

Charmouth Parish Council

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Communication Policy

This strategy sets a framework for Parish Council communications. It gives direction for all media, online, internal and external communications activity undertaken by Charmouth Parish Council.

We will use the most appropriate channels of communications to reach our customers including residents, employees, businesses, contractors and public sector partners. We will use clear and easy to understand language.

Good communication is a key driver to overall satisfaction with council performance. It is also at the heart of good customer service and effective, meaningful consultation and critical to the council's role in the community.

Our Communications Objectives

- To secure and strengthen the reputation of the Parish Council
- To build and maintain a professional corporate identity
- To promote the image that the Parish Council is supportive, effective, efficient and listens to the public and their needs
- To ensure that communications are consistent and co-ordinated across all channels
- To ensure all staff understand the priorities of the Parish Council and feel valued and able to contribute to major changes affecting services they provide
- To ensure that our communications activities reflect the full diversity of the community and help ensure equality of access to all our services
- To hold an Annual Parish Meeting as an opportunity for face-to-face communication with parishioners
- To hold consultation meetings as an opportunity for dialogue on specific items
- To work with public sector partners to share good practice and explore joint working opportunities

Our Communications

- To work with public sector partners to share good practice and explore joint working opportunities
- Communications must be clear, easy to understand, polite, tasteful and relevant
- Communications must not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, defamatory, harassing, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive
- Communications must not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright

Letter, Email, Telephone and Texting

We communicate with residents, employees, businesses, contractors and public sector partners by letter, email, telephone and to a lesser extent by texting. This type of communication is normally to a named individual but is equally as important as broadcasting information to a wider audience.

Our offices are open most weekday mornings and we aim to reply to all correspondence sent as soon as we can. An 'out of office' message should be used when appropriate.

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with correspondence received and passing on any relevant information to councillors or external agencies.

It is essential to the smooth running of the office and the reputation of the council that all councillors inform the Clerk of any communication received or sent externally. Best practice is for draft emails and letters to be sent to the Clerk for onward dissemination, ensuring that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept. Please remember not to forward personal information (names and addresses) on to other people or groups outside of the Parish Council.

Anonymous Correspondence

The Parish Council will not normally respond to anonymous correspondence, including letters, emails, telephone messages, text messages or electronic communications where the sender cannot be reasonably identified.

Anonymous correspondence may be considered where it raises matters relating to public safety, safeguarding, legal/regulatory concerns, or other issues of significant public interest.

Vexatious or Persistent Correspondence

The Parish Council reserves the right not to respond, or to limit responses, to correspondence which is considered vexatious, abusive, harassing, repetitive, unreasonable or persistent in nature.

Correspondence may be regarded as vexatious where the sender:

- Repeatedly raises the same matter after a full response has been provided
- Makes excessive demands on council time or resources
- Uses abusive, threatening, defamatory or insulting language
- Pursues matters in a manner intended to cause disruption rather than resolution

Where correspondence is deemed vexatious, the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair where appropriate, may restrict further contact or decline to enter further correspondence unless new substantive information is provided.

Social Media

The Parish Council has a Website and Facebook page which are used to provide up to date information about the Parish Council and its activities. It is a legal requirement for the Parish Council to have a website, and this should include certain information as required by the Transparency Code. In addition, our website displays notices, agendas and minutes of all our meetings, planning applications, our policies including the Neighbourhood Plan, our amenities and news items.

The Clerk moderates our website and Facebook page and oversees all updates and posts. The Parish Council is aware of the benefits of social media but also of the dangers and as such will follow the following guidelines:-

- Not partake in political advertising or use social media for commercial purposes
- Be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarity, personal threats or abuse of language is not tolerated
- Abide by copyright laws when sharing information
- Our social media is not monitored 24/7
- The Parish Council will not normally engage in debate or discussion via public social media comments
- The Parish Council will only respond to social media enquiries where these are received by direct/private message and the sender is identifiable
- We will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information made through public comments/posts on social media
- Please do not include personal/private information in your social media posts to us

- Sending a message/post via Facebook will not be considered as contacting the Parish Council for official purposes. Please make direct contact by emailing the Clerk
- We retain the right to remove inappropriate comments or content
- It is strongly advised that Councillors using social media in their personal capacity avoid commenting on Parish Council matters but if absolutely necessary it should be clearly stated as their personal views and not the views of Charmouth Parish Council

Internal Communication

The Parish Council understands that ensuring that our staff know the council’s plans and priorities are vitally important. To achieve this aim the Clerk and Facilities Manager meet regularly to discuss meeting outcomes and action points. In addition, meetings with the committee chairs and staff are held to ensure that work plans are agreed and incorporated into work schedules. Staff are appraised annually and encouraged to discuss any issues with the Clerk or HR committee as they occur.

Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act in all their work on behalf of the Council.

Adopted by Council:	May 2026
Last Reviewed:	
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