

SWINFORD PARISH COUNCIL

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

AIMS

To establish clear, easy to use channels of communication between the Parish Council and the Parishioners, and vice versa.

To provide information on important matters in an appropriate manner to facilitate and encourage informed comment from interested individuals and groups.

INTRODUCTION

Each Parish Councillor has a duty to represent, without bias, the interests of the whole community.

They will endeavour to do their best and are available to help parishioners regarding matters relating to the Parish of Swinford.

Parish Councillors may be contacted via the Clerk in the first instance or by their Parish Council email addresses displayed on the Parish Council website.

PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Parish Council generally meets at 7.30pm on the first Tuesday of every month, excluding August. Unless otherwise notified, meetings will be held at Swinford Village Hall. Any variations to meeting times, dates or location will be published on the Parish Council website and the Parish Council noticeboard.

At the beginning of each Parish Council meeting there will be a 15-minute period of 'Parishioners Time' allowing parishioners opportunity to give their views on issues relating to the parish.

The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council will be the May meeting when Councillors will elect the Chair and appoint the Vice Chair for the forthcoming year.

The Annual Parish Meeting is convened by the Chair of the Parish Council and is generally held in May each year to provide parishioners with a summary of the activities of the Parish Council over the previous year and the opportunity to debate local issues and celebrate local events and activities.

PARISH COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE

All correspondence relating to the Parish should be addressed to the Parish Clerk in the first instance. This will ensure that the matter is recorded and passed to the relevant person or organisation as soon as practically possible.

All correspondence to the Parish Clerk will be acknowledged as soon as practically possible.

Under normal circumstances, if a response is required, the Clerk will respond to correspondence on behalf of the Parish Council and will bring to a future meeting agenda any item he/she thinks needs discussion.

At each Parish Council meeting the Clerk will report to the Council a list of correspondence received to be recorded in the minutes. Anonymous correspondence in any form will be recorded as received but not responded to.

The Parish Council reserves the right to not respond to any correspondents that are taking up a disproportionate amount of the Parish Clerk's time. Advice will be sought upon receipt of vexatious communications and acted upon accordingly.

Email should be thought of in the same way as a letter. A subject line, the name of the sender and the content should be in the main body of the email, not as an attachment. Attachments will not be opened unless the Clerk has prior knowledge of the subject. The Parish Council regrets that, for reasons of computer security and virus protection, anonymous emails and those with no subject in the title will not be opened or actioned.

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

REQUESTS FOR COPY DOCUMENTS

When documents are requested from the Parish Council any copies provided are subject to a charge of 10p per A4 sheet. Application of the charge is at the discretion of the Parish Council.

PARISH COUNCIL NOTICEBOARD

The Parish Council noticeboard is located in the bus shelter on North Street.

Contact details for the Clerk and details of the Parish Council website will be permanently displayed.

The Agenda for Parish Council meetings will be displayed three clear days in advance of the meeting.

The draft minutes of the previous meeting will be displayed as soon as practically possible after the meeting.

Any statutory notices and items of interest will be displayed when appropriate.

Due to limited space, more comprehensive information is available on the Parish Council website.

PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE

The address of the Parish Council website is www.swinfordparishcouncil.gov.uk.

The Agenda for Parish Council meetings will be posted three clear days in advance of the meeting.

The draft minutes of the previous meeting will be displayed as soon as practically possible after the meeting. The draft minutes will be replaced by the final minutes, once approved.

To comply with the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities, the following documents will be published annually:

- a. all items of expenditure above £100
- b. end of year accounts
- c. annual governance statement
- d. internal audit report
- e. list of councillor or member responsibilities
- f. the details of public land and building assets
- g. agendas and minutes of formal meetings

PRESS RELATIONS

The Clerk will clear all press reports, or comments to the media, in consultation with the Parish Council. 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 Chair or Vice Chair shall be authorised as the official spokesperson for the Parish 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.

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 their personal view.

REVIEW

This document will be reviewed at least annually.