

Aston Clinton Parish Council

Communication and Engagement Strategy

Adopted by Council at meeting held on 19 November 2014

1. Introduction

- a. Aston Clinton Parish Council has developed a communication strategy with the aims of setting a standard for engagement with its community.
- b. The Council recognises that the services it provides must reflect the needs of residents and the locality. As a Council, it wants to ensure that communication is two-way:
 - i. Telling people about the Council, and
 - ii. Listening to what people say about the services they would like to see.

2. Aims

- a. The Parish Council will ensure that it communicates with residents in a timely and effective manner, and to inform and consult them about matters which affect them.
- b. The aim of this strategy is to define clearly the way in which the Council engages and consults with its residents and partners on important issues by:
 - i. Informing, consulting and involving
 - ii. Being inclusive and engaging with all of its residents and partners
 - iii. Ensuring views are listened to and used to develop and enhance services, the environment and the quality of life where practicable to do so.
- c. The key stakeholders with which the Council must communicate include:
 - i. Residents
 - ii. Councillors
 - iii. Aylesbury Vale District Council
 - iv. Buckinghamshire County Council
 - v. The local Member of Parliament
 - vi. Transport providers
 - vii. Community groups
 - viii. Youth groups
 - ix. Village organisations
 - x. Charitable organisations
 - xi. The local police, and
 - xii. The local press.
- d. The broader stakeholder community also includes libraries, medical service providers, educational facilities, land owners, local businesses and other service providers.

3. Communication and Engagement Objectives

- a. To improve, plan and shape the future of the parish according to local needs and priorities.
- b. To use engagement to inform decision making, ensuring decisions are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the parish.
- c. To enhance the wellbeing of the parish.
- d. To improve the quality and delivery of services.
- e. To be a stronger, more active and cohesive parish.

4. Parish Council Spokesperson

- a. In the event of any media enquiry, the Parish Clerk (in conjunction with the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council), will be responsible for issuing a response from the Parish Council. Individual members of the Parish Council must make clear – if they are approached for comment directly – whether they are giving an individual opinion or will be referring the matter to the Parish Clerk for a formal Parish Council response. In any event, the Parish Clerk must be notified of any contact with the media as soon as possible.
- b. The Parish Clerk shall be responsible for providing the copy and content for the Parish Magazine and ensure that all deadlines in this respect are met.
- c. The Parish Council website and other social media channels will be updated and edited by the Parish Clerk and a nominated Parish Councillor representative. However, it is the responsibility of all Councillors to check the site regularly for any issues of inaccuracy or omissions and to inform the Parish Clerk of these if and when they arise.

5. Support

- a. The Parish Council will continue supporting and engaging with local organisations and will assist them in meeting their own aims and objectives. Supporting local projects and participating in local events will raise the awareness of the Council and its aims and objectives.
- b. The Parish Council will achieve this by:
 - i. Continuing to attract as many participants as possible to the monthly Parish Council meetings
 - ii. Promoting and attracting as many participants as possible to special meetings
 - iii. Liaising with local police on local issues
 - iv. Working with the Parish Plan Working Group involving stakeholders
 - v. Supporting and encouraging the work of local initiatives such as a village tidy up scheme, gardening initiatives etc.
 - vi. Facilitating and launching new initiatives – including consultation with residents in the vicinity before commencement of any work.

6. Consultation

- a. Consulting residents on important issues will be key to the strategy. It will ensure those most affected are able to put forward an opinion and given an opportunity to make a difference.

7. Communication

- a. Communicating with members of the parish will be achieved in several ways to ensure all sections of the community are reached:
 - i. Parish Council and other special meetings are open to the public and include an opportunity for members of the public to engage with Councillors
 - ii. Agendas for all meetings are sent to Parish and District Councillors and other stakeholders and posted on the village Parish Council notice boards and the website in advance of each meeting
 - iii. Contact details for all Councillors and the Clerk are available on the village Parish Council notice boards and the Parish Council website
 - iv. The Parish Council website will continue to be regularly updated and will have a wealth of information including agendas, minutes and a calendar of meetings, which highlights special meetings and events. Important notices, project updates and local information sections will be updated regularly.

- v. Village Parish Council notice boards will continue to be regularly updated to provide information about the activities of the Parish Council. The public may use these by sending their information to the Clerk.
- vi. The Parish Council will utilise social networking where appropriate. The options include a Parish Council Twitter feed, a Parish Council Facebook page and a Parish Council Google group, which could all be used to provide updates and links to new information on the Parish Council website.
- vii. The Parish Council will prepare copy and inserts for village magazines that are distributed widely throughout the village, and where copies will be placed at strategic locations in the village, such as the churches and The Hub.
- viii. The Bucks Herald is invited to each Council meeting and they report meeting dates and other relevant information.
- ix. The local radio station will be requested to read out details of special meetings and consultations.

8. Strategy

- a. If there is an opportunity for consultation for any idea or proposal which may affect the village, the Parish Council and/or its partners will:
 - i. Promote it through the notice boards, website, social network sites and local media. On appropriate occasions residents in a particular locality may be individually written to
 - ii. Investigate creating a website consultation or poll for those unable to attend meetings
 - iii. Investigate the usefulness and/or disadvantages of such a facility
 - iv. Aim to identify minority or hard to reach groups and identify channels of contact and consultation with them
 - v. Identify focus groups
 - vi. Identify members of the Parish willing to be included in vox-pop surveys. This will ensure that smaller consultations may be initiated where specialist advice is required to inform decision making
 - vii. Identify members of the Parish with specific skills who can be consulted on specialist subjects. This will be a useful tool to judge general opinions without the need for a full and time consuming process
 - viii. Ensure need, priority and importance of consultation to ensure there is no misuse of the consultation process
 - ix. Identify the benefits of consultation and whether there is a real opportunity to influence decisions
 - x. Not enter into a consultation unless the outcome can be influenced. If this is not possible a consultation will be meaningless and residents may become distressed in the process
 - xi. Publish feedback on consultations and include details of the use of information gained
 - xii. Ensure outcome of consultations are used to inform decisions and policies
 - xiii. Review consultation outcomes to highlight any failings in the process to enable identification of any changes and amendments required to the strategy

9. Acting together

- a. Acting together with residents and partners in finding solutions to local problems will ensure they will be accepted and fit for purpose.
- b. Acting together to carry out agreed action plans will engage the community in working with the Parish Council to enhance their environments and the quality of their lives.

10. What Aston Clinton Parish Council asks its residents to do

- a. To actively review the notice boards and/or the Parish Council website and/or the local newspaper and/or the Parish newsletter for information about meetings and events on a regular basis. Links to our website with new information will also be posted onto the Parish Council Facebook page, which will have a growing 'reach' within the community.
- b. To recognise engagement opportunities and utilise them by responding to surveys, letters, questionnaires etc.
- c. To address comments, suggestions or complaints in writing by letter, or by email, or by telephone using contact information available on the Parish Council website and displayed on the village Parish Council notice boards. Alternatively to attend the monthly Parish Council meeting and make use of the public participation session.
- d. The Google Group will be an informal discussion forum for the whole community but is not intended as a method of communicating with the Parish Council. The Facebook page will be more widely used to link to official web pages and to inform the community about current issues.