

1. Purpose of this policy

Wheatley Parish Council (WPC) recognises its role within the community as a communicator to individual residents, local organisations and businesses. Within its own Strategic Plan, WPC is committed to develop channels of communication to reach the wider community.

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.

2. 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)
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines ~(WCAG) 2.2AA

The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information which is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the Council's standing orders, under contract, or by common law.

3. Related Council Policies and Documents

- Privacy Notice (internal and external)
- Retention and Disposal Policy
- Publication Scheme
- Subject Access Request
- Data Breach Procedure⁴
- Social Media Policy
- Communication Policy
- IT Policy
- Volunteer Agreement
- Code of Conduct
- Standing Orders
- Financial Regulations
- Strategic Plan

4. Correspondence (email or letter)

All correspondence relating to the Council should be addressed to the Parish Clerk in the first instance either via email at clerk@wheatleyparishcouncil.gov.uk or via post. This will ensure that the matter is recorded and/or passed to the relevant person or organisation as soon as practically possible.

However, all Parish Councillors have their own Council email addresses which have the format [firstnamelastname@wheatleyparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:firstname.lastname@wheatleyparishcouncil.gov.uk).

The Clerk/Assistant Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and passing on anything relevant to councillors or external agencies for information and/or action. All communications on behalf of the Council will usually come from the Clerk/Assistant Clerk. In instances where this is not the case, the Clerk should be copied in.

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.

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.

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.

All correspondence to the Parish Clerk will be acknowledged within one week of receipt if possible. If email is used, then an acknowledgment will be sent via email.

Councillors will be notified of correspondence, but the addressee will not be named on minutes of meetings unless requested.

Anonymous correspondence in any form will be recorded as received but not responded to.

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. The Council regrets that, for reasons of computer security and virus protection, anonymous emails, and those with no subject in the title will not be opened or actioned.

A parishioner may raise any issue directly with the Clerk/Assistant Clerk or any Councillor. If the parishioner is not satisfied with the response, they may wish to address their concern to the Clerk/Assistant Clerk, or Chair, as appropriate. If appropriate the issue may be placed on the agenda for the attention of the full Council.

The Clerk/Assistant Clerk will acknowledge all Freedom of Information requests within seven 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.

5. Events

The Council may decide to support or deliver events for the benefit of the community. Such events will be promoted within the community and provide an opportunity for the council to raise its awareness.

Advertising of events will be carried out using many of the outlets identified in this document.

6. External representations

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.

Any requests for council representatives, or attendance at events or meetings should be made to the Clerk/Assistance Clerk, in the first instance.

7. Newsletter

The Council will aim to produce a village Newsletter (Wheatley News), 6 times a year. This will be edited, printed, and delivered to every property in Wheatley, to local business.

and public buildings and made available online from the Council's website www.wheatleyparishcouncil.gov.uk

Each issue will provide opportunities for the Parish Council, village organisations and residents to share news, articles, and updates.

This will be funded by paid for advertising space, made available to local businesses and organisations. This will be managed by the Clerk/Assistant Clerk.

8. Noticeboards

The Council have installed four noticeboards within the Parish. The main noticeboard, outside the parish office, High St, Wheatley will be used to display agendas, planning notices, formal documents and other information that may be useful to the public.

The three remaining noticeboards (London Rd – Triangle, Roman Rd – Iffley Vets and Littleworth Green) are accessible to all. Where possible the Council will post information that may be useful to the public here. The public can also place notices and posters, providing they are of relevance to the village and removed in a timely manner

Council staff and councillors will regularly monitor and, where necessary, remove out-of-date or inappropriate items.

9. Parish Council Meetings

The Council approves its meeting schedule at its first meeting of the council year (usually May). Upon approval the schedule is displayed on the parish noticeboard and on the website.

Agendas and summons are displayed at least three clear days before meeting are scheduled to take place.

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. During other committee meetings, the public may be invited to speak during discussions. This will be at the discretion of the Chair.

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 Parish Office.

WPC will continue to press for the ability to hold hybrid council meetings. Until this is available WPC will utilise technology to make meetings accessible online.

10. Annual Parish Meeting

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.

11. Other Public Meetings

Throughout the year, there may be other public meetings arranged, to discuss village matters. These may or may not involve WPC. However, WPC will, where possible share information about such events.

12. Parish Office & Surgeries

The Council benefits from its offices at 89 High St, Wheatley, which is the base for the Clerk/Assistant Clerk. However, the Council does operate a flexible working ethos and the parish office may not be staffed every day of the week.

The Clerk/Assistant Clerk will respond to any voice messages or correspondence as promptly as possible. An 'out of office' message is sent from the Council's email account.

Where possible the Council offers parish surgeries every Wednesday and Saturday morning from 9.30-11.30am. These will be staffed by the Clerk/Assistant Clerk or a councillor.

Parish Surgeries provide an opportunity to drop into the parish office to view planning applications, discuss village issues or to seek advice or guidance.

Appointments outside of these hours can be made, by prior arrangement.

13. Press releases

To raise awareness of the council's activities and services, the Council may choose to share positive news stories or other information with a wider audience.

A draft release will be written for approval by the Chair, before being issued to the relevant media outlets (e.g., Oxford Mail, NALC, SLCC etc.)

14. Promotional Material

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, recognized royalty free website.

Posters and advert should be placed on council noticeboards, on social media platforms or used in other ways to raise awareness.

All material should be removed as soon as possible, after an event or deadline has passed.

15. Social media

The Council has its own Social Media presence to engage with the local community and to share useful information from other organisations and agencies.

This is managed by the Clerk/Assistant Clerk, with access given to the Chair/Vice Chair to be used in an emergency.

The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication but is used to enhance communication with a wider range of the population.

A full social media policy has been adopted.

16. Website

The Council will provide a website (www.wheatleyparishcouncil).

To ensure transparency the Council will arrange for the publication of required documents and policies as well as further useful information.

Where possible agendas will be displayed at least three clear days before the meeting is scheduled and draft minutes will be posted as soon as possible after a meeting.

The final minutes will be posted, once approved.

The website is hosted and supported by an externally appointed company but is managed on a regular basis by the Clerk/Assistant Clerk.

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