

## **Community Engagement Strategy Statement.**

The parish council values its individual residents and the numerous communities that make up the parish and it wishes to give everyone the opportunity to contribute their views and influence future decision making.

The parish council is committed to talking and listening to the people and so will do whatever is possible and reasonable to create opportunities for people to be kept informed, invited to participate and become actively involved in decisions and shaping the parish in which they live and work.

Details of how and what media the parish council will use to fulfil this commitment is available in the Community Inclusion Policy that is available on the parish council's website or from the parish office.

Parish Council meetings, including its committees, are open to the public with a time set aside for public comments. Details and advice are contained in the How to Ask a Question leaflet that is available on the parish council's website or from the parish office.

The parish council wishes to work for residents and the various communities and welcomes all views and comments.

## Our commitment to you.

Boxley Parish Council is committed to working with its residents and communities so that they can be actively involved in decisions that affect them by:

- Being proactive in making information available on what decisions are being considered and how residents can influence or contribute to the discussion.
- Being receptive to any reasonable opportunities that support the above, especially assisting those residents that are difficult to reach e.g. the housebound and disabled. See also Appendix 1 Consultations and Petitions
- Having all meetings of the parish council and its committees open to the public and with a period set aside for residents to comment. See Appendix 2 How to Ask a Question.
- Ensuring that the parish office plays a neutral role so that residents can be confident that they are receiving unbiased information and support
- Using its website, Facebook, noticeboards, community e-mail alert, leaflets, press releases and the monthly Downs Mail newsletter to keep residents informed.
- Going out to the community with locally held meetings, school fetes etc.
- Direct consultation with residents/communities on issues where it is appropriate to gain their views. Appendix 1 Consultations and Petitions.
- Being open and accountable in its dealings with residents and the community.
- Publishing its agenda, draft and approved minutes, policies and procedures on its website.
- Ensuring that, where appropriate, local people and communities are referred to the correct borough or county council department/officer/councillor and that they are aware of the ways that they can use the relevant systems to make their views known
- Meeting the requirements of the Open and Accountable Local Government legislation.

### **Appendix 1 – Consultations and Petitions**

Parish Council Consultations, by local meeting, letter drop, e-mail alert, survey monkey etc. will be considered when:

- There is an issue identified by the Council, Councillors or office as controversial e.g. a large planning application; or
- There is a plan to significantly change an amenity or equipment on an amenity site.
- on receipt of a petition from residents.

### **Who should be consulted?**

If agreed that a consultation is needed then the Council or relevant Committee will decide on its range, timescale and the method to be used. Issues to be considered in deciding the consultation are:

- What residents will be affected by the proposal;
- Whether to consult with all residents directly affected; and/or a wider range of residents

- Local groups or organisations who may be affected or benefit from the proposal/issue e.g. play groups, scouts, elderly people's clubs etc.

## **Petitions**

The Council will consider petitions received on any issue. Residents/organisations submitting petitions will be required to: Have the wording of the petition on each page that has signatures; and

- Include the name and address (or post code) of all persons signing
- It is expected that signatures will be from people within the parish but at the discretion of the Council, signatures from outside the boundary may be accepted
- A petition can only be presented once to the Council

The Council in deciding whether to support the petitioned issue will take the decision in an open and accountable way by debating in a public meeting with the public allowed to speak.

## **How to Ask a Question**

Boxley Parish Council welcomes visitors to its meetings and is happy to receive questions at the time indicated in the agenda.

The meeting will be adjourned to allow you to speak. Once reconvened you will not be allowed to join the general discussions of the meeting.

Three minutes are allowed per person. Councillors will only be allowed to ask any questions after you have finished.

Depending on the question or issues raised you may not get an answer at that meeting and the issue may be referred to a committee to deal with however this will be explained to you and you can leave your details with the Clerk to ensure you are kept updated.

The minutes will include a reference to your query/question but will not include your personal details.

Alternative arrangements, by contacting the Clerk, can be made for anyone unable to attend a meeting or who finds it difficult to talk to a public gathering.

It is possible to 'lobby' members before a meeting. If you wish to send a written explanation (at least 2 working days before a meeting) then this will be passed to members. You may still speak at the meeting if you do this.

The press and other members of the public may be present. You should not slander or make offensive comments about anyone.

Tips for helping you present your views

- Stand whilst you talk, acoustics can be a problem in some halls
- Open your speech by explaining the location of any problem, try to be as specific as possible, e.g. the piece of land at the junction of ... and ...

- Have a list of the relevant points you wish to make
- Try to be concise and not go off the point
- If you know what you want please ensure that you clearly inform the Council
- If you so wish a report can be read out on your behalf.
- The Parish Council may wish to send you information or keep you in touch with any developments, don't forget to supply your name and address to the Clerk who always has spare paper and pens.