

# COLERNE PARISH COUNCIL

## CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

This is the Consultation and Engagement Policy Statement of COLERNE PARISH COUNCIL:

The Parish Council is committed to making the best quality plans and decisions for its residents that are possible with the knowledge and resources available at the time. To do that, the Council will consider which of them need to be based on consultation. For those, it will design the most appropriate process to ensure residents, businesses, groups or organisations that may be materially affected have the opportunity to affect the outcome. The Council and its members will continually engage with the community to ensure that its aim of improving the quality of life for all who live, work or visit the area is achieved.

The Parish Council, as the first tier of local government, is uniquely situated to provide the forum for understanding and supporting the needs of this community. It provides advocacy on behalf of its residents, uses linkages to other organisations to bring in services, or directly procures them itself. Liaison with Wiltshire Council happens at all levels, and there are linkages to health and social care as well. Day-to-day, the Council will seek solutions for the community, looking for skills and volunteers to make improvements to our surroundings or bringing particular neighbourhood issues to local attention to promote a better quality of life for all. Therefore, finding out what residents, businesses, groups and organisations think about the community around them, or what they may need themselves, is important if the Council is to properly represent their views to others or make good decisions itself.

This Council believes that the widespread programme of consultation whilst preparing the Village Design Statement/Neighbourhood Plan is a 'material consideration' in the planning and development control process. It is an example of how consultation can be used to gather a wide range of opinion about how life in the community could be both protected and enhanced by controlled development and improvement.

The law requires councils to consult in some situations, and to engage with its communities in many others. But despite this, the council wants to do this anyway. Its members are themselves drawn from the community, and choose to serve the public because they care. Consultation is a two-way listening process and participation in it is itself a means of:

- improving understanding and transparency;
- promoting a sense of belonging and inclusion;
- strengthening communities.

Ensuring good quality feedback from the results of consultations and the decisions that arise helps people feel that they have either made a difference or at least had their say.

In the new era of 'localism' it is now more important than ever before that local people, businesses, groups and organisations can have a say on local issues that matter to them, and hear how their opinions help shape policies and services.

This Council also recognises its obligations in The Wiltshire Compact and undertakes to meet them in regard to consulting and engaging whenever it is practicable to do so.

### CONSULTING

From time to time the Council will want to consult. Equalities legislation requires that the most appropriate forms of consultation method (and the design of materials) will be selected to reach as diverse a range of people or groups as practicable or relevant.

Such methods might include:

- Leaflet drops;
- Magazine articles;
- Parish website;
- Questionnaires;
- Newspaper articles;
- Door-to-door enquiries;
- Table/stalls at public events;
- Public notices placed in conspicuous places;
- Using other forms of news distribution network (such as schools, doctors surgeries);
- Specific events, designed to promote debate and opinion gathering by a variety of means.

The choice of method/s and materials will be proportional to the subject, and will seek to avoid 'consultation fatigue' in the community that can arise from poor timing or too much consultation.

The information provided will itself either be sufficient for the issue to be understood and a response made, or it will provide links to other sources of information and advice from where a greater understanding can be reached. Sufficient time will be allowed, usually 12 weeks, to do this.

A single point of contact will be published to which responses should be made, and analysis of those responses will be published (de-personalised). The Council will have regard to this analysis in making its plans or decisions, the outcome of which will also be published.

## **ENGAGING**

The Council recognises that the communities it serves are diverse. They may be 'communities of interest' or spatial communities such as neighbourhoods, estates, or streets. Whichever is the most appropriate, the Council engages with the communities of the parish in a number of ways:

- At its meetings, either personally or through receiving reports;
- At the Annual Parish Meeting;
- Through published articles in the village magazine;
- Through its own Members' activities in the community;
- Managing the Public Notice Board;
- Managing the parish website, and feedback from it;
- Responding to requests for information or advice;
- Attending Area Board meetings and similar public forums;
- Encouraging volunteering and putting on voluntary activities for public participation;
- Making links to those other organisations and 'communities of interest' supporting the most vulnerable in the community;

## **OTHER LINKAGES**

Other public and voluntary organisations make plans concerning the parish area from time to time, to which this Council will have regard when making its own plans and decisions. Similarly, those organisations should have regard to published plans of this parish, and ensure their own consultation and decision making processes are in place to support them.

Date created:

Date for review:

Author:

Clerk to the Council