

Town and Parish Engagement - Improvement Plan

First Theme: Communications, Engagement and Customer Services

Theme	Feedback/improvement	Action needed by WBC	Action needed by T&PCs	Priority level 1 = low, 2 = medium, 3 = high.	Success?
Communication	<p>a) A regular town and parish newsletter, which is co-produced providing a quarterly round up of news from WBC as well as towns and parishes; sharing best practice and encourage networking. This would be one newsletter for the whole of West Berkshire.</p>	<p>This is different content than the WBC residents' newsletter and would include both WBC and town/parish news.</p> <p>Could include timetable of decisions, officer points of contact, Devolution case studies, WBC grant funding deadlines, etc.</p> <p>Towns/parishes should be contacted to ask for content.</p>	<p>Stories and news to be shared.</p> <p>Town and parishes to discuss with WBC Communications (Alice Bloor) regarding information they can share.</p>	2	<p>Newsletter with shared stories.</p> <p>Feedback shows that information being shared is useful and informative.</p>

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	b) Information sharing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • funding streams • changes in legislation • campaigns (in a format that can be shared widely) 	Share details of relevant campaigns and ensure local campaigns are shared through WBC channels.	Share details of relevant campaigns	3	Feedback indicating initial reader satisfaction levels (e.g. a social media 'like'). Popularity of articles, monitored through number of times an article is accessed (e.g. link click numbers).
	c) Ensure a clear process for updating contact details of the town and parish councils and make sure this is communicated effectively.	Executive cycle email address is the best contact for updating details of town and parish councils. (executivecycle@westberks.gov.uk)	Share updated details when changes occur. Provide social media links to assist with wider community engagement.	3	Accurate up to date details are publicly available.

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		<p>Ensure this is widely known.</p> <p>Capture town/parish council social media links to assist with collaboration and community engagement.</p>			
Engagement	<p>a) Themed, two-way engagement forums to inform policy development (e.g. building on the District Parish Conference (DPC) to develop themed conversations, develop the West Berkshire Parish Climate Forum, Devolution, etc.)</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for a two-way discussion through DPC</p> <p>BCT Team (Jo Naylor) can help signpost to relevant officer.</p>	<p>Link with Council officers for further advice on arranging themed forums.</p>	1	<p>When required, facilitate the delivery of a forum with for discussions on key topics.</p>
	<p>b) Consultation exercises to be targeted where specifically for town and parishes with clarity on whether a whole town/parish council view is required; along with time given to respond if it is.</p>	<p>Clear guidance should be provided to town/parish councils as to whether a full council view is</p>	<p>To respond in a timely manner to WBC consultations.</p>	3	<p>Good engagement with consultation exercises.</p>

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		<p>required or whether it's appropriate to respond as an individual.</p> <p>Ensure clarity on the status of the consultation (e.g. the Council policy is a minimum of 6-weeks for a public consultation but for statutory consultations the time periods may vary.</p> <p>Communication should be clear when responses are required by.</p>			
	c) Closer links between WBC and the Clerks Forum	Ensure good BCT Team links with Clerks' Forum organisers.	Clerks' Forum organisers (Tilehurst PC/Hampstead Norreys PC Clerks) to link with the	2	Appropriate attendance by WBC officers at relevant Clerks' Forum meetings.

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			Principal Policy Officer (Communities, in the BCT Team).		
General customer service	a) Responding to town and parish enquiries in a more timely manner, ensuring that feedback loops are closed to inform town/parish council colleagues when an issue has been closed	Work underway on the new Customer Charter – this includes our relationship with town and parish councils. Share the required timeframes for a response. Share the process to follow if there has not been any response within the set timeframe.		3	Greater satisfaction in response times and details provided.
	b) A listing of officer contacts for towns and parish councils to help direct enquiries to the correct place in the first instance.	Develop list of key officer contacts that town and parish	Communicate which service areas are most frequently contacted to	3	Ensure officer details are easily accessible.

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		councils are most likely to need.	help shape a list.		
	c) Raise awareness of our respective roles (as a Unitary Authority and as town/parish councils) and understand the constraints of each organisation to assist more effective joint working.	To be clear in all communications and manage expectations of what is possible and achievable.	Work towards good communication links with relevant WBC officers.	2	Stronger working relationships.

Second Theme: Resources and delivering services together

Theme	Feedback/improvement	Action needed by WBC	Action needed by T&PCs	Priority level 1 = low, 2 = medium, 3 = high.	Success?
Resources	a) Improved support from both West Berkshire Council and the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) for guidance on safeguarding and risk management.	Safeguarding support reshaped for all VCS. VCS support being commissioned that could help with risk management; ensure availability of this advice is communicated to	n/a	2	Increased levels of confidence on safeguarding and risk management.

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	b) Development and communication of some standardised advice and guidance for town and parish councils on consultations and risk assessments.	town and parish councils. To provide a guide on consultation and engagement to enable parish and town councils in carrying out their own exercises. To share links to the agreed Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance on risk assessments.	Opportunity to share best practice through websites/ newsletter.	2	Increased levels of confidence in undertaking activities.
Planning and delivering services together	a) Explore the simplification and/or tailoring of devolution for the relative size of the parish and the interests of the community (e.g. process for hedge cutting versus library devolution).	Look at a simplified approach to devolution with associated guidance.	Town and parish councils to share best practice and their experiences of what worked well.	1	Opportunities for all sizes of parish to engage in devolution.
	b) Consider the opportunities for assisting with access to funding to take on services through devolution.	Explore the use of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for devolution		2	Good access to funding to support devolution.

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		<p>i.e. to facilitate the delivery of services.</p> <p>Explore the use of other community grants to support devolution.</p>			
	c) Explore the use of CIL monies to support community priorities.	Arrange a future DPC and/or workshop with town and parish councils to explore the use of CIL funding.		2	Greater access to funds to support devolution.
	d) Share case studies of successful devolution projects and explore where best to store/share this information.	Gather successful case studies (with points of contact) to showcase devolution. This could be best done via newsletter or on a website.	Share successful stories of devolution projects with WBC and each other	2	Clear access to information on devolution

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		Consider how best to host information on devolution.			
	e) Ensure the 'offer' of support for parish planning and Neighbourhood Development Planning (NDP) is clear.	Better awareness of the officer points of contact within WBC to support parish planning and NDPs.		2	Clear signposting on parish planning and NDP support available.

Third Theme: Working Together on Highways and Road Safety

Theme	Feedback/improvement	Action needed by WBC	Action needed by T&PCs	Priority level 1 = low, 2 = medium, 3 = high.	Success?
Road safety	a) A lower 'trigger' threshold sought for speeding cars. WBC set the threshold at 25% of vehicles going at 35mph or more - this is set according to the available officer resource – a lower threshold is possible, but not with the current level of resources currently available to the Road Safety Team.	Improve Parish and Town Councils' awareness of the Council's Speed Intervention Programme and the 'trigger points' for the various	Engage with the Council and/or the Police to determine the best management options. The best point of	3	Fewer speeding cars.

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		<p>interventions available.</p> <p>Council to report speed data back to communities in two ways:</p> <p>1). Percentage of all vehicles above the speed limit 2). Percentage of all vehicles above ACPO guidelines (10% +2mph)</p> <p>Share contact details of TVP contact for those wanting to engage with their Community Speedwatch initiative, which does not have trigger points, but does require more direct involvement from parish and town councils.</p>	<p>contact at TVP is Lee Turnham (Email: Lee.Turnham@thamesvalley.police.uk)</p>		

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	b) Training, advice and guidance sought.	<p>Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic meant WBC were unable to provide face-to-face SID training there has been full access given to the online SID portal. This is where both training and Council-owned equipment can be accessed.</p> <p>Links to be re-shared to all town and parish councils (see links to resources at the end of this document).</p>	<p>Register your interest to gain access to the SID portal by emailing Cheryl.evans@westberks.gov.uk</p> <p>Each town and parish council should allocate a designated user.</p> <p>The approved designated user can then invite suitable volunteers to access training and to book the SID equipment.</p>	3	Successful use of SID equipment by Parish and Town Councils.
	c) Advice and case studies sought which show the impact of speed management initiatives.	WBC officers to share case studies with town and parish councils to show the relative		2	Improved understanding of the benefits of speed

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		success of speed management initiatives.			management initiatives
	d) Improvements to 'Report a Problem' to refine the system to ensure it functions more effectively (e.g. uploading photos of the issues), gives greater clarity on the status of reports and closes feedback loops.	Work currently underway improving the 'Report a Problem' portal – this will have much greater functionality in the future including uploading pictures, tracking issues with more specific details and seeing the final result after the contractor has completed the work. Officers to notify town and parish councils when the improved system is available.	Improved 'Report a Problem' portal will be available in the New Year.	3	Easier tracking of problems reported and better, clearer photographic evidence of the problem and the solution provided.
	e) Road closures/diversions – Communications	When there were road works, alternative routes provided were not always correct.	Town/parish councils to advise of any errors in	2	Successful routing of diverted traffic during road closures.

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		<p>Present practice included a map sent along with a list of road names. Greater local knowledge is often required and feedback from parishes will be helpful to amend the routes.</p> <p>Work will be done during 2022 to re-launch and improve of the existing website to notify of roadworks.</p>	notified route diversions.		

Fourth Theme: Working Together on Planning

Theme	Feedback/improvement	Action needed by WBC	Action needed by T&PCs	Priority level 1 = low, 2 = medium, 3 = high.	Success?
Planning	a) Ensuring planning decisions are clearly communicated back to the parishes, and where possible, to provide more detailed information to the town/parish council to explain the planning decision.	<p>To review the format of the officer report on planning applications and to ensure this report contains all necessary advice from the service areas and clearly shows the officer view, recommendation and other considerations.</p> <p>To ensure effective circulation of the planning officer reports and decisions to the relevant ward/town/parish councils.</p> <p>To produce a briefing sheet on what constitutes a 'material</p>		3	Clearer transparency in the planning decision process.

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		consideration' to help guide town/parish councils when commenting on planning applications.			
	b) Showing the location of planning application sites more clearly, which will help enable better onward dissemination of this information.	Council officers to investigate the potential use of XMap which is being used by some other Local Authorities to map development sites. This was reported as a very helpful/accessible method for certain parish councils already using this system. There is a need to explore the costs involved and functionality compared to the current mapping software used by WBC.	A clearer electronic map of the development sites would enable greater sharing of information with local residents, local councillors and others.	2	Ability to easily appreciate the location of planning sites and keep residents and others better informed.

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	c) Better informed about planning applications being made in adjacent/neighbouring parish areas.	Planning Service to explore how this might be done in an automated way to ensure better awareness of planning applications in neighbouring parish areas.		3	Improved knowledge of where development is taking place, if just outside parish boundaries.
	d) Greater enforcement action to be taken by WBC.	All enforcement applications to be logged and investigated. Recruitment to a new Planning Enforcement Officer post is underway (Dec 2021).	T/PCs to notify the Planning Service if they see unauthorised planning activity.	3	Enforcement action seen to be taking place to prevent unauthorised breaches.
	e) Training and ensuring towns/parishes are kept informed of changing/updated planning policy.	Training to be organised for town/parish councils on current planning legislation. It was suggested this is could be done via Tim Parry at	Training should be attended to keep updated with current legislation. This is particularly crucial those	2	Better understanding of planning policy and how this must be followed and applied.

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		Connecting Communities in Berkshire (CCB).	councils with responsibility for overseeing Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP).		