

Community Engagement Policy and Action Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

Westfield Parish Council's Community Engagement Policy aims to outline the means of engagement with its residents and partners and how these might develop and improve over time.

In so doing it recognises that the services it provides must reflect the needs of its parishioners and the locality.

Westfield Parish Council strongly believes that its residents should be involved in decisions affecting them and their neighbourhood and in shaping the future of their Parish.

2. ENGAGEMENT WITH RESIDENTS AND PARTNERS

The Parish Council engages with its residents and partners by:

- informing, consulting and involving
- being inclusive and engaging with all of its residents and partners
- ensuring views are listened to and used to develop, enhance and improve services, the environment and the quality of life of those who live and work in Westfield.

3. OBJECTIVES

- To improve, plan and shape the future of the Parish according to local needs and priorities
- To improve the quality and delivery of services
- To use engagement to ensure decisions are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the Parish
- To be a stronger, more active and cohesive Parish

4. HOW THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED

Communication

Communicating with members of the parish will be achieved in a variety of ways to ensure all sections of the community are reached.

The Westfield Warbler, which is delivered to every house and business in Westfield. It updates local people on Parish events, invites involvement in its activities and is a vehicle for consultation when required.

The Parish website has a wealth of local information and is updated on a weekly basis. The home page consists of latest news and information to keep the site interesting. In 2020 the site was rejuvenated in compliance with Accessibility standards.

Press releases to the local press take place regularly, highlighting items which benefit from being communicated immediately.

Social media has increased in recent years and in 2020 we trialled boosting posts and using videos to increase viewings. We post regularly on Facebook and in 2023 we opened an Instagram page to post photos showing how visually stunning Westfield can be. We have created two new hashtags – On Facebook #Respect Westfield and on Instagram #Wake up to Westfield

Meetings of the Council and its Committees are open to the public and include an opportunity for members of the Parish to engage with councillors.

Forming Focus Groups – In 2022 we formed a Waterside Valley Focus Group of people with specific knowledge and enthusiasm for this land. Their specific input helped shape the Waterside Valley Management Plan.

Being part of wider Groups – We work closely with Somer Valley Rediscovered to share expertise and knowledge on public open spaces.

Consultation

Consulting Parishioners on key issues is vital. It ensures those most affected are able to put forward an opinion and are given an opportunity to make a difference.

Ensuring consultations include all members of the Parish by identifying the hard-to-reach groups such as youths, the elderly, the housebound, the disabled, ethnic minorities etc. may require establishing different engagement channels. Developing strong links with schools and other agencies to help with consultations is important.

Support

Supporting local organisations and engaging with them will assist them in meeting their own aims and objectives. The Parish Council's grant policy is an excellent means of understanding the needs and aspirations of local groups.

Supporting local projects and participating in local events will raise the awareness of the Council and its aims and objectives. 2023 saw a well-attended Coronation Celebration at Westhill Recreation Ground hosted by the Parish Council.

We have also arranged community bulb planting events.

Working with the community

Working with residents and partners in finding solutions to local problems will ensure that outcomes will be accepted and fit for purpose.

Working together to carry out agreed action plans, will engage the community in working with the Council to enhance the environment and the quality of their lives. The Neighbourhood Plan is an important part of this process and in 2023 came under Review, having been five years since it was agreed by referendum.

5. MEASURING SUCCESS

Success will be measured via the Action Plan by the Environment and Development Committee. The success of individual consultations will also be measured by the Committee to highlight any areas for improvements.

6. STRATEGY REVIEW

The Community Engagement Policy will be reviewed annually.

Review History	To be reviewed annually
First draft to Finance and Personnel Committee	18/3/15
Agreed by Parish Council	7/4/15
Agreed by E&D	9/5/16
Reviewed by E&D with one addition	12/6/17
Agreed by Parish Council	3 rd June 2019
Reviewed by E&D	11/5/21
To Parish Council	7/6/21
To E&D	15/11/22
To Parish Council	5/12/22
To E&D	14/11/23
To Parish Council	4/12/23
Next review	December 2024

7. **ACTION PLAN**

ACTION PLAN		
Activity	Action	Review details
To review the Grant making policy annually to ensure it is still relevant and funds are being spread across all aspects of Parish life.	To gather feedback on the grants made the previous year and annually review the grant making criteria to keep it relevant.	Reviewed annually by the Finance and Personnel Committee.
To raise the profile of the Parish Council at events such as the Christmas Lights Switch On Event, Annual Parish Meeting.	To continue to take part in these events.	For review by the E&D Committee as required.
To engage with residents on the maintenance of land at Waterside Valley, once the purchase is complete	To continue to work with groups such as Somer Valley Rediscovered, Active Way, EcoWild and CPRE to promote voluntary work on site	For review by the E&D Committee as required.
Front Garden competition	To run the Front Garden competition annually.	To be reviewed via the E&D Committee annually.
Inspirational Citizen Award	To run the Inspirational Citizen Award annually	To be reviewed Parish Council annually.
Christmas Lights Decorations competition	To run the Christmas Lights competition annually	To be reviewed via the E&D Committee annually.
Neighbourhood Plan Review 2023	To continue to work on the five yearly review of the Neighbourhood Plan.	On-going reporting to E&D.
National celebrations and commemorations	To take part in national events such as D-Day Anniversary and Remembrance Day	For review by E&D as required
Community planting	As required, to set up community planting events eg bulb planting	For review by E&D as required