



Donnington and Muxton Parish Council

Community Engagement Policy

1. Introduction

This Parish Council believes that all the people in its parish have the right to influence the future of service provision in their parish. It is vital to encourage active engagement of the people who use this Council's services, as well as with representative and community organisations and other partners in all sectors. Community engagement empowers citizens by providing them with an opportunity to tell the Council about their own vision for their communities and neighbourhoods, and about what they want and need in terms of service provision. It also enables them to work with the Council to realise their vision and improve their communities and thus, their quality of life. Engagement generally enables better planning and decision-making and together, by helping this Council improve the quality of its services, effective engagement will lead to improvements in communication and collaboration with partner organisations.

Engagement is also a mechanism for the Council to tell local people about what it does, what services it can and cannot provide, and how its priorities and policies are determined.

Donnington and Muxton Parish Council is committed to engaging with its residents, service users and other partner organisations. This Community Engagement Policy provides direction and guidance to the Council's elected members and officers in order to bring engagement into the heart of the Council's work and to ensure that engagement activities are of a consistently high standard.

2. What is community engagement?

Community engagement is a broad term used to describe the different ways we communicate, consult, involve and encourage participation from communities. It is about giving people the opportunity to get information, have a greater say and influence what happens in their community. It helps people play a more active role in decision making and delivering improvements for them, their neighbourhood and their town.

3. Why is community engagement important?

Community engagement is essential to improving services. It helps to unite local people and communities, builds citizenship and community pride. By talking to local people, the council can make sure that good quality services are delivered where they are most needed and tailored to local needs. Feedback is also important as this ensures that our services are meeting needs and improvements recognised.

Community engagement also breaks down barriers and negative views of organisations. The council will become more open and accessible when communities have a better understanding of how it works and take part in decision making at all levels. It needs to reach out to all of its diverse communities to ensure that the wide varieties of views are taken.

4. The Policy and its objectives

The Parish Council's Policy is to make community engagement a priority that is mainstreamed into the work of the Council. The overarching aim of the Community Engagement Policy is to ensure that residents, workers and other partner organisations have a voice to influence the development of policies and strategies that will affect their lives, and to inform the way in which services in the parish are planned and delivered. The Policy's objectives are:

- To ensure that throughout the Council there is a clear understanding of, and commitment to, engaging with communities about decisions that affect their lives.
- To establish a co-ordinated and consistent approach to community engagement.
- To ensure that community engagement is inclusive by giving every citizen the opportunity to express their views, particularly people and groups which may be harder to reach and that those views will be listened to and respected.
- To keep its community informed of the outcomes of engagement.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of community engagement activities and seek continuous improvement.

5. How this will be achieved

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

5.1 Communication

Communication with residents within the parish will be achieved in many ways to ensure all sections of the community are reached.

- A quarterly newsletter will be published on www.donningtonmuxtonpc.org and displayed on notice boards around the parish. Copies are available from the Parish Council office, Donnington library, Lifelong Learning Centre and St John's Church, Muxton informing residents on parish matters.
- The Parish Council's website www.donningtonmuxtonpc.org will display information relating to activities and events occurring within the parish and Borough of Telford & Wrekin Council and information regarding the Council's Finances and Parish Councillors. Dates of Council meetings, agendas advertised as required under the Local Government Act 1972, along with minutes from meetings are included.
- Meetings of the Council and its standing committees are open to the public and each Council meeting includes an opportunity for members of the parish to engage with Councillors.
- The Parish Council also informs residents of activities and events through its Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Website pages. Residents are able to communicate with the Council by submitting posts and comments through this media.
- Councillors are an important source of two-way communications between the Council, its residents and higher-tier authorities. Members of the Council will continue to inform the residents of the Council's vision, priorities and aspirations. In turn these members will be receiving valuable feedback from the residents that will assist in shaping the vision and priorities.
- The Parish Council office is open to members of the public Monday to Friday who can drop in or make appointments to see the Clerk or Councillors and discuss any issues they may have or report issues such as street lights not working, pot holes, unemptied bins etc.
- The Parish Council will endeavour to inform its residents of activities and events through the local newspapers (Shropshire Star and Telford Journal) whenever possible.

5.2 Consultation

Consulting all residents on important issues are key to this policy. It will ensure those most affected are able to put forward an opinion and given an opportunity to make a difference. The Parish Council will usually undertake a consultation process by post, targeting affected areas, parish ward areas or the whole of the parish depending on the response required. It will endeavour to ensure that hard to reach groups such as youths, the elderly, the housebound, the disabled, ethnic minorities etc, are included and recognise that it may require the establishment of different engagement channels.

5.3 Partnership Working

The Parish Council works closely with partner organisations to address the needs of the local community. It does this by being an active member of the Donnington Partnership, participating in Community Engagement Meetings and working lunches. Supporting and engaging with local organisations will help assist all partner organisations meet their own aims and objectives. Acting together with residents and partners in finding solutions to local problems will ensure they will be accepted and fit for purpose.

6. Review of Policy

Three yearly reviews of the consultation processes will be used as a continual improvement process for changes or amendments to the policy.