

Community Engagement

STATEMENT OF INTENT: AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The 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.

The 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:

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| Inform | The council will tell people about its work and the services it provides |
| Consult | The council will seek out the views of the community |
| Involve | The council will encourage community participation in local government |
| Collaborate | The council will collaborate with individuals, community groups and organisations where appropriate, to achieve agreed aims for the benefit of the parish |
| Empower | The council will try to build up effective working relationships within the community and encourage a sense of ownership of assets, infrastructure and new projects. |

THE COMMUNITY

The Parish Council seeks to engage with all sections of Purleigh's 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 Maldon District Council, Essex County Council and the neighbourhood policing team, Purleigh Community Primary School and the church. 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

The 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.

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

1. **Publications:** The Parish Council will communicate with parishioners through articles in the parish magazine, quarterly and annual reports 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. Periodically each household will be issued with a '*Points of Contact*' booklet, and the Parish Council will endeavour to issue new householders with a '*Welcome to Purleigh*' pack. These publications explain the activities of the Parish Council, provide parishioners with useful contact points and information and invite comments. Quarterly and annual reports will be delivered to parishioners *via* their parish magazine or made freely available at focal points in the parish.

Website: The Parish Council has established a website, www.purleigh.com as a community resource which publishes information about the parish, its council and the many organisations which flourish in Purleigh. Parish Council 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, email at clerk@purleigh.com or at jane.m.potter@btinternet.com.

The Parish Council is committed to trying to improve the website and will actively encourage parishioners to use it to exchange information 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) together with other important points of contact on all of its six notice boards. 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 Standards Board for England will also be displayed for parishioners' information.
- **Meetings:** Parishioners are invited to attend each monthly meeting (*via* the Parish Magazine; the Purleigh correspondent's column in the Maldon Standard; and the notice of forthcoming meeting which appears at the top of each Agenda which is posted on the Parish Council's six notice boards in: Pump Lane; Farther Howe Green; Rudley Green; Maldon Road, Cock Clarks and Roundbush and in a local Public House). A fifteen minute public session precedes each ordinary meeting, and it is the usual practice of the Chairman to close the meeting once started (with the agreement of his or her fellow councillors) to enable interested members of the public attending to address the Parish Council should they wish to do so. Parishioners are also actively encouraged to attend the Annual Parish Meeting, which is advertised as above.
- **Surveys:** *Ad hoc* surveys will be carried out from time to time by the Parish Council to ascertain interested persons' views on a particular issue. In April 2006 for example the Parish Council assisted the Essex Rural Transport Partnership in conducting a transport needs survey in the parish. The Parish Council actively supported the carrying out of a

Parish Appraisal and has used the appraisal results to inform its decision-making.

- **Specific Projects:** Parishioners involvement will be sought when major projects are being considered e.g. the possible redevelopment of Purleigh Village Hall and the production of a Village Design Statement.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FORMAL REPRESENTATIONS TO THE COUNCIL

Representations to the Parish Council will normally be considered at its next ordinary meeting, unless they require the provision of information only, when the clerk will provide it accordingly. 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 six notice boards 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

The 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 e.g. the Parish Council retains an appointee on the Governing Body of Purleigh Community Primary School and works with both Maldon District Council and Essex County Council to improve service delivery in the parish.

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 proposals set out in the 2006 Local Government White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, and the subsequent Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 strengthen the scope for councillors to act as community leaders and

democratic champions and acknowledge the crucial link councillors make between the council, residents, community groups and organisations.

Purleigh Parish Councillors are very accessible:

Their contact details are published on the notice boards, on the website and in the annual and quarterly reports to parishioners.

They are available to talk to parishioners during the public session prior to each Parish Council 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, or by email at Lower Barn Farm, Roundbush Road, Purleigh, Nr Mundon, Maldon, CM9 6NN Tel: 01621 828270
email clerk@purleigh.com or jane.m.potter@btinternet.com.

SPECIFIC AREAS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The 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 Village Design Statement or Parish Plan or Appraisal.

OUTCOMES OF THE STRATEGY

Outcomes of this strategy will include:

Improved communication through the establishment of new channels of engagement e.g. Quarterly and Annual reports

More parishioners understanding the role and work of the council and how it uses its role to benefit the parish

Improved engagement with the local community, with more people feeling that they are involved in decision making

Monitoring and review of the strategy will be through the use of existing structures and resources.