

HIGH HALDEN PARISH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: STATEMENT OF INTENT

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

High Halden Parish Council aims to ensure that through the use of a wide range of approaches to public consultation and community engagement it actively encourages residents to inform its decision-making process and make an input into decisions which affect their day to day lives in the parish.

High Halden Parish Council is committed to creating and maintaining effective working relationships with all sectors of the community. The Council recognises that there are different levels of engagement and will endeavour to involve the community in the following ways:

- Inform people about its work and the services it provides.
- Consult with and seek out the views of the community.
- Encourage community participation in local government.
- Collaborate with individuals, community groups and organisations where appropriate, to achieve agreed aims for the benefit of the Parish.
- Build up effective working relationships within the community and encourage a sense of ownership of assets, infrastructure and new projects.

THE COMMUNITY

High Halden Parish Council seeks to engage with all sections of the community regardless of age, ability, gender, ethnicity, faith or sexual orientation and particularly hard to reach groups such as the young, disenfranchised, disaffected and the elderly. High Halden Parish Council also seeks to engage with the local business community, the many clubs, organisations and societies which are active in the parish, its partners such as Ashford Borough Council, the Community Warden Service and the neighbourhood policing team, the Church and our elected ward member for Ashford Borough Council. The Parish Council is also committed to engaging with any persons who appear to it to have an interest in matters relating to the economic, social and environmental well-being of its area.

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PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO THE COMMUNITY AND OPPORTUNITIES

High Halden Parish Council recognises that members of the community may wish to engage with it at different levels and in a variety of ways, from the occasional email or letter with a suggestion on how a service could be improved, completing an online enquiry form on our website to attendance at meetings etc.

High Halden Parish Council will therefore use many ways to actively seek the views of its parishioners and involve them in its work:

a) *Publications*: The Parish Council will communicate with parishioners through regular articles in the monthly parish magazine as well as producing its own quarterly newsletter.

We will produce an annual report which will contain up to date information about payments and receipts and monies held by the council on parishioners' behalf.

b) *Website*: The Parish Council website <http://www.highhalden.org.uk> is a community resource which publishes information about the Parish, its Council, and the many organisations which flourish in High Halden. Parish Council agendas, minutes, accounts and other documents will be regularly posted on this website for parishioners' information. Parishioners are invited to contact the Parish Council via the website, or email at clerk@highhaldenparishcouncil.co.uk.

High Parish Council is committed to developing and improving the website and will actively encourage parishioners to use it to exchange information.

c) *Direct Access*: The Parish Council will use the noticeboard to directly advertise important events e.g. notices relating to the annual audit of accounts; casual vacancies, elections and forthcoming meetings etc. Details of the Parish Council's publication scheme and the address of the Ashford Borough Council Monitoring Officer will also be displayed on the website for parishioners' information.

d) *Social Media*: High Halden Parish Council is committed to engaging with all parishioners.

Information is regularly posted on Facebook and other forms of social media when appropriate.

e) *Co-option*: High Halden Parish Council encourages the involvement of the community in the work of the Council through co-option. Any working party of the council is empowered to co-opt interested members of the community onto any standing committee or working party.

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f) *Meetings*: Notice of all Council meetings is given on the parish notice boards and on the website.

Parishioners are encouraged to attend Full Council Meetings and time is set aside at all meetings for public participation. Parishioners are also actively encouraged to attend the Annual Parish Meeting, which is advertised as above.

g) *Surveys*: High Halden Parish Council will undertake surveys and other related forms of information gathering from time to time to ascertain the community's view on a particular issue.

h) *Specific Projects*: From time to time High Halden Parish Council will undertake specific projects for the benefit of the community. The normal method for undertaking these is via working parties. Co-option (see above) is used to ensure that the community is fully represented and involved in these projects.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FORMAL REPRESENTATIONS TO THE COUNCIL

Representations to High Halden Parish Council will normally be considered at the next Full Council meeting. If, however, they require the provision of information only, then the clerk will provide it in accordance with the council's publication scheme. The Parish Council has a Code of Practice for handling complaints, which is available from the clerk, published on the website and reviewed annually. The publication of agendas on the Parish Council's notice boards and website gives parishioners the opportunity to make representation to the council before agenda items are discussed. All formal representations received are responded to in writing.

INVOLVEMENT IN PARTNERSHIPS

High Halden Parish Council is committed to partnership working where it is clear that it will be of benefit to the Parish or to fulfil its statutory requirements.

ROLE OF COUNCIL MEMBERS AND OFFICERS IN CONSULTATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Elected members are powerful advocates for their community and their leadership role enables them to have a major input into the consultation and engagement process.

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High Halden Parish Councillors are very accessible:

- Their contact details are published on the noticeboards, on the website and in the annual report to parishioners and occasionally in the Parish News.
- They are available to talk to parishioners during the public session at each Full Council meeting and at the Annual Parish Meeting
- In a private capacity, they belong to many other local clubs, societies and organisations, where they may, if they so wish promote the work of the Parish Council and be available to parishioners.