



Communications Strategy Adopted 19th March 2024

Context

Odiham Parish Council (OPC) is committed to representing the interests of all residents and businesses within the Parish of Odiham and to delivering high quality services to its area.

Through delivery of high quality services and projects which meet local needs and through lobbying on the issues which matter to local people, OPC aims to maintain and improve our Parish as a pleasant, safe, and enjoyable place to live and work.

OPC recognises that effective, transparent, and engaging communication is an essential factor in delivering the Council's vision in line with the needs and wishes of the local community.

OPC's communication aims to:

- i) Follow sector best practice when reporting OPC's statutory obligations.
- ii) Report on the progress of its aims and objectives on an annual basis.
- iii) Actively involve as many local people as possible in decisions which affect the community.
- iv) Undertake consultations on major proposals to help ensure evidence-based decision making.

Objectives for communication

We will communicate effectively in order to:

- Build strong 2-way connections **so that** community members feel trust and confidence in the Council and engage in consultation and feedback exercises.
- Report on council activities **so that** we improve understanding of the role of the Council and the Councillors, as well as meeting our statutory reporting and project requirements.
- Promote Odiham Parish Council services **so that** users can make use of and enjoy the services they need and want in the place where they live and or do business.



Audiences for the communication

These are the audience groups and the information that we need to be aware of when planning communications with them.

Audience group	Key information that could impact our communication with them	What does this knowledge mean for our communication?
Residents	<p>Older residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally have the highest level of knowledge about OPC, about its activities and where to find the Parish Office. • There are good links to this demographic through existing links with the U3A, Odiham Society, Rotary and Lions. • There is good engagement on the issues which interest them and the things they don't like eg environment and planning matters. • There is good word of mouth and individuals can be reached through group email lists. • There is a concern about whether OPC's comms are reaching non-digital users. • Volunteering is strong but some activities may be restricted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't assume all users have online access. • Newsletters are valued. Consider noticeboards for important news. • Large print versions should be made available. • Use email lists. • Consider drop in sessions for key decisions and projects. • Messaging needs to be concise – don't overload with information.
	<p>45-60 age range:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an apparent good level of knowledge about council functions but not necessarily which council does what. • There is good engagement on the issues which matter eg traffic and transport, planning and environmental issues. • Social media is strong with few non-digital users. • People are happy to report things directly and engage in online consultations. • Little spare time. • Active volunteering when time allows eg conservation volunteers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All communication methods are suitable. • Keep messaging simple. • Include links to direct user to online reporting, contact, reading and consultations. • Schedule social media to evenings and weekends.



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	<p>25-45 age range:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good knowledge of council service provision but not necessarily which council does what. • Some level of engagement with OPC on the things which matter most to them eg traffic and transport, safety, environment, planning and community facilities. • Very busy, lots of demands on their time, spend more time away from the parish. • Biggest concern is their children’s quality of life and family activities. • Strong networks and listening to other parents. • All expected to be digital users unless disability but some may chose to avoid social media. • Time for volunteering very limited but interest in shared activities eg community litter picks, Greening Campaign. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital communication preferred. • Newsletter also suitable. • Clear, simple information that’s easy to share quickly with their network. • Focus on the “so what” of how it impacts their children. • Schedule social media to evenings and weekends. • Share targeted news through school comms and RAF base comms.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 to 25 age range: • Strong views on the things which matter to them and a desire to campaign for change eg education, transport, environment, home ownership, national politics. • Little direct engagement with local councils. • Comments received that this age group does have an interest in their local area and local politics but needs clear, targeted messaging on how to engage, why things matter and what they could achieve through engagement. • Easily disengaged if negative feedback/criticism is raised on something which matters to them eg objection to development which could enhance recreational enjoyment or employment opportunities. • All expected to have online access and social media – Instagram preferred, not Facebook and TikTok not considered suitable for Council engagement. Newsletter is unlikely to reach this age group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media best method of reaching audience. • Consider targeted messaging on Instagram (not suitable for all OPC’s work). • Need to inform - raise awareness of local issue and why these issues matter eg through online posts, links on where to find information. • Acknowledge this age range as a valued contributor to the community and understand their concerns. • Consider other ways of engaging with this age group in a more structure way.



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	<p>Under 16's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OPC should consider all age groups in its work and take feedback but it's not appropriate for OPC to engage directly with this age group, only through recognised groups eg schools and uniformed groups unless parent/guardian's consent given. • There are good links with local schools and youth community groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events and activities best method of communication eg tree planting, litter pick. • Engagement through learning eg environmental projects, activities run by Book Exchange. • Use display boards and handouts. • Essential to consult on certain issues eg new play facilities. Consult through schools.
	<p>Residents with a disability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabilities present in many ways – use as many different communication methods as possible. • OPC's website has accessibility statement. • OPC open to receiving feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use as many different communication methods as possible. • Think about appropriate and targeted content. • Ensure accessibility statement is up-to-date. • Simplify text where possible. • Consider easy reading summary docs where possible. • Ensure public meetings are held in accessible venues.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAF community may not have knowledge of local area. • May require access to local services. • Age range likely to be smaller than rest of local population. • Assumed good use of IT. • Home ownership important to some who want to settle in area. • Traffic, transport and walking/cycling routes which link RAF Odiham to parish very important. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All methods of communication suitable. • Remember to explain background – don't assume the reader knows about the local area. • Value RAF as valued part of Parish in messaging. • Share news with RAF Odiham Hive. • Share news through RAF Station ward councillor. • Consider holding family events at RAF base.



Audience group	Key information that could impact our communication with them	What does this knowledge mean for our communication?
Service users	<p>Facility hirers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to find information quickly. • Want to know whether venue is available quickly. • May want help in promoting their activities. • May not be digital users. <p>Cemeteries and allotments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to find information quickly. • Don't want to see burial information alongside general news. • May not be digital users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website preferred which will assist OPC in keeping information up-to-date. • Newsletters, noticeboards, and social media suitable for promotion of facilities and allotments. • Keep hiring and booking details on separate, dedicated webpages with a clear, user friendly way of finding pages. • Facility hire comms needs to attract customer and will likely be different to other OPC reporting. Eg think about key messaging to target audiences/customers and key selling points. • Consider promotion of related webpages and events for allotments. • Be sensitive to nature of cemetery in messaging. Keep messaging simple and professional.
Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May want to get involved in volunteering but not politics of council work. • Need to feel opportunities are open to them and their time will be valued. • Need easy to find information easily. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All forms of communication suitable. Don't assume everyone is a digital user. • Messaging needs to be clear and easy to read – eg dates of event, time, where to meet, what is expected. • Share good news stories and give praise to show value the work undertaken and to attract new volunteers (for all local voluntary groups). • Tag relevant groups in social media and ask groups to share news. • Messaging likely to be more relaxed than formal OPC reporting.



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<p>Funders, other local councils and principal authorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to demonstrate and share best practice. • Grants from principal authorities will look at website and expect to see reporting of grant awards. • OPC is useful link between county/district councillors and community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only digital forms of comms likely to reach other councils. • Share important news from principal authorities on OPC's website & social media – eg where OPC has been involved in project, where news supports an OPC objective and consultations which effect local people. • Keep messaging informative and simple – use links. • Tag relevant authority. • Keep messaging positive and supportive. Honest reporting is best but don't discredit other authority or its decisions.
<p>Local businesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OPC is well positioned to share news between principal authorities to businesses, hear views of local businesses and help to promote them locally and to attract visitors. • They are interested in matters which affect their business eg business rates, planning and projects which encourage footfall to High St. • Home based businesses have in the past expressed views they feel left out of OPC's business promotions. • Businesses are supportive of large events and activities which increases footfall on High St. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All methods of communication useful but digital methods best. • Use WhatsApp group to share news quickly. • Be supportive in messaging but don't actively promote single business. • Remember to include businesses in promotion of events and consider sponsorship of event comms. • Consider seasonal and generic publicity which aims to increase visitors. • Remember home-based businesses in OPC's activities.





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Developers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developers will view and research on website. • They will view local community pages to get a feel of local opinion. • They are required to liaise with OPC for large developments. • They may be required to pay developers' contributions, depending on size of development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital methods best. • Keep messaging informative with direct links to developers' webpages or HDC's planning portal. Don't re-write text. • Be careful not to show support or objection to application prior to considering the application. • Messaging needs to be clear on OPC's role in planning process. Listen to residents but don't become referee between residents and developer. Encourage residents to send comments directly to planning authority. • Keep messaging as neutral as possible and strive for positive working relationship with developer. • Carefully consider which applications should be promoted – eg focus on Neighbourhood Plan sites or speculative applications not in the Plan. • Urge developers to speak to residents directly and enable this through offering meetings and venues.

Our key messages

- We represent the interests of all residents and businesses within the Odiham and North Warnborough Parish.
- We offer high standard public services and facilities.
- We want to work with you and want you to work with us.





Our key dates

- Annual Parish Assembly (1st March to 1st June)
- 1st April – start of new financial year, new budget & precept, new allotment & cemetery fees, audit process starts.
- Annual Council meeting (May)
- Spring newsletter (distribution March/April).
- Armed Forces Day (29th June 2024).
- Summer newsletter (new).
- National Town Crier Day (8th July 2024).
- National Allotment Week (12th to 18th August 2024).
- Autumn newsletter (distribution October)
- Remembrance (Sunday 10th November 2024).
- Christmas events (late November).
- October to January – set strategic priorities and agree budget for following year.
- Elections and PURDAH period (from March 2027).





The channels we will use to communicate

Channel	Purpose	Audience	Content types/messages	Process
<i>e.g. Service users Facebook group</i>	<i>e.g. To provide details of events & services available & opportunities for them to get answers</i>	<i>e.g. Service users</i>	<i>e.g. We provide playgroups at the community centre; stories and photos</i>	<i>Who owns it? How does it work?</i>
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote and report on all OPC activities. To comply with the Transparency Code. To act as a library for all OPC's work which can be made available to the public. To contact OPC. To signpost to other public services. 	All.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact a councillor or the Parish Office. Make a cemetery enquiry or apply for an allotment. View agendas, minutes and financial reporting. See volunteering opportunities. Find links to other website for reporting matters of concern. Read about OPC's projects and strategic plans. 	<p>Wordpress website designed by Somerset Websites and updated by Clerk and Deputy Clerk.</p> <p>Updated in line with publication of agendas, minutes and meeting information and ad hoc updating of other news.</p> <p>Updated at least weekly.</p> <p>All Councillors to review and suggest changes.</p>
Council meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily to make decisions and minute the Council's work. To give residents the chance to ask questions in person and listen to decisions. 	All. Audience likely to be 45+.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We promote openness. We make informed and fair decisions. 	<p>Meetings follow strict rules set in the Local Government Act.</p> <p>Residents can join online or in person.</p>





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Facebook (OPC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To report on OPC's projects and activities. To share relevant local news and information from other authorities. To show support for voluntary groups and to attract volunteers. To quickly share important news & updates eg Covid, storms, local road closures. 	Open to everyone. Audience likely to be 25+ but not older age group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is happening in your area and this is where you can find out how to get involved. This is what we have achieved. This is how your money has been spent. We want to hear from you. Thank you for the things other local groups have done. 	<p>Managed by Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Chair.</p> <p>Posts scheduled at times to achieve highest reach. Scheduling of post aims for 2-3 a week and at intervals.</p> <p>Don't post when important info needs to be in public eye eg Neighbourhood Plan consultation. Pin posts to top of page. This page is primarily for OPC news and will only include other news where OPC has an interest/ played a part in the work.</p> <p>Posts and commenting follow OPC's Social Media policy.</p>
Facebook (Your Odiham)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To share local news and events not run by OPC. To share some of OPC run events eg street parties, Annual Parish Assembly. To support other community groups in promoting local events. 	Open to everyone. Audience likely to be 25+ but not older residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is what is happening in your area and this is how to get involved. 	<p>Managed by Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Chair.</p> <p>Adhoc posts often when information received from external organisation.</p> <p>Posts and commenting follow OPC's Social Media policy.</p>





Channel	Purpose	Audience	Content types/messages	Process
The Bridewell Facebook page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote The Bridewell as a venue for hire and co-working space. To support hire groups in promoting their activities. To promote related grand awards and building improvements in line with grant conditions. 	Bridewell users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Come along to - this is what is happening at The Bridewell. The Bridewell is a community hub for hire. The Bridewell offers co-working space. 	<p>Managed by Clerk and Deputy Clerk. Deputy Clerk to take lead.</p> <p>Weekly post proposed including a weekly what's on. Also include details of grant funding.</p> <p>Promotion and frequency to increase once co-working space redeveloped.</p>
Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To report on OPC's activities since the previous newsletter. To notify event dates and what's happening in the near future. To seek feedback from residents. To attract volunteers including new councillors for vacant seats. 	All. Audience unlikely to reach under 25 age group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is who we are. This is what we do. This is what we have done. This is what we plan to do. This is what is happening in your local area. Find out how to get involved. This is where you report something. 	<p>Drafted by Clerk, Deputy Clerk and committee chairs. All councillors invited to input.</p> <p>Hand delivered to every household. Approx. 150 posted from office.</p> <p>Added to website and shared on Facebook.</p> <p>Spring, Autumn and Summer editions/</p> <p>Mailing list to be developed.</p>
Noticeboards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory publication of agendas, financial information and public notices. To promote forthcoming events. To promote volunteering opportunities. 	All. Will only reach people walking & cycling in the Parish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is what the Parish Council is doing. Find out how to get involved. 	Weekly trip to noticeboards by Amenities Officer.



Channel	Purpose	Audience	Content types/messages	Process
Instagram (Your Odiham)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To share local news and events not run by OPC. This is useful as many requests are made to the office. To share some of OPC run events eg street parties, Annual Parish Assembly. 	Unclear – tbc. No specific audience. Additional resource to reach people with local interest.	In line with Your Odiham FB page - this is what is happening in your area and this is how to get involved.	The Your Odiham FB page links to the Your Odiham Instagram page. Some posts are linked. Further worked is required to determine future.
Instagram (OPC) (new)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted messages to under 25 age group. To inform. To seek feedback. To raise awareness and encourage to get involved. 	Under 25 age group.	This is happening in your local area – get involved, give your views.	To be determined. Trial proposed. Eg to seek views of bus shelter on Alton Road.
RAF Odiham families Facebook page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted messages for people living at RAF Odiham, eg notification of events. 	RAF community.	This is what is happening in your local area. Would you like to get involved.	Deputy Clerk shares relevant news to RAF Hive.
Talking – at OPC events and through enquiries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote 2-way discussion. To build trust with residents. 	All.	We promote open discussion.	Opportunities arise at APA and events. Thank you Christmas event for voluntary groups. Councillors are happy to speak directly to residents when opportunities arise.





How we will measure/evaluate our communications

Comms objective To meet local government Transparency rules demonstrated by unqualified audit.	Comms objective To put as much info in public domain as possible – evidenced through no FOI requests.
Comms objective All new councillor and staff vacancies filled on first advertisement.	Comms objective To receive adequate level of response to community consultations which is felt sufficient enough to make informed decision based on local views.
To continue to attract new volunteers.	

Who is responsible for what?

- **The Council** determines policy and the views of the Council.
- **The Chair** acts as the spokesperson for the Council on matters which have been agreed by the Council and for any emergency statements which may be required. The Vice Chair steps in if the Chair is unavailable.
- **The Parish Clerk** has overall responsibility for all comms and management of channels.
- **The Deputy Clerk** supports the Parish Clerk and has specific responsibility for drafting the newsletter, The Bridewell pages and some events.
- Only the Chair, Vice Chair or Parish Clerk may speak directly to the Press.

Communications activity plan

To be reviewed 6 months after adoption of this Policy – September 2024.

