

# Rottingdean Parish Council Communication and Involvement Policy

## Introduction

This policy outlines how the Council communicates with all parties with whom it interacts, guided by principles of effectiveness, clarity and professionalism. It helps the Council inform people about its actions and actively gather feedback to better meet parish needs.

Parish councillors regularly communicate with residents and each other. Through social media, councillors may be contacted at any time and can respond quickly, which increases the risk of misinformation or inadequate consultation.

The policy applies to all internal and external communications, regardless of method.

## Aim

The Council aims to be transparent in its dealings and to ensure that all who interact with it are able to communicate with councillors and the Clerk in a timely and effective manner.

## Objectives

- i. To effectively inform residents and all those who have dealings with the parish and the Council (stakeholders) of its aims, objectives and activities
- ii. To build the capacity and motivation of residents and stakeholders to be involved with the Council and support the Council in its efforts to improve the quality of life for those who live, work or have a general involvement in the parish
- iii. To use a variety of communication methods to ensure that the way the Council communicates keeps everyone included and informed
- iv. To build trust by being open and transparent
- v. To improve methods of communication in line with modern technology

## Stakeholders

We aim to reach everyone who has an interest in the parish, whether they live, work or visit the village. It is important that we are able to communicate effectively 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 businesses
- Local schools
- Sports clubs
- City Councillors and officers

## **Rottingdean Parish Council Communication and Involvement Policy**

### **1 Parish Council Correspondence**

- i. The point of contact for the Parish Council is the Clerk, and it is to the Clerk that all correspondence for the Parish Council should be addressed.
- ii. The Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting.
- iii. No individual councillor or officer should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the Parish Council, a committee, sub-committee or working party. In particular, councillors and officers do not have the right to obtain confidential information or documentation unless they can demonstrate a 'need to know'. Where councillors receive emails or letters which should be managed on a formal basis, these should be copied to the Clerk so that actions taken can be tracked. Council-headed notepaper should not be used in any other correspondence, for example private communication with parishioners or fellow councillors.
- iv. All official correspondence should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the council, using council letterheaded paper.
- v. Where correspondence from the Clerk to a Councillor is copied to another person, the addressee should be made aware that a copy is being forwarded to that other person (e.g. copy to XX).

### **2. Agenda Items for Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Parties**

- i. Agendas should be clear and concise. They should contain sufficient information to enable Councillors to make an informed decision, and for the public to understand what matters are being considered and what decisions are to be taken at a meeting.
- ii. Items for information should be kept to a minimum on an agenda.
- iii. Where the Clerk or a Councillor wishes fellow Councillors to receive matters for "information only", this information will be circulated via the Clerk.

### **3. Communications with the Press and Public**

- i. All communications with the press and other publicity should be agreed with the Chair or (in his/her absence) the Vice Chair of the Parish Council and the Clerk prior to being issued.
- ii. Press reports from the Council, its committees or working parties should be from the Clerk or via the reporter's own attendance at a meeting.
- iii. Unless a Councillor has been authorised by the council to speak to the media on a particular issue, Councillors who are asked for comment by the press should make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it be reported as such.
- iv. Unless a Councillor is absolutely certain that he/she is reporting the view of the council, they must make it clear to members of the public that they are expressing a personal view.
- v. If Councillors receive a complaint from a member of the public, this should be dealt with under the Council's adopted complaints procedure, or via a council agenda item.
- vi. The Parish Council has social media accounts to inform local organisations and residents of the work of the Parish Council. If any parish councillor would like to post a message, they should inform the Parish Clerk, who will post the information, if appropriate, subject to the approval requirements set out above.

### **4. Councillor Correspondence to external parties**

- i. As the Clerk should send most of the council's correspondence, any correspondence from a Councillor to other bodies should make it clear that it is written in an official capacity and has been authorised by the parish council.
- ii. A copy of all outgoing correspondence relating to the council or a Councillor's role within it should be sent to the Clerk, and this should be noted on the correspondence, for example "copy to the Clerk", so that the recipient is aware that the Clerk has been advised.

## 5. Engagement

- i. The Council will take active steps to engage with residents and stakeholders:
  - a. Providing notice boards in prominent positions.
  - b. Providing timely and up-to-date information on plans, projects, forthcoming discussions and decisions in both written and electronic forms that are easily accessible.
  - c. Have a presence at formal and informal events where the views of residents and stakeholders can be actively sought.

Adopted: [insert date]