

Bolney Parish Council Communications Policy

Adopted: 17th February 2026

1. Introduction

This Communications Policy sets out how the Parish Council will communicate with parishioners, stakeholders, and the media. It supports the Council's commitment to openness, transparency, and accountability, while recognising the limited resources of a small parish council.

The policy has been prepared with reference to guidance from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and applies to all communications issued on behalf of the Council.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the Parish Clerk (as Proper Officer), and all Parish Councillors and covers all forms of communication undertaken on behalf of the Parish Council, including:

- The Council's website
- The Council's Facebook page
- Email correspondence
- Printed materials and public notices
- Media enquiries

The policy does not apply to communications made by councillors acting in a personal capacity.

3. Principles of Communication

The Parish Council will ensure that its communications are:

- Accurate, factual, and objective
- Clear, accessible, and timely
- Lawful and compliant with statutory requirements
- Non-political and non-discriminatory
- Proportionate to the size and resources of the Council

The Council will communicate as a corporate body and not through the actions or views of individual councillors.

4. Legal and Regulatory Framework

All Council communications will comply with relevant legislation and guidance, including but not limited to:

- Local Government Act 1972
- Localism Act 2011
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Council's adopted Code of Conduct

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Parish Clerk (Proper Officer) is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Council's communications and will:

- Act as the primary point of contact for the Council
- Issue official correspondence on behalf of the Council
- Manage and update the Council website
- Administer the Council's Facebook page
- Respond to routine enquiries or refer matters to Council or working group as appropriate

Parish Councillors

- Act collectively as the Council and not as individuals
- Must not represent or speak on behalf of the Council unless authorised by Council resolution
- Should refer formal correspondence and media enquiries to the Clerk
- Must comply with the Code of Conduct when communicating, including online

Chair of the Council

The Chair may act as an authorised spokesperson for the Council where this has been agreed by Council, particularly in relation to media enquiries or urgent matters.

6. Website

The Parish Council website is the Council's primary means of publishing official information and will include:

- Agendas, minutes, and notices of meetings
- Policies and statutory documents
- Contact details for the Clerk
- Information about Council services and activities

The Clerk is responsible for maintaining the website and ensuring information is accurate and up to date.

7. Social Media (Facebook)

Purpose

The Council's Facebook page is intended to:

- Share factual information about Council business
- Promote meetings, consultations, and community events
- Signpost residents to official information published on the Council website

Management and Content

- The Facebook page will be administered by the Clerk or another person authorised by Council
- Content will be factual, neutral, and respectful
- The page will not be used to make decisions or conduct Council business

Comments and Moderation

- The Council reserves the right to moderate comments
- Comments that are defamatory, offensive, misleading, or unlawful may be removed
- The Council will not engage in online debates or arguments

Use by Councillors

- Councillors may share or comment on Council posts but must make it clear when expressing personal opinions
- Councillors must not disclose confidential information or imply they are speaking on behalf of the Council unless authorised

8. Media Relations

- All media enquiries should be directed to the Clerk
- Any official statement to the media will be issued by the Clerk or Chair, with Council approval where appropriate
- Individual councillors must not make statements to the media on behalf of the Council without authority

9. Public Engagement

The Parish Council welcomes engagement with parishioners and will:

- Encourage attendance at Council meetings
- Provide clear information on how residents can contact the Council
- Respond to enquiries as promptly as resources allow

All decisions will be made at properly convened Council meetings in accordance with statutory requirements.

10. Data Protection and Confidentiality

The Council will ensure that all communications comply with data protection legislation. Personal data will only be shared where there is a lawful basis to do so, and confidential or sensitive information will not be disclosed through public communications.

11. Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Parish Council every three years, or sooner if required by changes in legislation or Council practice.