



## Sessay Parish Council

### Communications and Community Engagement Policy - Part 2

#### Statement of Community Engagement

According to NALC guidelines - Community engagement 'is about giving local people a voice and involving them in the decisions that affect them and their community. It is about the development of relationships and clear communication to deliver better services and projects'.

It is suggested that a policy should be based round the following issues:

How do you currently communicate with your community and how can you improve these lines of communication?

Do you regularly consult your community?

Do you know what your community wants or expects from its Council?

How content is your community with existing services?

How well do you communicate with hard to reach groups or young people?

What are the Council's short-, medium- and long-term aims?

#### 1. Aims and Objectives for Community Engagement

The Parish Council's aims and objectives for promoting community engagement and the outcomes it hopes to achieve are:

##### A. Aims:

- To work more closely with residents, businesses and community groups;
- To engage with as many people as possible, especially young and older people, and encourage them to participate in local decision making, the monitoring and improvement of Council services and planning for the future;
- To ensure through the use of a wide range of approaches to public involvement and community engagement, that the Parish Council captures the views of local people and understands their concerns, and actively and effectively uses those views as an integral part of the decision-making process;
- To ensure that residents have opportunities to be heard at every stage, to have their views acknowledged and be given the capacity to be more effective citizens;
- To encourage and foster greater collaboration, and the exchange of ideas and information between individuals, groups and organisations;
- To facilitate more local decisions to be taken by local people;

## **B. Objectives:**

This Policy is part of the Council's commitment to creating and maintaining effective working relationships with all sectors of the community, based on trust, honesty, openness, partnership-working and constructive debate.

Outcomes of this approach will include:

- Improved communication through the establishment of new channels of engagement;
- More residents understanding the role of the Council and Councillors and inputting their views and ideas to get the best results;
- Improved engagement with local residents and communitiy groups, with more people feeling that they are involved in local decision-making and a higher percentage of people involved in volunteering;
- The development of shared solutions to local issues
- Improved satisfaction with local public services.

## **2. Defining the Community**

Sessay and Hutton Sessay is a rural parish situated 6 miles south of Thirsk, North Yorkshire and approx. 19 miles north of York. The principal authorities are Hambleton District Council and North Yorkshire County Council. There are approximately 180 residential properties within the Parish accommodating approximately 350 people of all ages.

The community may be defined as consisting of:

- Residents of the Villages of Sessay and Hutton Sessay, and the hamlets of Little Hutton, Little Sessay and Pilmoor
- Users of Parish Council Services
- Village Hall and Playing Field Assn Trustees & facility users including the wider cricketing community
- Head Teacher and Governors of Sessay C of E VC Primary School
- Young people who live and/or go to school in the Village of Sessay
- Retail, Tourism and other Businesses in the community
- Interest groups – clubs and societies eg. Womens Institute, Cricket Club, Bowls Club etc
- Voluntary groups and organisations eg. litter pickers
- The congregation of St Cuthbert's Church and associated Church Groups
- Farming Community
- Groups of people defined by a common factor such as age, disability, faith etc
- Tourists who stay within the Parish or visit local amenities eg. fishing lakes, strawberry farm
- Councillors and public service representatives including Parish Council Staff.

## **3. Role of Council Members and Officers**

The Parish is non-political with 5 Council Members. They can be contacted via the Parish Council Clerk, the Community website [www.sessay.org](http://www.sessay.org) or directly. Council members communicate with the public via their attendance at meetings, and this role inevitably brings opportunity to discuss the work of the Council with residents and others and encourages participation and feedback.

There is one officer of the Council, the Parish Clerk, who covers the entire spectrum of the Council's work, and works from home. The Clerk can be contacted at home during normal office hours. Outside these times, appointments can be made to meet at a suitable venue. The Clerk can also be contacted via email, telephone and letter.

#### **4. Provision of Information to the Community and Opportunities for Community Involvement**

1. The Parish Clerk can be contacted at home and messages can be left 24/7 either by telephone or email.
2. The telephone numbers and addresses of all the Councillors are published on notice boards, the Community website and in the Parish Council Newsletter. It is recognised that members of the community may wish to engage with the Council at different levels - from the occasional face to face chat, phone call, email or letter, to regular attendance at Parish Council meetings.
3. The Parish Council's website contains much of the information an individual might wish to know about the work of the Parish Council and its individuals, including meeting dates, agendas and meeting minutes, policy documents, financial statements, annual reports and how to contact anyone associated with the Council.
4. The Council publishes a regular Newsletter 'Parish Council News for Sessay and Hutton Sessay' that is delivered to every household in the Parish, 2 or 3 times each year.
5. Information is published on the 2 Parish notice boards situated in Sessay and Hutton Sessay.
6. There is opportunity for the public to participate at each Parish Council meeting.
7. An Annual Report is prepared by the Chair and delivered at the Annual Parish Meeting in April or May.
8. Welcome Packs are delivered to new residents in the village. This contains information on the community and the Parish Council.
9. The Council has initiated the production of a Community Plan, first published in September 2014. This sets out the councils short-, medium- and long-term plans for action to address issues identified within the community.
10. The Council undertakes consultations by dedicated survey questionnaire, Newsletter and public meetings for specific issues, as appropriate. Active feedback is sought at all times and Councillors attend public events to listen to local views and to encourage people to participate in local affairs. The Council is always considering practical ways of engaging with people and community groups.
11. The Council releases information to the press, as appropriate, about its activities.

#### **5. Involvement with Partnerships**

The Council has representatives on the following:-  
Sessay Village Hall and Playing Fields Assn - Committee Meeting

This Statement of Intent for Community Engagement was approved for issue at the Parish Council meeting held on 20 July 2016

Signed

Julia Oyston - Clerk to Sessay Parish Council.