

WITHYHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Community Engagement Statement of Intent

Responsibility: Clerk/Full Council

Review Cycle: At least every three years or earlier in the event of legislative changes

Date of Adoption/Renewal	Date for review
October 2022	October 2025

Aims and Objectives

Withyham Parish Council aims to:-

- Represent and promote the interests of the parish and all its people in all forums
- Pay particular attention to the needs of our children, young people, elderly and people with special needs
- 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 Withyham Parish Council's geographical area and environmental assets

In order 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, monitoring services and planning for the future
- Ensure that through the use of a wide range of approaches to public involvement and community engagement, the Council actively encourage the involvement of residents, 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

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 feeling that they are involved in decision making
- Improved satisfaction with local public services

Defining the community

The Council considers the community of Withyham Parish Council to consist of:

- All residents of Groombridge (including Withyham/Blackham) and Marden's Hill Wards
- All users of the Parish Council's services
- All those who work within the parish
- All those who own businesses within the parish
- All young people who live and/or go to school 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

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, other tiers of local government and neighbouring town and parish councils.

Provision of information to the community and opportunities for community involvement

Information is provided by the Parish Council to the community in a number of ways, including:-

- The Parish Council office in The Old Station, Station Road, Groombridge can provide a wide range of information both on Council services and other parish activities and issues [opening times are subject to change].
- The Parish Council has eight notice boards around the parish which can be utilised for local communications
- The Parish Council has a website which display agendas of Council/committee meetings and contact details for local councillors as well as other information of interest to the local community
- The Parish Council has a Facebook page
- The Parish Council provides a Newsletter which is published two-three times per year and delivered to householders, available from the Parish Council offices, on the website and from the local village shops
- Notes of Council meetings are included in two of the parish magazines
- A parish plan is published and available from the parish office and via the website
- Meetings of the Parish Council and its committees are open to the public and a period is set aside at the beginning of each meeting for public questions
- Public meetings are called as required to gauge public opinion about important issues affecting the parish
- The Annual Parish Assembly is held annually and open to all members of the public
- Questionnaires are sometimes used to ask local people's opinions about specific matters and these are distributed to local residents

Opportunities for Formal Representations to the Council

- Formal representations to the Council may be made at any time in writing to the Parish Clerk

Involvement in Partnerships

The Parish Council often works in partnership with other organisations such as the District and County Council, local groups, or the Police.

The Parish Council has representatives on the following local organisations:

Ashdown Forest Parishes Liaison Committee
Blackham Village Hall
Crowborough Citizens Advice Bureau
Groombridge Sports Ground Association
Groombridge Playground Rejuvenation Project
Groombridge Village Hall
NALC Reps and County Association (SALC and AiRS) AGM
North Wealden Community Transport Partnership (Wealdlink)
Parish Planning Panel (WDC)
Speedwatch Co-ordinator

The Ridge Association
Traffic and Road Safety Representative
Wealden District Association of Local Councils
Withyham Charity

Role of Council Members and Officers

Council Members (Councillors) are the elected decision makers of the Parish Council. Their contact details are available from the Parish Council office, on the notice boards and the Parish Council website. Members of the public are welcome to contact Councillors to raise any issues.

The Parish Clerk is employed to carry out the day to day functions of the Council and make sure that its services are provided for the local community. The Parish Clerk is the Proper Officer of the Council which means she has overall responsibility for ensuring the Council is run effectively and efficiently.