

Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council

Consultation Policy

Introduction

Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council is committed to providing a high level of professional service to the community.

There may be circumstances when the Parish Council wishes to seek the views of local people on a proposed project or action. In such circumstances, a neighbourhood consultation may be conducted, and this policy aims to set out how such consultations may take place. Such consultation is not obligatory

A neighbourhood consultation will not be carried out in connection with any action required to be carried out by the Parish Council by law or where a project, action or activity is proposed on the grounds of health and/or safety or in connection with required repairs and maintenance, or in any circumstances where the proposed project, action or activity is outside the power of the Parish Council to undertake.

The pace of modern life is such that Parish Councillors and parishioners are time poor and consequently, some historic methods of alerting parishioners to the existence of a consultation and in conducting a consultation are increasingly difficult and impractical; e.g. Face-to-face formal surveys/interviews of the whole parish.

Conversely, use of the internet and social media is increasingly common across all demographics within the Parish and consultation will increasingly make use of the faster, more inclusive and more time-efficient methods such access affords.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council may, at its sole discretion, chose in which circumstances a neighbourhood consultation will take place.

Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council may, at its sole discretion, decide who is to be consulted, provided that any consultation be limited to people residing within the Parish.

Unless circumstances require otherwise, those responding will be able to do so anonymously but can be asked to provide a postcode to verify residence within the Parish.

Notice of all consultations to be undertaken by the Parish Council will be given in the Minutes of Parish Council Meetings, which can be viewed on the Parish Council Website (<https://winterbournestoke-pc.gov.uk/>) and the Parish

Noticeboard located at the north end of Church Street. Additional notification may, at the discretion of the Parish Council, be given on the website, by social media, etc.

Notice of a consultation will be deemed to have been given to all parishioners by virtue of its announcement in the Minutes of Parish Council Meetings as published in hardcopy and electronically.

Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council will decide how any consultation is to be conducted but will generally try to use a range of communication methods and media to reach the widest possible audience. Consultation methods that might be used may include in order of preference, but not be limited to:

- Electronic Surveys (Hardcopy equivalents for those with no internet access)
- Face-to face informal surveys
- Social media surveys
- Telephone Surveys

Different survey methods may be used for the same consultation where necessary to ensure equality of opportunity in responding.

Wherever possible, surveys and questionnaires will include the following:

- A brief explanation of the nature of the project/activity
- A clear indication that the consultation is being undertaken by Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council
- A statement indicating that the results of the survey/questionnaire will be used to inform Parish Councillors who will remain responsible for making a decision on the matter
- An opportunity for members of the public to add comments about the project/activity
- A clear indication of when electronic surveys are to be completed by and the date by which hardcopy responses are to be returned to the Clerk
- A statement that those who do not respond will be deemed to have no objections to the project/activity proposed

Wherever possible and/or appropriate, hardcopy surveys will be hand delivered to those households without internet access, and requesting such a hardcopy survey for each specific consultation, to ensure that they reach all those selected to respond.

The Parish Council may choose whether to consult households or individuals depending upon the nature of the consultation but in the absence of any resolution to the contrary, a consultation relating to impact on a property will be deemed to be a household consultation and one response per household

will be accepted.

Where a Parish Councillor has a declared prejudicial interest in a matter which is subject to a neighbourhood consultation, that Councillor should not be involved in any face to face, telephone or interview surveys. Simple delivery of paper-based surveys/questionnaires is permitted.

Parish Council decisions can only be made by Parish Councillors in a duly convened meeting. The results of a neighbourhood consultation are not a substitute for proper discussion and resolutions of the parish council and must be used solely for the purpose of informing parish councillors of the general wishes of those consulted. Specifically, Parish Councillors are required to take the needs of the Parish as a whole into account when making decisions and not just reflect the wishes of a minority which may conflict with the needs of the parish as a whole. Thus, the results of a neighbourhood consultation may not necessarily be reflected in the final decision of the Parish Council.

Feedback on the results of a survey will be made available to members of the public where appropriate through the Minutes of meetings at which the results are discussed. A separate notification of the results may be given to those surveyed if the Parish Council so chooses, either through a separate written notification or a notice on a nearby noticeboard for example.

Related Documents	

Adoption and Review History	
Adopted at Parish Council Meeting on:	2nd August 2018
Reviewed On:	September 2021 December 2024
Next Review Due:	December 2027