

ALBRIGHTON PARISH COUNCIL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Albrighton Parish Council has developed this document as a means of exploring how it can improve its engagement with residents and the community. It is intended to provide a framework of best practice; to draw together activities and practices which have been developed over the years to produce a closer working relationship with the community it represents. The Council recognises that engagement is a two-way process between itself and its residents.

Albrighton Parish Council represents a rapidly growing population as a result of on-going development which has seen the population grow by around 25% since 2010.

The Parish of Albrighton is rural with a train and bus service to neighbouring large towns. The Parish benefits from a number of shops, public houses, dentists, a community centre, playing fields, churches, medical practices, nurseries and three primary schools. Much of the Parish has access to good broadband services.

However, Albrighton, like many communities is ever changing, which will be further influenced by new developments.

As a result, this document is not intended to become a static document but one which will evolve over time reflecting the changes in the community of Albrighton. It is therefore essential that this strategy is subject to review and change at regular intervals.

Aims – Inform, Consult & involve

The aim of Albrighton Parish Council's Engagement Strategy is to continuously improve the way in which the Parish Council engages and consults with the community and key partners.

To this end all residents should be: -

Informed of the council's activities and projects

Consulted on council's activities and projects

Have the opportunity to be involved in the Council's activities and projects

This will result in the views/opinions of the community becoming an integral part of the Parish Council's decision-making process, improve the services provided by the Council and ensure the Council better reflects the community it represents.

Objective

Use consultation to improve the services the Council delivers, to ensure these services reflect the community's needs and aspirations.

ALBRIGHTON PARISH COUNCIL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Strategy – Communication & Consultation

Albrighton Parish Council will achieve its objective through the following means: -

1) Communication

The Parish Council recognises the need to use different methods of communication to reach all sections of the community, and each method used will include details of how the public can contact the Council.

Notice Boards – Information about meetings, agendas and minutes will be provided on the Parish Council Notice Board in the High Street and at the Library. Notices about meetings will also be placed on the village notice board.

Newsletters - The Parish Council is committed to contributing to Parish Magazine which is distributed to many houses in the Parish. Articles will include information about the activities of the Parish Council as well as contact details for the Clerk, Chairman, Vice Chairman and Parish Councillors.

Annual Report – The Council is committed to producing an Annual Report which includes a range of information about the Parish Council and will be distributed free, it is also available on the website and the Parish Council Facebook page.

Website – www.Albrightonparishcouncil.gov.uk – The Website will be used to provide information about the Council's activities including meeting agendas and minutes as well as information about other organisations in the area and all planning applications. The website also offers residents the opportunity to feed in their views directly to the Council using the webchat facility included on the website.

Facebook – The Council will submit information to be published on the Albrighton Facebook page as a recognised forum for public comment and debate. Facebook will provide a more informal avenue for the Parish Council to communicate with residents and to target its reach to a younger demographic, the use of both comments and the messenger facility with Facebook is encouraged.

Meetings – The Council's meetings will be advertised on the Council's notice board. Meetings are open to the public and include an opportunity for the public to speak as part of the meeting. The Parish Council also advertises its meetings on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Working Groups – The Parish Council will invite interested members of the community to join its working groups where appropriate.

Councillors – The Councillors are well known members of the community and are easily accessible for those residents who wish to contact them. Many are also members of other organisations within the community including the Albrighton Village Halls Trust, Albrighton Civic Society and the Melville Club. This provides a valuable opportunity for Councillors to learn about the needs and aspirations of the area as well as to tell residents what the Council is doing.

ALBRIGHTON PARISH COUNCIL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

2) Consultation

Albrighton Parish Council will consult residents, both formally and informally, at every opportunity when making important decisions.

It is also open to receiving representations from members of the public, through telephone calls and emails to the Clerk and individual Councillors, also through social media using messenger, webchat and Facebook chat, ensuring that all ages and demographics are targeted have the opportunity to voice their opinions and are listened to.

The Parish Council will also seek to consult with all sections of the community including the traditionally hard to reach sections of the community.

Parish Council Meetings - Parish Councillors will take into consideration matters raised by residents during the Public Forum part of its Parish Council meetings. Residents are encouraged to ask questions during the public session. Meetings and the agenda are advertised on the Parish Council Notice board, the Parish Council website, Facebook account and also Twitter and Instagram

In line with the Parish Council's Planning Standing Orders all planning applications will be considered at a meeting of the Parish Council (scheduled or extraordinary) where public participation will be extended to allow time for residents to comment.

Questionnaires - The Parish Council will seek the views of the residents on significant changes or improvements in the village through the use of questionnaires and outreach meetings. Depending on the subject of the consultation, Councillors may have such questionnaires delivered to each household, made available in the village shops and other community buildings, the library, the Albrighton Flyer (the Parish run community bus) and/or run a consultation event at the Community Centre and/or the Albrighton Fayre.

Surveys, focus groups

The Parish Council will seek views from hard to reach groups using traditional paper surveys and also the online 'survey monkey' tool in its endeavours to reach some of the less engaged residents. The Parish Council will endeavour to reach groups through partners. The Parish Council will ensure that the 'holiday hunger' program will include feedback from all users, this will provide opportunities for families to have a voice, many of whom would not traditionally engage with the Parish Council on a 'day to day' basis.

Partnership Working

To achieve the council's objectives, it is essential for the Parish Council/Councillors to support other groups, organisations and individuals within the community to achieve their aspirations.

It is also important that the Council works with other authorities providing services within the area including the principle authority, Shropshire Council and the Police.

The Parish Council will endeavour to take part in consultation exercises undertaken by the authorities and other bodies that provide services to its residents.

Managing Expectation

The Parish Council is aware that increased communications with residents has resulted in an increased workload for the Parish Clerk and it is therefore important to manage both the increased work load and resident's expectations.

ALBRIGHTON PARISH COUNCIL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Council Response Times

The Parish Council will respond to all communications whether by telephone, email, postal letter or digital media within 10 working days of receipt of the communication with the requested information or with information regarding actions being taken where appropriate.

Measuring Success of the Strategy

For the strategy to be effective it must be reviewed in terms of appropriateness and relevance to the changing community in Albrighton but also in terms of how effective it has been.

This can be achieved through monitoring a number of different aspects of the Council's activities: -

- Responses to council consultations
- Residents contact with clerk and councillors
- Residents attendance to council meetings

Review of Strategy

The success of the strategy will be reviewed annually.