

# BOUGHTON UNDER BLEAN PARISH COUNCIL

## Community Engagement Policy

Adopted: 10 December 2024

Next review: December 2026

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### **Introduction**

The purpose of this policy is to guide Boughton under Blean Parish Council's communication activity and public engagement. The Council aims to ensure that there are effective channels of communication both from the Council to the public and from the public to the Council.

### **Aims**

The Council aims to:

- Promote the role of community engagement and its importance
- Engage with the community
- Identify the needs and wishes of those living in the village.
- Ensure that through the use of a wide range of approaches to public involvement and community engagement that residents are encouraged to share their views, ideas and concerns with the Council
- Use the views of the residents as an integral part of its decision-making process

### **Objectives**

The Council is committed to creating and maintaining effective working relationships with all sectors of the community, based on trust, openness and constructive challenge.

The Council's objectives include:

- Improving communication through the establishment of new channels of engagement
- Improving residents understanding of the role of the Council and Councillors
- Improving engagement with local communities, with more people feeling that they are involved in their area
- Improving satisfaction with local public services and the area

### **Parish Council and Community Engagement**

The Parish Council will facilitate community engagement in the following ways:

- Making information available on what decisions are being considered by the council and how residents can influence or contribute to a meeting discussion. Methods used to ensure engagement will be through the Parish Council website, noticeboards, posters, consultations, surveys, reports, and word of mouth.
- All meetings of the Parish Council and its committees are open to the public and press and there is a period set aside for residents to speak. Residents can access agendas for meetings via the Parish Council website and noticeboards. The Parish Council website, notice boards and agendas explain the procedure for residents wishing to speak at meetings.
- Parishioners are also actively encouraged to attend the Annual Parish Meeting.
- Planning applications are considered at Full Council or Planning Committee meetings. The opportunities for people to speak applies equally to these meetings. Equal opportunity is given to planning applicants / supporters, objectors and local community groups.
- When relevant, hold engagement sessions/workshops at venues where specific groups will already be present.

- The Parish Clerk is required to play a neutral role so that the public can be fully involved and be confident that they are receiving unbiased information and support. This neutral involvement will allow more flexibility in the service provided and the personal element of contact will hopefully encourage more involvement and engagement from the hard-to-reach members of the community.
- Details of how to contact the Clerk will be displayed on noticeboards and the Council's website.
- The Parish Council will produce an annual list of scheduled Full Council and Committee meeting dates, to include the location and start times of the meetings.
- The Parish Council will be open and accountable in its dealing with residents and the community.
- The Parish Council will be receptive to requests from residents or communities and will attempt to be flexible in order to ensure their opinions are known not only to the Parish Council but also to other organisations when relevant.
- Parish Councillors will continue to represent the Council on various outside bodies, to ensure that they are kept informed of the communities' needs.

### **Communication**

The Council is committed to improving community engagement by:

- Continuing all the above activities and services into the future and improving relationships with community groups, including developing measures to encompass the views and opinions of people and groups who are often missed out of community engagement activities.
- The Council will be proactive and willing to consider any reasonable opportunities that support its purpose of making information available, increasing contributions from the community, especially with those who are difficult to reach.
- When dealing with controversial issues that affect a particular community then consideration will be given to holding a public meeting.
- Consultations and surveys are to be considered when necessary and appropriate and results will be made publicly available.
- Identifying and embracing opportunities to work with other local community groups when the need arises.
- Publicising the positive results that have been achieved from working relationships between the Council and other community groups in order to encourage new relationships / partnerships to be formed and to raise community spirit.
- Promoting elections and the importance of the democratic process and the value of being a Councillor.
- Promoting the value to the parish of volunteering.
- The Parish Council will review its community Engagement Strategy regularly to ensure that it remains relevant.

### **Outcomes**

The outcomes which we are striving for and against which the success of this policy will be measured are:

- 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.
- Improved satisfaction with the services provided by Boughton under Blean Parish Council.