

Statement of Intent as to Community Engagement.

1. Aims and Objectives

The Parish Council's aims and objectives for seeking community engagement and the outcomes it hopes to achieve are:

A. Aims to:

- Work closely with residents, businesses and community groups;
- Engage with as many people as possible who want to participate in decision-making, monitoring services and planning for the future;
- Ensure, that through the use of a wide range of approaches to public involvement and community engagement, the Parish Council actively encourages the involvement of residents, to capture their views and learn their concerns and effectively use those views as an integral part of the decision making process;
- Ensure that residents have the opportunities to be heard at every stage, and the capacity to be effective citizens.

B Objectives

This strategy is part of the Parish Council's commitment to creating and maintaining effective working relationships with all sectors of the community, based on trust, openness and constructive challenge.

Outcomes of the strategy will include:

- Improved communication through the establishment of new channels of engagement.
- More residents understanding the role of Councillors and getting the best effect.
- Improved engagement with local communities, with more people feeling that they are involved in decision-making and a higher percentage of people involved in volunteering.
- Improved satisfaction with local public services.

2. Defining the Community

Great Waltham is a rural Parish set in Essex, 5 miles from the centre of its principal authority Chelmsford Borough Council that is currently co-managed with Essex County Council. The community consists of a little over 900 residential properties accommodating approximately 2100 people of all ages. It is listed in the Domesday Book and has Roman origins. Post war development has seen the village grow with a number of small scale housing projects and infilling which gives the parish its current diverse stock of housing. Agriculture has been, and remains, the primary industry in the area and many of the villagers commute to other areas, including London for employment. The community may be defined as consisting of:

- Residents of the Village,
- Users of Parish Council Services,
- Village Hall Management Committees & its users,
- Head Teachers and Governors of Infant and Primary Schools,
- Young people who live and/or go to school in the Village,
- Retail and other and Businesses in the community,
- Interest groups – clubs and societies e.g. Great Waltham Horticultural Society,
- Voluntary organisations,
- Church Groups,
- Farming Community,
- Groups of people defined by a common factor such as age, disability, faith, and other groups,
- Councillors and public service representatives including Council Staff.

3. Role of Council Members and Officers

The Parish is non-political with 11 Councillors identified in the community, via newsletters, website and notice boards for their roles and responsibilities, which are also detailed and published in the Council's annual report. Council members communicate with the public via their attendance at meetings as part of their work with relevant committees. Councillors each have a number of different roles that embrace a range of activities from the following: Planning; Recreation; Finance and General Purposes; Emergency Planning. These roles inevitably bring opportunity to discuss the work of the Council with residents and peers and encourages participation and feedback.

There is one officer of the Council, who covers the entire spectrum of the council work, who works from home and is generally available to answer enquiries via email, telephone and letters etc. The Parish Council employ's a Parish Handyman and other contractors who frequently have direct contact with members of the public and naturally have to field questions and enquiries. Their ability to do this effectively and courteously is as important as any other element of the Councils work in the community and can give good feedback on the views of people on the services offered by the Council.

4. Provision of Information to the Community and Opportunities for Community Involvement

The Clerk is available to members of the public 24/7 either by personal visit, telephone, email or normal postal service. The contact number and email address is displayed on letter heads, agendas and on parish notice boards and the website. The telephone numbers and addresses of the Parish Council members are available on the Parish Notice boards and in the Annual report issued to every household. It is recognised that members of the community may wish to engage with the Council at different levels - from the odd email or letter with a suggestion on how a service could be improved, to regular attendance at a Council meeting.

The Parish Council website address is also widely published and the site contains all the information an individual might wish to know about the work of the Parish Council and its individuals, including meeting minutes, policy documents, financial statements, annual report, newsletters and how to contact anyone associated with the Council.

We engage with all communities in a variety of ways from regular newsletters and the use of several local notice boards, through our website, through public meetings called as and when deemed necessary and an annual report.

The Parish Council will, prior to an election, publish a regular programme of adverts, briefings and articles giving encouragement to people to stand as councillors and vote in elections.

The Council has also developed links with the local schools and a member of the Parish Council will attend a meeting of the School Council once per term and will encourage the members of the School Council to attend a monthly meeting of the Parish Council.

The Parish Council works closely in the development of:

- A Parish Plan
- Village Design Statements
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Community Speedwatch

This Statement of Intent for Community Engagement was approved for issue at the Parish Council meeting on the 14th December 2009.