

EAST PECKHAM PARISH COUNCIL **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STATEMENT**

The Council's aims and objectives for seeking community engagement and the outcomes it hopes to achieve are:

Aims:

- work more closely with residents, businesses and community groups;
- engage with as many people as possible who want to participate in decision making,
- monitoring services and planning for the future;
- ensure, that through the use of a wide range of approaches to public involvement and community engagement, we actively encourage the involvement of residents, to capture their views and learn their concerns and effectively use those views as an integral part of the decision-making process;
- ensure that residents have the opportunities to be heard at every stage, and the capacity to be effective citizens.

Objectives

This strategy is part of the Council's commitment to creating and maintaining effective working relationships with all sectors of the community, based on trust, openness and constructive challenge.

Outcomes of the strategy will include:

- Improved communication through the establishment of new channels of engagement;
- More residents understanding the role of Councillors and getting the best effect;
- Improved engagement with local communities, with more people feeling that they are involved in decision-making and a higher percentage of people involved in volunteering;
- Improved satisfaction with local public services.

Defining the Community

East Peckham is a rural parish. The principal authorities are Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Kent County Council. Its closest towns are Paddock Wood and Tonbridge. There are approximately 1,200 residential properties accommodating approximately 3,500 people of all ages. The community may be defined as consisting of:

- Residents of the Village
- Users of Parish Council Services
- Head Teacher and Governors of East Peckham Primary School
- Young people who live and/or go to school in the Village
- Retail and other and Businesses in the community
- Interest groups – clubs and societies e.g. Brownies, Scouts etc.
- Voluntary organisations
- Church Groups
- Farming Community
- Groups of people defined by a common factor such as age, disability, faith, and other groups
- Councillors and public service representatives including Council Staff.

Role of Council Members and Officers

The Parish is non-political with 11 Councillors who have various roles and responsibilities which are published in the Council's annual report. They can be contacted via the Parish Council office, the website or directly. Council members communicate with the public via their attendance at meetings as part of their work with relevant committees. Councillors each have a number of different roles that embrace a range of activities from the following: Allotments management; Churchyard maintenance, Finance; Footpaths; Highways; Liaison with other Parish Councils; Planning Development; Risk Assessment; Tree Wardens, acting as representatives on various bodies. These roles inevitably bring opportunity to discuss the work of the Council with residents and peers and encourage participation and feedback. There is one officer of the Council, who covers the entire spectrum of the Council work and is based in the Parish Council office in the Jubilee Hall which is open four mornings a week during term times for people to turn up without an appointment. Outside these times appointments can be made to visit the office and the Parish Clerk is frequently dealing with meetings or in contact via email, telephone and letters etc. The Parish Council employs two janitors, one litter

clearer and one grounds maintenance contractor who checks play equipment on a weekly basis. They frequently have direct contact with members of the public and naturally have to field questions and enquiries. Their ability to do this effectively and courteously is as important as any other element of the Council's work in the community and can give good feedback on the views of people on the services offered by the Council.

Provision of Information to the Community and Opportunities for Community Involvement

- The Parish Office is open to the public four mornings a week during term times and messages can be left 24/7 either by telephone or email. The telephone numbers and addresses of all the Councillors are published on notice boards, website, in the newsletters and in the Annual Report. It is recognised that members of the community may wish to engage with the Council at different levels - from the odd email or letter with a suggestion on how a service could be improved, to regular attendance at a Council meeting.
- The Parish Council website address is also widely published and the site contains all the information an individual might wish to know about the work of the Parish Council and its individuals, including meeting minutes, policy documents, financial statements, annual report and how to contact anyone associated with the Council.
- The Council issues a monthly newsletter which is available from the Library and Village Stores. The Council also issues an annual report which is delivered to every household in the parish. Both documents are also available on the council's website.
- Information is published on the Parish Council notice boards in the village centre.
- There is a public participation 'slot' at each council meeting.
- The council has prepared a Welcome Pack which is freely available in hard copy and on the website. The Welcome Pack contains information on the community and the Parish Council.
- The Council undertakes consultations by questionnaire, public meetings as appropriate, for specific issues. Active feedback is sought at all times and Councillors attend such events to "spread the word" on the role of the Council and encourage people to participate in local affairs with specific local issues being explored from time to time using the full range of communication techniques available. The Council is always considering practical ways of engaging with people and community groups.

Involvement with Partnerships

We are involved with the following groups and organisations: Kent Association of Local Councils, Action with Communities in Rural Kent, Village Tree Warden, Community Resilience, Parish Partnership Panel, Village Transport Representative, Crime Reduction Partnership, Twinning Association, Youth, CCTV, Jubilee Hall, Environmental Enhancements, Allotments, Skatepark, Library, CAMEO, Carers Support Group, Joint Parish Councils Transport Consultation Group, Village Planting, Voluntary warden for B2015 Branbridges Road Nature Reserve, East Peckham Business Forum, Borough Cllr. Liaison and Parking

In addition non parish councillors act on behalf of the Council as:
Village Historian, Allotment representatives and CCTV advisors

This Statement of Intent for Community Engagement was approved for issue at the Parish Council meeting held on 16 November 2015

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Signed
Karen Bell Clerk to East Peckham Parish Council.