

## HARTLEY WINTNEY PARISH COUNCIL

**POLICY NAME** Communications and Social Media Policy  
**POLICY NO/REF** HWPC 3/2022  
**EFFECTIVE DATE/FC** 06/09/2023  
**APPROVAL**  
**DATE OF LAST REVISION** JULY 2023  
**VERSION NUMBER** 3  
**LEAD COMMITTEE** POLICY

VERSION HISTORY				
VERSION	APPROVED BY	REVISION DATE	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE	AUTHOR
1	Full Council 03/08/2020		Replaced the HWPC Email Usage Policy. Reviewed by Policy Working Group 28.04.2022 and Section 10 reference to Code of Conduct amended.	
2	Full Council 06/06/2022	July 2023 by Policy Working Group		
3	Full Council 06/09/2023			

## APPROVAL AND REVIEW

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## ADDITIONAL NOTES

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## POLICY STATEMENT

- 1 The Hartley Wintney Parish Council (HWPC) recognises the importance of communication with all its stakeholders.
- 2 HWPC will communicate with its stakeholders through a range of traditional and electronic media in an open and transparent manner.
- 3 The Communication and Social Media Policy is applicable to all Councillors, staff, and volunteers.
- 4 The Executive Clerk has delegated responsibility to determine the most appropriate form of communication method.
- 5 The Executive Clerk will keep the Chair of the PC informed prior to the dissemination of all communication.
- 6 Communication by and with the Press and Media Communication shall be in line with HWPC Standing Orders and in line with the 'reporting Council Meetings Policy'.
- 7 Councillors and HWPC staff are not permitted to make any public statement on behalf of the Council which is not supported by a Council decision and then only after engaging with the Executive Clerk.
- 8 The Council encourages engagement with the community to gain views and comments via informal gatherings, Councillors' day-to-day contact with the community and attendance at meetings with local organisations.
- 9 All emails and communication from the PC will be routed through the Executive Clerk and be made using the HWPC email addresses.
- 10 All complaints on any matter shall be managed by the Executive Clerk.

## TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION

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## POLICY CONTENT

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document sets out the Hartley Wintney Parish Council (HWPC) policy for internal and external communications with stakeholders.
- 1.2. The relevant stakeholders for the HWPC are
  - 1.2.1. Residents of the Parish
  - 1.2.2. Users of Parish Council Services
    - 1.2.2.1. Business owners within the Parish
    - 1.2.2.2. All young people who live/go to school in the Parish
    - 1.2.2.3. All voluntary organisations, churches, clubs and societies operating in or representing groups within the Parish
- 1.3. Additionally, the HWPC will also maintain good communication and strong working relationships with organisations which directly impact the local community, including
  - 1.3.1. Hart District Council,
  - 1.3.2. Hampshire County Council,
  - 1.3.3. Neighbouring Parish Councils,
  - 1.3.4. Public Health bodies,
  - 1.3.5. Police, and Fire and Rescue Services and
  - 1.3.6. Local health and care providers.

### 2. Principles

- 2.1. The council defines communication as the process of exchanging information across traditional and electronic media.
- 2.2. The HWPC will engage with the community in an open and transparent manner.
- 2.3. The HWPC welcomes feedback and comments.

The HWPC is committed to encouraging the members of the Hartley Wintney Parish to actively engage in the life of the community.

### **3. Application of Policy**

3.1 This Policy applies equally to the HWPC Council through the Code of Conduct and to its employees through the employee terms and conditions of employment and staff handbook.

### **4. Agenda, minutes and papers of Council meetings**

- 4.1. The Council will publish on its website the meeting schedule and all papers and agendas for Full Council and Sub-Committees meetings.
- 4.2. The Council will set aside time at every Council and Sub-Committee meeting for members of the public to make representation to raise issues with councillors.

### **5. Parish Council Engagement with the Public and Promotion of Activities**

- 5.1. The Parish Council Website is the primary source of information on Council Business and Services provided. Other electronic forms of communication are the Parish Council Facebook and Instagram sites.
- 5.2. The Council Notice Boards located in the High Street will additionally, publicise meeting agendas and Councillor details.
- 5.3. The Council may publish articles in the "Contact Magazine" for those who do not have access to the internet or social media.
- 5.4. The Council may appoint members to represent the Council on community organisations when requested.
- 5.5. From time to time, the Council may seek volunteers from the Parish to join working groups to enhance communication and engagement.
- 5.6. The Executive Clerk has delegated authority to determine the most appropriate form of communication method to ensure the timely dissemination of information in line with Council Policies.

## **6. Parish Council Communication with the Press and Public**

- 6.1. The Executive Clerk is the nominated Press Officer.
- 6.2. All press notices or comments to the media will be agreed between the Chair and the Executive Clerk and where relevant, the Committee Chairs.
- 6.3. Press Reports from the Council, its Committees or working parties will come from the Executive Clerk or via the reporter's own attendance at a meeting.

## **7. Gathering the views of the Community**

- 7.1. The Council encourages engagement with the community so that views can be heard and needs established through formal consultations and less formal meetings and other engagement methods including surveys.

## **8. Parish Council use of email**

- 8.1 This policy operates in conjunction with the HWPC Privacy Policy.

## **9. Parish Council Correspondence**

- 9.1. The point of contact for the Parish Council is the Executive Clerk and it is to the Executive Clerk that all correspondence should be addressed.
- 9.2. Any correspondence or emails from a Parishioner or external source which are addressed to Council members must be copied onto the Executive Clerk.
- 9.3. Councillors receiving direct emails must forward a copy of the correspondence to the Executive Clerk, this is to ensure that there is a correct record of activity kept by the Parish Council.
- 9.4. All outgoing correspondence and emails from Councillors should be directed through the Executive Clerk.
- 9.5. All official correspondence should be sent by the Executive Clerk in the name of the Council, on council letter headed paper.
- 9.6. Replies to correspondence and email received by Councillors and Parish Council Staff should be sent within seven business days, or where that is not possible a holding update should be sent pending the final response.

## **10. Social Media**

- 10.1 Social media has a growing role as a vehicle for improving contact and engagement between the HWPC, its Parishioner members and other external bodies and organisations.
- 10.2 All posts referencing HWPC are posted via the Parish Office to the official Facebook and Instagram sites unless approved via the Executive Clerk or in a HWPC meeting.
- 10.3 Whilst social media can raise profiles and potentially help to engage a wider audience in local politics, it brings additional risks for Councillors around the way in which they express themselves.
- 10.4 Councillors must be particularly careful in the way they communicate where there is any suggestion that they are using these tools in an official rather than private capacity.
- 10.5 Comments on blogs, forums or social media are more likely to be viewed as having been made in an official capacity where the author is explicitly identified as a Councillor, where they impart information which is known to them only by virtue of their elected position, or where they comment directly on council business rather than on wider political issues.
- 10.6 Use of disclaimers on blogs and social media does not necessarily mean that what is said falls outside the scope of the Code of Conduct.

## **11. The Hartley Wintney Parish Website**

- 11.1. The Parish Council website is the primary electronic means of providing information about the village and Parish Council matters with the primary purpose of promoting easier engagement with the community.
- 11.2. The Parish Council website provides a means of promoting the village to visitors and business.
- 11.3. The official Parish Council Facebook and Instagram sites are an additional electronic means of communication.
- 11.4. While social media is a key tool to assist the Council to meet its obligations to be open and transparent, it will not be used as a substitute for meeting obligations to make information available to the public using other formats, particularly to Parishioners that are not connected to the internet.

## **12. Management of the HWPC website**

- 12.1. The HWPC website is hosted by a third-party provider linking HWPC web content with the wider internet.
- 12.2. The Council has direct control of day-to-day editing and updating of the website.

- 12.3. The Executive Clerk is accountable for making updates and is authorised by the Council to make routine updates without prior reference to the Council.
- 12.4. The following Council Information will be uploaded to the website:
- 12.4.1. Details of Councillors
  - 12.4.2. Information on Council Services
  - 12.4.3. Meeting agendas and minutes
  - 12.4.4. Policy Documents
  - 12.4.5. Audit Reports
  - 12.4.6. Reports or surveys commissioned by the Council
  - 12.4.7. Chair of HWPC update
- 12.5. The Website will also contain information and links which may be of use to residents. These will be updated from time to time. However, the Council cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies in contact details or links and their content.
- 12.6. The Website may include links to other websites or sources of information to assist the community in accessing views on issues of interest. The inclusion of such links is subject to Full Council approval, and it must be made clear that the Council does not endorse any opinions expressed on other sites.
- 12.7. Website material that is considered as Archival Material should be preserved without change to the content but can be restructured and reorganised as required.

### **13. Parish Logo**

- 13.1 Use of the Parish Logo is prohibited without the prior agreement of the Executive Clerk.

### **14. Complaints**

- 14.1 Any complaints about Parish Council Communication of any type including content or interactions on the Hartley Wintney Parish Council Website, Facebook or Instagram accounts should be made to the Executive Clerk.

### **RELATED POLICIES AND OTHER REFERENCES**

HWPC Code of Conduct  
Employee Terms and Conditions of Employment  
Staff Handbook  
HWPC Privacy Policy