



## **Sprotbrough and Cusworth Parish Council**

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### **POLICY TITLE**

**Community Engagement Policy**

### **ADOPTION DATE**

15<sup>th</sup> October 2020

### **POLICY AIM**

The aim of this policy is to assist Sprotbrough and Cusworth Parish Council as an open and transparent Council, which values the opinions of the community which it serves and to continue to listen to the needs and concerns of the community, doing everything within its power and financial constraints to make Sprotbrough and Cusworth a better place to live and work.

This policy sets out a framework of how Sprotbrough and Cusworth Parish Council will work with residents and partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors to give local people more of a say about what services they want and need and how they would like them delivered.

### **POLICY**

#### **1. General Principles**

- 1.1 Sprotbrough and Cusworth Town Council is committed to giving local people a voice. To enable the Council to do this it will, as far as is reasonably and financially practicable, they will:
- Represent and promote the interests of Sprotbrough and Cusworth Parish Council and its residents in all forums;
  - Listen to the needs of all 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 whilst ensuring all information published is clear, concise and widely available;
  - Support development which is environmentally, socially and economically sound and sustainable;

- Encourage partnership working;
  - Listen to communities and ensure feedback to participants about the outcomes of the community consultation.
- 1.2 The Parish Council acknowledges and undertakes that:
- Consultation is a fundamental part of good public service; it will be the starting point and not an afterthought
  - Consultation will be based on openness, trust, integrity and mutual respect for all participants
  - Where appropriate, consultation will be used to seek views before decisions are made.
  - Requests to consult may come from inside or outside the Parish Council.
  - Consultation will seek to involve all parties who can contribute to or who are affected by the outcome of consultation
  - It will seek to explain to people why they are being consulted, what they are being consulted about and how their views will contribute to any decision.
  - Some people will be less able to participate in consultation than others; specific efforts will be made to identify and target these people; every effort will be made to ensure that consultation is representative.
  - It will seek to ensure that the issues are clearly understood and that objectives, timescales and expectations are clearly identified
  - Relevant and easily understandable information will be provided to consultees with particular attention to those who have special communication needs.
  - The results of the consultation and any impact upon Council decisions will be provided in the most appropriate form both to consultees and the wider community.
- 1.3 The Parish Council recognises that some information is often technical in nature therefore consultation documents will be as clear and concise as practicable, using plain English as far as possible, avoiding or at least explaining 'jargon'.

#### Access and equalities

- 1.4 In terms of ensuring engagement of all sections of community, particular attention will be given to "hard to reach" groups. This includes meeting the public sector equality duty to advance equality of opportunity between different groups, associated with age, disability, gender/ gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation characteristics.

#### Means of involving people

- 1.5 The Parish Council will seek to choose appropriate consultation processes that best balance community impact, accessibility and available resources. Greater use will be made of online and social media methods of consultation, whilst appreciating that they are not accessible for all sections of the population. Detailed decisions about the methods of involvement to be used and when will need to take into account the availability of resources at the time. In particular, events which require considerable staff

involvement, such as exhibitions, will need to be prioritised to consultations where the outputs of such events will have the greatest benefits.

### Making comments and their availability

- 1.6 As part of the transparency and openness of decision making, and in accordance with the legal framework set out in the General Data Protection Regulations 2016 and the Data Protection Act 1998 comments made on formal consultation exercises will be made publicly available and they cannot be treated in confidence. However, the Parish Council will not publish personal information such as signatures, telephone numbers and email addresses online.
- 1.7 Comments made should be made within the timescales prescribed, relate to the particular document/ policy and not be potentially libellous, defamatory, threatening, abusive or likely to incite racial hatred.

### Consideration of comments

- 1.8 All comments received as part of consultation events will be taken into account in decision making and will be considered alongside all other comments received before a final decision is made.

## **2. Approach to consultation and engagement**

- 2.1 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) provide basic requirements for consultation on planning documents including Neighbourhood Plans. The full range of organisations and individuals who should be involved in consultation can be categorised into the following groupings;

A – Local groups and individuals. This group includes residents, community groups, voluntary groups and specific interest groups as well as interested individuals.

B – Parish and Town councils, adjoining parish councils.

C – Utility and service providers. This group includes water, sewerage, gas and electricity companies, health providers and emergency services.

D – Government bodies/ local authorities and collaborative bodies. This includes Doncaster Council and its local neighbourhood teams.

E – Local Strategic Partnerships

F- National organisations and agencies. These include a range of organisations and agencies which have specialist expertise to input. Examples include Historic England, Natural England, Environment Agency, Highways England and Sport England.

- 2.2 Depending on the scope and nature of the consultation the Parish Council aims to follow the approach set out above when undertaking consultation within the Parish.
- 2.3 The range of methods that will or maybe used to help inform and engage the community about Parish Council activities and decision making are;
  - Web based consultation. The Council will advertise all consultations on its website with full details and relevant documents available to view on dedicated pages accessible via [www.sprotbroughandcusworthparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.sprotbroughandcusworthparishcouncil.gov.uk) .

- Written notifications. The Council will make direct contact by email or letter with known consultation bodies and those who have asked to be notified that a consultation is taking place. Details of the consultation, including the availability of documents, will be explained in the notification. Organisations and individuals can ask to be added to the consultation list at any time by contacting the Parish Council by email to [clerk@sprotbroughandcusworthparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@sprotbroughandcusworthparishcouncil.gov.uk) or by calling 01302 788093.
- Making documents available. As well as publishing draft documents and supporting information online hard copies will be made available for inspection at the Parish Council office, Scawsby Community Centre and Sprotbrough Library. Consultation documents will also be available to purchase at 'cost' price plus postage (if they cannot be collected). Documents can also be provided in large print, Braille, on audio tape or CD and translated into other languages upon request.
- Public Notices. Information will be placed on the Parish Council's notice boards in Sprotbrough village and at the Goldsmith Centre.
- Social media. The Council will make use of social media and will post information via its Facebook account. Please note that comments will not be accepted by social media.
- Newsletters/press. Newsletter features may be promoted through the Sprotbrough Arrow, Churches Together magazine and the newsletter produced by the Parish Council.
- Posters/ leaflets. Dedicated posters and/ or leaflets may be used to gain wider public awareness of a consultation.
- Exhibitions. Exhibitions may be held to convey information about emerging plans and both publicise the opportunity for public involvement and enable face to face discussion about issues and options.
- Meetings/focus groups. These may be selectively used as a means of bringing different perspectives together to discuss a particular theme in a structured way. Meetings may be appropriate to discuss more complex issues.

2.4 Whenever a public exhibition or meeting is held, the venue chosen should have disabled access and be located as conveniently as possible for the expected audience.

#### Comments and formal representations

2.5 In relation to making comments and representations;

- Comment forms will normally be provided.
- Comments may be submitted in writing by email or post.
- All comments received will be acknowledged.
- A clear deadline for receipt of comments will be given. Comments must be clear and received by the date and time given.

2.6 An important aspect of community involvement is to offer feedback to those who have taken the time to be involved in the process.

2.7 Consultation statements will be compiled identifying the nature and extent of comments made during consultation exercises. These will be available on the Parish Councils website and a hard copy at the Parish Council office.

## IMPLEMENTATION

In order to achieve these aims, Sprotbrough and Cusworth Parish Council will:

- Work closely with residents, businesses and community groups;
- Engage with as many people as possible that 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, they 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;
- Allocate a specific agenda item for consider matters raised by the public during each 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 of the meeting and/or by writing in advance. Written comments need to be received by the Clerk no later than 7 days prior to the Full Council Meeting;
- Publish all Council and Committee meeting agendas both online, and on Parish Council notice boards in the Parish;
- Ensure that minutes of Full Council meetings and Committee meetings are available on the website, or that printed copies are available upon request;
- 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 and at the council offices;
- Undertake consultation exercises with local residents, children and other user groups where appropriate;
- Invite members of the public to attend all Council meetings;
- To ensure Members and Officers attend, as appropriate, meetings of 'Outside Bodies' as well as those comprising community groups and other levels of local government agencies;
- Consider data protection whenever consulting with the public and ensure General Data Protection Regulation compliance.

## MONITORING

The policy will be monitored in the following ways:

<b>Monitoring Activity</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>
Any breach of the policy to be reported to the Clerk/ Deputy Clerk	Anyone
Reports will be investigated and remedial action taken if required	Clerk/ Deputy Clerk
Review and production of annual risk assessments for each area of work identified as having a potential risk	Clerk
Review insurance policy annually	Clerk/ RFO

**POLICY REVISION DATE**

Policy reviewed August 2024  
Next review date August 2025

This document shall be reviewed annually; or upon any changes to legislation; or subject to the requirements of Sprotbrough and Cusworth Parish Council.

**RELATED POLICIES AND STRATEGIES**

Communications Strategy