



GT BARTON PARISH COUNCIL STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

**Engagement with the community is at the heart of everything which the
Parish Council does.**

(A) Aims and Examples of How We Try To Fulfil Them

1. Gt Barton Parish Council strongly believes that members of the community should be involved in decisions affecting them and their neighbourhood and in shaping the future of their Parish. It recognizes that the services it provides must reflect the needs of its parishioners and the locality. The Council aims to build on this through community engagement.

- The Council will use a variety of methods to seek the involvement and views of interested parties including – public meetings with interested parties, site visits and personal meetings; special edition newsletters; drop-in events; visits to schools and other groups; creation of working parties & working with specialist groups (e.g. Youth group).
- The Council will endeavour to engage with all interested parties when major issues are considered, examples of the areas where the Council will involve the communities are: St Edmundsbury Vision 2031 plan; development of the triangle of land bordered by the A143, School Road and Mill Road; major planning applications; introduction of items which increase the precept by more than 10% ; construction of a village design statement.
- Residents are encouraged to stand for election or co-option by notices on the noticeboards and the web-site, articles in the Newsletter and word of mouth.
- When planning applications are under consideration, the applicant and all neighbours of the property are contacted beforehand by letter to advise when the Planning Committee will be meeting and inviting them to attend the meeting. A site visit is also offered.
- Questionnaires are distributed and consultation meetings are held whenever appropriate e.g. Parish Plan, housing needs survey, provision of allotments and provision of affordable housing.
- Resident's views are heard and taken into account to develop, enhance and improve services; the environment and the quality of life for residents.

- The Clerk to the Council will be responsible for the co-ordination of any engagement activities, maintaining links with interested parties and implementing agreed actions. The clerk can be contacted in a variety of ways: In person, in writing (at 6 Garden Close, Gt Barton) by telephone (on 01284 787777) or by email harley.parish@btinternet.com

2. To ensure that members of the community know how they can contact councillors and that they feel comfortable doing so. By having a base in their communities Councillors are accessible and will get to know which issues affect people. Councillors will develop an understanding of the needs and hopes of local people through engaging with them and providing representations.

- Contact details for councillors and clerk are available on the web-site and in the newsletter.
- Councillors are well-known in the parish and always willing to discuss residents' concerns personally or by phone or email.

3. The Parish Council believes in transparency and wants to ensure that members of the community know what it is doing on their behalf.

- The Council's quarterly newsletter is distributed to all households in the Parish and is also available on the Parish Website and from the Village Hall.
- Minutes of all meetings are posted on the web-site www.greatbarton.suffolk.cloud (once they have been approved by the Council).
- Press release from the meeting is published by the Bury Free Press.
- The main documents, which reflect decisions made, are published and readily available for the public to view.
- The Council has adopted a Freedom of Information policy and information is available to view by appointment or via newsletters, the website and notice boards.
- Chairman's annual report is given verbally at Annual Parish Meeting and delivered to each household in writing (through the newsletter).
- Financial information, including the current annual budget and the annual returns are published.

4. To ensure that members of the community know how they can influence the decisions of the Parish Council in a democratic manner.

- Notices of meetings include an invitation to the 2 x 10 minute public participation sessions held at the beginning and end of each Parish Council meeting. Public are welcomed by the Chairman and invited to contribute.
- Procedures always explained to members of the public who attend meetings.
- Information as appropriate is put in the newsletter and on the web-site.

5. To ensure that, when appropriate, the wishes of the community are passed on to other authorities and agencies.

- Clerk in regular contact with West Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Association of Local Councils.
- County Councillor and Borough Councillors attend Parish Council meetings and give a monthly report.
- Clerk acts on decisions of Parish Council meetings.
- Parish Council represented on outside bodies such as Village Hall committee, Emergency Planning Group.

B. How Are We Doing?

Healthy Signs are:

- There are enough candidates to fill the seats at election time.
- There is always more than one person interested when it is necessary to co-opt a councillor following a mid-term resignation.
- Attendance of councillors at meetings is very good.
- Attendance of members of the public at meetings is good: applicants and neighbours often attend, in connection with their planning applications; members of the public attend when controversial items are on the agenda.
- All councillors and the clerk get frequent phone calls and emails from residents and deal with them promptly.
- Website analytic information shows an upward trend for views of the website.
- Thanks are given by residents, to Councillors and the Clerk for their efforts.
- A Welcome Pack has been produced for all new residents of the parish and is delivered to them personally.

Not so good:

- Despite wide publicity, attendance at Annual Parish meetings averages only about 25.
- There is scope for the web-site to contain more parish information and be more user friendly.

C. How Can We Do Better?

- Ways need to be found to increase attendance at the Annual Parish Meeting.
- The web-site will be developed further: to help with this a web-site expert has given 1 to 1 help and training to the Clerk and a Councillor, who will work on the website for presentation to the village at the Annual Parish Meeting.
- Collect email addresses of as many residents as possible to make communication more efficient.

Reviewed May 2021.....Next review due May 2022