

Wheldrake Parish Council

Communications Policy / Standing Order

Wheldrake Parish Council is committed to transparency and will engage with residents and other stakeholders in this context.

Meetings

All meetings, including those of the Parish Council's Committees and Working Groups, will be advertised no less than five clear days before the meeting at which time the agenda making clear the business to be transacted will also be published. The agenda will for each item specify the action proposed for the acceptance of the Parish Council or its subordinate Committee and Working Group.

Members of the public will be given the opportunity to speak before the Parish Council considers business as set out in the notice of the meeting concerned. Where new subjects are raised, the Clerk will minute what is said and the Parish Council will list the matter for discussion at the next meeting of the Parish Council or relevant Committee or Working Group.

All business of the Parish Council shall be conducted in public session except when considering the following: Parish Council's staffing matters; tenders received and post-tender negotiations; legally privileged advice obtained by the Council and action upon it in contemplation of litigation.

Minutes of all meetings shall be available in draft no later than six working days after the meeting and approved minutes no later than six working days of the meeting at which they were approved.

Website and other social media

The Parish Council website will be maintained so that content remains relevant and sufficiently comprehensive that it constitutes an effective interface with residents and other stakeholders. The same principle shall apply to the Parish Council's Facebook page.

The Parish Council will appoint one of their number or the Parish Clerk or other competent person to administer the website and Facebook page. Separate persons may be appointed for the website and Facebook page.

The Parish Council shall meet as required to approve or delegate to its Communications Working Group power to approve material to be added to the website and Facebook page.

The Parish Council will not post on Wheldrakians or other social media other than to refer to a statement of the Council's position and / or information contained on its website and / or Facebook page.

Resident and stakeholder engagement

The Parish Council will, as a minimum, publish a twice-yearly newsletter in print and digital formats. The printed version will be distributed to all households and businesses within the

Parish by cost effective means. The Newsletter will be published in March and September and otherwise as required by the Parish Council.

Each issue of the newsletter will be topical and include as a minimum a review of the Parish Council's work since publication of the previous issue. Specifically, the March issue will also cover plans and activities in the fiscal year following in April and the September edition will give notice of the Parish Council's open forum in October.

An open forum will be held each October at which the Council will meet residents and business principals to explain plans for the following fiscal year and to receive comments and ideas from those there to meet the Council. The output from the open forum will be an input to the Parish Council's budget for the following year which will be considered at the November meeting of the Council and approved at a meeting of the Parish Council in December.

Dealing with enquiries

The Parish Council's point of contact with members of the public, including the media, is the Clerk or in the Clerk's absence the Chairman. Therefore any contact direct with councillors shall be forwarded to the Clerk. The Parish Council will receive a clerk's report at each meeting which shall detail correspondence received since the preceding meeting of the Parish Council. The Clerk's report shall propose action necessary and state which items are for information. Where a response to correspondence is essential before the next meeting of the Parish Council, the Clerk shall liaise with the Chairman to determine a way ahead, which may include convening an extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council.

If approached by the media for comment, an individual councillor, including the Chairman, shall only speak with the authority of a Parish Councillor where there is already agreement as to the Parish Council's position and the information is already in the public domain. Otherwise, individual councillors shall make clear that any comment they choose to make is their personal position and not the view of the Parish Council.

A councillor's personal correspondence and use of social media which may be perceived as relating to the business and position of the Parish Council shall state clearly that they are acting in a personal capacity and not as a Parish Councillor.

Policy review

This policy and its use as a standing order of the Parish Council shall be reviewed by the communications Working Group annually and reported to the Council with any changes necessary put to the Council for ratification.

Approval

This policy was approved by the Parish Council on October 30th, 2019 and adopted as a standing order of the Council on that date.