

## **Boxley Parish Council Vision and Business Plan.**

The Parish Council is committed to working solely for and with its residents having a strong self-awareness of its role within its communities and also its position within the local government system.

To achieve this the Council will produce and regularly review its approach, policies and procedures to ensure that the work of the Council is:

1. **RELEVANT** – The Council will work for the short and long term welfare and improvement of the parish and its communities through projects that are of tangible benefit to all or part of the parish.
2. **RESPONSIVE** – it will respond positively and promptly to all requests, complaints<sup>1</sup> and queries from residents and other organisations. It will identify and respond to pertinent consultation from Government and other bodies.
3. **INCLUSIVE** - the Council welcomes local input and will work to its Community Inclusion Policy which actively seeks to involve its residents. It will work not only to serve but to empower its residents by working to attract people from diverse backgrounds to stand for election or co-option to the Council<sup>2</sup>.
4. **SUPPORTIVE** - The Council will give fair and unbiased consideration to applications for financial support, in the form of grants<sup>3</sup>, from parish groups and organisations related to the well-being of the parish and its residents.
5. **ACCESSIBLE** – The Council will ensure that the parish office<sup>4</sup> is open and welcoming to its residents. Opening times and contact details of staff and parish councillors will be widely publicised.
6. **INTERACTIVE** – The Council will offer all residents the opportunity to speak at its meetings<sup>5</sup> and will offer support and guidance on how to do this<sup>6</sup>. The Council actively canvasses and welcomes residents' views via its website, noticeboards, social media and public consultations. In accordance with its Community Involvement Policy it particularly encourages such interaction when major projects are under consideration.
7. **DEMOCRATIC** – The Council will listen to its residents and communities. The Council will also campaign to ensure contested parish elections to allow electors to choose their own representatives. Between elections casual vacancies for co-option to the Council will be widely advertised and CVs invited. These will be considered at a full meeting of the council open to residents, where a decision will be made.
8. **PROACTIVE** – The Council will always attempt to plan ahead and have the financial ability to respond to unforeseen circumstances<sup>7</sup>. It will keep and regularly review a 'wish list' of improvements that it wishes to see in the parish. This list will be drawn up in an open and accountable way to allow residents to suggest/identify local needs<sup>8</sup>.
9. **PARTNERSHIP WORKING** – The Council will openly consider opportunities to work in partnership with its residents, parish based Charitable Trusts/organisations and the local

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<sup>1</sup> Complaints Policy.

<sup>2</sup> To achieve this it will, where possible, make available a parish allowance and subsistence allowances so that no member is 'out of pocket'

<sup>3</sup> The parish council has a grants policy and application procedure which is advertised on its website.

<sup>4</sup> Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close ME5 9RU

<sup>5</sup> Public Bodies (admission to meetings) Act 1960.

<sup>6</sup> Leaflets on: the right to attend and address a meeting; how best to present an issue; and alternative methods of providing information to the meeting are available. Office staff are also briefed on the need to be neutral and helpful.

<sup>7</sup> Budget provisions, Reserves Policy, forward planning etc.

<sup>8</sup> Wish List policy

business community, including financial involvement if needed providing that the proposal meets identified needs/aims/local commitments.

10. OPEN AND ACCOUNTABLE – The Council will endeavour to take all its decisions in open session and to supply in advance adequate information to allow residents to be become involved in an informed way. It will publish a monthly newsletter, maintain an up to date website and publish the chairman’s annual report including an End of Year Statement. It will have clear and understandable policies and procedures so residents can see how the Council makes decisions.

11. EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT – The Council will undertake constructive reviews of its work and projects to learn from its successes or failures. It will willingly consider changes to the way it works if it will make it more effective and/or efficient or allow its service to be improved.

- TRAINING: The Council will give relevant training to new councillors and staff, as this leads to a stronger and more knowledgeable team.<sup>7</sup> It will offer supplementary training as and when necessary to the same ends.
- TEAMWORK: The Council will ensure that staff are allowed and remunerated for sufficient hours to ensure that work and projects can be completed<sup>7</sup>. The Council will also ensure that the parish office is provided with adequate and up to date equipment/facilities and will operate with a minimum of paperwork while remaining cost effective.
- PROJECTS: All Projects will be parish councillor led with support from the parish office and with due deference to the role of the Responsible Financial Officer<sup>9</sup>. Projects and work will have a reasonable deadline with a timeline produced to enable progress to be monitored.
- THE ESTATE – The Council will be a responsible manager of its property. It will have clear plans for maintenance, replacement and repair of all the Council’s buildings, open spaces and other property, both movable and immovable.

12. FINANCIAL – The Council will continue to have robust management and auditing regimes when dealing with its finances.

- Audit – The Council will continue to meet the legal requirements relating to the audit of its accounts.<sup>10</sup>
- Financial management - Strong financial checks and risk assessments will be undertaken periodically and investments and reserves will be reviewed regularly.
- Budgeting – An annual budget and precept will be agreed. The budget will include forecasts for 3-4 years in the future. The budget will be supported by an information document that gives details of maintenance programmes, contract finish dates and other information relevant to forward planning. The Council will include in this budget a healthy reserve so that it can be proactive in its service to the community.<sup>7</sup>
- Grants - Grant support for community organisations will be considered after relevant conditions are met and such organisations will also be encouraged, and supported, to apply for grants from other bodies.<sup>11</sup>

### 13. **SWOT ANALYSIS**

An analysis of current **strengths**, **weaknesses**, **opportunities** and **threats** to the Council:

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<sup>9</sup> Financial Regulations.

<sup>10</sup> Accounts and Audit (England) Regulation 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Budget and Grants Policy.

### 13.1 **Strengths**

- Proactive, qualified, experienced and attentive office personal
- An engaged and co-operative Council with strong leadership exercised by the Chairman.
- Positive image
- Excellent policies and systems
- Reasonable financial reserves

### 13.2 **Weaknesses**

- Serving four widely separated communities with lack of a single heart to parish
- Lack of knowledge by residents of what the Council does
- Age and demographic of current councillors
- Inability to attract input from residents

### 13.3 **Opportunities**

- Using the Council's website, community alerts and Facebook presence to consult with residents (including possible on-line petition facility and discussion forums)
- Four-yearly elections have the potential to attract new blood
- MBC adoption of Community Infrastructure Levy.

### 13.4 **Threats**

- Loss of key staff.
- If MBC fails to adopt Community Infrastructure Levy (loss of potential income
- Apathy of residents
- Failure to continue to attract new councillors
- Sudden loss of several experienced councillors
- Cuts in local authority services with the expectation that the parish council will take on or pay for them.
- Loss of the council tax support grant because MBC decides not to pass it on or the government withdraws it

## 14. **OBJECTIVES**

- *Increase knowledge of the Parish Council and its work in the parish by being proactive in implementing the Community Involvement Policy.*
- To continue to produce relevant documents and leaflets that explain the work and systems of the Parish Council
- To maintain and further develop the website
- To maintain a presence on Facebook and develop other communication opportunities.
- To continue to work for a better Boxley in all possible ways