



# Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council

## Community Engagement Action Plan & Policy

**Policy intent.** Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council recognises that decision making is enhanced and enriched; that services are better delivered; and that strategies and policies are likely to result in better outcomes for the community when community members are involved in decisions which affect them. It recognises that community engagement helps it fulfil its mandated roles of providing governance through advocacy, fostering community cohesion and encouraging active participation in civic life.

This action plan & policy will promote good governance and guide effective community engagement practices to support evidence-based decision making in the public interest. It will provide community members with a clear understanding of the council's role and the avenues for meaningful public participation.

**Purpose/Objective.** The purpose of the Community Engagement Action Plan & Policy is to articulate Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council's commitment to robust, rigorous and well evaluated community engagement processes. The Action Plan & Policy will guide the delivery of these processes across the organisation to better inform decisions about policy, service planning and delivery. This Action Plan & Policy reflects Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council's 2015 Community Led Plan commitment to effectively engaging with our community.

**Scope.** This policy applies to councillors, all council staff, contractors, working groups and networks as well as short term engagement bodies such as steering groups and advisory committees.

The policy articulates Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council's commitment to engaging the community as a matter of principle and is guided by a framework of techniques to ensure a fair and equitable processes. The application of the policy is intended to support the council's deliberation and decisions around issues affecting the parish now and into the future.

The policy will be supported by community engagement guidelines that provide clarity on when it is appropriate to engage, and at what level. Community engagement guidelines and supporting documents will address:

- All activities relating to the planning of community engagement activities,
- Stakeholder management,
- Identification of appropriate tools and recording techniques
- Evaluation of community engagement activities

The outcomes of a robust community engagement process include quantifiable and attributable information about community needs, aspirations and opinions that can be considered prior to the council resolving an issue. This process can enhance the democratic process by increasing the likelihood that Council's decisions are understood and supported by the community and reflect broader community needs and aspirations. Community input accrued through engagement processes will be considered along with financial, legal and sustainability considerations in decision making. In some matters the council is bound by legislation to engage with the community. In these cases Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council will adhere to the legislative requirement as a minimum standard. Community engagement is required under the following legislation:

- Local Government Act 1989
- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
- Road Management Act 2004

While these acts stipulate required community engagement in certain circumstances, the council is not prevented from carrying out further community engagement where local sensitivities or project complexities merit additional effort.

**Roles & Responsibilities.** Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council as the corporate body is responsible for ensuring policy implementation, compliance, monitoring, evaluation and review.

**Monitoring, evaluation & review.** Compliance with the policy will be measured through evaluation of individual community engagement plans submitted for approval prior to the commencement of engagement activities.

**Policy statement.** Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council believes that the community should have the opportunity to participate in decision making activities about issues that affect their lives. In giving effect to this the council makes a commitment to:

- Clearly articulate the issue under consideration
- Clearly identify the level of community influence and limitations if appropriate
- Seek out those potentially affected by the decision
  - Offer a range of accessible opportunities to participate
- Recognise and make provision for Upwood and the Raveley's socio-cultural diversity
- Consider the needs and values of those involved in the process including decision makers
- Consider the community input in the decision making process
- Provide feedback to the participant on how their input influenced the decision
- Evaluate the engagement process and outcomes
- Provide adequate resourcing to the community engagement process.

**The outcomes sought through this Community Engagement Policy include:**

- Improved governance through assisting elected representatives and Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council officers/staff understanding, and being informed by, the views of the community when making decisions on their behalf.
- Improved community ownership of the decisions made by Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council, particularly in relation to those directly affected by council developments.
- Community members feel they have had adequate opportunity to express their views and feel their interests have been considered in the planning, decision making and implementation of those activities.
- Feedback to the community on how their input affected Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council's decision- making.
- Appropriate tools and techniques are used to plan, carry out and evaluate community engagement.
- Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council aims to be open and transparent through following an accessible, clear and systematic participatory process.
- Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council officer/staff and councillors will be adequately trained and resourced, and confident in undertaking community engagement activities.
- Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council will actively collaborate with relevant organisations & groups to develop robust and inclusive engagement processes.
- The skills and capacity of community members to participate in decision making processes are enhanced.

**Budget.** Many aspects of Upwood and the Raveley's community engagement process can be met at a relatively low cost to the council through the parish website, social media and bi-monthly newsletter (hand delivered by volunteers to every household in the parish). As a matter of general good practice the Council will source funding for major projects as and when these arise and are identified as being high expenditure (such as a Neighbourhood Plan).

**Review Process.** Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council will review this Action Plan and Policy annually in October as part of the budget process for the coming financial year.

## Spectrum of Engagement

The table below illustrates the approach that will inform council practice.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Community engagement goal	To provide the community with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and /or decisions	To work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of a preferred solution	Where possible to place final decision making in the hands of the public
Promise to the community	We will keep you informed	We will listen to and acknowledge aspirations and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how community input influenced the decision	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	Where possible we will implement what you decide
Example techniques	Social media Websites Newsletters Fact sheets Open meetings	Consultation Events Workshops Focus groups Surveys Questionnaires	Workshops Deliberative polling	Advisory committees/working groups Consensus building Participatory decision making	Ballots Delegated decision

Carol Bilverstone  
Parish Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer  
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