

Doddinghurst Parish Council

1. Aims and Objectives

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

A. Aims to:

- work more 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, we actively encourage 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 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

Doddinghurst is a rural Parish set in Essex, 4 miles from the centre of its principal authority Brentwood Borough Council that is currently co-managed with Essex County Council. The community consists of a little over 1200 residential properties accommodating approximately 2800 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 numerous “shack” replacements that gives the village 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 Team & 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. Doddinghurst Olympic Football Club,
- 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.

NB: See the Parish Council website www.doddinghurst-pc.gov.uk for the Village Review 2007 for a complete statement of the community and its infrastructure.

3. Role of Council Members and Officers

The Parish is non-political with 11 Councillors identified in the community, via newsletters and website, 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 Development; Allotments; Finance; Recreational Ground management; Burial Ground management; Highways; Liaison with other Parish Council’s; Risk Assessment; Bus Club; Footpaths; Strategic partnership liaison with the principal authority and attending “East of England” regional assembly meetings. These roles inevitable bring opportunity to discuss the work of the Council with residents and peers and encourages participation and feedback.

Statement of Intent as to Community Engagement

There are two officers of the Council, who cover the entire spectrum of the council work, and are based in an office in the centre of the Village that is open three mornings a week from 09.30 to 12.30. Outside these times they are frequently dealing with meetings or in contact via email, telephone and letters etc.

Last, but not least, the Parish Council employ ground maintenance staff and 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 Parish Office is open to the public three mornings a week from 09.30 to 12.30 and messages can be left 24/7 either by telephone or email. An emergency contact number for out of hour problems is also published as are the telephone numbers and addresses of the Chairman and Vice Chairman and many other councillors.

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 to individual surgeries as well as regular public meetings and an annual report backed by a regular programme of adverts, briefings and articles giving encouragement to people to stand as councillors and vote in elections.

The Council has also prepared and presented to the local schools about the work the council does and encouraged interest from the schoolchildren by offering prizes for new a design of play equipment needed for the Children's Play Area managed by the Council.

The Council operates a community Bus Club that organises the hire and driving of 14 seater mini buses, usually offering two trips a month. This provides an invaluable service to many who are unable to drive or just look forward to an outing with others to shops and places of general interest in a 40 mile range of the Village.

Statement of Intent as to Community Engagement

Specific annual events are organised and supported by the Parish Council and these include a May Fair, Christmas lunches for senior citizens and, this year, a Fun Day for everyone in the summer. Active feedback is sought at all times and Councillors attend such events to “spread the word” on the role of the Council and encourage people to participate in local affairs with specific local issues being explored from time to time using the full range of communication techniques available..

The Council is always considering practical ways of engaging with people and community groups and have, with varying degrees of success, tried running a Youth Club, operating Councillor Surgeries and issuing Village Questionnaires as well as Leaflet distribution.

The Council has actively supported the re-launch of the village neighbourhood watch that has been very successful in becoming re-established.

The Council operates a comfortable Parish Room offered at a low rent that is well used by clubs and societies for events such as Art Workshops, Craft Clubs, Sewing Clubs, Card Clubs, Tai-Chi, and a crèche. The Council have also entered into a revenue sharing partnership with a local farmer to set up Garden Allotments and these have grown to over 40 plots in the past 4 years.

Longer term projects include the development of a Village Design statement and tackling low level crime reduction by working with the Community Police and Neighbourhood watch.

[This Statement of Intent for Community Engagement was approved for issue at the Annual Parish Council meeting on the 7th May 2009](#)