



St Helen Without Parish Council

Working for You

Communications Strategy

Introduction

The aim of our communications strategy is to enable the residents in the St Helen Without Parish to have a clear understanding of the parish council's priorities, operations and challenges and enable residents to engage with the council.

Communications in Context

This strategy outlines the St Helen Without Parish Council's (SHWPC) approach to communication with internal and external stakeholders. This is a crucial part of achieving the council's objectives of transparency and accountability.

Our communications should be frequent and clear and seek to disseminate and receive relevant information to parish residents and other stakeholders.

Our Communication Commitment

We will achieve our vision, aims and objectives by communicating, through the appropriate channels, with the people we represent, those we employ, other local councils and the groups and businesses with whom we work. We will use these channels to both send and receive information.

Stakeholders include:

- residents of Cothill, Dry Sandford and Shippon
- local community groups
- partner bodies/organisations/authorities local to SHWPC
- business community
- opinion formers and key influencers
- external funders.

Channels of Communication include:

- our website
- Facebook
- Freepost
- the annual Chairperson's Report
- local media and newspapers
- consultations and surveys
- parish notice boards
- public speaking at meetings.

Communication Principles

All our council communications should be consistent and uphold high standards of writing, production and dissemination. This reflects the culture of the council and its aims. We should encourage and enable a two-way flow of information, which involves listening to our stakeholders and responding with the council's views. All communication will comply with the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (2011) published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

Communication should be:

- lawful
- cost-effective
- objective
- even-handed
- appropriate
- have regard to equality and diversity
- carefully considered, especially during periods of heightened sensitivity.

Chartered Institute of Public Relations issues guidance in Public Relations and Communication in Local Government and Public Service

We will follow this guidance so that our communication:

- is accurate, with all efforts made to ensure accuracy at the time of production
- delivers key messages with information that relates primarily to parish council matters
- uses a variety of channels so that it is accessible to all and meets the needs of diverse groups
- uses plain language so that the information is clear with key points emphasised
- is appropriately timed to allow for responses and be a regular and an ongoing process
- has an appropriate quality of design and production, ideally to a professional standard
- has appropriate branding so that it is clear who is sending the information
- is reviewed and evaluated in order to see what works well in order to learn and improve our communications
- provides the opportunity for feedback and lets respondents know what will be done with the feedback.

Our Channels of Communication

We will use the following means of communication:

Our Website

We will use the website for regular communication. It will be the central hub for information about the parish and the council and include council meeting minutes, documents and councillor contact details.

The parish clerk will be responsible for maintaining and updating the council's website.

Information posted on the front page will be reviewed each month, be current and where relevant signpost readers to other sections on the website.

Councillors, with their geographic and designated areas of responsibility, will provide the clerk with news (for the front page) and content to be posted on the website. This information will be submitted to the parish clerk with a clear indication of when and where it should be posted.

Facebook Page

We will use the parish Facebook page for immediate proactive communication to readers.

The parish clerk will be the administrator for this Facebook page and will monitor the page regularly and post information on the page.

Councillors will be able to provide the clerk with information to be posted on the page.

Email

We will communicate in a timely manner with residents who have contacted us by email.

The topic will determine which Councillor will reply.

FREEPOST

Our Freepost address (Freepost ST HELEN WITHOUT PARISH COUNCIL) is available to residents who do not want to, or are not able, to attend a council meeting or do not use electronic means of communication.

Councillors will be responsible for drafting a response depending on their area of responsibility and the topic.

Annual Chairperson's Report

We will use the Report to provide a written update on the council's activity over a year. It will be delivered to each household and posted on the website.

The chairperson will be responsible for writing the Report.

Councillors will be responsible for providing content when required and for reviewing the content.

Newsletter/s

Information will be included in the Shippon News and the Wootton And Dry Sandford Community Newsletter.

Local media and newspapers

We will use local media and newspapers if we wish to provide information to a wider group of people.

Councillors will provide the copy based on their area of responsibility.

Consultations

We will consult our residents and other stakeholders if we wish to receive feedback on a specific topic.

Councillors, supported by the clerk, will be responsible for collating and submitting responses to consultations based on the topic and the councillor's area of responsibility

Parish notice boards

We will use the noticeboards to provide information/updates from the council to residents, in particular those who are digitally excluded.

Councillors will be responsible for reviewing, posting and ensuring that the information on a noticeboard is current. The council agendas, minutes and parish notices will be supplied by the clerk.

Cothill - Mark and Sarah Rusby

Dry Sandford - Monica Littleboy

Shippon – Mike Page

Public speaking at meeting

We will be happy to provide speakers at community group events or public meetings. We reserve the right to nominate speakers based on councillors' geographic areas of responsibility and/or specialist interests.

Cycle of Regular Communications

A summary of the minutes is sent out monthly using mailing software to ensure that visibility of other recipients email addresses cannot be accidentally distributed. Additional update and news will be shared as and when required.