



# **BISHOPSTOKE PARISH COUNCIL**

## **COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

**This Communications Policy was adopted  
at the Council meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

**D Wheal**

**Clerk to Bishopstoke Parish Council**

**BISHOPSTOKE PARISH COUNCIL**

**COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

**Amendment Sheet**

<b>Amendment No.</b>	<b>Date Incorporated</b>	<b>Subject</b>
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# COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1** Bishopstoke Parish Council (BPC) recognises its role within the community as a communicator to individual residents, local organisations and businesses.
- 1.2** BPC is committed to 'Provide excellent communications and transparency'.
- 1.3** This Communication Policy will lay out how the Council communicates and engages with the community. Communication is as much about listening to what residents think about the council and the needs of the community, as well as telling the community about the work of the parish council and its services.
- 1.4** Relevant Legislation:
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
  - Local Government Act 1986 and 1972
  - Local Government Finances Act 1972
  - Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960,
  - UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
  - Website Accessibility Guidelines 2.0
- 1.5** The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information that is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the Council's standing orders, under contract or by common law.
- 1.6** Related Council Policies and Documents
- Code of Conduct
  - Financial Regulations
  - Document Retention Policy
  - Social Media Policy
  - Standing Orders
  - Complaints Procedure
  - Civility & Respect Pledge

## 2. Correspondence (email or letter)

- 2.1** All correspondence relating to the Council should be addressed to the Parish Clerk (or other appropriate Officer) in the first instance either via email at [clerk@bishopstokepc.org](mailto:clerk@bishopstokepc.org) or via post. This will ensure that the matter is recorded and passed to the relevant person or organisation as soon as practically possible. Anyone requesting a response from the Parish Council should ensure the Clerk is copied into the correspondence.
- 2.2** All Parish Councillors have their own Council email addresses which have the format [firstname.surname@bishopstokepc.org](mailto:firstname.surname@bishopstokepc.org) .
- 2.3** The Clerk and other Officers are responsible for dealing with email received and passing on anything relevant to the appropriate people.

- 2.4** All communications on behalf of the Council will usually come from the Clerk or other Officers where relevant. In instances where this is not the case, the Clerk should be copied in.
- 2.5** Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with residents in relation to their own personal views, with a copy to the Clerk if appropriate.
- 2.6** It is important to note that any emails sent to Parish Council email addresses will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act requirements. These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.
- 2.7** All new email requiring data to be passed on may be followed up with a data consent request before action is taken with that correspondence.
- 2.8** It is imperative that all correspondents never forward personal information on to other people or groups outside the Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.
- 2.9** All correspondence to the Parish Council will normally be acknowledged within five working days of receipt. If email is used, then an acknowledgment will be sent via email.
- 2.10** Councillors will be notified of correspondence as necessary, but the addressee will not be named on minutes of meetings unless requested.
- 2.11** Anonymous correspondence in any form will not be responded to.
- 2.12** Email should be thought of in the same way as a letter. A subject line, the sender's name and the content should be in the main body of the email, not as an attachment.
- 2.13** Council regrets that, for reasons of computer security and virus protection, anonymous emails and those with no subject in the title may not be opened or actioned.
- 2.14** A resident may raise any issue directly with Officers or any Councillor. If the resident is not satisfied with the response, they may wish to address their concern to the Clerk, or Chair, as appropriate.
- 2.15** If appropriate the issue may be placed on the agenda for the attention of the Full Council.
- 2.16** The Clerk will acknowledge all Freedom of Information requests within five working days and will reply fully within 20 working days of receipt of the request. If this is not possible, a further holding letter/email will be sent with an expected completion date.

### **3 Events**

- 3.1** The Council may decide to support or deliver events for the benefit of the community. Such events will be promoted within the community and using any appropriate, approved online methods.
- 3.2** Events will also be used to provide the Council an opportunity to raise awareness of its work within the community.

### **4 External representations**

- 4.1** Each year Councillors are appointed to represent the council within village organisations. Councillors will use this opportunity to share information, provide support and to promote partnership working, to support the community.
- 4.2** Any requests for council representatives, or attendance at events or meetings should be made to the Clerk, in the first instance.

### **5 Newsletter**

- 5.1** The Council will aim to produce a village newsletter three times a year. This will be edited, printed, and delivered to every residential property in Bishopstoke, and made available online from the Council's website [www.bishopstokepc.org](http://www.bishopstokepc.org)
- 5.2** Each issue will provide opportunities for the Parish Council, village organisations and residents to share news, articles, and updates.
- 5.3** This may be part-funded by paid for advertising space, made available to local businesses and organisations. This will be managed by the Clerk or other Officers.

### **6 Noticeboards**

- 6.1** The Council have installed a number of general noticeboards within the Parish which will be used to display agendas, planning notices, formal documents and other information that may be useful to the public.
- 6.2** Charities and community organisations can also request to place notices and posters into the Parish noticeboards, subject to the space available. These requests should be directed to the Officer in charge of communications.
- 6.3** Council Officers will regularly monitor and, where necessary, remove out-of-date items.

## **7 Parish Council Meetings**

- 7.1** The Council approves its meeting schedule at its first meeting of the council year (usually May). Upon approval the schedule will be available on the website. Agendas and summons are displayed at least three clear working days before meetings are scheduled to take place.
- 7.2** Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings. Each Full Council meeting facilitates an 'open session' where issues can be raised, and questions asked.
- 7.3** During other committee meetings, the public may be invited to speak during discussions. This will be at the discretion of the Chair.
- 7.4** Minutes from meetings are displayed in draft form, on the council's website as soon as possible after a meeting and updated once approved. Hard copies are available from the Clerk.

## **8 Parish Office**

- 8.1** The Parish Office is permanently closed until such time as the new office is built within the New Memorial Hall building, or other temporary office location is arranged.
- 8.2** Until such time as new office premises are arranged, the Clerk and other staff are available to meet residents in other public meeting areas such as the allotments or burial grounds and have access to hiring rooms at various local facilities.
- 8.3** The Clerk will respond to any voice messages or correspondence as promptly as possible. An 'out of office' message will be used from Officer email accounts where appropriate.
- 8.4** Until such time as new permanent Parish offices are arranged, the Clerk's office mobile will be the main point of contact for telephone calls. In the event of holiday, sickness and other appointments, the calls will be forwarded to another member of staff.

## **9 Media releases**

- 9.1** To raise awareness of the Council's activities and services, the council may choose to share positive news stories or other information through media releases.
- 9.2** A draft release will be written by the Clerk, with the subject matter being agreed at Full Council meetings. Drafts will be sent to the Lead Member of the Communications Working Group for approval, before being issued to the relevant media outlets and published online as appropriate.

## **10 Promotional Material**

- 10.1** The Council may wish to promote events and activities using posters, or other imagery. Any images should have the owner's permission, or be from a reputable, recognised royalty free website.
- 10.2** Posters and adverts should be placed on council noticeboards, on social media platforms or used in other ways to raise awareness.
- 10.3** All material should be removed as soon as possible, after an event or deadline has passed.

## **11 Social Media**

- 11.1** The Council's use of social media is covered in a separate Social Media policy.

## **12 Website**

- 12.1** The Council will provide a website ([www.bishopstokepc.org](http://www.bishopstokepc.org)).
- 12.2** To ensure transparency the Council will arrange for the publication of the following documents:
- End of year accounts
  - Annual governance statement
  - Internal audit report
  - External audit report
  - Expenditure
  - Key documents and policies
  - Minutes, agendas, and papers of formal meetings
- 12.3** The website is hosted and supported by an externally appointed company but is managed on a regular basis by the Clerk and other Officers.

## **13 Annual Parish Meeting**

- 13.1** The Annual Parish Meeting is convened by the Chair of the Parish Council and is generally held in April each year to provide parishioners with a summary of the activities of the Parish Council over the previous year and the opportunity to debate local issues and celebrate local events and activities.

## **14 Other Public Meetings**

- 14.1** Throughout the year, there may be other public meetings arranged, to discuss village matters. These may or may not involve the Council.