

# Communications Policy for Alderbury Parish Council

For adoption September 2024

For review September 2025 and then 3 yearly

This policy is designed to guide Alderbury Parish Council in its communications with residents.

The Council's communication objectives are:

- i) To communicate effectively what APC does and doesn't do for the community
- ii) To encourage a managed 2-way communication with residents
- iii) In the longer term, to encourage residents to volunteer and so build a stronger community

The Council's main means of communication are our Website, Facebook, The Fountain, Council noticeboards, occasional leaflets delivered door to door, monthly council meetings and the Annual Parish Meeting. The Council will keep its social media activity under review and may decide to use additional or different platforms.

At the beginning of every Council meeting 15 minutes are set aside for residents to speak to the council or ask questions. Each resident is usually asked to limit their comments or questions to 3 minutes, although exceptions can be made at the discretion of the Chair.

The website is the main means of communication, carrying, inter alia, standing information on the Council and its policies and records of past Council Meetings and notices of future meetings.

The Council uses social media platforms, such as Facebook, to issue short term communications to residents, to report on meetings and projects, and to engage the community on current issues. Written or video formats can be used as appropriate.

The Council places articles in The Fountain to report on meetings, projects, and policies where a longer text is more suitable, and to ensure that information is available to those who prefer a printed format.

The Parish Clerk has standing authority to issue communications in line with agreed Council policy. On occasion the Chair or councillors may be asked to issue communications on behalf of the council (for example during a period when the Parish Clerk is on leave), this will be agreed and minuted by the Full Council at a meeting.

The Full Council will agree proactive themes for communication at meetings. On occasion, there may be a need for ad-hoc notices which will be approved by the Chair or councillors with responsibilities specifically delegated by the Chair/Council. The Council will use the means of communication most appropriate for the message but will aim to ensure that key messages are available in a range of formats.

The Parish Clerk will respond to communications from residents in line with agreed Council policy. Where issues are raised by residents on social media platforms the Parish Clerk will use

the agreed standard responses (see Appendix 1) to encourage them to contact the Council or attend a meeting.

Individual Councillors should not post material on social media platforms or other outlets as Councillors without the agreement of the Council. If they post in a personal capacity, they should avoid anything that suggests their comments are made in their official capacity, or in the name of the Council.

Individual Councillors may need to respond to emails from residents using their Council email address. Any correspondence using these email addresses will be considered as Parish Council communications and should either use the standard format (see Appendix 1) or be agreed at a Full Council meeting. If the Parish Council receives a Freedom of Information request, copies of individual emails may be required where they have been used for council business

The Council welcomes feedback, comments and suggestions. Residents wishing to contact the council are encouraged to use the following options:

- i) Attend the monthly meeting of the Parish Council where there is always a session set aside for residents to speak directly to the council
- ii) Use the "Contact Us" form available on the Council Website
- iii) E-mail or write to the Parish Clerk

When individual residents correspond with the Council to raise issues these will usually be raised at the monthly meetings for consideration by the Full Council. Where urgent issues are raised an emergency meeting can be convened if required. If issues are raised which fall within another jurisdiction (such as Wiltshire Council) the clerk will advise residents how to report these to the appropriate authority in line with agreed Council policy.

The council will not respond to any abusive, defamatory or vexatious communications and reserves the right to block persistent offenders.

## Appendix 1

Standard format response for social media:

1. Thank you for your comments which I will pass on to councillors at their next meeting DATE. You are welcome to come along and make your views known
2. Thank you for your comments. Please be aware the Council considered this matter at their DATE meeting and decided..... . Please attend the next meeting on DATE if you wish to pursue this further,
3. Thank you for your comments which *I have forwarded/which I advise taking to* ..... as this matter is not the responsibility of the parish council

Councillors and the clerk are advised to look at [wording](#) provided by the Society Local Council Clerks should they ever need to deal with abusive communication

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