



COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Title	Communications
Owner	Chair
Version number	0.1
Primary audience	General public, councillors and staff
Objective	This policy sets out the procedure for communications within the Parish Council and externally with third parties.

Aims

This policy aims to establish clear, easy to use, channels of communication in relation to members of the public, other agencies, fellow Councillors, the press and Parish Council staff.

Each Parish Councillor has a duty to represent, without bias, the interests of the whole community. He/she will always try to help regarding matters relating to the Parish. However, an individual councillor cannot respond to enquiries outside of Parish Council meetings other than to acknowledge such an enquiry. Neither can an individual Councillor, nor the Chair, make a decision on behalf of the Parish Council.

Principles for all forms of Communication

The Parish Council will ensure that it communicates with residents in a timely and effective manner, and to inform and consult them about matters which affect the Parish. All methods of communication should:

- reflect the views of the Parish Council not the individual
- be civil, tasteful and relevant
- be concise
- not disclose information which is confidential
- not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive
- not promote political parties
- not publicise personal information

All councillors are provided with a Council email address which is to be used solely for the purpose of conducting Council business.

Emails / correspondence received by the Council's staff or Members may be disclosed following a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or following a subject access request under the Data Protection Act 1998, under the General Data Protection Regulation or during legal proceedings.

- Do not write anything in communications that might be construed as offensive or discriminatory.
- Do not make negative comments about an individual, including members of the public, Members, Officer, or business suppliers.

Council letterheaded paper may be used by the Clerk when preparing communications from any Councillor if requested but must only be used to convey information that has been authorised by the parish council and must not be used to convey personal views.

Internal Communication

E-mails should be kept to a minimum and be appropriate to the work of the parish council. Matters for information to the other councillors should be directed via the Clerk.

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Councillors must not give instructions to any member of staff, unless authorised to do so (for example, three or more Councillors sitting as a committee or subcommittee with appropriate delegated powers from the council).

No individual Councillor, regardless of whether they are the Chair of the council, the Chair of a committee or other meeting, may give instructions to the Clerk or to another employee which are inconsistent or conflict with council decisions or arrangements for delegated power.

WhatsApp Groups

WhatsApp groups are informal means of communication and should only be used to discuss items to be included on a Council agenda and to raise areas of concern that need to be dealt with.

Means of Communication with the public

Parish Council Meetings

All Parish Council meetings are open to the press and public and under the council's standing orders time is allocated at each meeting for public comment. Residents and local organisations are encouraged to attend Parish Council meetings and bring to the Council any proposals or comments they may have.

It is expected that all participants in the meeting will abide by the code of conduct.

Website

Information is published on the Parish Council website in the interests of transparency and to provide electors with information about its activities. This will include Parish Council meeting agendas, the minutes of Parish Council meetings and a publication scheme. Hard copies are available by request to the clerk. The website must be kept up to date.

Parish Magazine

The Parish Council will contribute to the monthly Village magazine with details of Parish Council meetings and news which is considered relevant at the time.

Notice boards

The notice boards around the parish, will display contact details for the Parish Clerk and councillors, the notice of meeting dates, any statutory notices and other items of interest. Due to limited space, more comprehensive information is available on the parish council website.

Correspondence

All correspondence to the parish council should be addressed to the Clerk. This will ensure that the matter is recorded and passed to the parish council for their attention at the next meeting.

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If a resident wishes a subject to be raised, and it is appropriate for discussion at a parish council meeting, then the Clerk must be notified three days before the publication of the agenda.

The Parish Council will determine the response, if any, to correspondence received.

The Vexatious Complaints Policy will be used upon receipt of vexatious communications. The Parish Council reserve the right to not respond to any correspondents that are taking up a disproportionate amount of the Clerk's time.

All official correspondence from the Parish Council should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the Parish Council. Correspondence from individual parish councillors should be avoided; however, there may be exceptional situations when it is appropriate for a parish councillor to issue correspondence in his/her own name. Such correspondence must be authorised by the Parish Council.

Social Media

The Parish Council has a Facebook page which will be used to Inform, Celebrate and Signpost activities of the Council. The page is intended to inform residents of local issues and the Council's activities, it is not intended to be used for debate and members of the public are directed to email the Clerk rather than post comments on the page.

Annual Parish Meeting

This is a meeting of the Parish and not the Parish Council. These meetings can celebrate local activities and debate current issues in the community. Seven clear days' notice of the meeting will be given, and the meeting will be held in April each year.

Communication with the Public

Elected members will be regularly approached by members of the community as this is part of their role. How enquiries from the public are dealt with by councillors will reflect on the council. At no time should councillors make any promises to the public about any matter raised with them other than to promise to investigate the matter. All manner of issues may be raised, many of which may not be relevant to the Parish Council. Depending on the issue raised it may be appropriate to deal with the matter in the following ways:

- refer the matter to the Clerk who will then deal with it as appropriate
- request an item on a relevant agenda
- investigate the matter personally, having sought the guidance of the Clerk

Unless a Parish Councillor is certain that he/she is reporting the view of the Council, they must make it clear to members of the public that they are expressing a personal view. Any Councillor should be mindful:

- Of the need to take care not to give the impression that the view has the support of or represents official Council policy.
- Of the dangers of public or external bodies expectations.

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- Of the publicity or media coverage which may reflect on the Parish Council.

The only clear way of being aware of the Council’s view is if the matter has been discussed at a Parish Council meeting, and a decision made on that item.

Communication with the Press

The Clerk will clear all press reports, or comments to the media, in consultation with the Chair.

The Clerk will be the first point of contact for the media; however, where it is appropriate for a councillor to represent the Parish Council, the Chair or Vice-Chair shall be authorised as the official spokesmen for the council.

Individual councillors will not be permitted to issue media releases on behalf of the Parish Council.

In the restricted period before an election, commonly known as “purdah” media releases will not include quotes from councillors who are due for re-election.

Unless a parish councillor has been authorised by the council to speak to the media on a particular issue, parish councillors who are asked for comment by the press should make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as their personal view.

Review and approval

Sign off		
Parish Council	9/12/2024	
Next review date		
This policy should be reviewed every two years or when significant change occurs to the subject matter.		
The next review date for this policy is November 2026 .		

Version Control / History

Version no.	Author	Date	Status/Comments
0.1	AGS	23.10.2024	Create new template
1.0	AGS	11.11.24	Add sections on WhatsApp / social media