

Stratton Parish Council: Communications Policy and Guidelines

Stratton parish is a small parish, comprising 284 dwellings with 475 residents on the electoral roll in February 2020. Stratton Parish Council (henceforth referred to as the Parish Council) is accountable to the residents of the parish and this document relates to the Parish Council's interaction only with residents of Stratton parish.

The Parish Council recognises that consistent, effective and appropriate communications are essential for the council to engage with parishioners on the work and activities the council is undertaking on behalf of Stratton residents and the principles and legal framework that apply to it as a publicly accountable organisation.

This document outlines the principles for managing communications, to inform residents and to receive information from them, and will include key strands of the use and types of communications employed and the responsibilities of the council in relation to using them.

Legal Framework

The Parish Council must all times conduct its business within the law, not only the law of the land, but especially the legal requirements of a public local authority organisation; Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Council's Standing Orders. Further, The Parish Council must ensure that it maintains control of its information to ensure that is used appropriately and its use, by itself or others, does not bring the Parish Council into disrepute.

Introduction

Each parish councillor has a duty to represent, without bias, the interests of the whole community. Parish councillors will endeavour to do their best and be available to parishioners with regard to matters relating to the parish of Stratton. The parish clerk may be contacted by letter, telephone or email at strattonpc@gmail.com. Councillors may be contacted by telephone and a contact list will be available on the notice boards around the parish as well as on the Stratton Parish Council website at www.strattondorsetpc.org.uk, or again, contact with councillors can be made through the Council's email account.

Parish Council Meetings

The Parish Council will hold ordinary meetings once every two months. The meetings will take place in Stratton Village Hall and commence at 7.00pm unless otherwise notified. Meetings will be held on a Tuesday, usually the second Tuesday of the month. Meetings will include time for public participation at both the start and end of each meeting. The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council will take place in May when councillors will elect the Chairman and appoint a Vice Chairman for the forthcoming year. The Annual Parish Meeting will also take place in May giving parishioners the opportunity to listen to the progress of the Parish Council over the last year, to ask questions and the opportunity to discuss local issues and concerns along with celebrating local events and activities.

Noticeboards

The Parish Council has five noticeboards throughout the parish, three in the village and one each at Ash Hill and Grimstone. The following items will be displayed permanently; the name, address, telephone number and email for the parish clerk, the names of parish councillors with their contact details. Copies of Parish Council agendas, minutes of meetings and annual audited accounts will be displayed when appropriate. Notice of items of significant interest, information or concern will also be shown when applicable.

Stratton Parish Council Website (www.strattondorsetpc.org.uk)

All information on the website is copyrighted.

The Parish Council website will only publish matters relating to its work, responsibilities and other items that fall within the scope of its remit or purview. This includes all items required to be published under the Transparency Regulations; details and contact arrangements for the parish clerk and all parish councillors; agendas and minutes of meetings. Announcements, which will include information about matters that the Parish Council wishes to bring to residents' particular attention, will be posted on the website and displayed on the Parish Council's Facebook page, (Stratton Dorset Parish Council) at the same time.

Stratton Dorset Parish Council Facebook Page

As stated above, all information published under Announcements on the Parish Council's website are immediately available on the council's Facebook page giving residents the opportunity to comment on the matters circulated. No restrictions have been placed on the sharing of the Parish Council's information published on the Council's Facebook page, but the Parish Council must be alert to the possibility of the information being used inappropriately or in a way that is detrimental to the Parish Council.

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 passed to the relevant person or persons as soon as is practically possible. All correspondence received by the council, regardless of the means used, will be treated as confidential between the Parish Council and the correspondent. If a parishioner wishes a matter to be formally discussed at a Parish Council meeting the Parish Clerk must be notified at least 10 days prior to the meeting for the item to be placed on the agenda.

Letterbox Drop

Stratton Parish covers a relatively small geographical area and when a matter is regarded as being of significant importance, and the Parish Council wishes to ensure that all parishioners are made aware of it, a communication may be delivered to every household in the parish, with details of the issue and the timeframe for responses and comments to be received by the Parish Council.

Other Communication Opportunities

The parish magazine the 'Chalk Stream' is delivered to most households in the parish. The Parish Council publishes a precis of council meetings and other parish announcements in the magazine on a regular basis.

The Parish Council may facilitate other communication channels to signpost residents to important council matters, providing the Parish Council's copyright is not breached, that the Parish Council is credited as the source of the information and it is clear that any comments or responses to the information are sent directly to the Parish Council.

Other Matters

The Parish Council will only respond to matters or correspondence of any kind that is raised directly with them through the channels outlined in this document.

The Parish Council will not:-

- Respond to anonymous correspondence or comments.
- Respond to correspondence or comments if judged to be offensive.
- Respond to matters raised on a resident's behalf by a third party without being advised of the identity of the person in question