



GREAT GLEN PARISH COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

Great Glen Parish Council (GGPC) articulates and represents the views and needs of the local community. It provides information on important parish matters affecting the community and encourages comment from interested individuals and groups.

The overall aim is to make Council communications a two-way process: to give people the information to understand accurately what GGPC does, whilst also enabling GGPC to make informed decisions using information received from residents and partners.

The principles of these guidelines apply to Parish Councillors and the Clerk to GGPC. It is also intended for guidance for others communicating with the Parish Council.

These guidelines are associated with the Press and Media Policy.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD COMMUNICATION

Good communications will enable GGPC to:

- Better understand the needs of the community and develop appropriate strategies and priorities
- Raise residents' satisfaction, trust and confidence by communicating about issues
- Services and opportunities in the parish, the district and county.
- Be an effective voice of the community
- Maintain and enhance the reputation of GGPC
- Raise the profile of GGPC as a destination
- Make the best use of technology to innovate and engage with hard-to-reach groups such as young people
- Proactively challenge inaccuracies and misrepresentations that might undermine the integrity of GGPC or the Parish

WHO IS COMMUNICATING?

PARISH CLERK

The Parish Clerk has overall responsibility for overseeing all communication with members of the community and outside bodies.

The Parish Clerk is provided with a Council email address which is to be used solely for the purpose of conducting Council business.

The Clerk must ensure that any verbal communication with the public on council related matters reflects the decisions and policies of GGPC regardless of the Clerk's individual views on any subject.

COUNCILLORS

Elected members will be regularly approached by members of the community as this is part of their role. How enquiries from the public are dealt with by Councillors will reflect on GGPC. Enquiries may be in person, by telephone, letter or email.

When in doubt about how to respond to an enquiry the guidance of the Parish Clerk will be sought.

At no time should Councillors make any promises to the public on any matter raised with them other than to say they will investigate the matter. All manner of issues may be raised, many of which may not be relevant to GGPC. Depending on the issue, it may be appropriate to deal with the matter in the following ways:

- Refer the matter to the Parish Clerk who will then deal with it as appropriate
- Request an item on a relevant agenda
- Investigate the matter personally, having sought the guidance of the Parish Clerk.

Councillors must ensure that any verbal communication with the public on council related matters reflects the decisions and policies of GGPC regardless of the Councillor's individual views on any subject.

COUNCIL MEETINGS AND COUNCILLOR INTERACTION

GGPC meets on the second Tuesday of every month. Meetings start at 7.30pm.

GGPC has a number of working groups/committees whose activities are reported back to the council in the monthly meetings.

An initial draft of the meeting minutes will be produced by the Clerk and issued to councillors within 10 working days by email for review. The Agenda and Minutes of the meetings are published on the Council website following approval at the following council meeting.

Councillors who have taken on responsibility for some action which involves written or verbal feedback with third parties shall ask the Parish Clerk to respond on their behalf.

Guidance on interaction:

- GGPC Councillors should always disclose their identity and affiliation to the Parish Council
- All media enquiries should be directed to the Clerk
- If appropriate, for a specific issue the Chairman may make a statement on behalf of GGPC
- All media comment must accurately reflect GGPC's position on the topic, as adopted in documents eg. minutes and policies
- All decisions of GGPC made in an open meeting can be quoted and made available to the media
- When responding to a media enquiry the Clerk should have the necessary facts and understanding of the situation
- Councillors should not make 'personal comments' which could damage the reputation of GGPC or negatively impact on teamwork or credibility of the council or members of the community
- Comment on matters which are, or likely to be, subject to legal proceedings should be subject to advice taken from GGPC's solicitor before any response is made
- Councillors wishing to make a 'personal statement' to the media must clearly inform the media:
 - That their comments are made as an individual and are not necessarily the view of GGPC
 - That the matter may still need to be discussed or resolved by GGPC

WHO WE SHOULD BE COMMUNICATING WITH

The council's audience is wide and varied but will typically include:

- GGPC employees and contractors
- Residents
- Harborough District Councillors and staff
- Hard to reach groups, including young people
- The media
- Voluntary groups and organisations
- The business community
- MP
- Other public sector organisations (police, health, fire)
- Visitors and those who work in the area

HOW WE SHOULD BE COMMUNICATING

Different forms of communication will appeal to different ages, social groups and demographics so it is important to ensure that within reason, all options for increasing communication and participation are reviewed over time in order to communicate effectively with everyone.

The advances made in information technology offer new ways of communicating. At the same time, for many people, traditional methods – newspapers, telephone, leaflets – still play a fundamental role that must not be undervalued.

Currently Council communication is achieved mainly through Council meetings and Councillor interaction, managed by the Parish Clerk. Methods of communication include:

- Press releases
- Notices on village notice boards and Parish Office Window
- Online messages via the
 - GGPC website
 - GGPC Facebook page
 - GGPC twitter account
- Contributions to local publications
 - The Parish Council 'Great Glen Gazette'
- GGPC village email alert
- Alternative consultation and communication methods as approved by the Parish Council

GGPC will continue to explore ways in which communication could be improved.

PRESS – MANAGE THE MEDIA EFFECTIVELY

Key points for effective management of media relations:

- Respond to journalists in full within a reasonable time
- Be helpful, polite and positive
- Never say 'no comment'
- Evaluate media coverage
- Issue timely and relevant press releases
- Pre-empt potential stories arising from council agendas/minutes by issuing proactive PR (where possible)

VILLAGE NOTICE BOARDS

The village notice boards will be kept updated to ensure that members of the community who are less active online are kept aware of key information.

The Parish Clerk will manage all posting of notices to the notice boards.

All notices should be approved by the Parish Office and stamped accordingly.

ONLINE PRESENCE

Council Website

Online content should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate. What is written on the web is permanent.

GGPC's website is to be regularly updated.

All communications should promote the Council website and if appropriate its social media accounts.

It is important to ensure that links to the website are provided from other key partners, especially Harborough District Council.

GGPC Twitter Account

The GGPC Twitter account is a forum for both GGPC and the village community. GGPC will continue to engage with the community to grow the twitter audience. It is recognised that this forum has a wide reach, as posts can be re-tweeted by the audience with their twitter friends. The GGPC twitter account is monitored by the administrators to ensure the content is appropriate to the forum.

GGPC Facebook Page

GGPC have a Facebook page to alert members of the Parish to local news and events. Administrators manage the content to ensure it is relevant to the audience.

PUBLICATIONS

Great Glen Gazette

The Great Glen Gazette is published by GGPC to impart information to the village residents. It is aimed to be delivered to all households in Great Glen.

EMAIL

All correspondence should be addressed to clerk@greatglen-pc.gov.uk

VILLAGE LOGO

The village logo is used as a brand to identify GGPC.

The logo is owned by GGPC and can only be used with the permission of the Council.

COMMUNICATION – GOOD PRACTICE

It is imperative that:

- All communication from GGPC is courteous, timely, professional, appropriate and reflects the decisions and policies of council;
- All individuals communicating on behalf of GGPC are aware that every piece of communication reflects on the reputation of GGPC in the community.

Staff and Councillors are ambassadors of GGPC and this is reflected in all communications. Any communications from GGPC will meet the following criteria:

- Be tasteful, civil and relevant;
- Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- Not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which GGPC does not own the copyright or does not have permission to use;
- Not contain any personal information,
- If official business, in case of any doubt, communications by staff will be referred to the Clerk to GGPC prior to release;
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

Equally, it is expected that any communications to GGPC would meet similar criteria.