

Wadworth Parish Council

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

March 2024

Adopted: 14th March 2024
Reviewed:

RECORD OF AMENDMENTS

Introduction

Each Councillor has a duty to represent, without bias, the interests of the whole community.

They will always try and do their best and are available to help residents with regard to matters relating to the Parish of Wadworth.

Councillors may be contacted via the Clerk or using their Council email addresses.

If it is felt by the resident that the matter is important, then a letter or email to the Clerk will ensure that it is dealt with in a timely and professional manner (also see the Correspondence section below).

It is the Council's intention to meet the timescales detailed below but there could be occasions when this is not possible. When this happens, the Council will review their procedures and where necessary make changes to the policy or procedures.

Aims

To establish clear, easy to use channels of communication between the Council and parishioners, and vice versa.

To provide information on important matters in a timely manner so as to enable and encourage informed comment from interested individuals and groups.

Council Meetings

The Council meets on the second Thursday of every month except August.

The Council will normally meet in the Village Hall, Old School Lane, Wadworth from 7.00pm.

Public participation will be held for up to 15 minutes at the start of the meeting to enable discussion on agenda items. Members of the public wishing to address the Council during the formal meeting or wishing to record the meeting are asked to make the Chair aware of their intention before the meeting starts.

Notice Boards

The following items will be displayed on the Council noticeboards:

- Contact details for the Clerk (on agenda)
- The Council's meeting agenda - which will be posted at least 3 working days in advance of each meeting
- Council meeting minutes – which will be posted in draft form as soon as is practicable after the meeting.

The information displayed on the noticeboards will be kept up-to-date.

Correspondence

All correspondence relating to the Council should be addressed to the Clerk in the first instance either via email or via post. This will ensure the matter is recorded and passed to the relevant person or organisation as soon as practically possible. However, most Councillors have their own Council email addresses.

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and passing on anything relevant to Councillors or external agencies for information and/or action. All communications on behalf of the Council will usually come from the Clerk, and/or otherwise will always be copied to the Clerk. All new email requiring data to be passed on may be followed up with a data consent request before action is taken with that correspondence. Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with residents in relation to their own personal views, if appropriate, with a copy to the Clerk.

It is important to note that any emails sent to the Council email addresses will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act requirements. These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

It is imperative that all correspondents never forward personal information on to other people or groups outside the Council; this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

All correspondence to the Clerk will be acknowledged within one week of receipt if at all possible. If email is used then an acknowledgment will be sent via email.

Councillors will be notified of correspondence, but the addressee will not be named on minutes of meetings unless requested. Anonymous correspondence in any form will be recorded as received but not responded to.

Email should be thought of in the same way as a letter. A subject line, the sender's name and the content should be in the main body of the email, not as an attachment. Attachments will not be opened unless the Clerk has prior knowledge of the subject. The Council regrets that, for reasons of computer security and virus protection, anonymous emails and those with no subject in the title will not be opened or actioned.

A parishioner may raise any issue directly with the Clerk or any Councillor. If a satisfactory answer cannot be given immediately, the issue may be placed on the agenda for the attention of the full Council.

The Clerk will acknowledge all Freedom of Information requests within seven working days and will reply fully within 20 working days of receipt of the request. If this is not possible, a further holding letter/email will be sent with an expected completion date.

Website

The Clerk will arrange for the Agenda and associated papers to be posted on the council website at least three clear days before the meeting and for the draft minutes to be posted as soon as possible after the meeting. The final minutes will be published once approved.

While the Parish Council income is above the £25,000 threshold, the Council still tries to comply with the DCLG's Transparency Code for Smaller Councils and will publish the following information after 31 March and no later than 1 July each year:

- a. all items of expenditure above £100 (see each set of minutes)
- b. end of year accounts
- c. annual governance statement
- d. internal audit report
- e. list of councillor or member responsibilities
- f. Minutes, agendas and meeting papers of formal meetings.

The Town Clerk is the Webmaster for the Council website.

The Town Clerk will ensure that the Parish Council email address is publicised.

Social Media

The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication, but is used to enhance communication with a wider range of the population. A full social media policy has been adopted.

Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting is convened by the Chair of the Council and is generally held in April each year to provide parishioners with a summary of the activities of the Council over the previous year, and the opportunity to debate local issues and celebrate local events and activities.

Related Policies and Procedures

Councillor Code of Conduct
Complaints Procedure
Data Protection Policy
Document Retention Policy and Procedure
Press and Media Policy
Recording of Meetings Policy
Social Media Policy