# Bishopstone Parish Council

**Communication and Engagement Policy**

**October 2021**

* **Introduction**

The Policy has been written to help us to involve as many people as possible in a variety of ways. The Communications Policy will cover all aspects of the Parish Council’s communications with everyone who comes into contact with us either directly or indirectly.

* **Aim**

The overall aim is to make the Parish Council communications a two-way process. The intention is to provide timely information to allow the community to understand what we do, whilst enabling the Council to make informed decisions using accurate information received from residents and partners.

It will endeavor to ensure that communication is clear and appropriate for the message and audience.

* **Objectives**
* To improve, plan and shape the future of the parish according to local needs and priorities through active engagement with the community to understand needs and priorities
* To use the process of engagement to inform decision making
* To raise the profile of the village
* To raise the profile of the work of the Parish Council
* To use a variety of methods to provide information to the community
* To engage with local and strategic partners on a range of matters of interest or concern to the community
* **Community and local partners and stakeholders**

Within the parish:

* Residents
* Parish Councilors,
* Village voluntary groups
* Village clubs, societies and organisations
* Local churches
* Local businesses
* Bishopstone Primary School

Wider groups and organisations:

* Swindon Borough Council
* MPs
* Neighbouring Parish Councils
* Other public sector organisations such as those concerned with health, education, the police and emergency services
* The media

**Methods**

Methods used by the Parish Council to communicate and engage stakeholders can be found in Appendix 1.

**Social Media**

Following a successful pilot, the PC wishes to continue the operation of its own Social Media presence via a Parish Council Facebook page. However, this is limited to one way communication for notification of events, projects and key information. It will not be used in any way for dialogue between PC Members and the public.

The purpose of the use of this channel is to increase transparency of council matters and ensure speed of communication. Councillors and Officers should at all times present a professional image and not disclose anything of a confidential nature. Comments of a derogatory, proprietary or defamatory nature must not be made, and care should be taken to ensure accuracy of information.

**Personal Accounts**

Whilst councillors may use their own personal social media accounts, they must not imply they are speaking for the Council and must make it clear that what they say is representative of their personal views only.

**Evaluation**

It is important that the Council measures its progress towards its stated objectives so that it may inform any future plan.

The following initiatives can potentially be monitored:

* Raised awareness of the Parish Council and the services it provides
* Participation and engagement of community partners with Council projects, initiatives and consultation processes
* Attendance at public meetings and organised events
* Media coverage of the Parish Council’s communication coverage

This can be done by:

* Parish questionnaires
* Measurement of press coverage following press releases
* Number of likes and followers on social networking sites (to be agreed)
* Attendance at meetings

**Conclusion**

The Council should aim to consult regularly with residents ranging from light touch opportunities such as the “Questions from Registered Electors” session at the start of each PC meeting through to formal consultation programmes where information must be widely disseminated and feedback obtained to shape the programme and demonstrate democracy in action.

For large or complex consultation programmes it may be necessary to form working parties – ideally consisting of Councillors and members of the public to organise the consultation programme.  Outcomes from surveys and consultation draft material should be made available to the public through village bulletins and the web site for transparency purposes.

This Community Engagement Policy provides the framework for how the Parish Council will communicate and engage with parishioners and other organisations. It must be reviewed and updated if necessary, annually.

Adopted 7th August 2017

Reviewed and approved vs 2 December 2020

This version vs 3 reviewed and approved October 2021