

## Eglingham Parish Council Communication Policy

Adopted 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024

### **Purpose of this policy**

Eglingham Parish Council (EPC) recognises its role within the community as a communicator to individual residents, local organisations, and businesses. Within its own Strategic Plan, EPC is committed to 'Provide excellent communications and transparency'.

This Communication Policy will lay out how the council communicates and engages with the community. Communication is as much about listening to what residents think about the council and the needs of the community, as well as telling the community about the work of the parish council and its services.

### **Relevant Legislation**

- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Local Government Act 1986 and 1972
- Local Government Finances Act 1972
- Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960,
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Website Accessibility Guidelines 2.0

The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information, is prohibited under the terms of court order, by legislation, the Council's standing orders, under contract or by common law.

### **Correspondence (Email or Letter)**

All correspondence relating to the Council should be addressed to the Parish Clerk in the first instance either via email at [eglinghamclerk@gmail.com](mailto:eglinghamclerk@gmail.com) or via post.

This will ensure that the matter is recorded and passed to the relevant person or organisation as soon as practically possible.

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and passing on anything relevant to councillors or external agencies for information and/or action.

All communications on behalf of the Council will usually come from the Clerk. In instances where this is not the case, the Clerk should be copied in.

Individual councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with villagers in relation to their own personal views, if appropriate, with a copy to the Clerk.

It is important to note that any emails sent to Parish Council email addresses will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act requirements. These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

All new email requiring data to be passed on may be followed up with a data consent request before action is taken with that correspondence.

It is imperative that all correspondents never forward personal information on to other people or groups outside the Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

All correspondence to the Parish Clerk will be acknowledged within one week of receipt if possible. If email is used, then an acknowledgment will be sent via email. Councillors will be notified of correspondence, but the addressee will not be named on minutes of meetings unless requested.

Anonymous correspondence in any form will be recorded as received but not responded to. Email should be thought of in the same way as a letter. A subject line, the sender's name and the content should be in the main body of the email, not as an attachment.

Eglingham 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.

A parishioner may raise any issue directly with the Clerk or any Councillor. If the parishioner is not satisfied with the response, they may wish to address their concern to the Clerk, or Chair, as appropriate.

If appropriate the issue may be placed on the agenda for the attention of the full Council. The Clerk will acknowledge all Freedom of Information requests within seven working days and will reply fully within 20 working days of receipt of the request. If this is not possible, a further holding letter/email will be sent with an expected completion date.

#### **Correspondence (Phone Calls)**

Phone calls to the Clerk should be limited to urgent issues only. The call should be followed up with an email to [eglinghamclerk@gmail.com](mailto:eglinghamclerk@gmail.com) or via letter.

#### **Correspondence (Suggestion Boxes)**

Eglingham Parish Council has installed three suggestion boxes. There is one at Eglingham Village Hall, sited below the post box in the external porch. A second is sited at South Charlton Village Hall and affixed to the village hall Gate and the third in North Charlton, on the wall opposite the cottages. They are all clearly labelled. The suggestion boxes will be emptied monthly, no less than 7 days prior to each meeting, by the Clerk. Where appropriate the items will be added to the agenda for the meeting.

Anonymous submissions may be discussed but cannot be replied to. Unless permission is explicitly given, any identifying information on the submissions will be removed by the Clerk before putting to the Council.

#### **Events**

The council may decide to support or deliver events for the benefit of the community. Such events will be promoted within the community and provide an opportunity for the council to raise its awareness.

Advertising of events will be carried out using many of the outlets identified in this document.

#### **External representations**

Each year councillors are appointed to represent the council within village organisations. Councillors will use this opportunity to share information, provide support and to promote partnership working, to support the community.

Any requests for council representatives, or attendance at events or meetings should be made to the Clerk, in the first instance.

### **Noticeboards**

The Council have three noticeboards within the Parish: South Charlton, North Charlton, and Eglingham.

Where possible the council will post information that may be useful to the public here.

Council staff and councillors will regularly monitor and, where necessary, remove out-of-date or inappropriate items.

### **Parish Council Meetings**

The Council approves its meeting schedule annually (usually in the November meeting) Upon approval the schedule is displayed on the parish noticeboard and on the website.

Agendas and summons are displayed at least three clear days before meeting are scheduled to take place.

Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings. Each full council meeting facilitates an 'open session' where issues can be raised, and questions asked.

During other committee meetings, the public may be invited to speak during discussions. This will be at the discretion of the Chair.

Minutes from meetings are displayed in draft form, on the council's website as soon as possible after a meeting and updated once approved.

### **Press releases**

To raise awareness of the council's activities and services, the council may choose to share positive news stories or other information with a wider audience via the residents@ distribution list or the News section of the website.

A draft release will be written for approval by the Chair, before being issued to the relevant media outlets (e.g. the Community Magazine, the residents@ mailing list, NALC, SLCC etc.)

### **Promotional Material**

The Council may wish to promote events and activities using posters, or other imagery. Any images should have the owner's permission, or be from a reputable, recognised royalty free website.

Posters and advert should be placed on council noticeboards, on social media platforms or used in other ways to raise awareness.

All material should be removed as soon as possible, after an event or deadline has passed.

### **Website**

The Council will provide a website ([www.eglingham.info](http://www.eglingham.info))

To ensure transparency the Council will arrange for the publication of the following documents:

- End of year accounts
- Annual governance statement

- Internal audit report
- External audit report
- Expenditure relating to Parish Council funds.
- Expenditure relating to the Grant Fund
- Key documents and policies
- Minutes, agendas, and papers of formal meetings

Where possible agendas will be displayed at least three clear days before the meeting is scheduled and draft minutes will be posted to the website as soon as possible after a meeting.

The final minutes will be posted, once approved.

The website is hosted and supported by an externally appointed company but is managed on a regular basis by the Clerk.

### **Annual Parish Meeting**

The Annual Parish Meeting is convened by the Chair of the Parish Council and is generally held in April 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.

### **Other Public Meetings**

Throughout the year, there may be other public meetings arranged, to discuss village matters. These may or may not involve the Council.