



# **MARDEN PARISH COUNCIL** **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY**

## **Aims and Introduction**

This policy sets out what Marden Parish Council believes community engagement is, why we do it and the aims and actions which support it.

This policy is about building on the good practice which already exists in the parish and making it better. It also acknowledges the genuine desire of all partners within our community to work more closely together for the benefit of local residents.

Crucially, it seeks to ensure that the many 'communities' in Marden have a voice in the debate around improving the delivery of local services and thus having a positive impact on life and work in the parish.

Marden Parish Council aims to openly seek community involvement by using means of consultation via the Parish website, newsletter, notice boards, social media and weekly e-newsletter. The Council's objectives are to maintain this level of communication and community involvement in all that it hopes to achieve.

## **What is Community Engagement?**

Community Engagement is a term covering many different activities carried out with people who make up our communities. It is about making sure that people can participate and engage in lots of different ways to make Marden a better place. Community engagement can happen in many ways from Parish Meetings, survey polls, questionnaires, big events, through to the arts, festivals and much more.

Community engagement can also take place at a number of different levels from low involvement activity to high involvement activity. For example, this can range from providing information to people, to consultation by asking for feedback on a particular service or policy, to participation when decision making is shared and through to empowerment which gives people ownership of the decisions and support to carry out their own activities.

## **What is a Community?**

Communities can be:

- Communities of Place – people within a defined geographical area like Chainhurst, Marden Beech, High Street etc.
- Communities of Interest – People who share a particular experience or characteristic, such as young people, faith groups, older people, disabled people or ethnic groups.

Office Opening Times:

Mondays, Tuesdays & Fridays 10am - 12 noon

Email: [clerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk)

Website: [www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk](http://www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk)

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Communities may define themselves and definitions do change and people often belong to more than one community and communities themselves are often very diverse. The key point is that we always endeavour to engage with all residents.

### **Why Do We Engage?**

Community Engagement gives individuals, communities and partners a range of very important benefits:

- Developing a better understanding of relationship with communities through genuine dialogue
- Involving residents in public services and making sure their knowledge, experience and priorities shape those services so they are more responsive to need
- Encouraging more voluntary and community groups to become involved in planning and delivering local services
- Helping people to establish an improved sense of neighbourhood and more cohesive communities
- Engaging more people in local democracy

### **Our Partners**

There are different partners involved in working together on community engagement:

- All residents of Marden
- Borough and County Councillors as elected representatives of their communities
- Voluntary and community groups both individually and through local organisations
- Private sector organisations, local businesses and social enterprises
- Public service providers

The approach to community engagement in Marden is founded upon the principle that each agency; public, private or voluntary, is responsible for its own community engagement activity.

### **Our Principles Which Support Engagement**

Through this policy and the engagement work we are all involved in throughout the parish, we aim to:

- Have clear objectives for engagement and to communicate clearly and openly about decisions and actions and the reasons for them
- Seek to reach those communities and individuals not yet engaged
- Share information and expertise
- Engage in innovative and creative ways using 21st century media where appropriate
- Recognise and value existing channels and work to make these more responsive and effective
- Engage using a range of flexible methods to avoid relying on one source or route

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## Our Commitments

Through this policy we are committed to:

- Use the most appropriate level of involvement and participation for each activity
- Build on the existing skills of local people and communities so they are empowered to engage in decision making
- Develop the voluntary and community sector to play a key role in helping in delivering services
- Develop a culture where other peoples' views are valued and listened to and are part of the decision making process and help build cohesion in Marden.

## How We Will Do It

To help us achieve effective community engagement we will:

- Publicise Full Council and Committee meeting agendas prior to the meetings on the website, noticeboards and social media along with the minutes on the website. Links will also be available on social media and weekly e-newsletter.
- Engage with the community by holding local meetings to encourage people of all ages to share their opinions;
- Undertake surveys to encourage input from the community as to their views and comments on issues affecting them;
- Support the work of the village organisations, groups and societies wherever possible;
- Involve all residents on decision making ensuring that the hard to reach members of the community are included;
- Hold public consultations to encourage residents to participate in both parish and borough issues.
- Liaise with Maidstone Borough Council, Kent County Council and other agencies to develop or deliver activities/services for the parish.

## How Will We Measure Success?

- Through attendance at meetings of the Council, committees and the Annual Parish Meeting
- Responses received to questionnaires, surveys and polls
- Statistics from the website
- Statistics from Social Media
- The activity of and interest in the parish organisations and societies

The Parish Council's Annual Report will include a section on community engagement.

*Adopted at the meeting of Marden Parish Council on: 12<sup>th</sup> June 2018*

*Reviewed/Amended on: 11<sup>th</sup> June 2019 / 6<sup>th</sup> April 2021 / 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022 / 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023 / 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024 / 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025 / 10<sup>th</sup> March 2026*

*Review Date: March 2027*

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