

**Halton Holegate with Halton Fenside Parish Council**

# **Community Engagement Policy**

**March 2026**

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## **1. Aims and Objectives**

Halton Hologate with Halton Fenside Parish Council is an open and transparent Council, which values the opinions of the community which it serves. It continues to listen to the needs and concerns of the community and will do everything within its power and financial constraints to make the village a better place to live and work.

The purpose of this document is to deliver a standard policy for engagement with residents and partners whilst recognising the services that the Parish Council provides must reflect the needs of its residents and the locality.

This policy aims to improve communication between the Parish Council and the residents of the Parish in order to increase awareness of local issues and council involvement, encourage public participation and receive feedback.

### **Halton Hologate with Halton Fenside Parish Council aims to:**

- Represent and promote the interests of Halton Hologate and Halton Fenside and its residents in all forums.
- Pay attention to the needs of children and young people.
- Pay attention to the needs of elderly residents.
- Provide the best possible amenities and services by the efficient use of available resources.
- Actively involve local people in decisions affecting activities in the area.
- Promote equality of opportunity and oppose discrimination.
- Be open and accountable in all it does.
- Support development, which is environmentally, socially and economically sound and sustainable.
- Enhance quality of life by protecting and enhancing the ecological and environmental assets.
- Encourage partnership working.
- Ensure all information published is clear, concise and widely available.

### **To achieve these aims, the Council will:**

- Work closely with residents, businesses and community groups.
- Engage with as many people as possible who want to participate in decision making.
- Monitor services and plan for the future.
- Ensure that, through the use of a wide range of approaches to public involvement and community engagement, the involvement of residents is actively encouraged, to capture their views and learn their concerns and effectively use those views as an integral part of the decision-making process.
- Ensure that residents have the opportunities to be heard at every stage, and the capacity to be effective residents.
- Allocate a specific time for Comments from the Public prior to a Full Council meeting. This provides an opportunity for local residents to make representations to the Council or to ask questions relating to any of its areas of responsibility. Comments can be in verbal form by attendance at the meeting and/or by writing in advance.
- Publish all Council and Committee meeting agendas both online and in the noticeboard.
- Ensure that minutes of Full Council and Committee meetings are available on the website or that printed copies are available upon request.

- Ensure that the annual External Audit offers the opportunity for questions to be asked about the latest Statement of Accounts and Balance Sheet. A synopsis of the financial accounts is published within the Annual Report.
- Publish contact details of all Council members on the website, in newsletters and at the council offices.
- Produce regular newsletters and other information highlighting events and latest developments within the Council.
- Undertake consultation exercises with local residents, children and other user groups (where appropriate).
- Invite members of the public to attend all Council meetings.
- Submit Council press releases for consideration to be featured in local newspapers to keep the general public informed of community events, Council projects and other items of interest as necessary.
- Ensure Members and Officers attend, as appropriate, meetings of Outside Bodies as well as those comprising community groups and other levels of local government and agencies.

### **Future Improvements:**

Halton Holegate with Halton Fenside Parish Council is committed to improving community engagement by:

- Improving relationships with community groups, including the development of measures to harness the views and opinions of people and groups who are often missed out of community engagement activities.
- Identifying and embracing opportunities to work with other local community groups, as and when the need arises.
- 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 Council and other community groups; in order to encourage new relationships/partnerships to be formed and raise community spirit.
- Ensuring that the public is appropriately informed about the difficulties as well as the successes with projects so that they can better understand the constraints that the Council operates within.
- 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 proved to be.

### **The outcomes the Council hopes to achieve are:**

- Improved communication with the local community.
- A better understanding within the community of the role of the Parish Council and of its Councillors.
- Local people actively contributing to decision making.
- Improved satisfaction with local public services.
- To respond to views and needs of local residents and address their priorities.
- Promotion of local democracy.
- Proactively working to improve the parish and the lives of residents.
- Working in partnership to maximise achievement and efficiency in service delivery.
- Delivering and improving upon value for money.

## **2. Defining the Community**

Halton Holegate with Halton Fenside Parish Council is keen to reach all groups and individuals who work or live in the parish. It has historical links with many local self-help groups, voluntary groups, businesses and other local government bodies (Police, Fire Brigade and NHS) working for the good of the village, to ensure that a wide cross-section of the community can have access to the Council, its Members, and the Clerk.

### **The Council considers the community to consist of:**

- All residents of the parish.
- All users of the Council's services.
- All those who work within the parish.
- All those who own businesses within the parish.
- All young people who live within the parish.
- All local voluntary organisations, clubs and societies.
- Any group or organisation that represents some or any of the members of the above sections of the community.
- Visitors to the parish.

Additionally, the Council recognises that there are certain bodies that are crucial to the quality of life in the parish and aims to maintain excellent working relationships with these bodies, including the Police, the other tiers of local government and neighbouring Town and Parish Councils.

## **3. Provision of Information to the Community**

Halton Holegate with Halton Fenside Parish Council has many avenues through which it communicates with its community:

- The Parish Clerk's office in the Franklin Hall, Halton Road, Spilsby, PE23 5LA can provide a wide range of information both on Council services and other local activities and issues.
- Councillor surgeries.
- The public can contact the Council through the website.
- The Council provides noticeboards which are used to display agendas for Council meetings and details of local councillors as well as other information of interest to the local community.
- The Annual Report is produced in May each year and is available from the Clerk and on the website. This report is also presented at the annual Parish Meeting.
- All meetings of the Council and its committees and sub-committees are open to the public and a period is set aside at the beginning of each meeting for public questions relating to items on the agenda.
- A website containing all relevant information about the work of the Council including meeting minutes, policy documents, financial statements, annual report and how to contact the Council; this also includes links to other organisations including the principal authority.
- Publishing of agendas and other information, on noticeboards throughout the parish, for all Council and committee meetings.
- Publishing of minutes, on the Council website, for all Council and committee meetings.
- The production of the Annual Report, available from the Council office or online.
- The Council's involvement in the Annual Parish Meeting.
- The annual External Audit offers the opportunity for questions to be asked about the latest Statement of Accounts. A synopsis of the financial accounts is published within the Annual Report.
- Public meetings are called to gauge public opinion about important issues affecting the parish, such as major planning applications.

#### **4. Opportunities for Community Involvement**

Halton Holegate with Halton Fenside Parish Council ensures the electorate has the opportunity to have access to Council meetings and facilities ensuring increased and representative community involvement.

A public forum session is available at every full Council meeting, where the electorate can raise issues in relation to the business on the agenda. The electorate can also request other matters to be discussed at future meetings.

#### **5. Opportunities for Formal Representations to the Council**

Issues received in writing may be included as a stated item on a future agenda dependent on relevance and legality within the Parish Council's duties, powers or responsibilities.

Correspondence received from a member of the public is acknowledged wherever possible, within five working days.

A period for the receipt of petitions is set aside at the beginning of each full Council meeting.

#### **6. Involvements in Partnerships**

The Council encourages and supports public meetings organised by the Police, the health authority, East Lindsey District Council, Lincolnshire County Council, neighbouring Parish and Town Councils and other organisations where it feels information should be made available to the residents of the Parish.

The Council often works in partnership with other organisations and has nominated Councillor Representatives on the following outside bodies:

- East Lindsey District Council Area Committee
- Emergency Planning
- LALC Representatives
- Playing Fields
- Police Forum

#### **7. Role of Council Members, Clerk and Members of Staff**

As an open and transparent Council, both Elected Members and the Clerk seek to offer a high-quality professional service to all whom they serve. Both Elected Members and the Clerk are keen to maintain relevant Codes of Conduct in their activities and view the community as "customers" rather than an electorate.

The Council's officers and staff members are employed to carry out the day-to-day functions of the Council and make sure that its services are provided for the local community.

#### **8. Objectives**

- To improve, plan and shape the future of the village according to local needs and priorities.
- To improve the quality and delivery of services.
- To use engagement to inform decision making, ensuring decisions are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the parish.
- To enhance the wellbeing of the parish.
- To be a stronger, more active and cohesive parish.

## 9. Specific Areas for Community Engagement

Where there is a specific issue, or new project that the Council wishes to consider, it is of value to the Council to seek the views of the community who will be most affected. The residents of the Parish can have confidence that their “voice” will be heard, and that the Council will work with the community to reach a common goal.

Community Engagement takes many forms and is best described by the Ladder of Engagement, as seen in the diagram and table below, which describes the different levels of involvement.



STEP	MEASURE
5	<b>Empowering:</b> Placing decision-making in the hands of the community.
4	<b>Collaborating:</b> Working in partnership with communities in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
3	<b>Involving:</b> Working directly with communities to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. For example, partnership boards, reference groups and service-users participating in policy groups.
2	<b>Consulting:</b> Obtaining community feedback on analysis, alternatives and / or decisions. For example, surveys, door knocking and focus groups.
1	<b>Informing:</b> Providing communities with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding problems, alternatives, opportunities, solutions. For example, websites, newsletters and press releases.

### Informing

The Council will raise awareness of consultation processes by various methods including promotion through local publications, the website and local media.

Councillors are a rich and important source of two-way communication between the Council and its residents. Members of the Council will continue to inform their ward and residents of the Council’s vision, priorities and aspirations.

In turn these Members will receive valuable feedback from residents which will assist in shaping the vision and priorities.

## Consulting

The key to effective community engagement is the consultation of all residents on important issues. It will ensure those most affected are able to put forward an opinion and given an opportunity to make a difference.

The Council will ensure consultations include all members of the parish by identifying the hard to reach groups such as youths, the elderly, the housebound, the disabled, ethnic minorities, etc. This may require the establishment of different engagement channels.

## Involving

The Council will work with Police and Partner Authorities (e.g. LCC and ELDC), to strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones.

The Council will liaise with minority/hard to reach groups and identify channels of contact and consultation to ensure inclusion.

The Council will work with and identify consultation/focus groups and identify residents (by means of survey to judge general opinions to minimise cost implications of full consultation processes) with specific skills who can be consulted on specialist subjects.

## Collaborating

The Council will support local organisations and assist them in meeting their own aims and objectives. Support for local projects and participating in and organising local events will raise the awareness of the Council and its aims and objectives.

## Empowering

By bringing together residents and partners, the Council will find solutions to local problems ensuring they will be accepted and fit for purpose. Mediation and assistance in the formulation of action plans will engage and empower the community in decision making resulting in enhancements to the environment and the quality of life. Acting together in decision making and policy drafting will ensure residents have a voice and see they can make a difference.

## 10. Measuring Success

Success will be measured by predefined targets on individual projects and reviewed at inception, during the project and at the end of the project. This process will include consultation outcomes, monitoring of resident participation in consultation processes and increases in their involvement in local projects and events.

## 11. Action Plan

How can the Council improve community engagement?

The Council has identified certain activities it undertakes, how the service is delivered and how it can be improved:

Activity	What we do now	What we could do
Council Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Clerk's Office</li><li>● Civic Ceremonies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Raise the profile</li><li>● Initiate monthly Councillor Surgeries</li><li>● Raise profile of all Councillors</li><li>● Clarify resources and statutory duties of the Council</li><li>● Use other locations to hold meetings</li></ul>

Council Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public attendance</li> <li>● Public questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Encourage people to attend Council meetings</li> <li>● Expand the offer of presentations to wider groups from within the community</li> <li>● Make Council meetings more user friendly</li> </ul>
Use of Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Noticeboards</li> <li>● Website</li> <li>● Newsletter</li> <li>● Annual Report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Produce annual report of Council activities and plans</li> <li>● Establish e-mail database to inform and circulate council papers</li> <li>● Use web-based surveys on key issues</li> </ul>
Engaging individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ad-hoc Councillor calls/conversations/meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Councillors talking with individual constituents</li> <li>● Establish Councillor surgeries</li> <li>● Establish framework/principles within which reactive work can be dealt with</li> </ul>
Engaging groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Councillor representatives on external groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establish database of stakeholders in the Parish</li> <li>● Obtain clarity on user groups and their status</li> <li>● Encourage groups to engage with one another - act as a conduit</li> <li>● Encourage groups to present updates at meetings</li> <li>● Identify strategic priorities with/for the community, e.g. health and welfare, public space, youth. Bring key groups together to collaborate and evaluate</li> <li>● Work in partnership with groups to develop strategic plans, e.g. open spaces, environment</li> <li>● Act as a coordinating body to enable groups to communicate</li> <li>● Identify key partners for projects and who will take the lead</li> </ul>
Public meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Annual Parish Meeting</li> <li>● Council Meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Initiate monthly Councillor Surgeries</li> <li>● Informal meetings</li> </ul>

## 12. Outcomes

- Improved communication through the establishment of new channels of engagement.
- More residents understanding the role of Councillors and getting the best effect.
- Improved engagement with local communities, with more people feeling that they are involved in decision-making and a higher percentage of people involved in volunteering.
- Improved satisfaction with services provided by the Council.

## 13. Reviewing and Assessing Effectiveness of the Strategy

This strategy will be reviewed and updated annually; its effectiveness will be assessed by Councillors and Council staff and amendments and/or improvements would be recommended if benefits are identified.

From time to time this policy can be subject to a publicity feedback review, in order that public opinion on its effectiveness and how it may be improved can be sought.