

MIDDLETON STONEY PARISH COUNCIL

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Introduction

Each Parish Councillor has a duty to represent, without bias, the interests of the whole community.

They will always try and do their best and are available to help villagers regarding matters relating to the Parish of Middleton Stoney Parish Council.

Parish Councillors may be contacted via the Clerk or using their Parish Council email addresses.

If it is felt by the villager that the matter is important, then a letter or email to the Parish Clerk will ensure that it is dealt with in a timely and professional manner (also see the Correspondence section below).

The Parish Council intends to meet the timescales detailed below, but there could be occasions when this is not possible. When this happens the Parish Council will review their procedures and where necessary make changes to the policy or procedures.

Aims

To establish clear, easy-to-use channels of communication between the Parish Council and parishioners, and vice versa.

To provide information on important matters in a timely manner so as to enable and encourage informed comments from interested individuals and groups.

Parish Council Meetings

The Parish Council meets on the First Thursday of January, March, May, July, September, and November.

The Parish Council will normally meet in the Middleton Stoney Village Hall, Middleton Stoney, Oxfordshire from 7.30pm.

Public participation will be held from 7.40 pm to enable discussion on agenda items. Planning applications are available online prior to the meeting. Members of the public wishing to address the Council during the formal meeting or wishing to record the meeting are asked to make the Chairman aware of their intention before the meeting starts.

Notice Boards

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

- Parish Council meeting dates for the year
- Contact details for the Clerk

Date agreed at Council Meeting: Ref: 06/24 – 18th January 2024

- The Parish Council's meeting agenda - which will be posted at least 3 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.

The information displayed on the Parish Notice Board will be kept up to date.

Correspondence

All correspondence relating to the Parish should be addressed to the Parish Clerk in the first instance either via email at clerkmiddletonstoneypc1@gmail.com or via post to 22 Exeter Road, Kidlington, OX5 2DY. This will ensure that the matter is recorded and passed to the relevant person or organisation as soon as practically possible. However, all Parish Councillors have their email addresses which have the format please see the website for their details.

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with emails 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, and/or otherwise, will always be copied to the Clerk. All new emails requiring data to be passed on may be followed up with a data consent request before action is taken with that correspondence. 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 a complete and proper record of all correspondence.

It is imperative that all correspondents never forward personal information 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 at all possible. If email is used then an acknowledgement 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. Attachments will not be opened unless the Clerk has prior knowledge of 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.

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.

The Clerk will acknowledge all Freedom of Information requests within seven working days and reply fully within 20 working days of receipt. If this is not possible, a further holding letter/email will be sent with an expected completion date.

Website

The Parish Clerk will arrange for the Agenda and associated papers to be posted on the Shipton-on-Cherwell Parish Council Website (www.middletonstoney.com) at least three clear days before the meeting and for the draft Minutes to be posted as soon as possible after the meeting. The final Minutes will be published once approved.

While the Parish Council income is under the £25,000 threshold, the Council still tries to comply with the DCLG's Transparency Code for Smaller Councils and will publish the following information after 31 March and 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.

The Parish Clerk is the Webmaster for the Parish Council website.

The Parish Clerk will ensure that the Parish Council email address is publicised.

Social Media

The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication but is used to enhance communication with a wider range of the population.

A full social media policy has been adopted.

Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting is convened by the Chairman of the Parish Council and is generally held in May 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.

Related policies and procedures

- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Complaints Procedure
- Data Protection Policy
- Document Retention Policy and Procedure
- Freedom of Information Introduction and Publication Scheme
- Press and Media Policy Recording of Meetings Policy
- Social Media Policy