



**Dartmoor Forest Parish Council**

**Policy**

**Community Engagement**

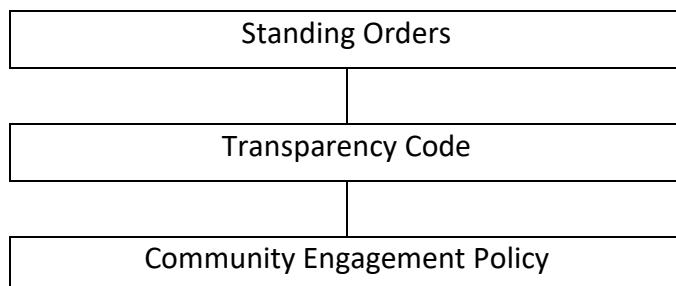
## Record of Amendments and Reviews

<u>Version</u>	<u>Comment</u>	<u>Date of Adoption</u>
1	To meet the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014	11 November 2014
1a	New sections on Accessibility and 'What Dartmoor Forest Parish Council Asks Of Its Community'. Minor text amendments. Reviewed and readopted.	23 March 2021
1a	Reviewed and readopted.	28 June 2022
1a	Reviewed and readopted.	June 2023
1a	Reviewed and readopted.	Feb 2025

Next review required by:	Feb 2027
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## Document Hierarchy

In the event of any discrepancy between Dartmoor Forest Parish Council Codes, Regulations, Policies, Strategies, Procedures and other documentation, the version contained in the higher level document detailed below will apply, unless changed by a resolution of the council.



## **Aims**

1.1 The council's aims for seeking community engagement and the outcomes it hopes to achieve are to:

- a. Work more closely with residents, businesses and community groups;
- b. Engage with as many people as possible who want to participate in decision-making, monitoring services and planning for the future;
- c. Ensure that, by getting closer to the community and being accessible to all groups, local democracy is enhanced;
- d. Ensure that through the use of a wide range of approaches to public involvement and community engagement, we actively encourage the involvement of residents, to capture their views and learn their concerns and effectively use those views as an integral part of the decision-making process;
- e. Ensure that residents have the opportunities to be heard at every stage, and the capacity to be effective citizens.

## **Desired Outcomes:**

2.1 This strategy is part of the council's commitment to creating and maintaining effective working relationships with all sectors of the community, based on trust, openness and constructive challenge. Desired outcomes of the strategy include:

- a. Improved communication through all channels of engagement.
- b. More residents understanding the role of Councillors and getting the best effect.
- c. Improved engagement with local communities, with more people feeling that they are involved in decision-making and a higher percentage of people involved in volunteering.
- d. Improved satisfaction with services provided by the Council.

## **Defining the Community**

3.1 Dartmoor Forest is wholly within the Dartmoor National Park. Princetown is an urban village with the concentration of the Parish population but communities of appreciable size are in the hamlets of Hexworthy and Postbridge, with other scattered settlements such as Believer, Powder Mills, Merrivale (east), Rundlestone, Two Bridges, Peat Cott, Whiteworks, Huccaby and Dartmeet (west). The principal authorities are West Devon Borough Council and Devon County Council. The Parish is divided into 3 wards: Princetown, Postbridge and Hexworthy. There is an electorate of around 920. The community may be defined as consisting of:

- a. Residents of the Parish;
- b. Postbridge Village Hall Trustees and its users;
- c. Princetown Community Centre and its users;
- d. Head Teacher, teachers and Governors of Princetown Primary School;
- e. Young people who live and/or go to school in the Parish;
- f. Retail and other businesses in the Parish;
- g. Interest groups – clubs and societies eg Football Club, History Society etc;
- h. Voluntary organisations;
- i. Church Groups;
- j. Farming Community;

- k. Groups of people defined by a common factor such as age, disability, faith, and other groups;
- l. Tourists and other visitors to the Parish;
- m. Councillors and public service representatives.
- n. Neighbouring Parish Councils.

### **Role of Council Members and Officers**

- 4.1 The Parish Council is not party-political and has 10 Councillors: 7 from Princetown Ward, 2 from Postbridge Ward and one from Hexworthy Ward. Councillors and their contact details are on the council website and the 4 Parish Council noticeboards.
- 4.2 There is one officer of the Council who is referred to as the Clerk. The Clerk covers the entire spectrum of the council work and combines the roles of: the Parish Clerk, the Proper Officer, the Responsible Financial Officer and Burials Clerk.

### **Provision of Information to the Community**

- 5.1 The Parish Council Transparency Code meets the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. The information listed at Annex A is published for the community under the Transparency Code.
- 5.2 The Parish Council provides information to the community by the following means:
  - a. Parish Notice Boards.
    - i. Princetown – all legal requirement notices and notices of community interest as deemed appropriate.
    - ii. Postbridge – limited legal requirement notices and notices of community interest as deemed appropriate.
    - iii. Believer – limited legal requirement notices and notices of community interest as deemed appropriate.
    - iv. Hexworthy – limited legal requirement notices and notices of community interest as deemed appropriate.
  - b. The council's website: [www.dartmoorforestparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.dartmoorforestparishcouncil.gov.uk). This publishes:
    - i. All information required by the Transparency Code;
    - ii. All other legal requirement notices;
    - iii. A wide range of community information, notices and news.
    - iv. Links to other government and non-government bodies that provide services within the Parish.
  - c. The council's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/dartmoorforestpc.net> Community news items are posted including: the agenda for forthcoming Parish Council meetings; links to key documents on the website; to conduct community surveys; and general information for the community. Posts will be shared to other Facebook groups operating in the Parish as deemed appropriate.
  - d. Other Social Media. The council reserves the right to use other social media for community engagement as appropriate.
- 5.3 The names, addresses and phone numbers of all the Councillors are published on the website and on all Parish noticeboards.

5.4 Information, such as agendas for and minutes of meetings, is published on the website and the Princetown noticeboard. Links to this information is posted on the Facebook page.

5.5 An Annual Report is prepared and published on the web site.

### **Opportunities for Community Involvement**

- 6.1 Key representatives of outside bodies are invited to attend all Parish Council meetings, including: the Police Community Support Officer, the ward County Councillor, the ward Borough Councillor, the local DNPA Member, the public and members of the press.
- 6.2 It is recognised that members of the community may wish to engage with the Council at different levels, from the odd email or letter with a suggestion on how a service could be improved, to regular attendance at a Council meeting.
- 6.3 Messages can be left for the Clerk by website contact form, email or telephone at any time.
- 6.4 Parish Council meetings are open to the public and there are two formal public fora during each council meeting.
- 6.5 An Annual Parish Meeting is held in April, giving the public and local organisations an opportunity to participate in the full meeting. This meeting is advertised widely and is used by the Council to report on the work carried out during the year. It is also an opportunity for the Council to obtain the views of residents on any matter which affects the community.
- 6.6 The Council undertakes consultations by questionnaire and public meetings as appropriate for specific issues.
- 6.7 The Council is always considering practical ways of engaging with people and community groups.
- 6.8 The Council will continue to arrange, support and participate in community events.
- 6.9 The council has either a representative on the committee, or a nominated lead councillor or an identified point of contact for the following organisations within or linking to the Parish:
- a. West Devon Southern Parish Link Committee.
  - b. Princetown Community Centre Committee.
  - c. Postbridge Village Hall Committee.
  - d. Princetown Charity Shop Committee.
  - e. High Moorland Women's Institute.
  - f. Princetown Pavilion Youth Club.
  - g. Princetown Play Area.
  - h. Princetown Primary School Governors.
  - i. Princetown Public Library Group.
  - j. Princetown Food Bank Committee.
  - k. Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Councillor Advocate Scheme.
  - l. Postbridge Cemetery.
  - m. Gardening the Grounds – Princetown Churchyard Maintenance Fund
  - n. Princetown Business Network Group

## **Accessibility**

- 7.1 As far as reasonably practicable, the council will meet in premises that have suitable access arrangements for disabled people.
- 7.2 As far as reasonably practicable, the council will make information available in a variety of formats: paper, online and verbal; to ensure all parishioners are able to access it by at least one means.
- 7.3 As far as reasonably practicable, the council will maintain its website in a way to maximise its accessibility. The Accessibility Statement on the website will detail any limitations.

## **What Dartmoor Forest Parish Council Asks Of Its Community**

- 8.1 To actively review the council's notice boards, website and Facebook page for information about meetings and events on a regular basis.
- 8.2. To recognise opportunities to influence the council and utilise them by responding to surveys, letters, questionnaires etc.
- 8.3. To address comments, suggestions or complaints in writing by letter, or by email, or by telephone using contact information available on the council's website. Alternatively, to attend the monthly council meeting and make use of the public participation session

## Annex A: Transparency Code Summary Table

Dartmoor Forest Parish Council will publish:

Information title	Information which will be published
<b>All items of expenditure above £100</b>	<p>Annual publication no later than 1 July in the year immediately following the accounting year to which it relates.</p> <p>Publish details of each individual item of expenditure.</p> <p>Copies of all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers, receipts and other related documents do not need to be published but should remain available for inspection.</p> <p>For each individual item of expenditure the following information must be published:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. date the expenditure was incurred,</li> <li>b. summary of the purpose of the expenditure,</li> <li>c. amount, and</li> <li>d. Value Added Tax that cannot be recovered.</li> </ul>
<b>End of year accounts</b>	<p>Annual publication no later than 1 July in the year immediately following the accounting year to which it relates.</p> <p>Publish signed statement of accounts according to the format included in the Annual Return form. It should be accompanied by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. a copy of the bank reconciliation for the relevant financial year,</li> <li>b. an explanation of any significant variances (e.g. more than 10-15 percent) in the statement of accounts for the relevant year and previous year, and</li> <li>c. an explanation of any differences between 'balances carried forward' and 'total cash and short term investments', if applicable.</li> </ul>
<b>Annual governance statement</b>	<p>Annual publication no later than 1 July in the year immediately following the accounting year to which it relates.</p> <p>Publish signed annual governance statement according to the format included in the Annual Return form.</p> <p>Explain any negative responses to governance statements, including how any weaknesses will be addressed.</p>

Information title	Information which will be published
<b>Internal audit report</b>	<p>Annual publication no later than 1 July in the year immediately following the accounting year to which it relates.</p> <p>Publish signed internal audit report according to the format included in the Annual Return form.</p> <p>Explain any negative response to the internal controls objectives, including how any weaknesses will be addressed.</p> <p>Explain any 'not covered' responses to internal controls objectives.</p>
<b>List of councillor or member responsibilities</b>	<p>Annual publication of councillor or member responsibilities no later than 1 July in the year immediately following the accounting year to which it relates, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) names of all councillors or members,</li> <li>b) committee or board membership and function (if Chairman or Vice-Chairman), and</li> <li>c) representation on external local public bodies (if nominated to represent the authority or board).</li> </ul>
<b>Location of public land and building assets</b>	<p>Annual publication no later than 1 July in the year immediately following the accounting year to which it relates.</p> <p>Parish councils and port health authorities to publish details of all public land and building assets – either in its full asset and liabilities register or as an edited version.</p> <p>Internal drainage boards to only publish details of registered land and buildings that have a market value and appear in Fixed Assets Register.</p> <p>The following information must be published:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) description (what it is, including size/acreage),</li> <li>b) location (address7 or description of location),</li> <li>c) owner / custodian, e.g. the authority manages the land or asset on behalf of a local charity,</li> <li>d) date of acquisition (if known),</li> <li>e) cost of acquisition (or proxy value), and</li> <li>f) present use.</li> </ul>
<b>Minutes, agendas and papers of formal meetings</b>	<p>Publication of draft minutes from all formal meetings not later than one month after the meeting has taken place.</p> <p>Publication of meeting agendas and associated meeting papers not later than three clear days before the meeting to which they relate is taking place.</p>