

# Communications Policy

## **Aims**

To establish clear, easy to use, channels of communication in relation to members of the public, other agencies, fellow members, the press and Parish Council staff.

The Parish Council aims to provide information on important matters affecting the community and to encourage informed comment from interested individuals and groups.

Each Parish Councillor has a duty to represent, without bias, the interests of the whole community. They will always try to help with matters relating to Stilton Parish Council (SPC). However, an individual councillor cannot respond to enquiries outside of Parish Council meetings other than to acknowledge such an enquiry. An individual councillor, including the chairman, cannot make a decision or respond on behalf of the Parish Council.

## **Means of Communication**

### **Website**

In the interests of transparency and to provide electors with a clear picture of its activities, the Parish Council will publish information on the SPC website: [www.stiltonparishcouncil.org](http://www.stiltonparishcouncil.org) This will include Parish Council meeting agendas, the full minutes of Parish Council meetings and a publication scheme. Hard copies are available by request to the clerk.

### **Newsletter**

Whilst the Parish Council does not publish a regular newsletter or magazine, it has regularly contributed to SCAN (Stilton Community Association Newsletter) for many years. SCAN, which does not charge the Parish Council, is published monthly and delivered for free to every household in Stilton, Folksworth and some of the surrounding area. The Parish Council will continue to support and make effective use of SCAN through regular contributions describing the work of Council and informing the village of important events and information. It is seen as an important mechanism for communicating with large sections of the village and its environs. Over the years the Parish Council has, on occasions, circulated its own newsletter, information leaflet or questionnaire to houses in the village. Resources prevent this being done regularly but the Parish Council will use village circulars when needed.

### **Notice boards**

The notice boards by the Village Pump, the Parish Room, and The Pavilion display contact details for the Parish Clerk, the agenda for the next meeting, any statutory notices and other items of interest. Due to limited space on notice boards, more comprehensive and diverse information such as current and previous Minutes, previous Agendas, Policies, Regulations, Councillor details, planning applications, news, Facebook, forthcoming events, etc is available on the SPC website, [www.stiltonparishcouncil.org](http://www.stiltonparishcouncil.org).

## **Meetings**

The Parish Council usually meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm at various venues, or virtually via Zoom (details provided on the agenda). At every Parish Council meeting there is an opportunity for members of the public to raise a matter of concern or to comment on an item on the agenda. After the conclusion of the public speaking section members of the public are not permitted to comment on further agenda items unless permission is granted by the Chairman. Further details can be found in the Parish Council Meeting Protocol on SPC website. The Council also has various Committees and Working Groups, details of which are on the SPC website.

## **Annual Meeting of the Parish Council**

This meeting will be held in May. It is in effect a normal Parish Council meeting except that the first item on the agenda has to be 'The election of the Chairman'.

## **Annual Parish Meeting**

This is a meeting of the Parish and not the Parish Council. Electors can contribute to the agenda and these meetings can celebrate local activities and debate current issues in the community. It can be a very social meeting. Seven clear days' notice of the meeting will be given and the meeting will be held in May each year.

## **Correspondence**

All correspondence to the Parish Council should be addressed to the Clerk by email at [clerk@stiltonparishcouncil.org](mailto:clerk@stiltonparishcouncil.org) or by post at The Parish Meeting Room, Church Street, Stilton PE7 3RF. This will ensure that the matter is recorded and passed to the Parish Council for their attention at the next meeting.

If a resident wishes a subject to be raised, and it is appropriate for discussion at a Parish Council meeting, then the Clerk will have to be notified seven days before the publication of the agenda.

The Parish Council will determine the response, if any, to correspondence received. The Parish Council reserves the right to not respond to any correspondent that takes up a disproportionate amount of the Clerk's time. The Clerk will aim to respond to all correspondence within 14 working days of receiving it. Advice will be sought upon receipt of vexatious communications.

All official correspondence from the Parish Council should be sent by the Clerk on Stilton Parish Council official headed notepaper.

Correspondence from individual Parish Councillors should be avoided. However, there may be exceptional situations when it is appropriate for a Parish Councillor to issue correspondence in their own name. Such correspondence must be authorised by the Parish Council.

### **Communication with the Press and Public**

The Clerk will clear all press reports, or comments to the media, in consultation with the Chairman. The Clerk will be the first point of contact for the media. However, where it is appropriate for a councillor to represent the Parish Council, the Chairman or Vice-Chairman shall be authorised as the official spokesmen for the Council.

Individual councillors will not be permitted to issue media releases on behalf of the Parish Council.

In the restricted period before an election, commonly known as “purdah” media releases will not include quotes from councillors who are due for re-election

Press reports from the Parish Council, its committees or working groups shall be sent from the Clerk or via the reporter’s own attendance at a meeting.

Unless a Parish Councillor has been authorised by the council to speak to the media on a particular issue, Parish Councillors who are asked for comment by the press should make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as this.

Parish Councillors will be approached regularly by members of the community, as this is part of their role. Care should be taken over how councillors deal with enquiries from the public because this will reflect on the Council. At no time should councillors make any promises to the public about any matter raised with them other than to promise to investigate the matter. All manner of issues may be raised, many of which may not be relevant to the Parish Council. Depending on the issue raised it may be appropriate to deal with the matter in the following ways:

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

Unless a Parish Councillor is absolutely certain that they are reporting the view of the Council, they must make it clear to members of the public that they are expressing a personal view. The only clear way of being aware of the Council’s

view is if the matter has been discussed at a Parish Council meeting, and a decision made on that item.

### **Internal Communication**

- E-mails should be kept to a minimum and should be appropriate to the work of the Parish Council.
- Matters for information to the other councillors should be directed via the Clerk.
- Instant replies should not be expected from the Clerk.
- Telephone calls should be kept to a minimum and be appropriate to the work of the Parish Council.

### **Social Media**

**Please see our Social Media Policy**

#### **Related Policies and procedures:**

These include, but are not limited to:

- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Social Media
- Data protection/Privacy
- Freedom of Information
- Records management

Review of this policy will be carried out annually by Stilton Parish Council.

RESPONSIBLE OFFIER: CLERK	DATE EFFECTIVE FROM: MAY 2021	REVIEW DATE: MAY 2022
------------------------------	----------------------------------	--------------------------