

## MELBOURN PARISH COUNCIL Community Engagement Policy

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Melbourn Parish Council's Community Engagement Policy outlines the means of engagement with its residents and partners (for example, neighbouring Parish Councils) and how these might develop and improve over time.

It recognises that the services it provides must reflect the needs of its parishioners and the locality. Residents, local businesses and other organisations in the Parish must 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; and
- 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 Melbourn.

### 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

**“The right information at the right time by the right method”**

#### **Communication**

##### **Delivering information**

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

**Melbourn Village Magazine**, which is delivered to every house and business in Melbourn. It updates local people on Parish events and invites involvement in its activities. Both the Clerk and Chairman of the Council contribute regular articles.

**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.

**Press releases to the local press** are issued, highlighting items which benefit from being communicated immediately.

**Meetings** of the Council and its Committees are open to the public. Agendas and minutes are published on the website and on the Parish Notice Board.

Since 10 October 2016, a sound recording of the full Parish Council meetings has been put onto the website so people no longer have to attend a meeting to hear the discussion.

***Delivering information can be improved through:***

- More attention to the timeliness of communications. MM is only published quarterly so there may need to be more emphasis on Press Releases.
- Introducing a regular 2-page Newsletter to report on live issues and give advance notification of Council discussions which might be of wide interest.
- Publishing the supporting information at the same time as the agenda.
- Collecting information on the number of hits on the website over a defined period to gauge its effectiveness as a delivery vehicle.
- Using communication at points where it is likely to be noticed by the maximum number of people eg notices in the Hub, the Co-op and Post Office.

**Inviting Participation**

The articles in Melbourn Magazine may invite participation. There is no information on the efficacy of this route.

Parish Council and committee meetings include an opportunity for members of the Parish to engage with councillors. A change has already been made to the arrangements for public participation in Council meetings. The effectiveness of the change will be reviewed at the end of the Civic Year..

***Participation can be improved by:***

- Promoting the Annual Parish Meeting through notices in the Hub, the Co-op and Post Office. Consideration should be given to offering an inducement to attend eg refreshments and having a general Q&A session about anything parishioners want to raise. The Council may wish to use this meeting for the Parish Awards.
- Inviting to the public to submit questions/comments by e-mail if they are unable to attend the Council meeting.
- Having a more direct method of communication and one that will reach people who do not look at the website or Notice Board eg Facebook.

***Understanding of the Parish Council's work can be improved by:***

- Extending the range of information available on the website and positively promoting it as a source of information to answer questions.
- Pulling together information about the Council's work into an easy to read guide.

**Consultation**

Consulting Parishioners on key issues is vital. It ensures those most affected are able to put forward an opinion and given an opportunity to make a difference. For 'big' issues, the Council has used direct means of consultation to ensure all members of the community are informed about the issue and invited to contribute their opinion.

Consultations include all members of the Parish for example, the hard to reach groups such as youths, the elderly, the housebound, the disabled, ethnic minorities etc. However, to date the same communication methods have been used for all and in practice, these special groups may require different engagement channels.

***Consultation can be improved by:***

- Developing strong links with schools and other local groups to help with consultations.

**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.

***Publicising the PC's role can be improved by:***

- Ensuring that the groups which receive funding acknowledge the PC's role.

**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 consultations carried out by the Melbourn Futures Committee and for the Neighbourhood Plan have laid the groundwork for consulting the community in innovative ways as well as by questionnaire.

Public participation in Working Parties has begun, and will be continued.

**5. MEASURING SUCCESS**

The success of individual consultations will be measured by the appropriate Committee to highlight any areas for improvements.

The PC should ask for feedback on its communication strategies at the Annual Parish Meeting in 2017.

**6. STRATEGY REVIEW**

The Community Engagement Strategy will be reviewed annually.

Cllr Julie Norman: 

Chair

Date: 23 October 2017

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Parish Clerk	<b>Date effective from 23 October 2017</b>	
<b>Author</b>	Parish clerk	<b>Date last amended 14 November2016</b>	<b>Review Date: October 2018</b>