

Holbrook Parish Council Community Engagement Policy

Introduction.

1. Holbrook Parish Council is committed to community engagement at all levels and supports and encourages community members to share their aspirations and wishes for themselves, their families and other community members with the Council.
2. Holbrook Parish Council recognises that the services it provides must reflect the needs of its parishioners and the locality. The Parish Council strongly believes that its residents should be involved in decisions affecting them and their neighbourhood and in shaping the future of their parish.

What is our Community?

3. We believe our community is everyone within the boundaries of our parish including all ages, any organisations, groups and individuals within it. We also recognise that residents pay for the activities of the Council and that visitors to our community form an important part of the vibrancy of community life. We understand that there are certain bodies that are crucial to local quality of life and we will strive to achieve excellent working relationships with these bodies including village organisations, the Police, neighbouring councils and other tiers of local government.

Methods of communication.

4. Communicating with members of the parish will be achieved in many ways to ensure all sections of the community are reached. New opportunities will be identified and considered when they arise to keep the Parish Council up to date with new technologies. These methods include, but are not limited to:
 - **Parish Council meetings:** every parish council meeting has a public forum where any member of the public can ask questions about items on the agenda or raise issues for future consideration.
 - **Annual Parish meeting:** The Parish Annual Meeting brings the community together and allows residents to question and review how the elected members help shape the community. The main objective of the annual meeting is to provide and encourage two-way communication between the community and Councillors.
 - **Public meetings:** From time to time the Council may decide that an item warrants being dealt with through a specially convened Public Meeting. The Parish Council Chairman is expected to chair any Public Meeting but under exceptional circumstances the Chairman can appoint a deputy to this role.
 - **Publication Scheme:** Holbrook Parish Council is committed to transparency in its decision making and to this end, a publication scheme has been adopted which allows public access to policies, financial records and other documents. The Council has registered with the Information Commissioner's Office and has adopted a Freedom of Information policy. Many documents are freely available on the website, others by contacting the Clerk.
 - **Notice boards:** All agenda and other useful information will be posted on the noticeboards on the corner of Heathfield Road, Admiral's Quarter and at the Marsh Gate car park.
 - **Website:** The Parish Council will continue to pay for, and maintain, a village website. Information about the Parish Council, its business and policies, together with local news, events and general information will be published.
 - **Local newsletter:** Holbrook Parish Council occasionally contributes an article to the In Touch magazine which is distributed to the whole community. This facility is currently free of charge and provides an opportunity to reach a slightly wider audience across the Peninsula.

- **Parish Papers:** - This is a bi-monthly magazine that is delivered to every resident free of charge. The cost of the magazine is partially funded via local advertisement. It provides an excellent mechanism to communicate, especially to residents who may not have access to the website and social media.
- **Specific consultation:** The Council will decide if a particular event or programme that has a short, medium or long-term effect on the village warrants a specific consultation programme. Examples of specific consultations include Neighbourhood Planning, surveys about the future of the Reade Field and other local amenities and the development of a Parish Plan.
- **Social media:** Holbrook Parish Council has a Facebook page and will continue to develop its use of social media whilst ensuring that it is able to resource the regular updating of such applications and that the standard of communications meets the requirements of the media policy.

Holbrook Parish Council's short, medium and long term aims.

5. Short term:

- Continued use and updating of all current forms of communication,
- Regular reviews of feedback, and
- Prompt response to any communications received from the public

6. Medium Term:

- Looking for hard to reach groups and a means of communicating with them i.e., those without computer access.
- Better communication with young people: for instance, the formation of a Youth Parish Council.

7. Long Term:

- This policy should be reviewed annually as part of the timetable of policy reviews
- The council must keep up to date with evolving methods of communication.

Involvement in partnerships.

8. The Council has representation on a number of bodies including the Alton Water User Group, Babergh Liaison meetings, the Shotley Peninsula Alliance of Parish Councils, The Great Collaboration (a network for climate change and nature conservation) and so on. Councillors also attend many meetings of bodies which make decisions affecting the local community including the Police and Parish Forum. Information obtained from these meetings is reported to full council meetings.

Role of councillors.

9. Councillors are the decision-makers of the Council. The contact details for all councillors are available from the Clerk and are also published on the council's website. Councillors also hold the Clerk to account. Councillors welcome contact with members of the public, endeavour to be available immediately prior to council meetings for anybody who wishes to speak with them and they will listen to the representations you make to them at council meetings whether you attend in person, ask another person to raise matters for you or provide your comments in writing.

Role of the Clerk.

10. The contact details for the Clerk to the council are published on the council's website, the notice boards and in the Parish Papers magazine. The Clerk is the Proper Officer of the council and is the appropriate contact in most cases for raising matters with or requesting information from the council. The clerk works part time, but will do their best to respond to requests for information as soon as it is practical for them to do so.