

Mistley Parish Council
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

1. Introduction

1.1 Mistley Parish Council's Community Engagement Strategy sets out:

- The role of the Community Engagement and its importance;
- How Mistley Parish Council engages with the wider community and identifies the needs and aspirations of the community;
- How the Council can improve Community Engagement.

1.2 The Objectives of this Strategy are to:

- Encourage effective local Community Engagement;
- Ensure that throughout the Council and embedded within its culture, there is a clear understanding of the need to engage with the local community and residents, about decisions which affect them;
- Enable aspirations, comments, suggestions and feedback via Community Engagement - to have an impact on decision-making and the way in which the Parish Council's services and activities are being delivered;
- Identify how the Parish Council can enhance its profile by improving engagement with the wider community, including "harder to reach" groups'.

2. The Council's Commitment to Community Engagement

2.1 Mistley Parish Council is committed in its Vision and key corporate objectives to provide an open, fair and democratic representational "Voice" for the people of Mistley. Central to the Parish Council's ethos is engagement with the local community in a proactive, genuine, fair, open, transparent and meaningful way.

3. Community Engagement – an overview

3.1 Community Engagement is concerned with giving people "a Voice" and involving them in decisions which affect them and the community. This may be individuals, volunteers, community groups, clubs and organisations, local businesses, together with other public sector bodies' and stakeholder partners, for example, Tendring District Council, Essex County Council and Essex Constabulary. Community Engagement provides an opportunity for local people to talk more openly to the Parish Council about their aspirations and/or needs in their community and neighbourhood. It allows the Parish Council to consult more fully and inform local people about what services and activities it provides, how its priorities and policies are determined, and how well it is performing.

3.2 Consultation forms an integral part of Community Engagement. Without consultation, addressing a particular need may not be fully addressed or dealt with. The Parish Council uses a wide range of consultation methods such as updates in local community magazines, updates on the Parish Council's website, open forums for the public at all full Parish Council and Committee and Meetings, its Facebook and the local press and media;

3.3 The term "stakeholder" refers to a wide range of people and groups, which may include residents, visitors, volunteers, voluntary organisations, local businesses, the District and County Councils, the Police, local schools and all who have an interest in the Parish Council's services, activities and projects. Harder to reach groups may mean young people, elderly people, or those with physical disability, language, financial constraints, cultural differences and those with limited access to public transport, private transport or online services. For those with vision and sight problems, the Parish Council will print larger font documents of at least font size 14, upon request. The Parish Council is committed to expending every effort into seeking the views of the harder reach groups of people, including those who simply prefer not to get involved.

3.4 The key aspects of Community Engagement include:

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- Development of a network of relationships between the Parish Council, individuals, voluntary and community groups, clubs and organisations;
- Clear, open, fair and transparent communication to ensure that information is made accessible to all groups;
- Listening and understanding to a range of people to identify aspirations, needs and problems of local people and groups.

3.5 Effective and meaningful Community Engagement can provide a number of benefits:

- The problems and needs of local people are clearly identified in order that appropriate new or improved facilities and services can be provided;
- Those participating should feel empowered by being involved in decision-making in their local community and a sense of ownership and pride in the new facilities or initiatives;
- By highlighting the work of the Parish Council, this may mean a greater interest in elections or for standing for Council and will help to continue to raise the Council's profile and reputation in the community.

4. Mistley Parish Council and Community Engagement

4.1 The Parish Council currently facilitates Community Engagement in the following ways:

- Allocation of Public Representation sessions at the beginning of each full Parish Council and Committee Meetings.
- Presentations to the Parish Council or asking questions relating to items on the agenda;
- Publishing contact details of all Council members and Officer/s on its website;
- Updates on its website, social media (Facebook), in local community newsletters and via the local press about local events and the latest developments within the Parish Council and the wider community;
- Ensuring that agendas and minutes of all meetings are available on the Council's website and notice boards around the Village;
- The Council uploads the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts on its website;
- Consultation exercises with local residents, including children and young people, regarding the provision of play equipment (and other Parish Council projects), have been, and will continue to be undertaken;
- Parish Council press releases are featured in local newspapers to keep the general public in the Village, the district and the county informed of community events and Parish Council projects and other newsworthy items;
- The Parish Council frequently joins community stakeholder groups and meetings. For example, EALC (Essex Association of Local Councils), (affiliated to NALC – National Association of Local Councils), Tendring District Council, Essex County Council and Essex Constabulary;

5. Communication

5.1 Mistley Parish Council is committed to improving Community Engagement by:

- Continuing all the above activities and services into the future and improving relationships with community groups, including development measures to harness the views and opinions of people and groups who are often missed out of community engagement activities;
- Ensuring that any information published is clear, concise, and widely available. (This includes making information available in appropriate formats for people with visual impairments, learning disabilities, poor literacy or people who require language translation).
- Identifying and embracing opportunities to work with other local community groups, as and when the need arises;

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- Continuing to update and enhance its website to engage and consult with the local community and wider interested community;
- Participating in local networks to share knowledge and experience of Community Engagement activities in other areas;
- Publicising the positive results that have been achieved from working relationships between the Parish Council and other community groups, in order to encourage new relationships/partnerships to be formed and raise community spirit;
- Ensuring that appropriate evaluation is carried out following consultation exercises to ensure that lessons learned are carried forward, and an assessment of how effective/useful the consultation was.

6. Linking with other Parish Council Policies

6.1 This strategy is linked and “joined-up” with most of the Parish Council’s policies, procedures and strategies; including:

- Equality and diversity is integral to good governance, leadership and appreciation of the diversity in our community;
- A Community Engagement Strategy is a requirement of the accreditation of Quality Council Status, which the Parish Council may strive to achieve in the future;
- Its Press, Media and Social Media Policy.

7. Review

7.1 This strategy will be reviewed regularly, (not less than bi-annually) and amended as necessary, based on good practice, legislation or evidence taken forward, and as agreed by the Parish Council.

8. Conclusion

8.1 The adoption of a Community Engagement Strategy will assist in improving communication between the Parish Council and the wider community. This will enable the Parish Council to better understand the needs and aspirations of local residents’ and community groups, and in turn, facilitate appropriate projects to meet these needs, and create an enhanced community spirit and culture.

9. Alternative Formats

In accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, copies of this document in large print (in excess of font 14 or higher), if required, can be made available to those with sight impairment upon request from the Parish Clerk by telephoning 07982 507584 or by emailing Email – clerk@mistleyparishcouncil.gov.uk

10. Freedom of Information

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this document is available on the Parish Council’s website <https://www.mistleyparishcouncil.gov.uk> Please also refer to the Parish Council’s Publication Scheme, also on its website.

Review Body: Full Parish Council.

Review Period: Annually each May. **Adopted 18/05/2021. Last Reviewed 20.05.24. Next Review Date May 2025.**