

ICKLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL

**A local council for the peoples of Icklesham,
Winchelsea, Winchelsea Beach and Rye Harbour**

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COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

ADOPTED: 11TH MARCH 2024

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Communications Policy

Our Code of Conduct sets out the standards of conduct that is expected from all Councillors and the government has a Code of Recommended Practice regarding Local Government communication. Both documents set out principles that can be applied to any type of communication we make, whether verbal, printed or digital. They stress the importance of objectivity, transparency, honesty and balance.

Councillors may hold several different roles within the community, and this can create scope for confusion as to their capacity when communicating. Although councillors may be clear in their own minds that they are acting in a personal capacity it may be less clear to others. This can lead to the assumption that personal views are the same as those of the Council, when this may not necessarily be the case. So, when you are communicating personally, make it clear that any views that you express are your own personal views, and do not represent the views of the Council. In all circumstances the safer course is to refer the enquiry to the Clerk so that she may reply officially.

1. MEETINGS

Please remember you are under scrutiny of the public so dress smart casual (no t-shirts with wording unless under a sweater) and be careful how you conduct yourself and what you say. Our meetings are recorded for accuracy so any comments will be taped.

2. WEBSITE

The website is one of our most important communication tools. It provides an informative online resource, where members of the public can find information relating to their Councillors, Agendas, Minutes, Policies, News, Links and Contact details. The Clerk is responsible for ensuring it is kept up to date on a regular basis and that older documents are archived.

3. FACEBOOK

The Clerk is responsible for posting, managing and moderating the content on the Council's behalf so whilst Councillors may wish to place messages, comments or responses on other community channels within their wards please be careful that what is said is accurate because it is a record, and it is permanent. If you are unsure about posting something, ask the Parish Clerk before doing so however the safest course of action is to leave the posting to the Clerk.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk and RFO will be responsible for managing correspondence received on behalf of the Council. Whilst most will be of a general nature and the council will not be notified of them as a matter of course, if the Clerk considers it necessary, or if an individual asks, the correspondence will be presented to members at the next Council meeting under an Agenda item titled "correspondence". The Clerk will initially determine the most appropriate way to reply to correspondence with advice from the Chair. If by telephone a record should be made of the call confirming what was discussed and agreed.

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5. EMAIL (Adopted 4TH MAY 2021/ 8(d) Re-Adopted 9th May 2022)

It is believed that of those using the World Wide Web that 64% of people have sent or received an email that caused unintended anger, or confusion so the following policy adopted by Icklesham Parish Council will avoid this happening in our day-to-day dealings with our clerks, residents and fellow councillors.

It is important to keep emails short and to-the-point which will help the clerks enormously adding less clutter to their inboxes and making it easier for them to respond. Clear emails always have a clear purpose. Only sending emails that are absolutely necessary shows respect for the person you are emailing. The less you include in your emails, the better, and in business it is considered that more than five sentences can be too long although there will be times when it's impossible to keep an email to five sentences, in most cases, five sentences or less is sufficient.

A good structure for an email should include:

- A greeting
- A compliment or pleasantry
- The reason for your email
- A closing message
- Sign off, i.e. Best wishes, Kind regards etc. followed by your name.

Whilst it is okay to capitalise a word for emphasis, NEVER use this for whole sentences as this is considered shouting in emails. Always proof-read your email before you send it and ask yourself:

- Is my request clear - could there be any misunderstandings?
- How would this sound if I were the recipient?

Also please remember "Please" and "Thank you" go a long way.

6. NOTICE BOARDS (Document Display Policy Adopted 4TH MAY 2021/ 8(d) Re-Adopted 15th May 2023)

This Policy sets out the criteria governing the nature of acceptable material to be displayed on all official parish council notice boards. Our noticeboards, located in each ward, are an important method of communicating with residents. It is important that the information displayed is kept up to date by key holders and notices regularly replaced.

It is the overall policy of Icklesham Parish Council that no material of discriminatory, inflammatory, or purely commercial nature should appear on those notice boards under its control.

Notices will normally be issued by the Clerk to the Council and will have originated either with the Parish Council, District Council, County Council, or such bodies as may be considered appropriate to local council business.

From time to time the Clerk, or Ward Councillors, may wish to display other material relevant to local community life and this is permissible provided that it falls within the general constraints outlined in Paragraph 1 above.

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Where there is doubt as to the acceptability of an item proposed for display, the Clerk should be consulted before it is posted. If the matter remains unresolved, it must be put before full council for a final decision.

The Clerk and key holders of the Notice Boards should ensure that the boards remain uncluttered and that the Agenda and the draft Minutes to be approved at the next council meeting should be prominently displayed in each Ward's parish notice board together with any other important Parish Council information.

6. NEWSLETTER AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Once again to maintain accuracy the Clerk produces newsletters and articles for Parish Magazines.

To keep costs to a minimum, newsletters prepared by the Council should be predominantly available in a digital format [PDF], this could be either downloaded from the Council's website, sent via email to those on a subscription list or accessed via a QR code on Parish Noticeboards.

If required, printed newsletters could be delivered by Councillors, to residents who do not have online access.

7. PRESS & MEDIA

The Parish Clerk is the first point of contact for any enquiry from the media [Press, TV, Radio etc.]. Any approaches to Councillors by the media should always be referred to the Clerk. Where appropriate, the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, is responsible for issuing Press Releases on behalf of the Council. The purpose of a press release is to make the media aware of a potential story, to provide important public information or to explain the Council's position on a particular issue.

Only the Clerk is permitted to issue Press Releases on behalf of the Parish Council and all Press Releases should be agreed by the Parish Council.

8. ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The Annual Parish meeting is an important opportunity to report to residents what has been accomplished during year, and to answer any questions they may have. It is also an opportunity to hear from at least two groups and volunteers that the Council has supported. This meeting needs to be publicised to ensure a good attendance of residents. The Chair's Report should be available in hard copy and to be digitally downloaded.

9. URGENT SITUATIONS

During pandemics, or when urgent situations arise decisions may be taken via email.

Adopted by Full Council: March 2024 Minute Reference: 24/34b

Review Date: May 2025 Date Reviewed: _____