



[COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY]

Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Development Plan
November 2015

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Introduction

The Localism Act was passed by Government in November 2011 and final regulations relating to the Act and regulating the process came into force in April 2012. The Act allows local areas to produce a spatial development plan for their area and, if 'made' (adopted), future planning applications would have to have regard to the policies within this plan.

Salehurst and Robertsbridge Parish Council have decided to do a Neighbourhood Plan which may take between 12 and 18 months to achieve.

The key aims of the Neighbourhood Plan are to:

- To create local planning policies for Salehurst and Robertsbridge which development proposals need to adhere to;
- To protect against inappropriate and speculative development and to provide greater control over development;
- To bring forward action on facilities and improvements, which are needed by the village.

Two-way communication with the local community during the Neighbourhood Plan is vital for its success and ultimate support through the referendum; therefore, it is important to develop a coherent strategy of how this will be achieved and plan out key stakeholder engagement.

This strategy sets a framework for communications to develop, promote, and support the Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Plan. It gives direction to all media, online, internal, marketing, publications, and public relations communications activity undertaken on behalf of the Salehurst and Robertsbridge Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

We will use the most appropriate channels of communications to reach our wide variety of stakeholders including residents, employees, businesses, community partners, and all levels of government. We will seek to provide communications services on the most cost – effective basis.

Communication only works when messages are clear and easy to understand and when it is a two - way process. It's not enough to talk – we also have to be able to listen. Therefore, this strategy will set out to ensure that key messages are developed throughout the various stages of the Neighbourhood Plan, are communicated as widely as possible, and stakeholders are provided with multiple methods of providing feedback.

Objectives

The objectives of the Communication and Engagement Strategy are to:

- To achieve better communication, leading to better feedback and decision-making.
- Ensure that the implications of the development and adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan are understood by all stakeholders.
- Allow residents and other relevant stakeholders the opportunity to take part in defining the Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Plan.
- Ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the Neighbourhood Plan process to include:
 - ◆ the roles and responsibilities of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group;
 - ◆ the process of creation of the Neighbourhood Plan;
 - ◆ the governance, approval, and acceptance of the Neighbourhood Plan;
 - ◆ the schedule for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Ensure appropriate consultation with and communication to all stakeholders, ensuring that:
 - ◆ Input into the development and approval of the Neighbourhood Plan has been included;
 - ◆ the current status of the Neighbourhood Plan is understood at all times;
 - ◆ appropriate approval is gained from key stakeholders;
- Ensure acceptance by Rother District Council (RDC) by providing, amongst other things:
 - ◆ A Consultation Statement setting out how consultation will be carried out;
 - ◆ A Statement of Community Involvement evidencing the engagement with the community.

Principles

Our Strategy is based on four key principles:-

1. the right information
2. to the right people
3. in the right medium
4. at the right time

These principles include a number of key factors:

- Communication must be meaningful and appropriate.
- Information must be accessible.
- Quality mediums and methods must be used whenever possible.
- Communication channels must allow information to, through and across all levels.
- Information must be relevant and in plain English.
- Consideration needs to be given to the needs of people with disabilities and those whose first language is not English.
- The process must be transparent.

Tools and Activities

We shall use a variety of methods based on what reaches people most effectively and has most credibility. These include and are not limited to:

Tools to be used
Consultation events
Direct mail
Council newspaper/magazine
Email lists
Events
Exhibition
Leaflets & flyers
Local radio
Minutes of meetings
Networking
Newsletter
Parish newsletters / magazine
Posters
Press releases
Social media
Stakeholders' and partners' outlets
Neighbourhood/street champions
Village voice
Website

The messages will be relayed using different methods for different groups.

Resources

We shall make best use of the resources we have and strive to increase resources commensurate with the task. Our current resources, those that we have access to and can be applied to the task, are:

List of Available Local Resources:
Group members
Local councillors
Parish Council notice board
Community notice boards
Community networks
Parish newsletters /magazine
Local newspaper
Website
Facebook

Timescales

Preparing a neighbourhood plan is a sequential process based upon an agreed project plan. The project plan identifies the following key communication points and the dates in which they should be carried out:

Key Communication Point	Target Date(s)
Area designation	April 2015
Building the evidence base and community engagement	May – December 2015
Identifying projects and writing policies	Jan/ Feb 2016
Reg. 14 Pre-submission consultation	Feb/March 2016
Reg. 15 Plan submission	April 2016
Referendum	October/Nov 2016

It is important to note that these dates are indicative.

Evaluation and Amendment

After the first 6-8 months following area designation, the NDP Group will carry out a communications audit to assess the effectiveness of the strategy with both 'internal' and 'external' audiences. We shall consider in particular, who has not responded or reacted to our communications? We shall discuss the evidence/results carefully and use them to amend and improve the Strategy going forward.

How we will communicate

Stakeholder (s)	Format
Parish councillors in NDP area	Meeting mins/reports and presentations
Other elected members (DC & MP)	Direct e/mail/reports and presentations
Parish Council	Meeting mins/reports and presentations
NDP sub (thematic or task) groups	Meeting mins/reports and presentations
All residents in NDP area	Consultation events/parish newsletter/website/local press/posters/letter
Young people in NDP area	Consultation events – targeted events and social media
Clubs, community & voluntary groups in NDP area	Consultation events/parish newsletter/website/local press/posters/ Letter/ email
Elderly persons in NDP area	Consultation events/parish newsletter/website/local press/posters
Persons with disabilities and special needs	Consultation events/parish newsletter/website/local press/posters
Hard to reach groups	Consultation events/parish newsletter/website/local press/posters
Schools and colleges serving NDP area	Consultation events - targeted
All businesses/employers in NDP area	Consultation events/parish newsletter/website/local press/posters/ Letter/ email
Retailers in NDP area	Consultation events/parish newsletter/website/local press/posters/ Letter/ email
Service providers	Letter/ email /meeting
Statutory undertakers	Letter/ email /meeting
Major landowners	Letter/ email /meeting
Developers with interest in NDP area	Letter/ email /meeting
District Council	Letter/ email /meeting
Neighbouring parish/town councils	Letter/ email /meeting

Surveys, drop ins and workshops will be held as and when deemed necessary.

The NDP website will be used as a continuous means of communicating with everyone.