

## GRIMLEY PARISH COUNCIL - WORCESTERSHIRE

### Community Engagement Strategy

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Reviewed annually. Updated May 2024 to consider anonymous correspondence.

Contact Details Parish Clerk: Lisa Stevens, 01905 820956. clerkgrimleypc@gmail.com

#### 1. Introduction

1.1 A community engagement strategy guides us and our partners (including Malvern Hills District Council, Worcestershire County Council, our PCSOs, neighbouring parish councils and key community groups such as the Hall Committee) on how we engage with our communities, interested people and organisations in the services this parish council provides.

#### 2. Aims and Objectives

2.2 It's important for everyone to have the opportunity to get involved and have their say in local issues that affect or interest them. Grimley Parish Council is committed to engaging residents by encouraging them to become actively involved in decisions that affect them and the community, to delivering better services and to improving the quality of life of residents by creating a more active and informed community. Grimley Parish Council will do this by ensuring access to relevant information to allow them to contribute by an exchange of information to the decision-making process.

2.3 The aim of the Community Engagement Strategy is to:

- To work with all members of the community by keeping them informed of events within their locality,
- To improve the way in which the Council communicates with members of the community,
- To listen to the views of residents on important issues,

NB. Listen to the community. Lots of council communication is about 'broadcasting' information, but listening is also crucial. We will ask questions in person, on social media or via council newsletters. We will gather feedback through surveys that reach and engage different parts of the community. We will feed back what people said and explain what steps we're taking as a result. This will help us understand the community's needs and concerns and demonstrate that we are a council that listens.

- To use these views to deliver better services,
- To improve the long-term social, economic and environmental well-being of residents,
- To plan future development of the parish in accordance with community priorities and needs.
- To consider key audiences and key messages. What do you want the community to know and understand about the council? What are your council priorities, services and facilities and how can we communicate these effectively? Which audiences are you trying to communicate those messages to?

#### 3. Community Engagement

3.1 Grimley Parish Council and its partners will inform, consult and involve the community in many ways to influence local services. It will do this through various methods including:

- Agenda and minutes to be placed on the website and on notice boards.
- Calendar of Meetings via the website and noticeboards
- Annual Report and Accounts available at the Annual Meeting, website and summarised on notice boards.
- Any Surveys will be available, both electronic and paper based.
- Website. This parish council is currently in the process of setting up a new website. Our council website will be designed to provide easy access to information about council services, policies, and procedures. We know that providing access to information can help build trust in the community. We will signpost to the website through all our other communications channels, including social media.

### *3.1 Community engagement continued*

- Public Meetings.
- Encouraging more public participation at Parish Council meetings.
- Meeting with local representatives and groups.
- Having representatives on outside bodies and partner committees.
- Articles in Community Newsletters and Newspapers.
- General Information on social media including Facebook and Instagram.
- Presentations via Working Parties.

## **4. The Parish Council Clerk will**

- Assist Councillors who are delegated to develop and assess Questionnaires.
- Assist Councillors who are delegated to report back to Council.
- Assist in identifying hard-to-reach groups.
- Publish results as instructed by the parish council.
- Receive and store information in accordance with GDPR.
- Arrange visits as instructed by the parish council.
- Assist Councillors who are delegated to prepare presentations.
- Place notices in noticeboards.
- Update the website and Facebook account.

## **5. Opportunities for Community Involvement**

### **5.1 Meetings**

5.1.1 The Parish Council has an element for Public Participation. The bi-monthly council meetings are open to the public and time is set aside, for members of the parish to make comments or to ask questions. The Parish Council is also flexible to requests for Standing Orders to be put aside to allow urgent public input on a debate – subject to the discretion of the Chair.

5.1.2 An Annual Parish Council meeting is held between March and June each year giving residents the opportunity to have a say on local issues, find out what the parish council has been doing and residents are given the opportunity to share their opinions on the services delivered by the council.

5.1.3 Residents will continue to be encouraged to submit items which they wish to be brought to the attention of Councillors at the monthly meetings, or to give their opinion on a particular agenda item, to the Clerk.

### **5.2 Contact Your Councillors**

5.2.1 Make an appointment, make a phone call, write a letter, e-mail a message.

5.2.2 Contact your Councillor to:

- let them know what you think
- get advice or help or be signposted to authorities better placed (and legally permitted) to assist with a query.
- pass on a suggestion or good idea

### **5.3 Write or Sign a Petition**

5.3.1 A petition is a document that states a concern and asks that something be done to improve the situation. Members of the community sign the petition to show their support. Petitions are tabled in Full Council. They tell our Councillors how members of the public are feeling about an issue.

5.3.2 If you want to write a petition, decide whether the issue is a Parish, District or County Council issue. You will need to collect signatures and ask your Councillor to present the petition to the correct Full Council.

## **5.4 Partnership Working**

5.4.1 Grimley Parish Council is committed to working with local voluntary and community groups to improve the quality of life for residents in the parish. The Parish Council will work with Local Authorities (District, County and the Police) to ensure an improvement in the quality and delivery of services.

5.4.2 The Parish Council will work with residents, local groups and neighbouring parishes to find a solution to common problems – We have done this in 2024 in order to find a solution to defibrillator provision in the parish. Attending group AGMs is a significant part of this and Councillors will attend where able.

5.4.3 The Parish Council will continue to support and engage with local organisations to assist them in meeting their own aims and objectives. All members of the Parish Council will continue to support local projects and events, including those arranged by the Council.

5.4.5 For large or complex consultation programmes it may be necessary to form working parties – ideally consisting of Councillors and members of the public to organise the consultation programme.

## **6. Correspondence from electors and residents**

6.1 Correspondence from residents (**email or on paper**) must include a date and either an elector number on the current register of electors, or a full address and postcode. Correspondence without these requirements will be treated as anonymous and therefore will not require consideration by the parish council and will be destroyed. In these instances, the Clerk may record the correspondence as being received and may respond (by email or phone only if possible) to confirm this course of action – nb no postage will be spent replying to anonymous correspondence.

6.2 Communication received by **phone** cannot be verified as being from a resident/elector and so will be reported to the parish councillors/added to the next agenda and it will be the councillors' final decision as to whether to consider or not.

6.3 Communication received via **Social Media** is complex and ideally is treated as anonymous correspondence, however it is acknowledged that there is significant potential for using social media and that this can bring great advantages. As per the Press and Social Media Policy,

- **Councillors and the Clerk may initiate a social media news item** and keep residents updated with local issues and matters via social media, as long as they make it clear who they are in the profile of any account and whether they are an authorised representative of the Parish Council.
- **When commenting/responding online on any matter relating to the Parish Council**, Parish Councillors should obtain permission from the Clerk and Chair to respond on behalf of the parish council, identify themselves as a Parish Councillor (for instance in their profile) and make it clear whether or not they are representing the views of the Parish Council. They must not make anonymous posts nor use a pseudonym when making such comments so as to hide their identity. **It is important not to respond to 'pitch forking', which must be treated as anonymous correspondence. In extreme circumstances only the Clerk and Chair may respond to such items after consultation with full council via email.** The Clerk can add such items to the next agenda as they see fit and ask if Cllrs wish to discuss further.

## **7. Review**

7.1 This strategy reviewed annually to assess its effectiveness and amended as necessary.

7.2 Drafted by the Parish Clerk 1/03/2024 with the assistance of Worcs CALC and the Association of Clerks, including Carrington Parish Council and Thurmaston Parish Council.

## **Footnote:**

Clerk & RFO Mrs Lisa Stevens, 9 The Limes, Kempsey, Worcs, WR5 3LG. Tel: 01905 820956 Mob: 07950256363. Email: [clerkgrimleypc@gmail.com](mailto:clerkgrimleypc@gmail.com). <http://e-services.worcestershire.gov.uk/MyParish>

Footnote continued

Requests for this information in other languages/audio/large print will be reasonably considered.

Parish Logo shows the miniature 'gorse type' plant Petty Whin (*Genista anglica*). Found on our local SSSI Monkwood Green Common, it is a plant of acidic heaths and moors which has undergone serious decline over the past century.



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