

Weston by Welland Parish Council

Communications Policy

Weston by Welland Parish Council (WbWPC) understands that the residents of the village have different needs when it comes to receiving information and news from the council. We will endeavour to reach as many residents as possible and to provide the means by which residents can make their views known to the council.

This policy sets out the purpose and the underlying principles of our communications. It seeks to explain WHY we are communicating in the ways we intend. It should be read alongside our Communications Strategy which will set out the means and the processes (the WHEN, the HOW and the WHAT) in more detail.

PURPOSE

The purpose of our Communications Policy is to

- develop appropriate communications strategies to benefit the parish
- focus on the community as a whole, rather than particular ages or groups
- raise residents' satisfaction, trust and confidence in the council
- give help and advice in support of local services, clubs and societies
- be an effective voice for the community, campaigning for better local services and challenging attempts to reduce them
- promote the achievements of the council
- provide timely news
- challenge negative views which might undermine the image or integrity of the WbWPC and the village
- protect councillors (who are volunteers, giving freely of their time) from unwarranted intrusion and abuse.

To achieve these goals, WbWPC encourages all residents to attend the PC meetings (held in the church) or to contact elected councillors or the Clerk directly through the various and proper channels.

The means by which residents can contact the council are advertised both on the website, and on the notice board. There will be regular reminders of these means. Councillors' names and email addresses are available on the website, and councillors accept that residents will want occasionally to speak to them directly. This is perfectly acceptable, and part of being a parish councillor. At the same time, we would ask residents to be respectful and polite. Councillors should not be subject to abuse or harassment in any way.

FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

The council intends to use both traditional forms of communication and to adopt some new forms. We believe that there remains a place for the traditional forms, but that new forms of technology have changed the way many people communicate. Our aim is to communicate effectively, with as wide a range of residents as possible.

We will use the following forms of communication, in different ways:

- Village notice board (on the green)
- Council website (www.westonbywellandparishcouncil.gov.uk)
- Weston by Welland/Sutton Bassett Newsletter (11 issues per year)
- Council Facebook page
- Council newsletters and flyers/leaflets (occasional)
- Village events
- Direct contact from councillors

The council will not engage in other forms of social media directly. This does not mean that councillors, as individuals, should not be engaged in whatever forms of social media they wish. At the same time, they need to be conscious that they are elected councillors. As a guide to councillors, please refer to the attached annex to this policy '**Social Media: Code of Practice for Councillors**' .

The council's **Communications Strategy** sets out how these different means of communication will be used. That strategy will be subject to annual review, as we learn how to be more effective.

PRINCIPLES

These things are easy to say, or write, but we intend to adhere to these principles in the ways we communicate:

- to be honest and truthful in what we display, write or say
- to be open and transparent in our dealings and decision-making
- to respect the rights and privacy of all concerned

COMPLAINTS

The council will try to deal with complaints fairly and promptly. Complaints will be dealt with according to the council's **Complaints Procedure (2019)** available on the council's website (under Policies).

THE CLERK AND THE COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

As required by law, the council employs, through the county council, a fully-qualified Clerk and who acts also as the Responsible Financial Officer. As is usual, the Clerk has an important role in overseeing and managing much of what needs to be communicated to residents.

When possible, it is our intention to appoint a Communications Officer from the ranks of the elected councillors. This officer will take responsibility for several elements of our communications. S/he will work in collaboration and consultation with the chairman of the council, other councillors, and the Clerk.

Please refer to the **Communications Strategy** for details of how we hope this will work.

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