

Odcombe



Parish Council

Communications and Social Media Policy

December 2023

1.0 Aims.

- 1.1 This policy aims to ensure that Odcombe Parish Council communicates and interacts in ways that are clear, accessible, timely and appropriate for all of its stakeholders and other audiences. Means of communication remain under constant review to ensure the most effective channels of engagement.
- 1.2 This policy aligns itself to the adopted vision statement; *'Odcombe residents are fully informed about the deliberations and actions of the Parish Council in a timely and effective way; they engage with discussions and contribute to decisions that affect their community.'*

2.0 Responsibilities and principles.

- 2.1 Odcombe Parish Council aims to serve and represent the interests of the whole community and councillors are subject to the agreed policies and decisions that support this endeavour.

Parish Council communications are made via the clerk to ensure alignment with council policies and recorded decisions. Individual councillors should not respond formally to enquiries outside of parish council meetings other than to acknowledge.

Councillors are discouraged from engaging in social media activity that could in any way be construed to represent the view of the Parish Council.

3.0 Means of Communication

3.1 Website

In the interests of transparency and to provide a clear picture of its activities, the Parish Council publishes appropriate and legally mandated information on its website. This will include Parish Council meeting agendas, minutes of Parish Council meetings, policies and governance documents. The Clerk is responsible for updating the website with the latest information and news as directed by the Parish Council. An annual review of the website format and content is undertaken by the Communication Working Group.

3.2 Newsletter

The Parish Council contributes to the quarterly Village Hall newsletter. The article aims to keep residents informed of current business as well as issuing important messages to the community. The submission is prepared by a nominated councillor and endorsed by the clerk and another councillor before publication.

3.3 Notice board

The noticeboard at the Village Hall displays contact details for the clerk, meeting agendas, any statutory notices and other items of interest to the community. Information on the notice board is maintained regularly by the clerk.

3.4 Full Council Meetings.

During full Parish Council meetings there is an opportunity for members of the public to raise matters of concern or to comment on an item on the agenda. The presiding Chairperson shall provide verbal responses in line with Council's previously approved decisions or policies and may ask other Councillors to contribute to the conversation.

3.5 Annual Parish Meeting

This meeting provides an opportunity for Council to communicate its work over the previous year to residents. The community is encouraged to attend and contribute to the conversation and share current concerns and issues that may shape the Council's future plans. However, no decisions can be made at this meeting.

3.6 Correspondence

All incoming written correspondence to the Parish Council is reviewed by the clerk who assesses whether correspondence requires the direct attention of Council members and to ensure that the matter is dealt with effectively and in a timely manner

All outgoing written communication is prepared and issued by the clerk to ensure that responses are in alignment with council policy or approved decisions. Where necessary, the clerk will consult with council members to ensure an accurate and effective response. In appropriate circumstances the clerk can give authority to an individual councillor to issue written correspondence to a third party where the communication represents the view of the whole Council.

3.7 Social Media

The Parish Council utilises social media as an effective tool to communicate matters of importance or interest. The Parish Council Facebook page is administered solely by the clerk and posts can contain only factual information that corresponds with the Council's decisions or policies. The Parish Council does not respond to posts or comments made by users but any issues or concerns arising will be brought to the attention of councillors.

3.8 Communication with the Press and Media Bodies

Any release of communication to media organisations will be made by the clerk after consultation with the Parish Council Chair or Vice Chairperson. All councillors will be made aware immediately of any question from media outlets and associated responses. In the restricted period before an election, commonly known as "purdah" media releases will not include quotes from councillors who are due for re-election. If a request for interview is received, the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson will determine the appropriacy of the request and determine which councillor is best placed to respond.

3.9 Communication with Members of the Public

Councillors should be aware that their responses could be construed to be that of the Parish Council and should avoid commitment to anything that has not been formally agreed. Where appropriate the matter should be referred through the Clerk to a full Council meeting.

3.10 Internal Communications

Council Members are encouraged to take advantage of a dedicated Parish Council email address whereby the majority of internal business can be managed. Councillors should be aware that all written communications may be subject to review by outside parties on request.