



Wedmore Parish Council

COMMUNICATION, PRESS AND MEDIA POLICY

AIMS

- To establish clear, easy to use channels of communication between the Parish Council and the Parishioners, and vice versa.
- To provide information on important matters in an appropriate manner so as to facilitate and encourage informed comment from interested individuals and groups.

Introduction

Each Parish Councillor has a duty to represent, without bias, the interest of the whole community. They will endeavour to do their best and are available to help parishioners with regard to matters relating to the parish. They may be contacted through the Parish Clerk or by visiting the Parish Council Website.

If the matter is important, then a letter /email to the Parish Clerk will ensure that this will be brought before the Parish Council and dealt with in a suitable and professional manner.

It is the Parish Council's intention to comply with the schedule as below.

Parish Council Meetings

- The Parish Council will meet at 7.30pm (unless otherwise stated) and are held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month.
- The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council will be the May meeting when Councillors will elect the Chair and appoint the Vice Chair for the forthcoming year.
- The Annual Parish Meeting will take place in May each year.
- Parish Council Committee meetings are held throughout the year and agendas will be published at least three clear days (not including Weekends)

or Bank Holidays) in advance on the Website, the Parish Council Facebook page and the village noticeboards.

- The Parish Council will meet at the Parish Council Office, Wedmore unless otherwise notified.
- All Council Meetings are open to the public and press. Councillors and the Clerk should be aware that any statements made in the meeting may be reported.

Noticeboards

The following items will be displayed:

- The next Full Parish Council & Committee meeting date.
- The Parish Council meeting notices will be displayed a minimum of three clear days (not including Weekends or Bank Holidays) in advance of the meeting.
- Notices for Parishioners as and when appropriate.

Parish Council Website

The following items will be made available:

- Appropriate notices will be published as and when required.
- Approved Parish Council & Committee Meeting Minutes.
- Consultation information when required.
- Council policies and procedures.
- Meeting agendas & Minutes.
- Parish Council meeting dates for the year.
- Parish Councillor listing.
- Planning applications.
- The Chairman's Annual Report.

All minutes of meetings are public legal documents and may also be quoted in the press and other media.

The Parish Clerk will ensure that all Parish Council information included on the Website is regularly updated by passing relevant papers to the team involved in creating and maintaining the site.

Correspondence

- All correspondence relating to the parish should be addressed to the Parish Clerk in the first instance. This will ensure that the matter is recorded and

passed to the relevant person or organisation as soon as practicably possible.

- All correspondence to the Parish Clerk will be acknowledged within one week of receipt.
- If a parishioner wishes a matter to be formally discussed at a Parish Council meeting, then the Parish Clerk must be notified at least 10 days prior to the meeting to enable the item to be placed on the Agenda.

Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting is held in May of each year. Parishioners can have the opportunity to listen to the progress of the Parish Council over the last year and have the opportunity to debate local issues and celebrate local events and activities.

Public comment

Members of the Parish Council accept their legal collective responsibility for all decisions taken by Council whether or not they personally supported those decisions.

Members should not criticise or complain about such decisions if approached by the media to do so.

Where a Councillor or the Clerk wishes to make or publish a public comment on any matter related to the Council's business or its responsibilities they must be sensitive to any agreed Council position and also make it clear if they are speaking/writing as a Councillor or expressing a personal opinion.

Requests for comments or quotes

Any media requests for comments or quotes outside a Council meeting may be:

- a. Answered by the Councillor contacted provided he or she is comfortable in doing this and the response should reflect the Council's agreed position/policy.

If a Councillor wants to make a personal comment, he or she should make it completely clear that they are not commenting for or on behalf of the Council.

No Councillor is obliged to make any comment or to give any quote. (see b)

or

- b. Referred to the Chairman for comment. The Chairman/Clerk should ensure the response reflects the Council's agreed position/policy.

Social Media

The Parish Council realise that social media and networking websites have become a regular part of everyday life and that many people enjoy membership of sites such as Facebook.

This policy is to provide councillors and staff with guidelines on responsibilities of use.

The Parish Council's aim is to inform members of the community and the wider local area, through as many communication channels as possible, about what is happening within the Parish and local area and share important news and information. The Parish Council's social media channels supplement the information published on their website and in their articles in the Isle of Wedmore News. The Parish Council can remind people of important events and alert followers instantly to breaking news. The Parish Council can link to interesting and useful information about the Parish and local area published by other people. The Parish Council can better communicate with those using mobile devices and personal computers.

Use of Official Accounts

The Parish Council operates a Facebook account for the promotion of activities and events and as a communication and broadcast tool.

Examples of acceptable corporate content are:

- Marketing campaigns
- Consultation documents
- News feed & emergency information
- Event listings
- Key dates
- Short debates & quick comments on hot topics and relevant news (discussion board)
- Polls and information gathering
- Useful links

The following outlines the limits of their use

An official account on any social media website may only be set-up with consent from the Parish Council. Once approved, each account will be set up by the Webmaster and/or the Parish Clerk. Only authorised staff may use these accounts to post online and access to the account is strictly limited. The Parish Council's social media accounts are managed and

monitored daily by the Webmaster and the Parish Clerk. Only the Webmaster or Parish Clerk is allowed to post links to the corporate website, partner websites, 'Useful' links for example local transport sites etc, links to other Facebook pages, local media, National organisations.

All information published on the internet must comply with the Parish Council's confidentiality policy and data protection. Social media accounts will primarily be used to promote the 'good news' and information, supplementing content already published on the Parish Council's website. Any employee, Councillor or member of the public who becomes aware of social networking activity that would be deemed distasteful should make the Webmaster and/or the Parish Clerk aware as soon as possible.

Facebook

The Webmaster manages the Council's Facebook page. Facebook pages are used to highlight news, make announcements, engage with the community and share information. Comments posted on and messages received on the Facebook page are views of individuals and do not represent the views of the Parish Council.

Request for something to be posted on the Parish Council's Facebook page, should be directed to the Webmaster and/or the Parish Clerk.

Social media moderation policy

The Parish Council Facebook page is reactively moderated. The Council cannot accept responsibility for the content of any comment.

The Council reserve the right to remove comments received on Facebook that:

- Contain abusive, obscene, indecent or offensive language, or link to obscene or offensive material.
- Contain swear words or other sorts of profanity.
- Are completely removed from the topic of conversation or are not relevant to the item posted on the wall.
- Contain abusive language towards an individual involved in the thread, other organisations or the page administrator.
- Constitute spam or promote or advertise products, except where it is for an event, publication or similar item that has direct relevance to the subject of discussion.
- Information about locating and sharing knowledge and expertise is welcomed, but within the specific discussion.
- Are designed to cause nuisance to the page administrator or other users.

For serious and/or persistent breaches of the moderation policy, we reserve the right to block users from posting further comments

Use of Photos and Video

Only the Webmaster and/or the Parish Clerk has permission to upload photos and videos. The appropriate permissions must be obtained for all imagery.

Personal Accounts on Social Media

Staff need to use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the terms of their contract of employment. The absence of, or lack of, explicit reference to a specific website or service does not limit the extent of the application of this policy. Where no policy or guidelines exist, employees should use their professional judgment and take the most prudent action possible. If the Parish Council is referred to in a way that is deemed defamatory or confidential information is disclosed, it reserves the right to report the comment and request that it be removed.

Councillors are at liberty to set up accounts using any of the tools available but should ensure they are clearly identified as personal and do not in any way imply that they reflect the Council's view. Councillors should at all times present a professional image and not disclose anything of a confidential nature. Comments of a derogatory, proprietary or libellous nature should not be made and care should be taken to avoid guesswork, exaggeration and colourful language.

Purdah

The pre-election period (purdah) is the term used to describe the period between the time an election, (local or general) is announced and the date the election is held.

Councils have to be very careful not to do or say anything that could be viewed in any way to support any political party or candidate. The Council will continue to publish important service announcements using social media but will monitor and potentially have to remove responses if they are overtly party political.

Direct messages posted on social networking sites

If appropriate, the Clerk will endeavour to respond as quickly as possible to all questions received via social networking sites. All formal requests, comments, enquiries or complaints should be emailed to the Clerk.

Rules

The Parish Council may monitor forums and blogs to gain indirect feedback. The Parish Council may post replies on forums or blogs to answer queries or address factual corrections but would generally take a cautious approach before getting involved in contentious issues. The Parish Council reserves the right to take any necessary steps to protect members of the Parish community and will delete any comments referencing the Parish Council, which are deemed abusive or offensive in anyway.

Date Adopted 21 July 2021

Next Review Date July 2023