

Ropley Parish Council – Draft communication plan

Catherine Mitchell – November 2022

Introduction

This draft plan outlines how Ropley Parish Council currently communicates with its residents, and makes a number of recommendations on how the Parish Council might improve its communications.

The Parish Council is asked to review the draft plan and consider the recommendations.

The Hampshire Association of Local Councils (HALC) notes:

‘Communication is a key area for Parish and town councils and how a council communicates with its residents and how that communication is received and perceived is crucial for good governance and positive relationships. Setting out guidelines and procedures around internal and external communications can form an effective strategy where everyone can be clear as to what is expected and what will be done. This can be as simple as ensuring Councillors know how and when they will receive agenda packs to the content in newsletters and press releases.

Communication can take many forms, but the following are the key ones:-

- *agendas, minutes and reports*
- *Parish noticeboards*
- *website*
- *social media pages*
- *newsletters or parish magazines*
- *annual report*
- *annual parish meeting.*

Types of communication in Ropley

Currently the Parish Council communicates with its residents via the website and Bismonroptis. There is scope to increase communication methods to reach a wider audience.

Recommendations

- Use one of the noticeboards (see detail under noticeboards)
- Update and improve the website
- Ask Ropley Society to add key messages in their emails to members, recognising that this will only reach those residents who have paid to join the Ropley Society
- Consider the use of social media (see section on social media below)

Noticeboards

The Parish Council has agreed that the noticeboards need replacing as the wood is rotten. Jeff has kindly agreed to get them constructed.

Currently there are noticeboards in four locations:

- In the village hall carpark in the hedge
- In the grounds of the Coffee Rooms
- On the Petersfield Rd in Monkwood
- Ropley Dean – *check what this is and where*

In addition, the Courtyard shop has noticeboards outside and inside for flyers of local events, as well as a noticeboard for small adverts.

Anyone can attach something to the Parish Council noticeboards (e.g. flyers for events, adverts etc). There is no information about the Parish Council on the noticeboards, although the name of the Council is at the top.

Recommendations

- The Parish Council should decide where the noticeboards should be located.
 - Could the noticeboard at the village hall be attached to the front of the building rather than in the hedge?
 - Do we want to retain a noticeboard outside the Coffee Rooms, which is on the same road as the village hall?
 - The one on the Petersfield Rd in Monkwood is in a dangerous place on a road with fast moving traffic. Is there a safer place to locate this in Monkwood?
 - Where should the noticeboard be in Ropley Dean?
 - Are there any additional locations where it would be good to have a noticeboard, for example on the junction of Parkstone Road with Stapley Lane (at the moment people attach flyers to the fence)?
- The Parish Council should decide what the noticeboards should be used for:
 - Should there be two noticeboards at the village hall – one specifically for Parish Council information under lock and key ? (e.g. static information on where agendas and minutes can be found on website, dates of meetings, public participation, names and photos of Councillors, explanation what the Council does)
 - Should the other notice boards be open access, but make it clear what is acceptable to pin up e.g. flyers for local events within Bismunroptis, but not commercial advertising?

- The Parish Council should decide on the design of the noticeboards:
 - size
 - Should they all have glass or plastic covers so that people don't have to laminate flyers? Thinking of the green agenda and the cost of lamination.
 - Make sure the wood is not too hard for attaching flyers with drawing pins

Website

<http://www.myropley.org.uk/>

The Parish Council funds the My Ropley website, which is looked after by a number of volunteers. There is scope to both update and refresh the Parish Council section of the website.

Recommendations

- Parish Councillors are asked to review the proposed changes to the website set out in the separate document (already done)

Parish Council

It is likely that quite a few residents don't know what the Parish Council does or who their Parish Councillors are.

Recommendations

- Refresh explanation of Parish Council on website
- Update list of Parish Councillors on website including photos, email addresses and responsibilities
- Add details on noticeboard next to parish hall
- Introduce Parish Councillors at meetings if there are members of the public present
- Write articles for Bismonroptis
- Signpost all of the above via the Ropley News and Community Hub on Facebook, and the Ropley Society email

Agendas and minutes

HALC notes:

'Draft minutes of formal meetings must be published within one month of the meeting. Meeting agendas should also be published along with all associated meeting papers not later than 3 clear days before the meeting takes place.'

<https://hampshirealcsupport.zendesk.com/hc/en-gb/articles/4773225527569-Local-Government-Transparency-Code>

Agendas are published on the website, under 'upcoming events', but not on the Parish Council section of the website, meaning that they can be missed. Any associated meeting papers are not published.

http://www.myropley.org.uk/event/ropley-Parish-Council-meeting-7/?instance_id=6952

Final minutes are published on the website.

Recommendations

- Agendas and associated meeting papers should be published not later than 3 days in advance of meetings. The Parish Council section of the website should make it clear where agendas can be found.
- Add notice to noticeboard making it clear where agendas and minutes can be found on the website.

Use of social media

HALC notes:

‘Social media can be a powerful tool for Parish Councils particularly to disseminate immediate information to residents. However, Councils should always consider that only a certain demographic will use social media and therefore it should be used to complement other ways of communicating.

The Council are advised to adopt a social media policy which sets out who is responsible for posting updates. The commenting policy should also be clear and offensive or disrespectful comments should be removed. However, disagreement should be allowed – removing comments from people who disagree with the Council is not democratic.

Some Councillors will choose to set up their own social media pages. Whilst this is an acceptable method of communication, Councillors need to ensure that their pages include a disclaimer to say that any views expressed are not the view of the Council but are the view of the individual Councillor. Councillors can express views that differ from the Council’s views and, again, it should be clear that this is their personal view.’

<https://hampshirealcsupport.zendesk.com/hc/en-gb/articles/4767711169169-Communications-Engagement>

The Parish Council currently does not use social media as a way of communicating with its residents, which means that it may not be reaching some cohorts.

Recommendations

- The Parish Council should consider how it should use social media:
 - the Parish Council should set up a Facebook page, so that it can post key messages which can then be shared on Ropley News and Community Hub Facebook page
 - Are there other types of social media that the Parish Council should use?

Examples of town and Parish Councils using Facebook



New Alresford Town Council
5 October at 09:41 · 🌐

Community Grants up to £1000 - Available Now

Does your community group, Friends group or charity have a project that benefits people in Alresford?

Grants of up to £1000 are available now, with the next round of applications to be submitted by 18th October, for consideration at the Town Council meeting on 25th October.

For an application form please visit <https://www.newalresford-tc.gov.uk/Grants.aspx>

2 shares



Cheriton Parish Council
13 April · 🌐

Cheriton Annual Parish Council Meeting
PUBLIC WELCOME
26th April 2022, 7.30pm Cheriton Village Hall

Cheriton Parish Council are pleased to announce the Speaker for the above meeting will be:
Ms Donna Jones, Head of the Police and Crime Commission for Hampshire.

Ms Jones will present a talk lasting 10-15 minutes on how Hampshire Constabulary are tackling Rural Crime in Hampshire, she will then take questions and be available for discussions thereafter. The Annual Parish Council Meeting is your chance to speak to councillors, to raise issues that are of concern to you and that you feel need addressing by the Council. If you have thoughts you would like to share regarding traffic through the village, planning, litter, play area or any other local subject please join us for a glass of wine and a chat.

Cheriton Parish Council's primary role is to represent the interests of the community. The Council is the grass roots of the governmental system, working for the community by improving the parish environment as well as representing the community's views and needs to other governmental departments.

Cheriton Parish Council

Bismonroptis

The Parish Council has a regular slot in the bi-monthly magazine which all Parishioners receive.

Recommendations

- The Council should continue to use the Bismonroptis as one way of communicating with Parishioners.

Finance

The current format of the budget makes it hard to see how much new expenditure has been committed in the annual budget.

HALC notes:

'The Council should regularly review its budget and the RFO should provide a report to Council, at least quarterly, of spend against budget. This will help Councillors to understand where there is underspend or overspend and make adjustments to the budget accordingly.'

<https://hampshirealcsupport.zendesk.com/hc/en-gb/articles/4768876991377-Financial-Management>

This does not happen at the moment.

While the budget is included within Council minutes, it is not easily found on the website.

Recommendations

- Revise how the budget is presented, so that there is clarity between income and expenditure, and balance sheet items (done).
- The RFO should report spend against budget on a quarterly basis.
- The website should have a finance 'tab' which includes the budget. This section should also explain:
 - Grants - who can apply and how
 - Community infrastructure fund – what it is and what it is for
 - Community infrastructure levy – what it is and what it is for
 - What the precept is

Public participation

HALC notes:

'Members of the public may wish to ask questions or make statements in the public participation section of a Council meeting. Some members of the public may rarely attend meetings and only come when there is something specific on the agenda they wish to ask

about. A public participation notice setting out how they can ask questions, how long they can speak for and other methods for contacting the Council is a useful tool.

Public participation is a standing item on the monthly meeting agendas.

Recommendations

- As part of the website refresh, have a section on public participation
- Promote this via Facebook/ Bismonroptis/ notice boards on a regular basis

Engagement

HALC notes:

'The key purpose of a local Council is to represent the interests of the whole community and a good engagement strategy enables a Council to understand what those interests are and to properly reflect them in their decision making. A Council should not assume that they represent the interests of the community unless they consult with them and this can help identify gaps in services, agree priorities and develop an action plan.'

<https://hampshirealcsupport.zendesk.com/hc/en-gb/articles/4767711169169-Communications-Engagement>

Recommendations

- Parish Councillors should discuss how well the Council understands the interests of the community, and consider whether there is scope to improve.