Henfield Parish Council

Community Engagement and Communications Policy

**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

Henfield Parish Council aims to ensure that through the use of a wide range of approaches to public consultation and community engagement, it actively encourages residents to inform its decision-making process and make an input into decisions which affect their day to day lives in the parish.

Henfield Parish Council is committed to creating and maintaining effective working relationships with all sectors of the community. The Council recognises that there are different levels of engagement and will endeavour to involve the community in the following ways:

* Inform people about its work and the services it provides
* Consult with and seek out the views of the community
* Encourage community participation in local government
* Collaborate with individuals, community groups and organisations where appropriate, to achieve agreed aims for the benefit of the parish
* Build up effective working relationships within the community and encourage a sense of ownership of assets, infrastructure and new projects.

 **THE COMMUNITY**

Henfield Parish Council seeks to engage with all sections of the community regardless of age, ability, gender, ethnicity, faith or sexual orientation i.e. parishioners (particularly hard to reach groups such as the young, disenfranchised, disaffected and the elderly), the local business community, clubs, organisations and societies which are active in the town, its partners such as Horsham District Council and West Sussex County, the neighbourhood policing team and all organisations and individuals who attend various committees and groups. The Parish Council is also committed to engaging with any persons who appear to it to have an interest in matters relating to the economic, social and environmental well-being of its area.

 **PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO THE COMMUNITY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Henfield Parish Council recognises that members of the community may wish to engage with it at different levels and in a variety of ways, from the occasional email or letter with a suggestion on how a service could be improved, to attendance at meetings etc. The Council will therefore use many ways to actively seek the views of its residents and involve them in its work:

* The Parish Council website is a resource which publishes information about the Council, including agendas, minutes and other documents. It is also a source of information about the local community. Enquirers are invited to contact the Parish Council via the website, or email office@henfield.gov.uk
* Direct Access: The Parish Council will display a list of Councillors (contact details together with other important information on its website. This medium will also be used to directly advertise other important events e.g. notices relating to the annual audit of accounts; vacancies, elections and forthcoming meetings etc
* Meetings: Notice of all Council meetings is given on the parish notice boards and on the website. Residents are encouraged to attend Council Meetings and time is set aside at all meetings for public participation. Parishioners are also actively encouraged to attend the Annual Parish Meeting, which is advertised as above.
* Surveys: Henfield Parish Council will undertake surveys and other related forms of information gathering from time to time to ascertain the community’s views on particular issues.
* Specific Projects: From time to time Henfield Parish Council may undertake specific projects for the benefit of the community. Working Groups may be set up and parishioners are encouraged to participate and involve in these projects.

 **OPPORTUNITIES FOR FORMAL REPRESENTATIONS TO THE COUNCIL**

Representations to Henfield Parish Council will normally be considered at the next meeting of the council. If, however, they require the provision of information only, then the clerk will provide it directly to the enquirer. The Parish Council has a Complaints Policy which is available from the Clerk, published on the website and reviewed regularly. The publication of agendas on the Parish Council’s notice boards and website gives parishioners the opportunity to make representation to the council before agenda items are discussed. All formal representations received are responded to in writing.

 **INVOLVEMENT IN PARTNERSHIPS**

Henfield Parish Council is committed to partnership working where it is clear that it will be of benefit to the parish or to fulfil its statutory requirements. For example the Council supports Henfield Community Partnership and Community Speedwatch.

**ROLE OF COUNCIL MEMBERS AND OFFICERS IN CONSULTATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Councillors are powerful advocates for their community and their leadership role enables them to have a major input into the consultation and engagement process.
Henfield Parish Councillors are very accessible:

• Their contact details are published the website.
• They are available to talk to residents during the Open Forum section of Council meetings and at the Annual Parish Meeting.
• In a private capacity, they belong to many other local clubs, societies and organisations, where they may, if they so wish promote the work of the Parish Council and be available to parishioners.

Officers of the Council will endeavour to answer and address any concerns or queries raised by members of the public. They will also support and guide residents through the appropriate procedures for engaging with the council and councillors.

**IN PRACTICE**

Henfield Parish Council will regularly promote information and news via

* HPC website
* Social Media (see appendix A)

They will also continue to promote Henfield Parish Council via existing channels

* Noticeboards
* Printed leaflets if appropriate
* BN5 & Parish Magazine

They will seek to be inclusive, ensuring that content relevant to all residents. There may occasionally be a special focus, such as on youth communication

**OUTCOMES**

* Promote and build a positive environment and a strong, supportive community

 This will be measured by a greater level of public feedback

* Create advocates for the Parish Council and what it does in the community.

 This will be measured by increased engagement and attendance at events and meetings.

* Encourage members of the community to become more involved in supporting Parish Council aims and projects.

 This will be measured by increased levels of volunteering & candidates for Parish Council

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| **Actions** | **Owner** | **Due date/**  | **Status** |
| Create an Editorial Board to meet quarterly to discuss • Review of past communications• Feedback • New ideas and improvement• Housekeeping | Clerk and Chairman | January 2021 |  |
| Conduct an annual parish council survey via social media to complement the Annual Parish Meeting | Chairman and Operations Manager | March 2021 |  |
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**Appendix A**

**HPC Social Media Operational Guidelines**

**Primary Aims**

* Promote work of Henfield Parish Council
* Engage with community

 **Criteria**

**Parish Posts**

* Parish News
* Date of meeting or events
* Monthly Newsletter
* WSCC advance road closures
* Posts seeking comment of either Parish Council matters/ surveys or matters that Parish Council can directly influence
* Photos with approval of originator

**Non-Parish Council Posts or Share e.g. HCP, Clubs, Haven etc.**

 •     Items on joint HPC/others projects

 •     Significant good news items affecting the whole village

**Not to Post**

* Individual messages or personal information
* Photos without originator permission
* Groups not directly associated with the parish
* Business posts unless specifically agreed
* Sponsorship or approval for non-Parish Council campaign/ petitions
* Issues likely to produce “rants” or extreme comments
* Negative views of village
* Posts from or by individual Councillors

**Moderating Social Media Pages**

* Hide from Timeline unsuitable messages – racist, sexist, bad language etc.
* Block repeat offenders

**Document Control**

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| New version approved | July 2024 |
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