

BOUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

Communication & Community Engagement Policy

1. Purpose

- a. To clarify the ways in which Boughton Parish Council intends to communicate and engage with its electors.
- b. To ensure residents are kept informed and are encouraged to participate actively in Parish matters.
- c. To ensure residents' views and opinions are considered and used to inform Parish Council decision making and influence the quality and delivery of local services, facilities, and appropriate infrastructure to benefit of the Parish.

2. Publishing Meeting Agenda

At least three clear days before the meeting, the notice and agenda for meetings of the Parish Council are to be displayed:-

- in the Parish Council's noticeboards located in Humfrey Lane, Church Street, and Home Farm Drive; and
- on the Parish Council's website www.boughtonparishcouncil.co.uk

3. Methods and timescales for publishing records of meetings

- a. Draft minutes of meetings of the Parish Council will be published within 7 working days of the meeting.
- b. At the following meeting of the Council, the approved minutes will be published within three working days.
- c. Specific reports discussed at meetings may be posted on the Parish Council's website by the discretion of the Clerk and Chair.

4. Correspondence

- a. All written correspondence for the Parish Council should be addressed to the Clerk either at the Clerk's home address or via the official email address clerk@boughtonparishcouncil.co.uk.
- b. All official correspondence will be dealt with by the Clerk on behalf of the Council.
- c. The Clerk may respond to verbal or written requests for information when the information is readily available, without referring the request to any Councillor or meeting of the Parish Council.
- d. When a request for information is likely to involve significant time spent in research, or

BOUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

when a second or subsequent request is received from any individual following an earlier response on the same subject, the Clerk is to refer the request to the Chair for advice.

- e. If correspondence addressed to the Clerk appears to level a complaint at the Parish Council or at any Councillor, the Clerk is to advise the correspondent to follow the Council's Complaints Procedure.
- a. If Councillors receive a complaint from a member of the public, this will be dealt with under the Parish Council's Complaints Procedure or as a Parish Council meeting agenda item. Care will be taken to protect identities when reporting correspondence to the Parish Council.

5. Verbal Communication

- a. Unless a Councillor is absolutely certain that he/she is reporting the view of the Parish Council, they must make it clear to members of the public that they are expressing a personal view.
- b. Unless a Councillor has been authorised by the Council to speak to the media on a particular issue, Councillors who are asked for comment by the press should make it clear that it is personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as such. Cross referenced to the Council's Press & Media Policy.

6. Planning Applications

- a. As West Northamptonshire Council's website publishes details of planning applications that are referred to the Council, there is no obligation on the Clerk to provide copies to Councillors or to the public.
- b. The Parish Council's comments on an application will be noted on the Parish Council website <https://boughtonparishcouncil.co.uk/category/documents/planning-documents/planning/>

7. Scope and availability of information published on the Council website

- a. The Parish Council will endeavour to publish and retain on its website meeting agenda and minutes, together with any relevant reports in accordance with paragraph 3c above.
- b. The Parish Council authorise the Clerk to publish on its website notices of general interest and benefit to its electors, with due regard to avoiding appearing to endorse or support any declared interest of any of its Councillors or appearing to prejudge any matter which is to be brought to the Parish Council to be determined.

BOUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

8. Use of Social Media

- a. The Parish Council nominate the Clerk to maintain and update the Parish Council website www.boughtonparishcouncil.co.uk and Facebook page "Boughton Parish Council". All online content should be accurate, objective, balanced and informative.
- b. Communications will include, but are not limited to, posting council meeting agendas and minutes, dates of meetings, vacancies, news stories as well as advertising events and activities.
- c. Such communication will be a direct representation of the Council. Therefore, the Clerk agrees to uphold the same standards expected of a Councillor as set out in the Council's Code of Conduct.
- d. Councillors who use social media personally should ensure that they do not breach the Council's Code of Conduct with their online activity. Such as, but not limited to, their comments, posts, likes, group/page membership and sharing of third party information.
- e. Anyone with concerns regarding online content published by the Clerk, or by a Councillor on their personal account, should report the issue directly to the Clerk, or the Chair should you feel there is a conflict of interest.
- f. For the avoidance of doubt, Councillors and the Clerk must not:
 - Bring the council into disrepute through content posted in a personal capacity including presenting:-
 - personal opinions as that of the council
 - themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to the council
 - false names or pseudonyms to hide their identity
 - Post content that:-
 - is contrary to the democratic decisions of the council
 - is controversial or includes potentially inflammatory remarks
 - engages in personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications
 - constitutes bullying or harassment
 - includes photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
 - uses an individual's name unless given written permission to do so
 - Post offensive language relating to the nine equality characteristic being:
 - race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief, gender realignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity.
 - Conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence including, but not limited to, data protection, copyright infringement or anything that may be deemed libel.
- g. Social media content that is contrary to this and/or any other policy, could result in action being taken.

BOUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

9. Community Engagement

- a. Parish Council meetings are held in Boughton Village Hall, Butchers Lane, Boughton at 7.00 pm on the second Monday of the month, excluding August.
- b. Members of the Public and Press are invited to address the Council at the Public Open Forum Session of the Parish Council meeting which lasts for approx. 15 minutes.
- c. In addition to regular Parish Council meetings described above, the Parish Council will hold extra-ordinary meetings or arrange consultation meetings to keep residents informed and to consult with them ahead of, for example submitting responses to major planning applications.
- d. The Parish Council will advertise extra-ordinary meetings as widely as possible to all residents using Parish noticeboards, the website, Facebook, Boughton Village matters both in hard copy and electronically and, if deemed necessary, by hand delivered invitations.
- e. The Parish Council will include in its annual budget monies available as grants which community groups and other organisations within the Parish are entitled to apply for in order to support and improve the local community.
- f. Individual Parish Councillors take on responsibility for reporting on and promoting particular items of community interest.
- g. An Annual Parish Meeting will be held every year which all residents are invited to attend. All local community groups are invited to attend and present a review or report on activities over the previous year. Parish Councillors attend this meeting and are encouraged to listen to any views or concerns of residents.