

# **Easton** on the **Hill** Parish Council

## **COMMUNICATION POLICY AND CUSTOMER SERVICES STANDARDS**

### **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 parishioners with regard to matters relating to Easton on the Hill 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).

It is the Parish Council's intention 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, and between Councillors/Clerk.

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

### **Parish Council Meetings**

The Parish Council meets on the second Monday of each month at 7pm.

The Parish Council will normally meet in the village hall.

Members of the public wishing to address the Council during the formal meeting or wishing to record the meeting must make the Chairman aware of their intention before the meeting starts.

### **Notice Board**

The following items will be displayed on the Parish Council noticeboard on High St

- Contact details for the Clerk – included on the minutes
- 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 [clerk@eastononthehill-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@eastononthehill-pc.gov.uk) or via post. 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 own Council email addresses which have the format [firstname.lastname@eastononthehill-pc.gov.uk](mailto:firstname.lastname@eastononthehill-pc.gov.uk)

All correspondence to the Parish Clerk will be acknowledged within one week of receipt if at all possible. If email is used then an acknowledgment will be sent via email, usually within 48 hours.

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 not be acknowledged or recorded.

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 will reply fully within 20 working days of receipt of the request. 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 Parish Council Website [www.eastononthehill-pc.gov.uk](http://www.eastononthehill-pc.gov.uk) 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 posted once approved.

In order to comply with the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities, the Clerk will arrange for the annual publication of the following documents no later than 1 July each year:

- a. end of year accounts
- b. annual governance statement
- c. internal audit report
- d. 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 or will be adopted.

## **Annual Parish Meeting**

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

Data Protection Policy

Freedom of Information Policy

Public speaking at Council and committee meetings policy

Social Media Policy

Complaints procedure

## **CUSTOMER SERVICES STANDARDS**

This applies to communication from the parishioners to the Council/Clerk and between the Councillors and the Clerk to/from the Councillors

### **When anyone makes contact with us we will:**

- Be welcoming and courteous
- Be polite, fair and respectful
- Be helpful and responsive
- Provide good quality information
- Communicate clearly
- Advise what we can provide, who to contact and how
- Advise how to use the complaints procedure to improve our services
- Keep them informed of the actions we have taken and not make false promises
- Empathise and listen to understand their needs
- Treat all information received in the strictest of confidence.

### **To help us achieve this we ask that Parishioners and Councillors:**

- Are courteous and respectful towards us and each other
- Provide accurate information when required
- Make suggestions on improving our services by using the complaints procedure
- Ask us to explain anything they are not sure of
- Advise us of any specific requirements, e.g. large print, Braille etc.

### **When dealing with emails we will aim to:**

- Acknowledge all external enquiries and give responses within 48 hours
- Respond to your enquiry in full normally within one week.

**When answering the telephone the Clerk will:**

- Aim to answer your call within five rings or twenty seconds
- Greet you politely and clearly
- Listen carefully
- Aim to return your messages within 48 hours.

**When dealing with your letters the Clerk will aim to:**

- Reply within a week
- Tell you what to do if you require further assistance
- Use clear, jargon free language.

This policy was adopted at a meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019 and will be reviewed in two years or sooner, should legislation dictate.