# Wonersh Parish Council

*Covering Blackheath, Shamley Green and Wonersh*

# Communications Strategy and Policy

September 2026



# 1. Executive summary

Communication is a vital part of running any organisation and Wonersh Parish Council ("the Council") recognises effective communication is fundamental for its aims and purposes as a democratic body. It is essential for the Council to understand and represent the views of all community stakeholders and to be able to clearly communicate its aims, policies, operations, challenges and achievements.

This Communications Strategy and Policy is focused on external communications and outlines **who** we should communicate with, **what** we should communicate, **how** we should communicate and **when** we should communicate. It directs and informs processes of communication in order to ensure we adhere to professional standards and outlines **responsibilities** of Councillors and Officers in enacting the strategy.

The strategy was built on a two-part vision that:

1. **ALL** community stakeholders should have a clear and relevant understanding of the Council's responsibilities and how these are being carried out
2. **ALL** community stakeholders should feel heard by their Council and be aware of how they can easily share their views

In order to assess the impact of the strategy and policy implementation, we have considered measures of key performance indicators and set up processes for **evaluation** in order to regularly assess our communications as a whole.

# 2. Communication principles

The Council is required by law to have regard to the contents of the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity in coming to any decision on publicity. Publicity is defined as ""any communication in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or a section of the public." The principles of this code are that publicity by local authorities should:

- be lawful
- be cost effective
- be objective
- be even-handed
- be appropriate
- have regard to equality and diversity
- be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity

# 3. Who we communicate with

A community stakeholder is an individual, group or organisation that lives, works or operates within Wonersh Parish, or may otherwise be affected by the Council's aims, policies and operations. The Council has considered and identified the following categories of stakeholders who should be considered as part of any communication. We have included examples of stakeholders for each category, but we recognise that our Parish is a diverse and engaged community and therefore the lists are not exhaustive.

**Residents**

**Visitors / tourists**

**Service users of**

- Playgrounds
- Closed burial ground
- Garden Close community room
- Allotments
- Open spaces

**Community Groups**

- Shamley Green Environment Group
- Wonersh Advisory Environment Group
- Shamley Green Village Association
- Barnett Fields Group
- Blackheath Village Society
- Sports, leisure and interest groups*

**Local businesses**

- Village shops
- Wonersh pharmacy
- Village pubs / cafes

**Other local organisations**

- Wonersh Foundation
- Wonersh United Charities
- Village Halls
- Wonersh Surgery
- Parish schools and nurseries
- Parish churches

**Public bodies or authorities**

**Emergency services**

- Surrey Police
- Surrey Fire and Rescue Service
- Ambulance service

*The Council would like to highlight the Wonersh Connections and SGVA website which are both supported financially by the Council and contain details of the wide variety of community groups in our villages.

# 4. What we communicate

In deciding what the Council should focus on communicating, consideration should be given to the needs of the community stakeholders identified above. The Council should always be mindful of the benefit to stakeholders from communications to ensure that they are adhering to the principle of cost-effectiveness outlined in section 2. Core communications should focus on:

- Contact details, including ways to raise issues
- Information on how the Council operates
- Meeting times and dates
- Council proposals and decisions
- Information on Council services and notice of changes
- Information on local destinations and activities, where there is Council involvement
- Information on proposals and updates for external local projects or issues, where appropriate
- Travel information, especially in times of disruption
- Public information notices, including emergencies and weather warnings.
- Notice of consultations (both WPC and external)
- Increased awareness on grant availability
- Notice of WPC events and volunteer days*
- Statutory notices and documents (e.g. audit, notice of elections, planning comments etc)

*The Council does not have the capacity to advertise third party events and organisations, where there is no Council involvement.

In addition to the above, the Council may consider other communications; however, these would need to be agreed in line with section 7. Responsibilities below.

# 5. How we communicate

Although a majority of UK households have access to the internet (Official of National Statistics Data 2020: 96%), we recognise that digital communication is not the first choice for some of our residents. We will therefore aim to use a mixture of digital and traditional media. Communication channels will be regularly evaluated to assess their effectiveness and this is discussed more in section 8 Evaluation. In so far as possible, communications should be released across all channels in a consistent manner to ensure continuity between channels. The exception to this is postal letter drops which are more costly than other forms of communication, and decisions to use this channel should be made at a full Council meeting on a case-by-case basis.

**Communication channels**

- Website (https://wonershparish.gov.uk/)
- Council E-mailing list (https://wonershparishcouncil.eo.page/nq6s5)
- Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/wonershparish/)
- Community groups' newsletters / mailing lists
- Public noticeboards
- Public meetings
- Local publications e.g. church magazines
- 'A' board in key locations e.g. outside Wonersh Shop
- Direct interaction with Councillors or Officers via email, telephone and face-to-face

New communication channels should be considered by the Council when suggested by stakeholders, with regard given to the channel's legality, reach, accessibility and cost-effectiveness in line with the Communication Principles. In particular, all communication channels should be assessed to ensure they can be used in line with data protection laws. The Council should also give regard to the longevity and succession plan for the channel to ensure consistency when there are personnel changes.

# 6. When we communicate

The Council should give consideration to when to communicate including appropriate timescales and frequency. In general, the Council should wait until all information is available and core messaging confirmed before communicating. Where this is not possible, they should clearly state within the communication that the provided information is subject to change. They should be mindful of times of heightened sensitivity, in line with the Communication Principles outlined in section 4.

The Council will aim to communicate regularly and in particular will aim for monthly to bimonthly e-mailing list submissions and biannual newsletters. The Council should have regard to the disadvantages of over-communication.

# 7. Responsibilities

The Clerk, in accordance with this policy, shall have the authority to communicate on the all the items listed in section 4. If they have any concerns over an item to be communicated, they will bring this to a full Council meeting for discussion and consideration of next steps.

They may use any established form of communication channel that they judge to be of benefit. If this channel would lead to additional costs (e.g. letter drops or printed newsletters), these costs should be approved by the Council in line with its standing orders and financial regulations.

# 8. Evaluation

In order to measure the impact of the implementation of this strategy and policy, the Council has decided on the following key performance indicators:

- Mailing list subscribers
- Mailing list 'opens'
- Website hits
- Facebook views and followers
- Number of members of the public at meetings
- Number of Council newsletters taken from shops

In addition, the Council will conduct surveys, as appropriate, to assess the effectiveness of their communications, and to receive measurable feedback from stakeholders. The results of these surveys will be presented at a full Council meeting.