

Rackheath Community Council



Communication and Engagement Strategy

Reviewed September 2020

Communication and Engagement are about letting people know what is going on and giving them a voice and involving them in the decisions that affect them and their community. It is about clear communication and development of relationships that help the Council deliver better services and projects.

The aim of a communication and engagement strategy should be to engage residents and encourage their participation in decision making to secure better services and to create a more active and informed community. This strategy sets out how Rackheath Community Council will engage its community across a broad range of its activities and sets out short, medium and long term aims. It was adopted by the Council on 21 September 2015

1. Current means of communication with the Rackheath Community

At present residents and other interested persons/organisations can communicate with or receive information from the Council in the following

- Annual Report and subsequently from the Annual Parish Meeting in May. Includes details of council activities, achievements, organisation, grants awarded, summary of accounts.

The Annual report is published on the website and copies are available from the Clerk.

- Website address is <http://rackheathparishcouncil.co.uk> Information and photos updated regularly and details include information on the council and its activities, local amenities and organisations, current issues and events.
- Annual Parish Meeting is held on the first Tuesday in May at 6.30 p.m. and gives electors of the parish a chance to air their views or ask questions on matters relating to Rackheath. A speaker agreed by the council will give an address on a pertinent local issue. All local organisations are invited to send representatives to the event. Refreshments are available
- Public Participation during Meetings is held for 20 minutes at the start of all meetings of the Planning Committee, Parks and Leisure Committee and the Council and gives residents a chance to speak on local issues which are on the agenda for the meeting. There is no requirement to make a formal request to speak prior to a meeting.
- Contact with the Clerk or Booking Assistant can be made by telephone, email, post or by appointment at the Community office in the Pavilion.

- Facebook - The Community Council has a Facebook page, which is updated with news and information and links to articles on the website. A Twitter account will be launched shortly. Councillors also contribute to the Facebook Community Page, a thriving source of local information and opinions (A Social Media Policy is in place which provides guidance to councillors and the public on the correct use of all media and the rules for correct usage)

2. Aims for Improving Communication

Short Term Aims

- To publicise the launch of the new Twitter feed.
- To publicise Councillor's surgeries through the Facebook page and village noticeboards Rackheath Life and the local newspaper to try to interest and attract public attending each month.
- To publicise information relating to local issues, and new projects through leaflets, local press, website and to invite residents to contact the council with their observations.
- To circulate leaflets to community organisations such as schools, churches, social and activity groups etc. To place articles in other newsletters such as the school, church.

Medium Term Aims

- Provide more information on council activities through a Newsletter, which can be used to provide updates housing developments and also contain generic articles e.g promotion of local democracy and citizenship (such as information on registering to vote, where and when people can vote, standing for the council or the functions of the council, committees and councillors), affordable housing, features on local landmarks/characters. To be publicised on a regular basis (Quarterly) and delivered with leaflets and distributed to the shops and other public places and to be available on the website. Articles to appear in the local press.
- To set up a short consultation survey asking the public what they want to see in the village in the long term, what they think about the Council increasing the precept etc.
- To organise consultation and engagement events and activities for the Council to meet the public, take the survey to them
- To attend other community groups organised activities

Long Term Aims

- To disseminate information on all aspects of the council and the Rackheath community in a number of forms such as website, leaflets and local press to many different places and organisations including those involved with young people and hard to reach groups.
- To encourage comments from residents and local bodies on issues affecting Rackheath. A short survey form asking what is considered good and bad and what needs improving is circulated to groups using the Pavilion for completion, if people wish.

3. Assessment of the Needs and Views of the Community

The Council will aim to find out what the community wants or expects from its council and how content it is with existing services by circulating information on activities regularly and inviting residents to submit their observations to the council. All relevant and appropriate comments will be considered by the Council or one of its committees/working parties. If few responses are made on any subject it will be assumed that the majority of people, including hard to reach groups and young people, are satisfied with the work being carried out by the Council.

4. Communication & Engagement Committee

The Committee comprises Pippa Nurse (Chair) Joel Whymark, and Julie Hunt. The Committee will be responsible for implementing this strategy and overseeing communication and engagement with the public. The Committee will meet periodically.