STILTON PARISH COUNCIL

Stilton Pavilion, High Street, Stilton PE7 3RA
Telephone: 01733 639106 - Email: clerk@stiltonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Community Engagement Policy & Strategy

Introduction

The Parish Council's intention is to be open, transparent and inclusive, encouraging active community engagement for the betterment of Stilton and its residents.

Aim

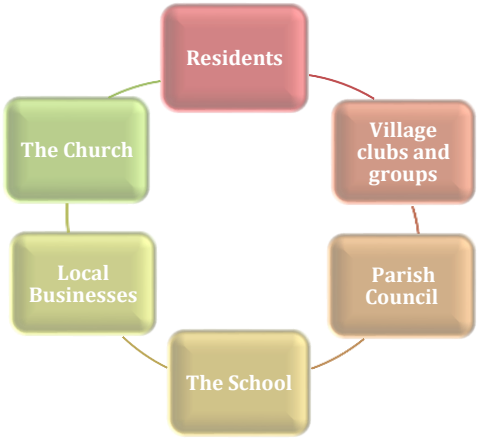
To ensure there are effective channels of communication both from the Council to the public and from the public to the Council.
To listen to residents through traditional means of letter, email or phone call but also by committing to finding new opportunities for communication that enable all members of the village to get engaged.

To inform residents of the Parish Council's activities through not only Parish Council Meetings, the Parish Council's own website (www.stiltonparishcouncil.gov.uk), noticeboards, newsletters and using SCAN (a monthly village magazine) but also to embrace other methods of communication so that all groups in the village are aware of the decisions taken by the Parish Council on their behalf.

Objectives

- To work with residents to plan how Stilton should evolve and develop in the coming years
- To involve the village when decision making and identifying key objectives
- To provide increased, accessible information regarding how the Parish Council discharges its functions and manages the amenities it provides
- To actively engage with Huntingdonshire District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and other groups (including local MPs, the police and emergency services, health, social care and education providers)
- To build working relationships so that the flow of information relating to community needs is increased.

The Stilton Community includes:



The Parish Council intends to work alongside all village groups and build strong working relationships.

How to engage – our strategy

www.stiltonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Our website is available all day, every day for referencing information, the latest Parish news, details of meetings, agendas, decisions, planning applications, events, enabling communication through the inbuilt contact form and provides direct contact details for the Parish Clerk and Councillors. The website address is detailed on all 3 noticeboards.

Parish Clerk

The Clerk works part-time but is well placed to answer questions and direct comments: email clerk@stiltonparishcouncil.gov.uk, phone 01733 639106 and contact through the above website or Stilton Parish Council's Facebook page. These details are prominently displayed on the website, on noticeboards and on Parish Council publications/signage.

Parish Council Meetings

The Parish Council meets every month, usually on the second Tuesday and the meeting is open to the public and press. The agenda is displayed on 3 village notice boards, the Parish Council website and on social media. In addition to main meetings, Stilton Parish Council has Amenities (AMC), Pavilion (PVC) and Finance (FGPC) Committee meetings that are also open to the public and press and are publicised in the same way as full council meetings. Facilities also exist where residents can, where appropriate or necessary, make written reports, present petitions or have a case presented on their behalf to councillors.

At every meeting there is a public participation session for 15 minutes where any member of the public is able to come and speak to council on matters relating to the village. On the agenda is a 'Correspondence' section where communication sent to the Clerk is brought to member's attention, enabling either dialogue at the meeting (should the member of public attend – always invited) or a formal response.

Planning Applications are considered at Council Meetings held monthly. The opportunity for people to speak applies equally to these agenda items.

The Parish Clark is required to play a neutral role so that residents can be fully involved and confident they are receiving unbiased information and support. This neutral involvement will allow more flexibility in the service and the personal element of the contact will hopefully encourage more involvement from the hard-to-reach members of the community.
The Parish Council will produce a list of annual council and committee meeting dates to include the start times of meetings.

Working Groups

The Parish Council has the following working groups, which members of the public can join …

- Traffic and Parking
- Cemetery
- Green Spaces and Wildlife
- Neighbourhood Plan.

Active participation and engagement is encouraged through advertising in the community for membership.

Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting (which by law has to be held once a year, between 1 March and 1 June) is a meeting of the electorate. It offers an opportunity to engage with parishioners and discuss Parish matters. It is an effective way for the council to listen to the views of the community. The Annual Parish Meeting will not start before 6pm so that the largest number of residents will be able to attend and the publicising of the meeting is designed to encourage the maximum attendance by members of the pubic. The focus of the meeting will be discussed well in advance allowing for planning and implementation. District and County Councillors will also be invited to attend alongside other relevant groups.

Councillor Surgeries

When council decisions would benefit from further explanation or promotion to residents, especially where the council is aware of a lack of information or miscommunication, a councillor surgery may be held. This might also be called for when viewpoints from members of the public are sought. A surgery will involve at least 2 councillors.

Public Consultation

If the council feels a particular issue, especially one that will have an impact on the village, requires feedback from the community, a public consultation can be utilised. This will ensure village needs are considered before decisions are taken. Examples of this include …

* Neighbourhood Planning (Public Consultation is a statutory requirement)
* A major financial commitment (play parks, new buildings for Parish use)
* Establishing a Parish Development Plan

Surveys

The Parish Council is taking the lead on a Neighbourhood Plan, which will facilitate the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group initiating village surveys, illuminating the needs and views of residents over the coming years. This then can inform Parish Council focus.

Parish newsletter and SCAN magazine

The Parish Council updates the village on a monthly basis through the Stilton Parish Council newsletter which is digitally available on the Parish Council website, social media, four notice boards and in SCAN (a monthly village magazine which is delivered to every household in the parish). The Parish Council bi-annual hard copy newsletters (summer and winter editions) are also delivered to every household in the village.

Facebook

Stilton Parish Council uses its Facebook page to pass on Parish news (including the Newsletter). News posts that start on the website are forwarded to the Facebook page, which are then shared to village Facebook sites, allowing quick and effective communication.

To encourage direct email/phone discussion between residents and the Parish Council on issues, especially if an answer if required, the Clerk's email address and telephone number will be on all posts and the comments facility disabled.

Published comment by other groups on Parish Council activities

Should the Parish Council become aware of miscommunication or inaccurate publication of facts involving the Parish Council and/or it's activities, the Finance, General Purpose and Communication committee shall be advised and the Clerk asked to request a published correction from the source.

Evaluation

The Parish Council is aware that communication and engagement with the village is essential. Stilton Parish Council will make available to the community information relating to who we are, what we do, what we spend and how we spend it, how we make decisions, our policies and procedures and the services we offer.

The Parish Council will continually monitor …

- Awareness in the community regarding Parish Council activities and initiatives (especially familiarity with the Pavilion and its function as an active community hub)
- Attendance and involvement at Parish Council meetings
- Interest in Parish Councillor vacancies
- Media comments on Parish Council activities (in SCAN and social media).

Conclusion

The Parish Council is committed to listening to feedback from the village and understanding community needs before decision making takes place. This policy and strategy will be reviewed, at least annually, to ensure it develops alongside technological advancements and the evolving demographic of Stilton as a growing village.

Policy Review

Reviewed & updated: 12 May 2026 (agenda item PC108/26)
Next review date: May 2027