

**Wentworth Parish Council**  
**Community Engagement Policy**

**Introduction**

**The objectives of the policy are to;**

Encourage effective local community engagement;

Ensure that embedded throughout the Council there is clear understanding of the need to engage with communities about decisions that affect them;

Enable aspirations/comments/suggestions obtained from community engagement to have an impact on decision making and the way services are being delivered;

Identify how the Council can enhance its profile by improving engagement with the wider community (with specific reference to hard to reach groups such as young people, elderly people, those with physical disability, language barriers, financial constraints, cultural differences or social expectations.)

Wentworth Parish Council advocates giving local people a voice and involving them in decisions which affect them and their community. This may include individuals, voluntary and community organisations as well as other public sector bodies.

It provides opportunity for local people to talk to the Council about their aspirations and or needs in their community and neighbourhood. It allows the Council to consult with and inform people about what services it provides, how it prioritises, how policies are determined and how well it's performing.

**The key aspects of community engagement include:**

Development of a network of relationships between Wentworth Parish Council, individuals, voluntary and community groups, neighbouring Parish Councils, Wentworth Estates and Borough Councils.

Clear and open communication to ensure that information is made accessible to all groups.

Listening and understanding from a range of people to identify aspirations, needs and problems of local people and groups.

Effective and meaningful community engagement can provide a number of benefits:

The problems and needs of local people are clearly identified in order that appropriate new or improved facilities /services can be provided.

Those participating feel empowered by being involved in decision making in their local community. This may result in enhanced leadership and greater interest in elections and standing for council.

**Wentworth Parish Council and Community Engagement**

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

Making information on what decisions are being considered and how residents can influence or contribute to the discussions in good time.

Methods used to ensure engagement will be - through the Parish Council website, notice boards, posters, Whatsapp, Community Alert Emails, Leaflets, consultations, and word of mouth.

All meetings of the Parish Council will be 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 web site and notice boards.

The Parish Council website explains the procedure for residents wishing to speak at meetings.

Residents can, where appropriate or necessary, make written reports/present petitions or have a case presented on their behalf to Councillors.

Planning applications are considered at Environment Committee meetings held twice a month and provides opportunities for people to speak on those agenda items that affect them. Equal opportunity is given to applicants/supporters/objectors/local community groups.

The Parish Clerk, are required to play neutral roles so that residents 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 and the personal element of the contact, will hopefully encourage more involvement from the hard to reach members of the community. Details of how to contact the Parish Clerk are displayed on notice boards and the Parish Council website.

The Parish Council will produce a list of annual meeting dates to include the start times and locations of the meetings.

The Parish Council will be open and accountable in its dealing with residents and the community. It will make information on its policies and procedures freely available.

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.

This may be by including an item for discussion on an agenda or allowing a local group to put their opinions into an official report undertaken by the Parish Council.

Parish Councillors will continue to represent the Council on various outside bodies, to ensure that they are kept informed of the communities' needs.

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 available.

Identifying and embracing opportunities to work with other local community groups when the need arises.

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 on an annual basis to ensure that it remains relevant.

Wentworth Parish Council has developed a community engagement strategy with the aim of constructing a standard for engagement with its residents and partners.

It recognizes that the services it provides must reflect the needs of its parishioners and the locality.

Wentworth Parish Council believes that its residents should be involved in decisions affecting them, their neighbourhood and the future of the parish.

## **Aims**

The aim of the strategy is to improve the way in which the Council consults and engages its residents and partners by

- Informing, consulting and involving
- Ensuring views are listened to and taken into account when making decisions on issues that enhance and improve services and affect the quality of life for residents.

## **Objectives**

- To improve, plan and shape the future of the parish according to local needs and priorities.

- To improve the quality and delivery of services
- To use engagement to inform decision making
- To enhance the well being of the parish
- To be a stronger, more active and cohesive parish

### **How this will be achieved**

Community engagement will be achieved by Wentworth Parish Council by communicating, consulting, supporting and working together with its residents.

### **Communication**

- The Wentworth Newsletter is delivered to every house in the parish. This quarterly publication informs residents on important issues and events. It is also used as a medium for consultation and includes articles from the various societies and groups active in the parish.
- Wentworth Parish Website has a wealth of local information and is updated on a weekly basis. Agendas and minutes are posted. The website which allows questions to be posed and residents the opportunity raise any questions.
- Meetings of the Council and its Committees are open to the public and include a Public Forum giving an opportunity for anyone to address and engage with Cllrs. The Parish Council also holds an Annual Parish Meeting to which all residents are invited.

Wentworth Parish Council has several notice boards throughout the parish which are used to advertise events, meetings.

Flyers are sometimes produced and delivered to inform of meetings and/or events.

### **Consultation**

Consulting all parishioners on important issues is the key to this strategy. It will ensure that those most affected are able to put forward an opinion.

Wentworth Parish Council will ensure consultations include all members of the parish by identifying the hard to reach groups such as youths, the elderly, the housebound, the disabled and ethnic minorities.

Wentworth Parish Council has facilitated the formation of a Parish Plan group that will be carrying out a wide ranging consultation on all aspects of parish life. It is hoped that the results of this will give the Parish Council a clear indication as to the priorities of residents.

**Wentworth Parish Councillors will undertake a quarterly walk round at which residents have the opportunity to speak with Councillors on any matter. They also hold surgeries in various locations within the village at which the PCSOs are also usually present.**

### **Support**

Wentworth Parish Council will offer support and engage with local organisations and assist them in meeting their own aims and objectives.

Supporting local projects and participating in local events helps to raise awareness of the council and its aims and objectives.

Supporting members of the parish in shaping the future of the parish will help to make a more cohesive community.

### **Acting Together**

Acting together with residents and partners in finding solutions to local problems will ensure that they will be accepted and be fit for purpose.

Acting together to carry out agreed action plans will engage the community in working with the Council to enhance the environment and quality of life.

Acting together in decision making and policy will ensure that residents have a voice and can make a difference.

### Measuring Success

Success will be measured by predefined targets, annual reviews of consultation outcomes, monitoring residents' participation in consultation processes and increases in involvement in local projects and events.

### ACTION PLAN

<b>ACTION PLAN</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Statement</b>
Raise awareness of consultation processes	Promote through Wentworth Newsletter, the website, local media, parish notice boards, Web site.	Promoting the strategy will be an ongoing priority and commitment.
Identify consultation/focus groups	Identify members of the parish with specific skill who can be consulted on specialist matters.	This will enable smaller consultations where specialist advice is required to inform decision making.
Work with the Police and partner authorities	Strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones.	
Identify minority/hard to reach groups.	Identify these groups and channels of contact and consultation.	Identifying these groups will ensure they are included in consultation processes.
Utilise the website for vox-pop surveys	Promote the website online poll facility.	Vox-pop surveys are a useful tool to judge general opinions without the need for a full consultation process
Identify consultation needs, priorities, and importance	Establish need, priorities, and importance of consultation.	This ensures that there is no overkill, overlap or misuse of the consultation process.
Identify benefits of consultation	Identify whether there is a real opportunity for people to influence decisions.	No consultation should be undertaken unless the outcome can be influenced. Unless this is possible a consultation will be meaningless and residents will become disillusioned in the process.
Feedback on consultations	Agree methods of feedback to residents and partners and ensure it's adhered to.	This will keep all parties involved in the process.

Ensure outcomes of consultations are used to inform decisions and policy	Use the outcome of consultations to inform decision making and shape policies.	All consultations will be undertaken to achieve the best possible outcome for parishioners, locality and environment.
Review outcome of key decisions.	Review consultation outcomes annually to highlight any failings in the process	This will enable identification of any changes and amendments required to the strategy.

### **Freedom of Information**

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this document will be posted on the Council website and copies will be available from the Parish Council.

Wentworth Parish Council is committed to improving its community engagement by:

Continuing all the above activities and services into the future and improving relationships with community groups, including developing measures to harness the views and opinions of people and groups who are often missed out of community engagement activities.

Wentworth Parish Council will be proactive and will be willing to consider any reasonable opportunities that support its purpose of making information available and increasing contributions from the community, especially those difficult to reach.

Publicising the positive results that have been achieved from working relationships between Council and other community groups; in order to encourage new relationships/partnerships to be formed and to raise community spirit.

**Adopted by Council May 2024**

**Review date May 2025**