

Introduction

This strategy is based on the principles that communication must be effective and that protocols should be followed to ensure clarity and professionalism. The strategy covers both internal and external communications. Pennington Parish Council aims to be transparent in its dealings and for communications to be timely and effective.

1. Objectives

Pennington Parish Council aims to reach everyone in the parish, be it that they live, work or visit the village. It is important that we are able to effectively communicate with anyone who is interested and may want to become involved in influencing the future of the parish. These people include:

- Village residents
- Community groups and organisations
- Agencies and partners (including the local police)
- Local school / nursery
- County Councillors
- The local MP
- Local businesses and employers
- Voluntary groups
- Local media
- Tourists
- Workers

2. The Role of Councillors, Chairman and Clerk

Councillors represent the community in which they live and are governed by a Code of Conduct which encourages open, informed, timely and courteous communication at all times. Our aim is to keep the community informed of our actions and encourage them to actively participate in influencing the future of the parish.

The Clerk is the first point of contact of the Council. As such, the Clerk should receive all communications which ought to be formally brought to the attention of the Council and should issue all formal communications made by the Council unless specified otherwise.

Councillors should immediately refer any complaints or concerns relating to their conduct or the Council received from residents to the Clerk. If the complaint is relating to the Clerk, it should be directed to the Chair or as specified in the Complaints/ Appeals Procedure.

Councillors should make it clear in all interactions with residents the press or third parties that they have no authority to represent the Council's view unless the matter has been agreed at a Council meeting or they have been given specific mandate to do so at a Council meeting.

It is important not to raise the expectations of the residents before a matter has been debated and agreed at a Council meeting.

Unless otherwise specified the Chairman should comply with this protocol in the same way as other Councillors.

3. General Rules of Communication

It is important that all Council communications are effective and in so doing must be:

- Short and to the point
- Courteous
- In plain English
- Based on facts and information
- In a consistent format and style
- Clear about the action required or taken
- Informative

4. Methods of Communication

The Council will use a variety of methods of communication based on what reaches its intended audience most effectively and efficiently. Over 80% of the population generally use electronic communication now (*Office for National Statistics*), so this is the Council's preferred and primary method of communication.

However, we recognise that not all people are able to or wish to use electronic methods of communication, so we will continue to utilise different media and approaches in order to reach our audiences.

The table below shows our main means of communication.

Council Website

The Council website is a platform for general communication with the community. It is important that the Council regularly review its content to ensure it is kept up to date. The website includes information of the Parish, the Council's policies, links to external publications and updates on relevant community matters wherever available.

Council Notice Boards

Noticeboards are updated regularly with information relating to community matters/ meetings and important contact details.

Council Meetings

Council meetings are publicised and are open to the public to attend. There is a short period at the start of each Council meeting for public participation and members of the public are then welcome to stay and hear the rest of the meeting.

Council Agendas and Minutes

Council agendas are publicised on the website and noticeboards. Minutes are on the website and are available on request by email. Printed copies may be provided but may incur relevant administration costs.

Annual Parish Meeting

The annual parish meeting is held in May every year and provides an opportunity to communicate and discuss Council activities over the past year.

Press Release

It may be necessary to give press releases in local media on significant points of interest or achievement.

Councillors Representation/ Networking

We are committed to regular involvement with residents, local groups and organisations through representation.

Community Consultation Events

The Council aims to facilitate community consultation events on matters of interest with the involvement of relevant external representation.

Social Media

The Council has a Facebook Page where important information or points of interest are publicised.

External Communication

We will reply to external correspondence in a timely manner which is both courteous and compliant with the general rules of communication.

Internal Communication

Internal communication is to be simple, courteous and kept to a minimum, in accordance with the general rules of communication.

Community Chat Magazine

Although not a Council publication, the Community Chat magazine is an effective way of reaching the whole parish and the Council endeavour to provide information through this channel.

Clerks' Contact Details

The Clerk's contact details are available on the website, noticeboards, in the Community Chat magazine and can be reached directly through the 'contact us' section of the website.

5. Responsibilities

- (a) The Clerk has overall responsibility for all issues in this strategy unless specified otherwise.
- (b) In the event of any media enquiry, Councillors must adhere to the Media Policy.
- (c) The Clerk, in consultation with the Chair (unless agreed otherwise), shall issue a press release on behalf of the Council where it is considered necessary to publicise an activity of the Council.
- (d) The content of the Council's website is mainly managed by the Clerk. However it is the responsibility of all Councillors to check it regularly for any issues of inaccuracy or omissions and inform the Clerk if issues arise.
- (e) The Clerk is responsible for receiving correspondence and documents on behalf of the Council and dealing with them, bringing such items to the attention of the Council. The Clerk issues correspondence on the Council's behalf as instructed by the Council or in accordance with known policy unless specified otherwise.
- (f) Any advice relevant to Council business given to a Councillor by third parties and which affects their opinion on any such matter should be declared at Council meetings.