individual councillors are on the website and notice boards.