



NEWPORT PARISH COUNCIL

Communications & Social Media 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 so as to facilitate and encourage informed comment from interested individuals and groups.

Introduction

Each Parish Councillor has a duty to represent, without bias, the interest of the whole community. They will endeavour to do their best and are available to help parishioners with regard to matters relating to the parish of Newport. They may be contacted by telephone and a contact list is displayed on the Parish Council noticeboard at The Riverside Centre and the website www.newportwight.org.uk. If the matter is important, then a letter to the Parish Clerk will ensure that this will be brought before the Parish Council and dealt with in a suitable and professional manner.

It is the Parish Council's intention to comply with the schedule as below.

Parish Council Meetings

- The Parish Council will meet at 6.45pm on the second Monday of the month.
- 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 will take place in April in each year.
- There will be no Parish Council meeting in August.
- The Parish Council will meet at various venues around the parish
- A 15-minute discussion period for parishioners will be held at the beginning of the Parish Council Meeting

Noticeboards

- The following items will be displayed permanently:
 - Parish Councillors with contact telephone numbers
 - Parish Council meetings dates for the year
 - Parish Council Ward areas.
 - Notice of the annual audited accounts will be displayed when appropriate.
 - The Parish Council meeting notice will be displayed one week in advance of the meeting.
 - Notices for Parishioners will be displayed as and when appropriate.

Parish Website

- The following items will be permanently available:
- Parish Councillors with contact telephone numbers
- Parish Council meeting dates for the year
- Parish Council Ward areas
- The last set of approved Parish Council Minutes
- The Chairman's Annual Report
- The Parish Clerk will ensure that all Parish Council information included on the Website is regularly updated by passing relevant papers to the team involved in creating the site.

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 practicably possible.
- All correspondence to the Parish Clerk will be acknowledged within one week of receipt.
- If a parishioner wishes a matter to be formally discussed at a Parish Council meeting, then the Parish Clerk must be notified at least 10 days prior to the meeting to enable the item to be placed on the Agenda.

Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting is held so that parishioners can have the opportunity to listen to the progress of the Parish Council over the last year and have the opportunity to debate local issues and celebrate local events and activities.

Press Releases

Newport Parish Council welcomes enquiries from the press and media and recognises that our relationship with the press helps us communicate with residents. The Council recognises the need for openness and this should be reflected in how we deal with the Press.

The aim of the protocol is to ensure that the Parish Council is seen to communicate in a professional and objective manner.

This protocol should be read in conjunction with the Members Code of Conduct. The Council's approach to the media should be:

- open and honest
- proactive
- responsive and timely

Information

There are two types of press release-

1. Official Council Releases

An official Council release is made on behalf of the Council as a whole; it will be written by an officer and issued by the Parish Clerk. It is non-party political and includes a quote from the relevant councillor(s). This is usually the Chair of the Council or Committee Chairman.

2. Councillor Press Releases

Councillors' press releases are personal and are written and issued by the Councillor responsible. This release may or may not be political and should not include the name of a Council Officer, or a Council telephone number as a point of contact. It would be beneficial for copies of intended releases, especially those of a factual nature, to be provided to the Parish Clerk.

Councillors seeking advice can either contact the Parish Clerk or Monitoring Officer.

Press Release Protocol

The following forms the Protocol for Council Members and Officers.

- All official Council press releases will include a quotation from the relevant Councillor. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to also include the Ward Councillor or other Councillor promoting the scheme.
- In line with service standards all official Council press releases are to be issued on a template provided by the Parish Clerk. This template includes the Parish Council logo.
- Official press releases will not identify the political party or group affiliation of any Member(s) quoted in the release.
- The Parish Clerk is the first line of decision making in terms of what is newsworthy for official press releases, and shall make the final decision on whether a press release shall be issued, unless otherwise directed by the Council or Committee.
- In the years when elections occur, during periods from the issue of the Notice of Election until the day of the Election, Officers will issue no releases quoting Council Members. During this time any quotes will be from Officers.
- The role of Officers is to advise and provide support and advice to Council members in their communication activities.
- Council Members are solely responsible for the writing and distribution of all councillor press releases and any Editor's Letters to the media.
- Council Member releases must not use the Parish Council's logo, or use the Council or an Officer as a point of contact.
- Officers and Council Members must act reasonably and responsibly.
- Council Members are reminded that they must not misuse Council resources for political or other inappropriate purposes. Should the Council receive a Freedom of Information request on a topic on which there is correspondence (email or written)

from or with Members, normally that correspondence would have to be disclosed, unless it was exempt. The fact that the disclosure of the correspondence may prove embarrassing would not, of itself, prevent disclosure.

- In addition, care should be taken when processing personal data. The Data Protection Act 1998 prevents the use of personal information other than for the purposes for which it was supplied. Members should bear this in mind when using any personal data which may be supplied to them by their constituents.

- In general, the Parish Clerk will be responsible for interpretation of the Protocol.

Facebook and Social Media

Introduction

The Newport Parish Council Facebook and Twitter pages intend to:

Provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within Newport Parish and promote positive thoughts and comments from residents within the parish.

- Be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarity, threats or abusive language will not be tolerated.
- Differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including Newport Parish Council members of staff, will not be permitted.
- Share freely and be generous, but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.
- Stay on topic.
- Refrain from using Newport Parish Council social media pages/sites for commercial purposes or to market products. If in doubt, seek clarification by contacting the Council before posting information etc.

The sites are not monitored 24/7 and we will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, we will endeavour to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people.

Sending a message/post via Facebook or Twitter will not generally be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes. Freedom of Information requests and other requests for information will be processed in accordance with relevant legislation. We recommend that official contact with the Council is through normal channels e.g. telephone email or in writing. Details can be obtained by visiting www.newportwight.org.uk/contact. Please do not include personal/private information in your messages to us on Facebook/Twitter.

We retain the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- Obscene or racist content
- Personal attacks, insults or threatening language
- Potentially libellous statements
- Plagiarised material; any material in violation of any laws, including copyright
- Private personal information published without consent
- Information or links unrelated to the content of the forum
- Commercial promotions or spam

Non-compliance will not be tolerated and could result in a ban.

Newport Parish Council is not responsible for the accuracy of content posted by any subscriber in any forum; opinions expressed in comments on Newport Parish Council's social media forums do not necessarily represent those of the Council.

All comments, once posted, become the property of Newport Parish Council and we reserve the right to reproduce, distribute, publish, display or edit. Derivative work can also be created from such postings or content and used for any purpose in any form and on any other media.

Newport Parish Council is not responsible, liable for and do not endorse the privacy practices of Facebook, Twitter or any linked websites. Your use of Facebook, Twitter and any linked websites is at your own risk.

Newport Parish Council assumes no responsibility or liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred as a result of any use or reliance upon the information and material contained within or downloaded from these websites.

Facebook and Twitter may occasionally be unavailable and we accept no responsibility for this lack of service.

The presence of any advertisement on Facebook or Twitter is not an endorsement of the authenticity or quality of the goods, services or website and Newport Parish Council will not be held responsible for any claims arising in that respect.

We will not engage in/with, and we discourage posts or comments on, issues of a political nature.

Comments should not advertise commercial products or services.

By choosing to comment and/or utilise any Newport Parish Council social media site, users are deemed to agree to this policy.

Review

This document will be reviewed annually.

Comments

Any comments or queries regarding this document should be made to the Parish Clerk.

Reviewed: July 2017

Adopted: July 2017