

Abbeydore & Bacton Group Parish Council

Communication and Engagement Strategy Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within the Parish Council regarding communications.

Abbeydore and Bacton Group Parish Council have developed a communication strategy with the aims of setting a standard for engagement with its community.

The Parish Council recognises that the services it provides must reflect the needs of residents and the locality. As a Parish Council, it wants to ensure that communication is two-way – telling people about the Parish Council and listening to what people say about the services they would like to see.

Scope

It is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules and regulations. Rather, it provides guidance on how to ensure efficient and effective communications between Parish Council members and with third parties.

Emails received by the Clerk or members may be disclosed following a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or following a subject access request under the Data Protection Act 1998 or in the course of legal proceedings.

Information that is held by someone on behalf of a Local Parish Council (that is by a Parish Councillor or Clerk) will satisfy the definition in Section 3(2)(b) of the 2000 Act and constitute ‘information held by a parish council’ which a person is entitled to request under the 2000 Act. Therefore, information that relates to the official business of the Parish Council that is held in personal email accounts of Parish Councillors or the Clerk is caught by the 2000 Act.

If official business of the Parish Council held in personal email accounts of Parish Councillors or Clerk contains personal data, it may come within the scope of a Subject Access Request under the 1998 Act.

Information in the personal emails of Parish Councillors and Clerk that does not relate to the business of the Parish Council will not be subject to the 1998 or 2000 Act.

If inappropriate internal Parish Council emails are required to be disclosed to persons external to the Parish Council then, at best, they may be considered embarrassing for the Parish Council and, at worst, have other unwanted consequences. If internal emails are defamatory, offensive, or wrongly disclose confidential information or personal data (which means information that may identify a living individual, such as name, address or telephone number) to those who should not have such confidential information or personal data, this may provide others with a means of legal redress against the Parish Council.

It is important to note that the Parish Council represents a relatively small constituency of around 300 parishioners. It does not have the resources to launch consultations for every matter that appears before it, nor would it be appropriate to do so in a representative democracy. The Parish Council therefore will only initiate a consultation when the matter under consideration meets one or more of the following conditions:

- a) There is a statutory requirement to consult
- b) The impact of the proposal for consultation is widespread and likely to impact a significant percentage of the parishioners and their interests.
- c) The Parish Council receives representation from 25% of parishioners.

Aims

The Parish Council will ensure that it communicates with residents in a timely and effective manner and to inform and consult them about matters which affect them. The aim of this strategy is to clearly define the way in which the Parish Council engages and consults its residents and partners on important issues by:-

Informing, Consulting and Involving

Being inclusive and engaging with all of its residents and partners.

Ensuring views are listened to and used to develop and enhance services, the environment and the quality of life where practicable to do so.

The key stakeholders with which the Parish Council must communicate include: Residents, Ward Councillor, Herefordshire Council, MP, Community Groups, Youth Groups, Village Hall Management Committee, Charitable Organisations, Police and Local Press. This includes Transport Providers, Libraries, Medical Service Providers, Educational Facilities, Landowners, Local Businesses and other service providers.

Objectives

- 1) To improve, plan and shape the future of the parish according to local needs and priorities
- 2) To use engagement to inform decision making, ensuring decisions are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the parish
- 3) To enhance the wellbeing of the parish
- 4) To improve the quality and delivery of services
- 5) To be a stronger, more active and cohesive parish

Support

The Parish Council will continue supporting and engaging with local organisations and will assist them in meeting their own aims and objectives. Supporting local projects and participating in local events will raise the awareness of the Parish Council and its aims and objectives.

How this will be achieved

The Parish Council will:-

Attract as many participants as possible to the bi-monthly Parish Council Meetings.

Promote and attract as many participants as possible to Special Meetings.

Liaise with Local Police on local issues.

Work with the Joint Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group, if required.

Support and encourage the work of local initiatives such as a village tidy up scheme, gardening initiatives etc. as appropriate.

Consultation

Consultations will only be launched if the issue to hand meets one of the criteria described under the scope of this policy.

Communication

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.

No individual Parish Councillor should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the Parish Council or Steering Group. In particular Parish Councillors do not have a right to obtain confidential information/documentation unless they can demonstrate a "need to know."

Communicating with members of the parish will be achieved in several ways to ensure all sections of the community are reached.

Parish Council and other Special Meetings are open to the public and include an opportunity for members of the public to engage with the Parish Council.

Agendas for all meetings are sent to the Ward Councillors and posted on the Village Notice boards in advance of each meeting.

Contact details for all Parish Councillors and the Clerk are available on the Village Notice Boards and the Parish Council Website.

The Parish Website will continue to be regularly updated and has a wealth of information including Agendas, Minutes and a Calendar of Meetings which highlights Special Meetings and Events.

Village Notice Boards will continue to be regularly updated to provide information about the activities of the Parish Council. The public may use these by sending their information to the Parish Clerk.

The Annual Report/Newsletter is produced yearly and is delivered free to every household in Abbeydore and Bacton areas.

Strategy

If there is an opportunity for consultation for any idea or proposal which may affect the village, the Parish Council and/or its partners will:-

- 1) Promote it through the Notice Boards and Website
- 2) On appropriate occasions residents in a particular locality may be individually written to

Acting together

Acting together with residents and partners in finding solutions to local problems will ensure they will be accepted and fit for purpose. Acting together to carry out agreed action plans will engage the community in working with the Parish Council to enhance their environments and the quality of their lives.

What Abbeydore and Bacton Group Parish Council asks its residents to do:-

To actively review the Notice Boards and/or the Parish Council Website and/or the Hereford Times and/or the Parish Newsletter for information about meetings and events

To recognise engagement opportunities and utilise them by responding to surveys, letters, questionnaires etc.

To address comments, suggestions or complaints in writing by letter; or by email; or by telephone, using contact information available on the Parish Council Website and displayed on the Village Notice Boards.

Alternatively to attend the bi-monthly Parish Council Meetings and make use of the public participation Agenda Item

Parish Council Chairman

Dated 16th May 2023

Print Full NameMr Toby Murcott.....

Signed 

Parish Councillor

Dated 16th May 2023

Print Full NameMr Keith Millington.....

Signed..... 

Signed..... 

Parish Council Clerk & RFO Mr Malcolm Walker

Dated 16th May 2023