

Communication Policy

The Parish Council will ensure that information about our services is easily accessible, relevant and timely, that the community are encouraged to access the Parish Council with queries and suggestions, that interaction with the Parish Council is collaborative and responsive.

The channels we use:

- The Parish Council website where key documents are accessible relating to the council services, where contact details of the Clerk and Councillors are held, where agendas, meeting minutes and a calendar of meetings can be accessed
- The Community Newsletter – where summaries of parish council activities and council subjects of interest for the community are reported.
- Use of social media using the popular Hullavington Happenings Facebook group
- Articles in The Hullavington News.
- From time to time, community surveys or consultations on specific topics and use of feedback on them for subsequent analysis.
- Occasional door drops for important topics and use of a survey post box on the Post Office counter.

The way we communicate

All communication from the Parish Council is courteous, timely, professional, appropriate and reflects the decisions and Standing Orders or Policies of Hullavington Parish Council. At times this may not reflect the Councillor's own views on any subject.

The role of Parish Clerk

The Clerk of the Parish Council has overall responsibility for overseeing all communication with members of the community and outside bodies. Contact details for the Clerk are visible on the website and on the parish noticeboard. Our community is advised to contact the Clerk for any enquiries relating to parish business, either by phone or by email.

The Parish Notice Board and Website

The Clerk updates the notice board with all information relevant to parish business such as meeting agendas, election notices and accounts information where they are a legal obligation of the council. Agendas are available three full working days before the meeting. Additionally, the Clerk and in their role as RFO ensures that the website holds all documents associated with transparency and accountability of the Parish Council.

Written Communication:

All Councillors and the Clerk will be provided with a parish council email address which is to be used solely for the purpose of conducting Parish Council business.

The Clerk is required to include a 'signature' as part of all email communication so that their name, position and contact information is provided.

Handling individual enquires from the Community

Councillors will also be regularly approached by members of the community as this is part of their role. Councillors and the Clerk will handle such communications with courtesy and professionalism at all times.

Enquiries may be in person, by telephone, letter or email.

At no time should councillors make any promises to members of the community 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 Council. The correct response may be to signpost the enquiry to the correct agency when it is not in the remit of the Council.

The issue can be handled in the following ways:

- refer the matter to the Clerk to handle the issue;
- request an item via the Clerk or Chair on a relevant agenda;
- investigate the matter personally, having sought the guidance of the Clerk or a relevant Councillor;
- pass the matter onto the relevant Councillor to handle the enquiry.

All communications must be responded to and the correspondent kept apprised of progress as follows:

1. Having received an enquiry, the councillor should acknowledge receipt (if in writing) and advise of what action is intended to be taken and forward the matter to the Clerk for any further action or reply;
2. Either the Councillor or the Clerk advises of any updates;
3. Either the Councillor or the Clerk reports back on the outcome of the enquiry. If a third party is involved, the Clerk or Councillor ensures the correspondent has been updated by the 3rd Party

Any Councillor who is unsure of how to handle difficult, angry or vexatious complainants will be provided with the necessary guidance by the Clerk to ensure a positive outcome from such situations.

Handling 3rd Party Media Communication

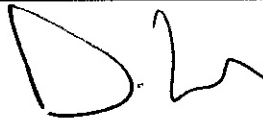
All communication to or from the media MUST be sent to the Clerk and Chair.

Effective management of media relations are handled as follows :

- Respond to journalists in full within a reasonable time
- Be helpful, polite and positive
- Never say “no comment”
- Ensure all statements or responses to hostile enquiries are cleared by the Clerk or Chair
- Evaluate media coverage
- Issue timely and relevant press releases
- Pre-empt potential stories arising from Parish Council agendas/minutes by issuing proactive PR (where possible)
- Ensure all media contact is with the Clerk or Chair

If Councillors personally communicate directly with the media, they must ensure the media understand their views are not necessarily the views of the Parish Council.

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

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