

Statement of Intent for Community Engagement .



Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council.

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Aims and Objectives:

Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council is committed to high standards of engagement with its community. The Council is a tier of local government which belongs to, is part of and is directly accountable to its local community. Councillors play an important role because they are elected to make decisions on matters affecting Aldington and Bonnington Parishes. The Council aims to make a measurable difference to the quality of life on the community it serves and to be responsive to the needs of the community. This statement sets out how the Council ensures the community is kept informed about, and can contribute to, the Council's activities and decision-making to the benefit of the Parishes.

What is the Community ?

The community is everyone within the boundaries of the Parishes of Aldington and Bonnington including all ages, any organisations, groups and individuals within it. It is recognised that residents pay for the activities of the Parish Council and that visitors to the community form an important part of the vibrancy of community life. The Council understands that there are certain bodies that are crucial to local quality of life, and that excellent working relationships with these bodies, including Village organisations, the Police, neighbouring Councils, and other tiers of local government, are essential.

Provision of Information to the Community.

This Council ensures that the main documents which reflect its decisions are published and readily available for the public to view. These documents include meeting agendas, minutes of those meetings, and annual reports of the Council which are:

- Published on the Council's website
- Posted on the Council's noticeboards.
- Available to view, by request and prior arrangement with the Parish Clerk.
- Summarised by key issues in the Parish Magazine, i.e. *Church & Village News*.
- The council's Freedom of Information Publication Scheme can be viewed on the Council's website [on the internet](#)

Opportunities for involvement and representations to the Council.

Public announcements about Council meetings contain an invitation to the public and press to attend. These give an indication of the business to be transacted so that parishioners can decide whether to attend or make your views known by some other means prior to the meeting. Agendas are always available on the Council's website

Meetings are the forum for Council business and decision making. It is crucial therefore that business be conducted with ample time for due consideration of issues that are before Councillors. Council meetings also provide an opportunity for the public to make representations in person prior to decisions being made. The Council welcomes

representations but inevitably have to apply a time limit to them. Parishioners concerned that there might be insufficient time to make their points known, may prefer to make representations in writing prior to the meeting.

Representatives from the Police as well as other tiers of local government an opportunity to make reports to Council meetings, thus providing the public and Councillors with information and an opportunity to ask questions on matters of interest to them.

It is the intention of the Council to call an Annual Parish Meeting for each of the Parishes of Aldington and Bonnington between April 1st and June 1st each year. These are parishioners' meetings at which there will be opportunities to raise matters of concern to the community, to hear from community organisations and to ask them questions.

Involvement in Partnerships

The Council has representation on the Aldington Village Hall Committee and attends occasional meetings of other bodies which make decisions affecting the local community. Information obtained from these meetings is reported to Council meetings.

Role of Councillors, Chairman and Clerk.

Councillors are the civil parish decision-makers. They welcome contact with members of the public, endeavour to be available immediately prior to Council meetings for anybody who wishes to speak with them. They will listen to the representations made to them at Council whether made in person, raised by proxies, or provided by written submissions.

The Chairman is appointed under the first point of business at the Council's Annual Meeting. He or she remains in office until his successor is elected at the next Annual Meeting unless he/she resigns, ceases to be eligible or is disqualified. At all meetings of the Council which he/she attends, the Chairman must preside and manage the orderly conduct of affairs. Whilst the Chairman should be consulted on the Agenda content, the legal signatory is the Clerk. The Chairman is responsible for ensuring that decisions by the Council are only taken on items on the Agenda.

Although the Clerk acts as Secretary to Council meetings and so prepares the Minutes, it is the Chairman (or other person in the Chair) who must sign them once they are agreed as an accurate statement of proceedings. The Chairman cannot make a formal decision on behalf of the Council.

The Clerk is answerable to the Council as a body rather than any individual. He/she implements the decisions of the Council and provides independent and professional advice, information and administrative support. The Clerk is usually the "proper officer". The Clerk is also the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO). As RFO, the Clerk prepares the Budget for Council to debate, keeps the books of account, arranges payment of all invoices by cheques signed by two Councillors, submits VAT returns, prepares the year-end accounts, submits the Annual Financial Return to the Council's External Auditor, reviews and renews the Council's insurance policies and premiums.

The contact details for the Clerk to the Council are published on Agendas, the Council's noticeboards and the Council's website. The Clerk is the appropriate contact in most cases

for raising matters with or requesting information from the Council.

Parishioners should feel free to contact the Clerk for more information on anything in this Statement.

Specific areas for Community Involvement.

In some circumstances, the Council provides additional information sheets and/or calls additional public meetings in the event that exceptional issues arise which are of particular interest to the Community. Exceptional issues would include plans for significant development, exceptional spending programmes and the advent of any emergencies.

Contact details for the Council Clerk are:

Tel: 01233 721757 email: clerkabpc@gmail.com