

# Widdrington Station and Stobswood Parish Council

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

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### 1. Purpose

Widdrington Station and Stobswood Parish Council recognises the importance of engaging effectively with residents, businesses and community groups.

This policy sets out how the Council will:

- Communicate with the community
- Encourage participation in local decision-making
- Ensure residents are informed about council activities
- Gather community views to support council decisions

The policy follows good practice guidance from the National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks.

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### 2. Principles of Community Engagement

The Council is committed to ensuring engagement that is:

#### **Inclusive**

Engagement opportunities will be open to all members of the community.

#### **Transparent**

Information about council decisions and activities will be readily available.

#### **Accessible**

Information will be shared in clear and understandable formats.

#### **Responsive**

The council will listen to community views and consider them when making decisions.

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## 3. Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Promote open communication between the council and the community
  - Encourage residents to attend council meetings
  - Provide accessible information about council activities
  - Enable residents to contribute to local decision-making
  - Support community initiatives and partnerships
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## 4. Methods of Engagement

The Council will use a variety of methods to engage with the community.

These may include:

### Council Meetings

Members of the public may attend council meetings in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

Meetings will normally include a **public participation session** where residents may raise questions or comments.

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### Council Website

The Council will maintain a website which will provide information including:

- Agendas and minutes
- Council policies
- Contact details
- News and announcements

Where possible the website will comply with accessibility standards.

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### Noticeboards

Council noticeboards will be used to display:

- Meeting notices
- Agendas
- Local information

Noticeboards help ensure information reaches residents who may not access digital communications.

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## **Social Media**

Where the council uses social media, it will:

- Share council updates
- Provide information about community events
- Encourage constructive dialogue

Social media accounts will be managed responsibly and in accordance with council policies.

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## **Community Surveys and Consultations**

The Council may conduct surveys or consultations to gather community views on matters such as:

- Local services
- Planning matters
- Community projects
- Strategic priorities

Consultation results may be considered when making council decisions.

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## **Public Events and Meetings**

The Council may organise or participate in public events such as:

- Community meetings
- Open forums
- Local events and initiatives

These events provide opportunities for residents to engage directly with councillors.

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# **5. Working with Community Organisations**

The Council recognises the importance of working collaboratively with:

- Local community groups
- Charities
- Schools
- Businesses

- Voluntary organisations

Partnership working helps support community wellbeing and local initiatives.

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## **6. Communication with Residents**

Residents may contact the Council through:

- The Parish Clerk
- Council email
- Council meetings
- Written correspondence

The Council will aim to respond to enquiries in a timely and professional manner.

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## **7. Equality and Inclusion**

The Council is committed to ensuring that engagement opportunities are accessible to all members of the community.

Efforts will be made to ensure participation from:

- Young people
- Older residents
- Individuals with disabilities
- Minority groups

Engagement methods will be designed to remove barriers wherever possible.

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## **8. Managing Expectations**

While the Council will consider community views carefully, it may not always be possible to accommodate all suggestions due to:

- Legal constraints
- Financial limitations
- Council priorities

The Council will aim to explain decisions clearly to the community.

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# 9. Responsibilities

## Councillors

Councillors are responsible for:

- Representing the views of residents
- Encouraging community participation
- Communicating council activities within the community

## Parish Clerk

The Clerk is responsible for:

- Managing council communications
  - Publishing council information
  - Supporting engagement activities
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# 10. Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure the Council continues to engage effectively with the community.

The policy will normally be reviewed **every three years** or sooner if required.

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# 11. Adoption

Adopted by:

**Widdrington Station and Stobswood Parish Council**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Chair Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Clerk Signature: \_\_\_\_\_