



Communications Policy

For Storrington & Sullington Parish Council

(Adopted 05.11.25)

1. Background

The view of the council is that communications should continue to improve. This policy aims to provide a simple and focused document which provides a foundation to build on improving communications and being consistent and concise with Parish Council content, channels, process and messaging. Additional consideration has been given to how Councillors work together to ensure communication between Councillors and the Parish Office is efficient and clear.

2. Audiences

- Residents, see below
- Business Community
- Media
- Voluntary Groups
- Parish church communities (Sullington, St Mary's Storrington, Our Lady of England Storrington)

a) Residents

Based on 2021 census:

- Total number of people: 7245 (likely nearer 9K now)

Age Group	Population	Potential ways we reach each group
0-9 years	620	Via schools, Wardens
10-19 years	645	Via schools, Wardens
20-29 years	575	Leisure Centre
30-39 years	637	Leisure Centre, Facebook, Parish website
40-49 years	712	Facebook, Parish website
50-59 years	1050	Facebook, Parish website, Sussex Local
60-69 years	1044	Facebook, Parish website, Sussex Local, church/ 3Heralds
70-79 years	1191	Parish website, Noticeboards, Wardens, Sussex Local, churches/ 3Heralds
80+	788	Noticeboards, Parish website, Wardens, churches/ 3Heralds

b) Business Community

- Retailers
- Business Group
- Small independent businesses
- Larger businesses or chain stores

c) Media

Includes:

- Sussex Local – monthly (deadline 1st month)
- Argus – ad hoc
- Radio Sussex – ad hoc
- 3 Heralds – monthly church publication (36 pages)

3. What/Objectives

- To build profile and reputation of the Parish Council through effective, trusted and valuable communication.
- To engage proactively with the community residents and businesses.
- To evolve parish communications that are the “go-to” for the community and other interested parties.
- To reestablish our previously strong relationship with the Business Group and, potentially explore a joint plan for communicating the promotion of business development.
- To encourage feedback and comments.
- To raise confidence and satisfaction of community across parish audiences.
- To clarify a code of conduct around community and media communications by councillors.

4. How/Tactics

- To understand our audiences and what they need from the Parish Council.
- To share our purpose, priorities, and our activities in more user-friendly manner.
- To ensure the communications are suited to the various age groups in tone of voice and where it is available.
- To increase the quality, transparency and availability of information which is, or could be, of interest and/or which is requested e.g. Devolution, Community Highways Scheme, Neighbourhood Plan.
- Announcements destined for the website should be shared with councillors at the same time (particularly if absent or not involved on the day) for information (and cover) e.g. appointment of new councillors, key developments.
- To review and improve the communications vehicles and update presentation and style as appropriate.
- To relaunch the Parish Council website.
- To correct (possibly challenge on occasion) misinformation.
- Potentially to align sponsorship requests which are made in ad hoc fashion (this is not an immediate priority).
- To identify and train our nominated and approved spokesperson/people.

5. What needs doing?

- **Style & tone** - Adopt a modern, clear and simple tone in all outbound materials e.g. font (per logo), language.
- **Check logo** – Ensure original source used by all.
- **Content** - Publish more content e.g. news, activities and other material such as media, key events.
- **Be more proactive** – Be proactive on non-statutory information, news.
- **Ownership** - Chairs of each committee to own relevant communications and use skills within council for guidance and enhancement of content
- **Alignment** – opportunity to improve alignment of content.
- **Process** – think ahead and pre-share key points with all councillors for “cover”.
- **Approval** – outbound communication must be approved by the Chair/ Chair of any sub- committee as appropriate and by the Clerk.
- **Delivery** – publication of content should be via the Parish office – clear framework for communication as the Parish Council rather than as individuals.
- **Availability of Frequently Asked Questions document (FAQs) about key issues.**
- **Transparency** – the intention is to set up record and video committee and Parish Council meetings. A pilot is being scheduled.

Note: Where a group or individual wishes to record any Parish Council meeting, the Parish Council asks that advance notice be given to the Parish Office as a courtesy, and that any use or publication of these recordings be advised.

6. Vehicles:

a) Website

A new website has been commissioned with a new supplier, Aubergine.

We would like the Parish Council website to be the "go to" for information by those with computer/smart phone access. (At the time this document was agreed) The site plan is agreed, and the website is being developed with a provisional launch date of January 2026.

The relationship between the new Parish Council website and the Community Partnership website is being actively considered and links between the two are being progressed.

b) Facebook

There has been limited use of our Parish Council Facebook page, but we are now using it more proactively to extend reach of parish news beyond the Parish Council website.

This social media commentary on other village Facebook websites will be lightly monitored, in order that incorrect misinformation about parish matters can be addressed within the Parish Council and where appropriate a response issued. We do not intend to respond to postings on social media otherwise.

At this time, the ICE Committee prefer that Facebook is used for posting information and news, and that comments may be turned off on Parish Council posts.

Any Councillor following social media postings should not respond individually on behalf of the Parish Council except in liaison with the Clerk.

c) Sussex Local

This is a monthly publication posted to all households, and the Parish Council has one free half page per issue. Copy provided on 1st month i.e. 28 days ahead of publication.

We know from Neighbourhood Wardens that the older community members, and many other households who are non-PC users, do read the Sussex Local Magazine.

The ICE Committee is currently considering that the Parish Council buy an additional half page, or consider a double-page spread or a four-page insert, all of which could be monthly, quarterly or ad hoc. Costings for the various options has been passed to ICE for 2026/7.

d) 3 Heralds

The Editor is accepting regular contributions from the Parish Council since September 2025. There is no charge to publish. Purchase price is £1. Copy provided on 6th of every month.

e) Noticeboards

Noticeboards potentially reach older people or non-tech-users. Located at the Library, Leisure Centre, Parish Office Old Mill Drive, plus other options. This would need a process to be workable – either via a designated local person connected to the Parish Council, or an email list of helpful people who will put up (and take down) content e.g. announcements, big news. Useful links could be available around the village via a QR link in shops windows, village maps, pubs etc.

f) Leaflets

Leaflets can be a useful means of communicating with all residents on significant issues but would only be suggested for occasional use due to labour and cost involved. See Sussex Local above.

g) Newsletters

There have been some thoughts on resurrecting the regular newsletter which can be delivered to all households. See Sussex Local above.

h) Media

Any media engagement must be handled by the Clerk and/or the Chair. The Chair of a sub-committee should be involved where appropriate. Full council should be kept informed and briefed on messaging in the event of hostile issues as they occur. The response should be as fulsome as possible and we will not use the "no comment" response unless appropriate. Responses should be made within a reasonable amount of time e.g. 24 hours. For the Code of Conduct around communications with the community and media, see Appendix 1.

7. Content

- Need for more attractive presentation of dry material.
- Need for more varied diet of content e.g. office vacancy, events, county announcements.
- More positive news would be good.
- More use of photos including those of councillors at events.
- Photos taken by our residents to highlight our village and environment – proposal to integrate with new parish website.
- Key messages will to be developed for significant topics such as traffic and devolution.
- We could also consider a device "In Your Area" for very local information.

8. Ways of Working

Councillors can support the Parish Office, and vice versa, by some small adjustments in their communication e.g.:

- a) Outbound messages can be labelled by sender to assist in prioritisation:
 - i. For info
 - ii. For reply
 - iii. For action
 - iv. Urgent
- b) When Councillors are asked for reply, they do not need to share their response as "reply all" unless appropriate.
- c) Outbound messages from the Parish Office, to address a query from a member of public, should be sent to the Chair of the appropriate committee for action rather than to all councillors. The Chair is then responsible for owning the action or delegating it and in that case, should inform the office sender who is contact for the action.
- d) For professional and consistent email protocol, all Councillors should use the same style of sign-off as below. Typeface and point size to be aligned. Quality logo in original format will be circulated.

Cllr Name Name

Chairman/Deputy Chairman if appropriate



This e-mail is intended solely for the person or organisation to which it is addressed. It may contain privileged and confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient, you are prohibited from copying, disclosing or distributing this e-mail or its contents (as it may be unlawful for you to do so) or taking any action in reliance on it. If you receive this e-mail by mistake, please advise the sender immediately by using the e-mail reply facility and then delete both the incoming and outgoing messages.

Appendix 1: Code of Conduct – Community and Media Communications by Councillors

This Code of Conduct applies to all Councillors on the Parish Council. Its purpose is to provide clear guidance on managing communications with the media and the community:

- Official statements must align with the Parish Council's democratically agreed position. Councillors must avoid misrepresenting Council views, speculating or providing personal opinions in their capacity as Councillor.
- When delegated to communicate on behalf of the Council, individual Councillors must explicitly state their role and authority, signing communications as "on behalf of Storrington & Sullington Parish Council"
- Councillors must ensure respect and professionalism in their written communications.
- Councillors and staff must not use their official titles in personal communications.
- Personal views on Parish Council decisions or actions should not be expressed publicly in a way that misrepresents or conflicts with the Council's stance.
- Councillors must make clear when they are communicating 'not as a councillor' (i.e. as an individual) or 'as a Councillor'.
- When engaging with the public informally (e.g. at events or casual meetings), Councillors must ensure they do not misrepresent the Council's views or commit the Council to any actions without proper authority.
- The Clerk is the primary contact for all media enquiries, including interviews, statements, or articles. If the Clerk is unavailable, the media should contact the Chair or Vice-Chair.
- Only the Clerk is authorised to communicate on behalf of the Council unless another individual has been expressly delegated by a Council resolution.
- Councillors may submit content for publication by the Clerk on the Parish Council website and/or the Parish Council Facebook page.
- Individual Councillors names may be included/recognised in the content, with the Clerk's approval, where a Councillor has played a key role in a project or process or they are the subject expert.
- Councillors may not accept approaches from anyone to appear on television, on radio or in any other media unless explicitly authorised in writing by the Clerk, or in her absence by the Chair or Vice-Chair. In all cases, such approaches should immediately be made known to the Clerk by the Councillor who is approached.
- Councillors should alert the Clerk to any media content which could be cause for concern.
- Official Council email addresses must be used for all Parish Council correspondence to ensure transparency and compliance.
- Personal email accounts must not be used for Parish Council business.
- Confidential information must remain protected, and GDPR requirements must be observed.
- The Clerk manages the Parish Council's official website and social media accounts, ensuring compliance with legal and professional standards.
- Councillors may maintain personal online presences but must not imply Parish Council representation or use official titles in personal posts.
- If Councillors have any concerns about communication, they should refer to the Clerk.