

Appendix 2

Community Communications Update

Introduction

On consulting with Parish Councils in October 2020 about what they felt to be important local priorities for the Area Board to focus on and tackle together in collaboration with parish councils, community groups and partners, the topic of community communications came up. The conclusion recorded was that work was needed in some parishes to improve communication, whether hard copy, online or both, with the overall aim of improving parish council and area board reach and dialogue with residents.

Recommendation

Councillors are asked to note the results from the community communications survey and to discuss the key findings, with a view to agreeing key actions intended to strengthen communications within, between and for the benefit of parishes and the community area as a whole.

Survey Findings

The detailed findings of the survey questions posed to parish councils (as below) are attached.

1. How does your Parish Council communicate with residents?
2. Please explain how your Parish Council consults residents when it needs to seek public opinion on key issues such as budgets, significant development proposals etc
3. Please tell us what intra-community communications exist in your village
4. Please tell us what inter-community communications are distributed or are available in your village.
5. Do you think the community you serve feels well informed about parish council, and other community news? Please provide a couple of sentences to describe your views
6. Are there any aspects of communications where you think there would be some benefit in collaborating with other villages? Please describe as fully as you can.

Key Findings

1. All parishes are using a combination of hard copy and online communication tools, some are led by the parish councils, others are led by village newsletter editors or social media site administrators.

2. The CEM needs to create and maintain a list of all the village newsletters/free papers/other publications (including social media sites), and the editor contacts, to strengthen effective overview/connection with local news and news contacts
3. Could each unitary cllr be tasked with keeping an eye on the various websites, parish newsletters, social media sites etc in their division – and email the CEM each week any notable issues/matters relevant to the Area Board work plan?
4. What does the Area Board need to do to get a bolder/more consistent presence on village noticeboards/newsletters/social media sites etc?
5. More could be done to optimise the effectiveness of [Our Community Matters](#) and the new [Wiltshire Together](#) online platform
6. We could look to provide training to strengthen communication methods
7. Is there scope to ask village hand copy deliverers to deliver flyers for Area Board projects/events?
8. Start up collaborative networking online meetings between parish councils to take time to discuss their shared issues of concern, which area board meetings can't always spend detailed time on, for example on issues of crime and community safety where this often occurs in one parish area but impacts on a neighbouring one
9. As we start to strengthen our schools' collaborations, maybe in time we could nurture some school gate village champions (for flyer distributions etc)?

Conclusion

There is a lot happening within and across parishes in terms of communications, and the area board's news and messages are also being conveyed and received well, generally.

There are opportunities to strengthen communications, as indicated in the above key findings, which the CEM will continue to work on over the coming months – offering an update report to the new area board in May 2021.

Report Author: Karen Linaker, Community Engagement Manager