

Weston by Welland Parish Council

Communications Strategy

Weston by Welland Parish Council (WbWPC) has a **Communications Policy** which sets out the purpose, the principles and the overall means by which the council intends to communicate with residents. The purpose of this **Communications Strategy** is to set out in some detail how that policy will work in practice, on a day-to-day basis. The council's various forms of communication are the responsibility of the Clerk and the Communications Officer (CO).

The means by which WbWPC intends to communicate are:

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

Village notice board

The notice board is the property of the council and is insured as an asset. The notice board divides into two halves. Traditionally, the right-hand side is open and accessible to residents to use. The left-hand side is locked and reserved for the parish council. The council does not intend to change this protocol, although we reserve the right to monitor the use of the right-hand side and to remove out-of-date or inappropriate material.

There are three keys to the left-hand side. These are held by the chairman and distributed to councillors as convenient. The CO will normally have one of these keys. Councillors that hold and use keys will update the council when they are making changes to the board.

The notice board will be used:

- to display key contact information about the council e.g. website details, contact details for the clerk and the chairman
- to display documents relating to council business as legally required e.g. agendas, minutes
- to display items of news, posters, requests etc. in order to promote the council's work and engage with residents.

Council website

Having a website is a legal requirement, and our clerk is the person who has overall responsibility for ensuring its proper use. Much of what is on the website, and its overall design, is there due to legal requirements. The timing which governs when items should appear on the website, and how long they need to be there, is subject also to legal

requirements. The clerk will answer questions from residents and councillors about such matters.

However, the council intends to use the website as another means of communicating news and information. To this end, the CO has access/administrator rights to the site. S/he will collaborate with the clerk as appropriate. The role of the CO will be to develop the council's use of the site in order that it becomes attractive, interesting and useful for residents. We intend that it be a site that celebrates as well as informs. Councillors should work through the CO to these ends. The CO will update material on the site at any time and inform the clerk.

Council Facebook page

In order to communicate more effectively with residents whose means of communication have evolved in recent times, the council has set up a Facebook page. The CO will have responsibility for running the page on the council's behalf. Councillors should work through the CO if they want something posted. The CO will liaise with the chairman if there are issues over content. The CO will update material on the page at any time, informing councillors and the clerk if appropriate.

This Facebook page is used as a digital equivalent of the notice board i.e. posting key pieces of important information. It refers to agendas and minutes when they are available elsewhere rather than reproduce them. The page is used for news items, updates, requests, appeals for help, reminders of events coming up etc. It is used alongside the joint village (Weston by Welland/Sutton Bassett) newsletter, although not necessarily just repeating that content.

The page is not to be set up to allow participation by other users, but solely for residents and users to read and see news and information. This is in order to avoid the possibility of the site being used inappropriately.

Weston by Welland/Sutton Bassett Newsletter

This is a joint village newsletter which has existed for many years. WbWPC makes a contribution towards the cost of its production from its budget each year. There are monthly issues, produced for the beginning of each month; however, December and January are rolled together, thus making 11 issues per year. This joint newsletter allows the council a means of informing residents in Sutton Bassett what is going on in WbW, particularly with regard to events that are planned (to which Sutton Bassett residents are usually very welcome, when appropriate.)

The council's CO will be responsible for sending material to the editor of the newsletter, aiming for the 16th day of the month preceding publication. Councillors should compose or suggest material for this newsletter in collaboration with the CO.

Newsletters/flyers/ leaflets

There will be occasions when the council may decide to distribute a newsletter, or flyer, or leaflet of its own. There may be various reasons for this e.g. a Christmas greeting, an important notice of some kind. There will be no regular, or planned pattern to such issues. The council will decide together when something of this kind is necessary, and the CO will take charge of its design, production and distribution, with appropriate help from other councillors.

Direct contact with residents

In putting themselves forward for election, councillors are accepting that they have responsibilities to the community. This means being willing to engage with residents verbally. There are circumstances when this means approaching people to talk to them about an issue. It also means being willing for people to approach them, should they need or wish to. Providing people are polite and respectful, this is perfectly acceptable. At the same time, as volunteers, councillors have the right to privacy, and should not be subject to abuse or inappropriate comment.

Social Media and a Code of Practice

We live in an age of proliferating social media. (Social media is a term used here to describe methods of publishing on the internet.) As stated above the council has limited itself at this stage to setting up the Facebook page. However, there are other forms of social media being used by many residents in the village. Councillors themselves are free, as individuals, to engage in these media, which can be hugely positive factors in people's lives. Nevertheless, as we all aware, social media is often the cause of dispute, argument, and offensive material and unwarranted abuse. Councillors need to be cautious and mindful that they are known in the community to be elected councillors. Consequently, the council has produced a Social Media Code of Conduct. This is an annex to the Communications Policy.

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