

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: STATEMENT OF INTENT**

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

Urchfont 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.

Urchfont 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**

Urchfont 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 Wiltshire Council and the neighbourhood policing team, Urchfont Primary School, the Church and the elected divisional member for Wiltshire Council. The Parish Council is also committed to engaging with any persons who appear to have an interest in matters relating to the economic, social and environmental well being of the Parish.

### **PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO THE COMMUNITY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Urchfont 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.

Urchfont 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 monthly parish magazine (Redhorn News), 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 established a new website in 2012, [www.urchfont-pc.gov.uk](http://www.urchfont-pc.gov.uk) as a community resource which publishes information about the Parish, its Council, and the many organisations which flourish in the Parish. Parish Council agendas, minutes, accounts and other documents will be regularly posted on this website for parishioners' information. Parishioners are invited to contact the Parish Council *via* the website, or email at [urchfontpc@hotmail.com](mailto:urchfontpc@hotmail.com). Urchfont Parish Council is committed to develop and improve the website and will actively encourage parishioners to use it to exchange information through the News, Notice Board and Events page and as a means of improving communication.
- **Direct Access:** The Parish Council will display a list of all Parish Councillors (addresses and telephone numbers included), the lead roles which are attributed to each councillor together with other important points of contact on all of its notice boards and the website. 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 Wiltshire Council Monitoring Officer will also be displayed on the website for parishioners' information (Parish Council>Policies and Procedures>No9).

**Co-option:** With the exception of the Full Council, Urchfont Parish Council encourages the involvement of the community in the work of the Council through co-option to Working Groups.

- **Meetings:** Notice of all Council meetings is given on the parish notice boards and on the website. Specific invitations to attend are issued by the Planning Administrator to interested parties for the applications being considered. Parishioners are encouraged to attend Full Council /Planning 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 as above.
- **Surveys:** Urchfont Parish Council will consult and 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 Urchfont Parish Council will undertake specific projects for the benefit of the community. The normal method for undertaking these is via working groups. 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 Urchfont Parish Council will normally be considered at the next monthly meeting of Council. 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 (Parish Council>Policies and Procedures>No 14) 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**

Urchfont Parish Council is committed to partnership working where it is clear that it will be of benefit to the Parish or to fulfill its statutory requirements /obligations. For example it is represented on the Devizes Area Board, Devizes Community Area Partnership and with the Military Authorities on Salisbury Plain.

## **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.

Urchfont Parish Councillors are very accessible:

- Their contact details are published on the notice boards, on the website in the annual report to parishioners and occasionally in the Redhorn News.
- They are available to talk to parishioners during the public session prior to each Full Council /Planning meeting and at the Annual Parish Meeting.
- In a private capacity, they 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.

The clerk can also be contacted in a variety of ways: In person, in writing, by telephone, by email or via the website.

## **SPECIFIC AREAS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Urchfont Parish Council will consult the community should it resolve to undertake, initiate or facilitate any major projects or undertakings in the parish such as the production of a Neighbourhood Plan or Appraisal.

Update prepared by Bob Lunn, Clerk to the Council – January 2014