

# **HOTON PARISH COUNCIL**

## **COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Hoton Parish Council represents and articulates the views and needs of the local community. It shares information on parish matters affecting the community and supports comment from interested individuals and groups.

The aim is to make Hoton Parish Council communications a two-way process: to give people the information to understand accurately what HPC does, whilst also enabling HPC to make informed decisions using information received from residents and partners.

The principles of these guidelines apply to Parish Councillors and the Clerk to HPC. It is also intended for guidance for others communicating with the Parish Council.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD COMMUNICATION**

Good communication will enable HPC to:

- Better understand the needs of the community and develop appropriate strategies and priorities
- Raise residents' satisfaction, trust and confidence by communicating about issues
- Be an effective voice of the community
- Maintain and enhance the reputation of HPC
- Make the best use of all forms of communication to engage with all residents

### **WHO IS COMMUNICATING?**

#### **PARISH CLERK**

The Parish Clerk has responsibility for communication with members of the community and outside bodies via email, the Parish Council webpage, Facebook, WhatsApp and the village noticeboards. The Parish Clerk is provided with a Council email address which is to be used solely for the purpose of conducting Council business.

#### **COUNCILLORS**

Councillors have responsibility for communicating with members of the community and outside bodies via email, the parish council Facebook page and village noticeboards. Elected members will be regularly approached by members of the community as this is part of their role. How enquiries from the public are dealt with by Councillors will reflect on HPC. Enquiries may be in person, by telephone, letter, or email. When in doubt about how to respond to an enquiry the guidance of the Parish Clerk will be sought. At no time should Councillors make any promises to the public on any matter raised with them other than to say they will investigate the matter. All manner of issues may be raised,

many of which may not be relevant to HPC. Depending on the issue, it may be appropriate to deal with the matter in the following ways:

- Refer the matter to the Parish Clerk who will then deal with it as appropriate
- Request an item on the next meeting agenda
- Investigate the matter personally having sought the guidance of the Parish Clerk

Councillors must ensure that any verbal communication with the public on council related matters reflects the decisions and policies of HPC regardless of the Councillor's individual views on any subject.

### **COUNCIL MEETINGS AND COUNCILLOR INTERACTION**

HPC meets six times per year. Meetings start at 7.45pm, currently in the village hall. An initial draft of the meeting minutes will be produced by the Clerk and issued to councillors for review and issued no later than one month after the meeting has taken place. The Agenda and Minutes of the meetings are published on the Council website, Facebook and village noticeboards following approval at the following council meeting. Councillors who have taken on responsibility for some action which involves written or verbal feedback with third parties shall respond or ask the Parish Clerk to respond.

### **WHO SHOULD WE BE COMMUNICATING WITH**

The council's audience is wide and varied but will typically include:

- HPC employees and contractors
- Residents
- Charnwood Borough Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- The media
- Voluntary groups and organisations
- The business community
- Our MP
- Other public sector organisations (police, health, fire)
- Visitors and those who work in the area

### **HOW WE SHOULD BE COMMUNICATING**

Different forms of communication will appeal to different ages, social groups, and demographics so it is important to ensure that within reason, all options for increasing communication and participation are reviewed over time in order to communicate effectively with everyone. The advances made in information technology offer new ways of communicating. At the same time, for many people, traditional methods (newsletter, notice board etc) still play a fundamental role that must not be undervalued.

Currently Council communication is achieved mainly through Council meetings and Councillor interaction, managed by the Parish Clerk. Methods of communication include:

- Notices on village boards
- Online messages and information via the HPC website
- Online messages via the Stoughton Parish Council Facebook page
- The village WhatsApp group

HPC will continue to explore ways in which communication could be improved.

### **VILLAGE NOTICE BOARDS**

The village notice boards will be kept updated to ensure that members of the community who are less active online are kept aware of key information.

### **ONLINE PRESENCE**

#### **Council Website**

Online content should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate. HPC's website is to be regularly updated.

#### **HPC Facebook Page**

HPC have a joint Facebook page with the Village Hall to alert members of the parish to local news and events. Administrators manage the content to ensure it is relevant to the audience.

### **EMAIL**

All correspondence should be addressed to [hotonparishcouncil@googlemail.com](mailto:hotonparishcouncil@googlemail.com)

### **COMMUNICATION – GOOD PRACTICE**

It is imperative that:

- All communication from HPC is courteous, timely, professional, appropriate and reflects the decisions and policies of council;
- All individuals communicating on behalf of HPC are aware that every piece of communication reflects the reputation of HPC in the community

Councillors are ambassadors of HPC and this is reflected in all communications. Any communications from HPC will meet the following criteria:

- Be tasteful, civil and relevant;
- Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- Not contain any personal information;
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising

Equally, it is expected that any communications to HPC would meet similar criteria.