



Redgrave Parish Council

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Introduction

Redgrave Parish Council (RPC) recognises that clear, timely, and professional communication is essential to transparency, accountability, and community engagement. This policy sets out how the RPC communicates internally and externally, ensuring compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, Data Protection Act 2018 (GDPR), Accessibility Regulations 2018, and Openness of Local Government Regulations 2014.

Objectives

The RPC aims to communicate effectively with all who live, work, or have an interest in Redgrave, including residents, businesses, community groups, volunteers, partner agencies, local authorities, councillors at parish, district, and county levels, local media, and visitors. Our goal is to inform, consult, and involve stakeholders in shaping the parish's future.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Clerk is the RPC's principal executive and point of contact for all official communications, correspondence, and publications. As such, the Clerk should receive all communications which ought to be formally brought to the attention of the RPC and should issue all formal communications made by the RPC.

In addition:

- The Clerk has overall responsibility for all issues in this policy unless specified otherwise.
- The content of the RPC's website and Facebook page is mainly managed by the Clerk. However, it is the responsibility of all Councillors to check it regularly for any issues of inaccuracy or omissions and inform the Clerk if issues arise.
- The Clerk is responsible for receiving correspondence and documents on behalf of the RPC and dealing with them, bringing such items to the attention of the RPC. The Clerk issues correspondence on the RPC's behalf as instructed by the RPC or in accordance with known policy. A Councillor corresponding with a third party does so as an individual and the rules relevant to media contact (see below) apply.
- Any advice relevant to RPC business given to a Councillor by third parties and which affects their opinion on any such matter should be declared at RPC meetings.

Councillors must follow the Code of Conduct, communicate courteously, and refer all formal matters and complaints to the Clerk. Councillors may only represent the RPC's official view if authorised at a RPC meeting. The Chairperson follows the same protocols and may issue statements in consultation with the Clerk.

It is important not to raise the expectations of the residents before a matter has been debated and agreed at a RPC meeting.

General Principles of Communication

All RPC communications must be clear, factual, and courteous; written in plain English; concise and consistent in style; compliant with data protection and accessibility requirements; and transparent about actions taken or required. In particular, it should ensure compliance with the RPC's Data Protection and Information Security Policies.

Methods of Communication

The RPC uses a range of communication methods proportionate to its size and community needs. The website is the primary source for agendas, minutes, policies, news, and links to partners, and must meet accessibility standards. Noticeboards, bulletins, meetings, and social media are also used. The Clerk (with the Chairperson) issues press releases as required.

Over 80% of the population generally use electronic communication now (*Office for National Statistics*), so this is the RPC's preferred and primary method of communication.

However, the RPC recognises that not all people are able to or wish to use electronic methods of communication, so it will continue to utilise different media and approaches to reach its audiences.

The table below shows the RPC's main means of communication.

RPC notice boards	The RPC noticeboard is the formal means of communicating information to residents, with electronic circulation provided as a supplementary means of sharing the same information. The noticeboards are updated regularly with important information about the RPC's activities and events.
RPC Website	While the RPC noticeboard remains the formal and definitive means of communicating information to residents, the RPC website is the primary electronic channel for general communication with stakeholders. We wish to improve its visibility, utility and effectiveness as a means of sharing information quickly and supporting two-way engagement with those residents who are able to access electronic communications. The website should be kept up to date and used to provide timely news, information on activities, and details of the RPC's policies and procedures, alongside links to other websites offering information of interest to stakeholders. Electronic communications will complement, but not replace, noticeboard communications, recognising that not all residents have access to online services.
RPC Bulletin	The RPC prepares periodic bulletins which are distributed by email to those residents that have registered an interest in receiving such information.
Clerk's contact details	Contact details are published on noticeboards and on the website to encourage open access.

RPC meetings	All RPC meetings are publicised and are open to the public. Each meeting includes a public participation period at the start of the meeting, during which the Chairperson will invite members of the public to raise matters relating to the business of the Council. The Chairperson or a councillor may provide a brief factual response where appropriate. Where a matter cannot be addressed at the meeting, the Chairperson will indicate the course of action to be taken, which may include referring the matter to a future agenda, requesting the Clerk to investigate and respond in writing, or passing the matter to the Clerk for follow-up in accordance with the Council's procedures. Following the conclusion of public participation, members of the public may observe the remainder of the meeting but will not participate in the Council's deliberations unless invited to do so by the Chairperson.
RPC Agendas and Minutes	Agendas and minutes of RPC meetings are available to all on the website and on the RPC notice boards. Minutes are available on request by email. A summary of the RPC minutes is also published in the Parish Magazine.
Annual Parish Meeting	The annual parish meeting is held in April every year and provides an opportunity to communicate and discuss RPC activities over the past year and objectives for the following year.
Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting	Most RPC business is conducted at the regular scheduled meetings. However, the RPC can call an Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting (EPCM) in limited circumstances. There is no obligation to call an EPCM because a matter is contentious or residents request it. An EPCM may be called for the following:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urgent business that cannot lawfully wait and where a decision is required before the next scheduled meeting • Immediate risk to health, safety or to the environment • Formal requisition by Councillors • Statutory or procedural necessity
Hand Delivery of Material	A Parish Council would not normally be expected to hand deliver documents where the information has been freely published elsewhere. Hand delivery of information is an exceptional measure appropriate only where required by law, justified by urgency or proportionate to the number of people directly affected.
Press Releases	Press releases are given to local media on significant points of interest or achievement as required.
Councillor's Representation and Networking	The RPC is committed to regular involvement with local groups and organisations through representation.
Twitter/"X" and Facebook	The RPC is not planning to get involved with Twitter ("X") at the moment, due to the time commitment to keep them up-to-date. The RPC supports a Facebook site in which it will provide relevant information. See

	https://www.facebook.com/people/Redgrave-Parish-Council/100093253568687/ Some information is also posted on the Redgrave village Facebook page. See https://www.facebook.com/groups/320460493669186
External Correspondence	The RPC will reply to external correspondence in a timely manner which is both courteous and compliant with the General Rules of Communication (see above).
Internal Correspondence	Internal communication is to be simple, courteous and kept to a minimum, in accordance with the General Rules of Communication (see above). Matters should not be debated by email but debated at public meetings to uphold democratic values.

Internal Communication

Internal communication shall be clear, respectful and limited to essential matters. RPC business shall not be debated or decided by email or other informal communication. Decisions of the Council must be taken at properly convened public meetings, except where authority has been lawfully delegated to the Clerk, the Chairperson, a committee, or another officer or member in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, or a specific Council resolution (see exemptions below).

Informal communication between councillors and officers may take place for the purposes of information sharing, clarification, or preparation for future meetings, but shall not be used to reach collective decisions or to commit the Council to a course of action.

Decision Recording and Exemptions

The RPC shall record all formal decisions of the Council in the minutes of its meetings or in other written records where decisions are taken under delegated authority.

Decisions taken by officers or members acting under specific express delegation shall be recorded where they grant a permission or licence, affect the legal rights of an individual; or award a contract or incur expenditure which, in either case, materially affects the Council's financial position¹.

Where officers or members act under general delegated authority, only decisions falling within the three categories above are required to be formally recorded.

All decisions taken under delegated authority that meet the above criteria shall be recorded in a Delegated Decision Log (DDL). Each entry shall be signed and dated by the officer or member making the decision and shall be reported to the next meeting of the Council or relevant committee for information. The DDL may take the form of an email to the Parish Clerk, copied to councillors. It is for the RPC to determine, in accordance with national legislation and guidance, which delegated decisions require formal recording and communication.

¹ <http://askyourcouncil.uk/openness-and-accountability/access-to-non-executive-meetings/>

Officers take many routine administrative and operational actions in the course of their day-to-day work within the Council's approved policies, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. Such routine administrative actions do not constitute formal decisions and are not required to be recorded, published or communicated to the wider public. It is for the RPC to decide what information should be recorded, and thus communicated, based on the national rules.

Media Contact

In the event of any media enquiry, only the Clerk or Chairperson may issue official statements. Councillors must clarify when expressing personal opinions and notify the Clerk and Chairperson of any media contact. Responses to media should be factual, non-political, and reflect RPC policy. The Clerk, in consultation with the Chairperson, is primarily responsible for issuing a response from the RPC. Individual members of the RPC must make clear, if they are approached for comment directly, whether they are giving an individual or personal opinion or referring the matter to the RPC for a formal response. In the former case, Councillors should be mindful of the policies and decisions of the RPC and respect the integrity of fellow Councillors and the Clerk. It must be made clear that the response is from the individual concerned and NOT from the RPC. In any event, the Clerk and the Chairperson must be notified of any contact with the media as soon as possible.

The Clerk, in consultation with the Chairperson, shall issue a press release on behalf of the RPC where it is considered necessary to publicise an activity of the RPC.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation, SAPP or NALC guidance, or best practice changes.