



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

### **Introduction:**

Fownhope Parish Council is committed to improving engagement with all local residents to ensure they feel part of the community and able to participate in its development. The Parish Council has a general duty to consider the whole community and will ensure that all community engagement complies with the Equality Act 2010. As a council, we want to make sure our communications are two-way and this policy has been written to improve the way in which the Parish Council engages with the community.

### **Objectives:**

The Parish Council will inform, consult, involve and collaborate with members of the public to achieve the overall objective of developing improved services to residents.

The council achieves these objectives through the following:

- **Inform:** to provide balanced and objective information to help people understand Parish Council issues;
- **Consult:** To obtain public feedback on experiences, views, proposals or decisions;
- **Involve:** To work directly with the public to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered;
- **Collaborate:** To partner with groups and public bodies in decision making and identification of preferred solutions.

### **Communication:**

The council informs and consults the community by:

- **Fownhope Flag:** The Parish Clerk writes a monthly report summarising the monthly Parish Council meeting, and any extraordinary meetings. The Fownhope Flag is delivered free to every household in the parish, as well as business premises.
- **Newsletter:** The Parish Council write an annual report, published in the Fownhope Flag and on the website; and regular (weekly or fortnightly) emailed newsletters 'Parish News', also available to download from the website.
- **Website:** The Parish Clerk maintains a website ([www.fownhope.org](http://www.fownhope.org)) including, but not limited to, agendas, minutes, policies, budget, accounting and audit information. The website has been developed to provide as much information and transparency as possible.
- **Council Handbook:** The Parish Council have compiled a handbook which sets out their aims and objectives for the forthcoming year, together with more general

information about the Parish Council. The handbook is updated regularly and is available to download from the website, as well as available in a printed format at the community library at Faulkner House.

- **Noticeboard:** The Parish Council maintain a noticeboard outside the West End Stores on the B4224. Notices are displayed as and when required but will always include the agenda for the forthcoming meeting (when produced), and draft minutes from the previous meeting.
- **Village Facebook Page:** The Parish Council are able to make use of the Fownhope Village Facebook Page to communicate with residents. At the time of writing, Facebook Page had 929 followers and regular posts are submitted to inform on a variety of matters.
- **Parish Council Twitter Page:** The Parish Council created a Twitter page, @fownhopepc. The Parish Council will continue to develop their Twitter presence to encourage more followers and monitor interest.
- **Local Events:** The Parish Council consulted with the public at the first Fownhope Market Trail event and plans to have a presence at every community event.

The Council involves the community by:

**Parish Council Meeting:**

Fownhope Parish Council hold an ordinary meeting at least ten times per year on the first Wednesday of each month, excluding January and August. Every meeting has an ‘Open Session’ to provide an opportunity for residents to make representation on any forthcoming agenda item or to suggest a topic for discussion at a future meeting.

**Annual Parish Meeting:**

The Annual Parish Meeting is the main opportunity to bring the community together and allows residents to question and review how the elected members help shape the community.

The Parish Council should determine how to encourage maximum attendance by the community. To help achieve this, the meeting follows an annual tea and cake afternoon provided by the Parish Council to thank residents who have given their time volunteering to support projects within the parish. A ‘Community Service Award’ and ‘Sports Award’ are presented annually as part of the Annual Parish Meeting, and reports are received from the Chairman and from the Chair of the Working Groups. Residents are able to make comments and present questions to the meeting.

**Public Meeting:**

From time to time the Council may decide that an item warrants being dealt with through a specially convened public meeting. The meeting will follow the same format and observe the same rules as an ordinary Parish Council meeting, in that it will be publicised at least 3 clear days before the meeting, will be chaired by the Chairman of the Parish Council and minuted by the Parish Clerk.

**Consultation:**

The Parish Council aims to consult regularly with residents, ranging from opportunities for requesting feedback and views within the monthly Flag article and the public participation session at the ordinary meeting to more formal consultation programmes, such as actioned

during the Neighbourhood Plan consultation. A page dedicated to promoting both parish and county consultations has been added to the website.

**Direct Communication:**

Parishioners are encouraged to contact the Clerk or any Councillor directly to air any views or concerns. Contact details, photographs and a short biography of each Councillor are published on the Parish Council website, within the Council Handbook, and on the general noticeboard outside the Fownhope New Memorial Hall.

The Council collaborates with the community, groups and public bodies by:

**Ward Councillor:**

The Ward Councillor for Backbury is invited to every meeting held by the Parish Council and receives an opportunity in the open session to provide a report from Herefordshire Council and on local ward matters.

**Planning Consultations:**

The Planning Working Group assesses every planning application in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan and submits comments accordingly to Herefordshire Council. In accordance with the Climate Emergency Declaration, particular importance is paid to issues of sustainability.

**Representation:**

Members of the Parish Council are assigned annually to represent the Parish Council on a number of local committees: Fownhope New Memorial Hall; Fownhope Recreation Field Association; Fownhope Communities Library; HALC; Common Hill Management Committee; United Charities.

**Expert Advice:**

Residents and parishioners with specific expertise are welcomed onto a number of working groups. Advice and support is regularly sought from representatives of professional bodies with particular expertise, for example Open Spaces, Wye Usk Foundation, Butterfly Conservation, National CLT Network, Herefordshire Council.

Adopted at a full council meeting on: 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019;

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To be reviewed: May 2027