

Community Engagement & Consultation Policy

Introduction

Wrockwardine Parish Council (the Council) is committed to encouraging the residents of the Parish to be involved, engaged and active in the decisions the Council makes about the services it provides. This policy sets out to encourage effective community engagement and how it may be achieved and to ensure that there is clear understanding of the need to engage with the community about decisions that affect them.

What is Community Engagement?

The Council considers community engagement to be the conversations it has with people about decisions that may affect them and their community and is about providing the opportunity for people, as individuals or members of groups or organisations to have a say in reviewing, designing, approving, influencing or commenting on the decisions, activities and services the Council provides. However, it is also about being clear that the Council cannot involve all the people all of the time and whilst it will endeavour to ensure that clear information and support is given, there is also a responsibility on residents and communities to be active and engaged in creating a thriving future for the Parish.

Achieving Community Engagement

The Council's approach to engagement is tailored to the type of activity taking place and can include:

- **Information giving** – where people are informed but have no influence;
- **Consultation** – where people are consulted and their views influence the outcome, but they don't necessarily have the final say in decisions;
- **Supporting** – people take the lead and the Council stands back supporting only when invited to do so;
- **Co-creation** – where things are done together and joint decisions are made.

The Council will facilitate community engagement in the following ways:

- Make information available on what decisions are being considered and how residents can contribute to the discussions. This will be through the Council's website www.wrockwardine.org.uk, notice boards, magazines, newsletters, Facebook, posters, consultations, surveys, reports, word of mouth (though not necessarily all of these at any one time)
- Ensure that all meetings of the Council and its committees are open to the public and press, with time allocated for members of the public to ask questions or bring issues to the attention of the Council
- Publish agendas, minutes and supporting documents for all council meetings on the website in a timely manner

- Publish, as required to do so, the annual external audit and accompanying financial accounts on the website and notice boards to give the opportunity for any questions regarding the financial position of the Council to be asked
- Where it is able to, the Council will facilitate and take part in an Annual Parish Meeting
- Consultation exercises, surveys and questionnaires are undertaken with key stakeholders, including residents and local user groups depending on the service and projects
- Nominate councillors and officers to act as representatives on various external committees, forums, community groups and other government agencies and ensure they regularly attend meetings to uphold the interests of residents and ensure they are kept informed of the community's needs. The Council will also work with other authorities such as Telford & Wrekin Council, neighbouring parish councils and West Mercia Police to try and secure good service and provision for the Parish
- Ensure the Council is both open and accountable in its dealings with residents and the community and will make information on its policies and procedures freely available in line with the Freedom of Information Act 2020
- Where appropriate, the Council will operate a gateway service to ensure residents are referred to the correct authority, government agency or organisation when the Council is not responsible for, or cannot resolve, an issue directly

Consultation Process

When the Council wishes to seek the views of residents and communities on a proposed project or action, a consultation may take place. The Council may, at its sole discretion, choose which circumstances a consultation should take place and who will be consulted and will always be limited to those residing in the Parish.

Consultations are not carried out in connection with any action required to be carried out by law or where it is proposed on the grounds of health and safety or in any circumstance where the proposed project, action or activity is outside the power of the Council to undertake.

The Council will decide how the consultation will be conducted but will try to use a range of communication methods and media to reach the widest possible audience. Methods that might be used may include, but not be limited to:

- Face to face informal surveys
- Social media surveys
- Informal written surveys e.g. suggestion box
- Formal written questionnaires
- Electronic surveys
- Telephone surveys
- Interviews

Council decisions can only be made by Parish Councillors at a duly convened meeting and the results of any consultation are not a substitute for proper discussion and resolutions. Results

of consultations will be used solely for the purpose of informing the Council of the general wishes of those consulted and the Council is required to take the needs of the Parish as a whole into account when making its decisions and not reflect the wishes of a minority which may conflict with the needs of the whole parish. Thus, the results of a consultation exercise may not necessarily be reflected in the final decision of the Council.

Feedback from consultations will be made available, where appropriate, through the Minutes of meetings at which the results are discussed. A separate notification of the results may be given to those surveyed if the Council so chooses, either through a separate written notification or on the website and/or notice boards.

The Benefits of Effective and Meaningful Community Engagement

- The issues and priorities of residents are clearly identified in order that appropriate new or improved facilities services can be provided (where appropriate);
- The Council can make use of local knowledge and experience to inform decisions;
- That those participating feel empowered by being part of the decision making process;
- It helps establish a greater sense of community cohesion;
- It may result in enhanced leadership, increased engagement in the elections and a greater interest in standing for the Council.