EMERSONS GREEN
TOWN COUNCIL

# Communications Policy

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Approved by: Finance & Partnership Committee

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## 1. Policy Statement

Emersons Green Town Council is committed to communicating openly, transparently, and effectively with all residents and stakeholders. The Council recognises that members of the community access information in different ways and is committed to ensuring that no resident is excluded from receiving information or participating in local democracy due to age, disability, language barriers, or limited access to digital technology.

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a consistent approach to communication that enables residents to:

- Stay informed about council services, projects, decisions, and events.
- Participate in local democratic processes.
- Access information in a format that meets their individual needs.
- Engage with the Council through a variety of communication methods.

## 3. Objectives

The Council will:

- Provide accurate, clear, timely, and transparent information.
- Encourage community engagement and participation.
- Ensure communication methods are inclusive and accessible.
- Promote awareness of the Council's role and activities.
- Strengthen public confidence and trust in the Council.

## 4. Scope

This policy applies to all Council communications, including information published through digital and non-digital channels, consultations, statutory notices, public engagement activities, and correspondence with residents and stakeholders.

## 5. Target Audiences

The Council communicates with:

- Residents of all ages and backgrounds.
- Residents without internet access.
- Businesses.
- Community and voluntary organisations.
- Schools and educational establishments.
- Faith groups.

- Other local authorities.
- Local and regional media outlets.

## 6. Communication Principles

All communications issued by the Council shall:

- Be factual, accurate, and impartial.
- Use clear and accessible language.
- Be published in a timely manner.
- Be respectful and inclusive.
- Comply with legislative and regulatory requirements.
- Support openness, accountability, and transparency.

## 7. Communication Channels

### Digital Communication

The Council will utilise digital platforms including:

| Channel | Purpose | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Website | Official notices, agendas, minutes, policies and news | Updated regularly |
| Social Media | Community information and engagement | 2-3 times per week |
| E-mail Newsletter | Regular council updates | Monthly or as required |

### Non-Digital Communication

To ensure inclusivity, the Council will maintain a range of non-digital communication methods including:

- Parish noticeboards.
- Printed newsletters and bulletins.
- Local press and community publications.
- Public meetings and engagement events.
- Posters and flyers.
- Direct mail for significant consultations and projects.
- Telephone and face-to-face contact arrangements.
- Community partnership networks.

## 8. Accessibility

The Council is committed to ensuring communications are accessible and shall:

- Use plain English.
- Avoid unnecessary technical language and jargon.
- Provide large-print documents on request.
- Make printed copies of key documents available when requested.
- Use accessible venues for public meetings.
- Consider translation or interpretation support where appropriate.
- Have regard to the principles of the Equality Act 2010.

## 9. Roles and Responsibilities

### Town Clerk

The Town Clerk shall:

- Manage the Council's communications.
- Publish agendas, minutes, and statutory notices.
- Maintain communication channels.
- Ensure compliance with legal publication requirements.

### Councillors

Councillors shall:

- Engage constructively with residents.
- Share publicly available Council information responsibly.
- Promote opportunities for public participation.

### Chair of the Council

The Chair shall:

- Act as the Council's principal spokesperson where appropriate.
- Support positive and professional public communications.

### Communications Lead (where appointed)

The Communications Lead shall:

- Coordinate communication activity.
- Promote consistency across communication channels.
- Support public engagement initiatives.

## 10. Communication Schedule

The Council will aim to meet the following minimum standards:

| Activity | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Meeting Agendas | At least three clear working days before meetings |
| Draft Minutes | Within two weeks of meetings |
| Noticeboard Updates | Weekly |
| Newsletter | Quarterly (minimum) |
| Social Media Updates | 2-3 times per week |
| Public Engagement Events | At least quarterly |

## 11. Feedback and Community Engagement

The Council encourages feedback and participation through:

- Attendance at Council meetings.
- Public participation sessions.
- Surveys and consultations.
- Drop-in events and surgeries.
- Written correspondence.
- Telephone and e-mail contact.

Where consultations are undertaken, both digital and paper-based response options will be considered wherever practicable.

## 12. Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of this policy shall be monitored through:

- Attendance figures at meetings and events.
- Public feedback.
- Reach and distribution of communication materials.
- Community engagement levels.
- Review of communication methods and outcomes.

This policy shall be reviewed annually or sooner if legislative or operational changes require amendment.

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**ADDENDUM A**

**Communications Procedure (How To Guide)**

**Website Updates**

The Town Clerk will:

1. Upload agendas and notices immediately after publication.
2. Upload draft minutes following approval for publication.
3. Ensure key policies and contact information remain current.
4. Review website content monthly.

**Noticeboard Management**

1. Check noticeboards weekly.
2. Remove expired notices.
3. Display:
    - Agendas
    - Minutes
    - Public notices
    - Consultation information
    - Community event information
4. Record inspection dates where practicable.

**Social Media Management**

1. Publish between two and three posts per week.
2. Promote:
    - Council meetings
    - Community events
    - Consultations
    - Completed projects
3. Ensure posts remain politically neutral.
4. All official communications must be issued only through authorised Emersons Green Town Council Communication Channels.

**Newsletter Production**

1. Collect content from councillors, officers and community groups.
2. Include:
    - Key decisions
    - Forthcoming projects
    - Meeting dates
    - Community initiatives

3. Distribute quarterly to residents or designated collection points.

**Community Consultations**

For significant projects or decisions:

1. Prepare clear background information.
2. Publish consultation details on all relevant channels.
3. Provide both online and paper response methods where possible.
4. Allow adequate response periods.
5. Report findings to Council.

**Public Engagement Events**

1. Hold a minimum of four engagement opportunities annually.
2. Advertise at least two weeks in advance.
3. Select accessible venues and times.
4. Record attendance and feedback.

**Accessibility Requests**

When residents request information in an alternative format:

1. Acknowledge the request promptly.
2. Provide large print, paper copies, or alternative formats were reasonably practicable.
3. Record recurring accessibility needs to improve future communication planning.

**Monitoring**

Each quarter the Clerk should report:

- Newsletter distribution numbers.
- Social media engagement.
- Website usage statistics (where available).
- Attendance at public meetings.
- Consultation response rates.
- Any identified communication gaps.

This information should be reported to Council to support continuous improvement of communication and community engagement activities.