

Nash Mills Parish Council

Community Engagement – Statement of Intent

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Review Date	When required

Nash Mills Parish Council (v3)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – STATEMENT OF INTENT

Introduction

Nash Mills Parish Council (“The 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 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:

- Inform people about its work and the services it provides
- Consult with and seek out the views of the community
- Encourage community participation in local government
- Collaborate with individuals, community groups and organisations where appropriate, to achieve agreed aims for the benefit of the Parish
- Build up effective working relationships within the community and encourage a sense of ownership of assets, infrastructure and new projects.

The Community

The Council seeks to engage with all sections of the community regardless of age, ability, gender, ethnicity, faith or sexual orientation.

The Council will aim to proactively engage with parishioners, the local business community, the many clubs, organisations and societies which are active in the parish, its partners such as Dacorum Borough Council, the Neighbourhood Policing Team, the Church, our elected Borough and County Councillors and Residents Associations within the parish.

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

- Publications: The Council will communicate with parishioners through regular articles in the parish magazine, as well as the annual report 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.
- Website: The Council website at <http://www.nashmillsparishcouncil.gov.uk> publishes information about the Parish and its Council. Agendas, minutes, accounts and other documents will be regularly posted on this website for parishioners' information. Parishioners are invited to contact the Council by email at clerk@nashmillsparishcouncil.gov.uk
The Council is committed to develop and improve the website and will actively encourage parishioners to use it to source information and as a means of improving communication.
- Direct Access: The Council will display a list of all Parish Councillors and their contact details together with other important points of contact on all of its 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 Dacorum Borough Council Monitoring Officer will also be displayed on the website for parishioners' information.
- Co-option: With the exception of the Full Council, the Council encourages the involvement of the community in the work of the Council through co-option. Any standing committee or working party of the council is empowered to co-opt interested members of the community onto any standing committee or working party. Some statutory exclusions apply.
- Meetings: Notice of all Council meetings is given on the parish notice boards and on the website. Parishioners are encouraged to attend Full Council meetings and time is set aside at all meetings for public participation in these meetings (further details regarding this and the procedure are available from the Clerk) Parishioners are also actively encouraged to attend the Annual Parish Meeting, which is advertised as above.
- Surveys: The Council will undertake surveys and other related forms of information gathering from time to time to ascertain the community's views on a particular issue.
- Specific Projects: From time to time the Council will undertake specific projects for the benefit of the community. The normal method for undertaking these is via working groups set up under a committee or standing committee. Co-option (see above) is used to ensure that the community is fully represented and involved in these projects.
- The Council will engage in regular councillor surgeries, this may take the form of regular representation at The Denes.

Opportunities for Formal Representations to The Council

Representations to the Council will normally be considered at the next meeting of the relevant standing committee. If, however, they require the provision of information only, then the Clerk will provide it in accordance with the council's publication scheme.

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 notice boards and website 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 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. For example, it is represented on the Nash Mills Village Hall Association Committee and is seeking further opportunities to engage with other local bodies.

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 council reviews and responds to consultation documents from a wide range of local and national bodies. They are, for example, a statutory consultee on all planning applications relating to properties within the parish.

The Councillors are very accessible:

- Their contact details are published on the website, the noticeboard, in the annual report to parishioners and in the Parish Magazine.
- They are available to talk to parishioners (by appointment) prior to each Full 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 Council and be available to parishioners.