

BINFIELD HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Introduction

Each Parish Councillor has a duty to represent without bias the interests of the whole community. Councillors are also available to help individual parishioners with matters relating to the parish of Binfield Heath.

Aims

To establish clear, user-friendly channels of communication between the Parish Council and parishioners. To provide relevant and up to date facts from local authorities as well as events within the parish to individuals and groups. The information may cover both statutory and social aspects of village life.

Parish Council Meetings

Binfield Heath Parish Council generally meets on the fourth Monday of every month apart from August and December. The meetings normally take place at 7.45pm in the Shiplake Scout Hut. There is always a public forum for anyone to come along and bring issues to the Parish Council.

Notice Boards

The following items will be displayed on the Parish Council noticeboard:

- Parish Council meeting dates for the year
- Contact details for the Clerk
- The Parish Council's meeting agenda - which will be posted at least three working days in advance of each meeting
- Parish Council meeting minutes – which will be posted in draft form as soon as is practicable after the meeting.

Written 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 practically possible.

A parishioner may raise any issue directly with the Parish Clerk or any Councillor. If a satisfactory answer cannot be given immediately, the issue may be placed on the agenda for the attention of the full Council.

Parish Councillors may be contacted via the Clerk or by using their own published email/postal addresses or telephone numbers.

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 protocol

Email should be thought of in the same way as a letter. Attachments will not be opened unless the Clerk can clearly see the subject. The 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.

Freedom of Information requests

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.

Website

Information concerning many aspects of parish life are accessible on the parish website, run and controlled by the Parish Council. It contains details about the council, news about SODC or OCC activities which affect the village, current planning applications, local social events and history. Parishioners may also contact the council via the website.

The Parish Clerk will arrange for the agenda and associated papers to be posted there and for approved minutes to be put up as soon as possible after the meeting.

From time to time emails will be sent out from the Parish website concerning both council matters and social events to people who have given their emails in order to receive such information in the past. Individual email addresses are not revealed in such emails. Recipients of such mails may contact the Council at any time to remove themselves from the list or to correct their email address.

In order to comply with the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities, the Clerk will arrange for the annual publication of the following documents no later than 1 July each year:

- all items of expenditure above £100
- end of year accounts
- annual governance statement
- internal audit report
- list of councillor or member responsibilities
- minutes, agendas and meeting papers of formal meetings.

Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting is convened by the Chairman 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 current issues and celebrate local events and activities.

This document was considered and ratified at the Parish Council meeting on July 23, 2018. It is to be reviewed in two years, or sooner if legislation dictates.