



## **Aldworth Parish Council**

### **Community Engagement Policy**

#### **Aims and Objectives**

Aldworth Parish Council aims to ensure that through the use of a wide range of approaches to public consultation and community engagement it actively encourages residents to inform its decision-making process and make an input into decisions which affect their day to day lives in the parish.

Aldworth Parish Council is committed to creating and maintaining effective working relationships with all sectors of the community. The Council recognises that there are different levels of engagement and will endeavour to involve the community in the following ways:

- Inform people about its work and the services it provides
- Consult with and seek out the views of the community
- Encourage community participation in local government
- Collaborate with individuals, community groups and organisations where appropriate, to achieve agreed aims for the benefit of the Parish.
- Build up effective working relationships within the community and encourage a sense of ownership of assets, infrastructure, and new projects.

#### **The Community**

Aldworth Parish Council seeks to engage with all sections of the community regardless of age, ability, gender, ethnicity, faith or sexual orientation i.e. parishioners (particularly hard to reach groups such as the young, disenfranchised, disaffected and the elderly), the local business community, the many clubs, organisations and societies which are active in the parish, its partners such as West Berkshire Council and the neighbourhood policing team, the Church and our elected divisional member for West Berkshire Council. The Parish Council is also committed to engaging with any persons who appear to it to have an interest in matters relating to the economic, social and environmental well-being of its area.

#### **Provision of information to the community and opportunities for community involvement**

Aldworth Parish Council recognises that members of the community may wish to engage with it at different levels and in a variety of ways, from the occasional email or letter with a suggestion on how a service could be improved, to attendance at meetings etc.

Aldworth Parish Council will therefore use many ways to actively seek the views of its parishioners and involve them in its work:

- ✓ Publications: The Parish Council will communicate with parishioners through regular articles in 'The Leaflet' as well as the annual report which will contain up to date information about payments and receipts and monies held by the council on parishioners' behalf, and the local press when appropriate.
- ✓ Website: The Parish Council website <http://www.aldworth-pc.gov.uk>: our community resource which publishes information about the Parish, its Council, and the many organisations which flourish in Aldworth, Council agendas, minutes, accounts, and other documents will be posted on this website for parishioners' information. Aldworth Parish Council is committed to developing and improving the website and will actively encourage parishioners to use it as a hub for Parish News.
- ✓ Email: All Councillors and the Clerk have a dedicated Parish Council email address, and these are published on our website and in 'The Leaflet'. You are all welcome to email any of us with any thoughts, comments, concerns or news and you will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and guidance on how we will deal with your query within 3 working days.
- ✓ Post: You can send any correspondence in writing to Aldworth Parish Council by posting to Aldworth Parish Council, 23 Slade Road, Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 7AR. The Clerk will ensure your enquiry is dealt with upon receipt of the information within 3 working days.
- ✓ Social Media: Aldworth Parish Council have a Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/aldworthpc](http://www.facebook.com/aldworthpc)) we will endeavour to post regularly important service updates, share information from our partners (such as West Berkshire Council) and inform you of meetings and events as they are published.
- ✓ Direct Access: The Parish Council will display a list of all Parish Councillors together with other important points of contact on its notice board. This medium will also be used to directly advertise other important events e.g. notices relating to the annual audit of accounts; casual vacancies, elections and forthcoming meetings etc. Details of the Parish Council's publication scheme and the address of the West Berkshire Council Monitoring Officer will also be displayed on the website for parishioners' information.
- ✓ Co-option: Aldworth Parish Council encourages the involvement of the community in the work of the Council through co-option. When a vacancy arises on the Council, we present a 'Casual Vacancy' to the Parish. If a by-election is called by more than 10 people we fill the vacancy that way. If no by-election is called after the notice period we are able to co-opt a new member of the council to join us.
- ✓ Meetings: Notice of all Council meetings is given on the parish notice boards and, on the website, and Facebook page. Parishioners are encouraged to attend Full Council and Committee Meetings and time is set aside at all meetings for public participation at all these meetings. Parishioners are also actively encouraged to attend the Annual Parish Meeting, which is advertised in the same way as above.
- ✓ Surveys: Aldworth Parish Council will undertake surveys and other related forms of information gathering from time to time to ascertain the community's views on a particular issue.

- ✓ Specific Projects: From time-to-time Aldworth Parish Council will undertake specific projects for the benefit of the community. The normal method for undertaking these is via working parties set up under a standing committee. Co-option (see above) is used to ensure that the community is fully represented and involved in these projects.

### **Opportunities for formal representations to the Council**

Representations to Aldworth Parish Council will normally be considered at the next meeting of the relevant standing committee. If, however, they require the provision of information only, then the clerk will provide it in accordance with the council's publication scheme. The Parish Council has a Code of Practice for handling complaints, which is available from the clerk, published on the website and reviewed annually. The publication of agendas on the Parish Council's notice boards and website gives parishioners the opportunity to make representation to the council before agenda items are discussed. All formal representations received are responded to in writing.

### **Involvement in Partnerships**

Aldworth Parish Council is committed to partnership working where it is clear that it will be of benefit to the Parish or to fulfil its statutory requirements.

### **Role of Council Members and Officers in consultation and community engagement**

Elected members are powerful advocates for their community and their leadership role enables them to have a major input into the consultation and engagement process. The council reviews and responds to consultation documents from a wide range of local and national bodies.

Aldworth Parish Councillors are very accessible:

- ✓ Their contact details are published on the website, in the annual report to parishioners and in 'The Leaflet'.
- ✓ They are available to talk to parishioners during the public session prior to each Full Council and at the Annual Parish Meeting
- ✓ In a private capacity, they can belong to many other local clubs, societies and organisations, where they may, if they so wish promote the work of the Parish Council and be available to parishioners.