

POLICY: Community Engagement

1. INTRODUCTION

Melbourn Parish Council's Community Engagement Policy outlines the means of engagement with its residents and partners (for example, other 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 ensure all members of the community feel they have adequate opportunity to express their views and feel their interests have been properly considered.
- To use engagement to ensure decisions are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the Parish
- To collaborate with individuals, groups and organisations where appropriate to benefit the Parish
- To encourage community in local government
- To inform people about the Parish Council's work and the services it provides
- To be a stronger, more active and cohesive community and encourage a sense of ownership of assets, infrastructure, and new projects

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 Chair of the Council contribute regular articles.

The Parish website has a wealth of local information and is regularly updated. The home page consists of latest news and information to keep the site interesting. Meeting information and supporting documents are available prior to Council meetings. Audio recordings of recent Council meetings are also available.

The Melbourn Parish Council Facebook Page is used to share information about services, consultations, and events in the village.

Press releases to the local press may be 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. Supporting documents are also available on the website.

Noticeboards are regularly updated with both Parish Council and local community news.

Inviting Participation

The articles in Melbourn Magazine may invite participation.

Parish Council and committee meetings include an opportunity for members of the Parish to engage with councillors.

The opening hours and location of the Parish Office are published on the website and notice boards. This gives parishioners a point of contact to come and voice concerns or ask questions.

When there is a casual vacancy, the Clerk will invite “expressions of interest” and will publicise this on the notice boards and website. Melbourn Parish Council encourages participation of new members to join the council when there is a vacancy.

Any standing committee or working party of the council is empowered to co-opt interested members of the community, when a non-councillor vacancy arises. Although non-councillor members do not have voting rights, their participation in the meetings helps the Committee/Working Party to make informed decisions for the benefit of the Parish.

The Council gives out Community Awards at the Annual Parish Meeting to members of the community who have been recognised for work which benefits the Parish.

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.
- Inviting the public to submit questions/comments by e-mail if they are unable to attend the Council meeting.

Promoting the Parish Council

By informing the community about the Parish Council's work and the services it provides will help parishioners understand how the Parish Council acts to benefit the village.

The Welcome Pack, which is given to all new residents, includes a section on what the Parish Council does and how to get involved.

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 are 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.

Surveys that the Parish Council or other local authorities undertake to find out parishioners' views will be published on the Facebook page and website.

Consultation events will be publicised using all channels of communication available. Consultations will run for as long as possible to ensure members have adequate time to respond.

Melbourn Parish Council will feedback to the community on how their input affected the decision making.

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 and Play Parks Working Parties have laid the groundwork for consulting the community in innovative ways as well as by online questionnaires.

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 or Working Party to highlight any areas for improvements.

The PC should ask for feedback on its communication strategies at its Annual Parish Meeting

6. STRATEGY REVIEW

The Community Engagement Strategy will be reviewed every 2 years.



Document Approval:

(Chair to Melbourn Parish Council)

Date of Parish Council Meeting: 28 November 2022

Document Review Policy: 2 years from last approval