

## Community Engagement Strategy - December 2010

### 1. Our aims and objectives:

1.1 We aim to create opportunities for all members of our community, representing all groups, to express their concerns about issues where the Council provides a service or can make a difference.

1.2 We aim to have a spectrum of means of communicating the work of the Council to all groups in our community.

1.3 The Parish Council only has limited responsibilities and powers to serve the local community. But it can encourage and guide local people, groups and organisations, to improve public services, to protect the environment, to develop new facilities, and to enhance our cultural and social life.

### 2. Our community:

2.1 The "Parish" is an area of about 20 square miles, stretching from Hurstpierpoint to Goddards Green and Sayers Common. It has a population of nearly 7000 living in about 2800 households.

2.2 There are a number of local voluntary groups, representing the very young, families, children and young people, the elderly, and special interests. We maintain a schedule of these groups and informally consult each of them as appropriate to the issue.

### 3. Information to the community

3.1 Our means of providing information to the community are:

- Parish Newsletter, published 4 times a year and distributed to every household
- Website
- Noticeboards
- Council's Annual report, published in paper form and made available from the Parish Office and the Library, and also placed on the website.

### 4. Opportunities for community involvement

4.1 Our Parish Plan survey in 2010 was issued to every household and to every special interest group. We posed a range of questions about the future of our parish and invited every household and group to submit their comments. These comments were then analysed and will be used to help shape our Parish Plan in 2011. We produced an earlier Plan in 2002, again following public consultation, and most of the proposals have been implemented.

4.2 We often raise questions in our quarterly Newsletter, inviting groups and individuals to make suggestions or comment on proposals. We are happy to receive comments by telephone, email, letter or personal caller the office.

### 5. Opportunities for formal representations to Council

5.1 The Council is always pleased to hear the views of groups or individual members of the public who wish to express their views on subjects where the Council has an interest.

5.2 The Council Meeting and the Planning & Environment Committee agendas always have an item for opening the meeting to the public in order for them to make comments.

5.3 The Council is always willing to receive requests from special interest groups who wish to present their proposals or concerns, and these presentations would be heard by either the full Council or one of the standing committees, depending on the subject. Interested groups should in the first instance, contact the Parish Office so that the most suitable arrangements can be made.

### 6. Involvement in partnerships

6.1 The Council is keen to work with local groups and organisations to improve the levels of service and to contribute to the social and cultural life of our community. Current examples include the annual Festival, the St Lawrence Fair, Christmas Lights, and environmental improvements to local woodland, flora and fauna.

6.2 The Council's involvement can be both financial, by making contributions, or practical, by providing professional and administrative guidance and support, or a combination of both.

6.3 Any groups who feel that they would benefit from partnership with the Council should initially contact the Parish Office or speak to a local Councillor, to explore the issues.

### 7. Role of council members and officers

7.1 The Council encourages its Members to listen to the community, both individuals and groups, and to stimulate ideas to enhance community life. Members are then encouraged to discuss ideas and projects

---

with the Officers (the Clerk, Deputy and Assistants) so that they can be brought to fruition. It is in the nature of public bodies, such as the local council, that they have to operate within strong legal, financial and compliance frameworks, which sometimes means that ideas take time to take root and grow. Despite these constraints the Council tries to be innovative and proactive in bringing the wishes of the community into action.

#### **8. Specific areas for community involvement**

8.1 The new Parish Plan is currently being produced and is due to be published later in 2011. It is expected that this will include a number of initiatives that have emerged as a result of our consultation in 2010.

Meanwhile, the Council is aware of particular areas where the views of the public and special interest groups will be of particular value, including: traffic congestion and parking in the High Street, Hurstpierpoint, traffic speeds in Sayers Common, the maintenance of rural footpaths close to both the villages of Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common.

Rev 16 December 2010

---