

BURWELL PARISH COUNCIL

STATEMENT OF INTENT AS TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

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

AIMS

- Work more closely with residents, businesses and community groups
- Engage with as many people as possible who wish to participate in decision making, monitoring services and planning for the future
- Ensure that as a council, through the use of a wide and varied range of approaches to public involvement and community engagement, we actively encourage involvement by residents, to capture their views and learn of their concerns and use these effectively as an integral part of the decision making process.
- Ensure that residents have the opportunity 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 having a greater understanding of the role of councillor and getting the best effect
- Improved engagement with local communities, with a great number of residents feeling that they are involved in decision making and a higher percentage of people becoming involved in volunteering
- Improved satisfaction with public services

DEFINING THE COMMUNITY

Burwell is a rural parish with approximately 6200 residents (as at 2012) situated on the edge of the fens. The principle authorities are East Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council. There has been significant development in the last twenty years mainly domestic but some commercial. The community may be defined as consisting of :

- Residents of the village
- Users of parish council services
- Village hall users
- Head teacher and governors of Burwell Village College (Primary)
- Young people who live and/or go to school in the village
- Retail and other businesses within the community
- Interest groups, clubs and societies i.e. Brownies, Scouts etc
- Voluntary organisations
- Church groups
- The 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.

THE ROLE OF COUNCIL MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

The parish council is non-political with 17 Councillors identified within the community, via the Council web site and village publications, for their roles and responsibilities, which are also detailed and published in the council's Annual Report. Council members communicate with the public via their attendance at meetings as part of their work with relevant committees, working groups etc. Councillors each have a number of different roles that embrace a wide range of activities from the following;

- Planning
- Allotment Gardens
- Finance
- Management and maintenance of recreational ground and burial grounds
- Management and maintenance of parish properties
- Maintenance of footpaths and bridleways in partnership with the County Council
- Management the cutting of grass verges within the parish in partnership with the County Council
- Provision and maintenance of public seats, bus shelters etc
- Provision of grants to other bodies such as youth services and community transport

These roles inevitably bring the opportunity to discuss the work of the council with residents and peers and encourage participation and feedback. The Council employs two officers a clerk /responsible finance officer and an assistant clerk, who between them cover all areas of the councils work. The officers are based in the Council Office at The Jubilee Reading Room, 99 The Causeway, CB25 0DU. The office is open Tuesday to Friday mornings from 10.00am 12 noon subject to staff holidays and the public are welcome to visit without an appointment during normal office hours. The clerk can also be contacted via e-mail, telephone or letter. The Parish Council also employs one handy man and two key holder/caretakers and external contractors all of whom have 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 all other elements of the Council's work within the community and is a way of receiving feedback on the public's views of 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 Tuesday to Friday mornings from 10.00am – 12 noon subject to staff holidays and messages can be left at any time either by telephone or e-mail.
- The contact details for all Councillors are published on the notice board outside of the office and in the Annual Report. It is recognised that members of the community may wish to engage with the Council at varying levels – from an occasional letter or e-mail to regular attendance at Council meetings.
- The Parish Council website address is also widely published and linked to the village web site. The site contains all the information that an individual might wish to know about the work of the Parish Council and its staff and members, including minutes of meetings, policy documents, financial statements, the Annual Report and how to contact anyone associated with the Council.
- The Council submits articles to the community magazine 'Clunch' which is published bi-monthly and delivered free to every household.
- There are 5 village notice boards which are used to publicise relevant information such as meeting notices.
- The Parish Council has a stand at 'Burwell at Large' periodically, where there is a chance to showcase the work of the Council over the year and talk to parishioners in general regarding any topic which may be giving them concern as well as listen to any ideas they might have for the future.
- At the beginning of each meeting of full Council there is a period of 15 minutes set aside for a public forum.
- An Annual Report is compiled each year and delivered to every household in the parish. A copy of the report is also included in the 'Welcome Packs'.

- 'Welcome Packs' are given to new residents of the village. These contain information on the community as a whole as well as the Parish Council.
- The Parish Council undertakes consultation with the community on specific issues normally by questionnaires or if appropriate at a public meeting
- The Parish Council hosts the Annual Parish Meeting when all residents and organisations are able to attend and discuss village matters and concerns with members of the Parish Council.

Active feedback is sought at all times and Councillors are encouraged to attend village events to promote the work of the Council and the role of Councillors in the community, and to encourage public participation in local affairs with specific issue being explored on occasion using the full range of communication techniques available. The Parish Council is constantly reviewing ways of engaging with the public and community groups, and have with varying degrees of success, issued questionnaires to the village on issues such as the possibility of a youth shelter for the village and where it should be sited, the introduction of a regular bus run to Ely on a market day in conjunction with Dial-a-Ride, re-introduction of a Christmas tree and lights in the centre of the village.

Involvement with Partnerships

The Council has a representative(s) or observers on the following bodies:-

- Burwell and District Day Centre
- Wicken Fen
- Burwell Museum
- Burwell Sports Centre
- Burwell Sports Federation
- Burwell Twinning Association
- Pauline's Swamp
- Burwell Community Lunch
- Burwell Community Forum
- Burwell Print Centre
- Burwell Allotment and garden Society
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Speed Watch