

# Belmont Rural Parish Council

## Neighbourhood Consultation Policy

### INTRODUCTION

Belmont Rural Parish Council is committed to providing a high level of professional service to the community.

Much of the work of the Parish Council is guided by the Parish Plan which has been drafted in accordance with the views of residents, sought through the Parish Planning process. However, there may be circumstances when the nature of a project or action has not been specifically envisaged when the Parish Plan was drawn up and the Parish Council wishes to seek the views of local people on the 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.

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.

### POLICY AND PROCEDURES

1. Belmont Rural Parish Council may, at its sole discretion, choose in which circumstances a neighbourhood consultation will take place.
2. Belmont Rural 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.
3. 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.
4. Belmont Rural 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, but not be limited to:
  - Face to face informal surveys
  - Formal written questionnaires
  - Electronic Surveys
  - Telephone surveys
  - Interviews

Different survey methods may be used for the same consultation where necessary to ensure equality of opportunity in responding. For example, an interview might be used in

conjunction with a written questionnaire where a resident might not be able to complete a written questionnaire.

5. 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 Belmont Rural 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 the questionnaire is to be returned and to which address
  - A statement that those who do not respond will be deemed to have no objections to the project/activity proposed
6. Wherever possible and/or appropriate, questionnaires or paper based surveys will be hand delivered to ensure that they reach all those selected to respond.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.

This policy was adopted by Belmont Rural Parish Council at it's meeting held on 17.05.2012