

Worlabby Parish Council – Communication Policy 2024

The aims of this policy

Worlabby Parish Council recognises its overarching role at the heart of the community and values its unique position to be able to provide community leadership. An effective and professional communications strategy will be laid out in this document with the aims of setting a standard for engagement both within the Council and with its community.

Legal requirements and restrictions

This policy is subject to the Council's obligations which are set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, The Local Government Act 1986, The Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and other legislation which may apply to the Council's Standing Orders and Finance Regulations.

The main 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:

- be polite and relevant
- be concise
- will respect confidentiality
- reflect the views of the Parish Council not the individual
- will be non-partisan
- will respect privacy laws
- not contain content that is unlawful, libelous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive

Methods of communication that may be used by the Parish Council include in no particular order

Parish Council meetings

The Parish Council Office

Noticeboard

Email (including an email distribution list for interested residents)

Post

Telephone

Website

Newsletter in Village Views

Social Media / Parish Council Blog

Public Meetings

Parish Council Meetings

All Parish Council meetings are open to the press and public and under the council's standing orders time will be set aside at each meeting of the for public comment.

On occasion it may be necessary for the Council or a Committee to exclude the public if the confidential nature of the business to be discussed means their presence at the meeting may be prejudicial to the public interest.

Parish Council Office – The role of the Clerk

The Clerk forms a pivotal role as a communications link between the Parish Council and its stakeholders. It is therefore essential that all forms of correspondence must go via the Clerk with the minimum requirement of a copy to the Clerk. This will ensure that the Parish Council records are properly kept. The Clerk will provide a list of correspondence to each Committee or to the Parish Council as appropriate at the Parish Council meetings. The Clerk will respond where required to all correspondence within **5** working days, either with a full response or with details of when one of the Parish Council Committees will consider its response (the exception to this will be during periods of absence)..

Notice board/s

The Clerk will maintain an up to date the 2No noticeboard located within the village. Contact details for the Clerk and Parish Councillors, agendas for its meetings and other information relating to Parish Council business will be displayed.

Email

The Parish Council email account is monitored by the Clerk during office hours ONLY. It is recognised that email is a fast and effective form of communication, especially when contacting several people with a single message.. In order to manage the proliferation of emails the following guidelines will be followed:

- General emails to the full Council by the Clerk will have the Subject Line starting with either: FYI or ACTION REQUIRED. This then allows Councillors to understand what is urgent.
- Some emails which are of general information to the community will be included in content for the Parish Council website and Facebook pages in addition to the Councillors.

- When responding to an external email the Clerk will include a copy to appropriate Councillors if it is relating to a matter in which they are involved. The Councillor would not be expected to respond to this other than directly to the Clerk.
- Councillors should not use the 'Reply All' option without forethought and should think about what is being said and if it is really is relevant to everyone on the distribution list.
- When forwarding emails caution should be exercised particularly if there is a long email chain involved. What information is being forwarded and to whom?
- An email topic which changes from an original thread should not "piggy back" off another thread, rather a new email should be started.
- It is not appropriate for draft documents circulated by email to be forwarded outside the Parish Council unless it is to an individual directly involved with the project.

Post

All post is received by the Clerk who will ensure that it is opened promptly and dealt with in an appropriate manner.

Telephone

The Parish Council telephone will be answered during office hours by the Clerk who will be expected to deal in a professional manner with all incoming calls. An answer machine service is available to receive messages when the Clerk is not available or the office is closed. The Clerk will check for messages each work day and return calls promptly where a number has been left.

Website

The clerk to the Parish Council will maintain an up to date website in line with their responsibilities as set out in government legislation. The Parish Council managed website will include the following information:

- Details of Parish Council Meetings – Schedule, Agendas and Minutes
- Details of each Committee and its responsibilities
- Contact details for the Councillors and the Clerk.
- Finance Reports
- Details of any significant on-going projects with up to date reports Additional information may be added as and when deemed appropriate by the Clerk. The Council will nominate one of the Councillors to work with the Clerk to be responsible for maintaining the content of the website.

Social Media

The Parish Council may consider using its social media sites on occasion where it feels this will benefit the public. The Clerk or a nominated Councillors will be responsible for posting anything relating to Parish Council business on social media sites once the content has been agreed with the Chair or relevant Committee. These forums are informal and do not replace official channels. They will only be used for the dissemination of information to the Parish. Any Parish Councillor who has their own social media accounts whilst free to express their views should use them with caution and always make it clear that their opinions are their own and not those of the Parish Council when commenting on issues relating to Worlaby or Parish Council business. Social media may be used to

- Raise awareness of Parish Council decisions
- Advertise events and activities in which the Parish Council is involved
- Publicise important meetings such as public consultations
- Raise awareness of important local issues
- Advertise vacancies A Social Media Management Platform may be engaged by the Parish Council to manage multiple platforms.

It must be noted that only the Worlaby Parish council Facebook page will be monitored and reviewed/responded to by the council, it will not undertake commentary on any other social media pages or format other than that described above

Press

The press are invited to attend all meetings of the Parish Council and will be provided with an agenda and minutes of previous meetings. The Clerk will be the main point of contact for the press and may contact the media if the Council wants to provide information or make a statement relating to its business. The Clerk will consult with the Chair, Vice-Chair or Chair of the relevant Committee regarding the content of any press release. It is important that all information shared with the press is accurate and represents to policies and views of the Parish Council. If a Councillor is interviewed the views expressed should be those of the Parish Council and the Council's code of conduct followed. Information of a confidential or slanderous nature must never be disclosed.

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