



Balderton Parish Council

Communication and Engagement Policy

Adopted: 26 August 2026, minute 60a

1. Policy Aims

Balderton Parish Council recognises its role at the heart of the community and values its position in providing community leadership.

The communications strategy laid out in this document sets the standard for engagement both within the Council and with its community.

As a Council, we aim to ensure communication is two-way; informing people about Council activities and village centre, consulting and listening to what people say about services and providing information to support residents. As a Council, we are committed to open and transparent communication with residents.

The Council aims to ensure that the community understands the role of the Parish Council as the first tier of local government, its powers, limitations and its liaison with Newark and Sherwood District Council and Nottinghamshire County Council.

The Council aims to:

- a. Establish clear, easy to use channels of communication between the Council and residents and vice versa
- b. Provide information on important matters in a timely manner to facilitate and encourage informed comment from interested individuals and groups
- c. Promote inclusion - all Balderton residents, businesses and community groups are encouraged to be involved wherever possible in the work of the Parish Council. The Council supports equality of opportunity for everyone in the parish
- d. Listen to and respond to residents to enable their voices to be heard and for them to take an active role in shaping their local area
- e. Work together to facilitate the development of the community recognising and supporting the existing groups in the parish and the wealth of experience and contributions people make
- f. Build trust - the Council will work to understand the needs of Balderton residents, businesses and community groups and collaborate constructively where it can.

2. Legal Requirements and Restrictions

This policy is subject to the Council's obligations which are set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, The Local Government

Act 1986, The Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018, and other legislation which may apply to the Council's Standing Orders and Finance Regulations.

The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information where this is prohibited by law. The Council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the Council's Standing Orders, under contract or by common law. Councillors are subject to additional restrictions about the disclosure of confidential information which arise from the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council, a copy of which is publicly available at www.baldertonparishcouncil.gov.uk All documents are available on request in hard copy or large print.

3. The main principles for all forms of communication

Balderton Parish Council will ensure that it communicates with residents in a timely and effective manner, and to inform and consult with them on matters which affect the parish.

All methods of communication should:

- be civil, tasteful, and relevant
- be concise
- not disclose information which is confidential
- reflect the views of the Parish Council not the individual
- not contain unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented, or racially offensive content.
- not promote political parties
- not publicise personal information

4. Methods of communication that may be used by the Parish Council

- Parish Council meetings
- The Parish Council office
- Parish Council noticeboards
- Email
- Post
- Telephone
- Website
- Newsletter
- Social media
- Public meetings

5. Parish Council meetings

Full Council and committee meetings are open to the public and press. A public forum is a standing agenda item at Full Council which can last up to twenty minutes (longer may be allowed at the Chair's discretion). Residents are encouraged to raise issues during the public forum relating to agenda items or anything else and are allocated three minutes to do so. At Committee and sub committee meetings if the public wish to speak they should make it known and the Chair of the meeting will make time early in the agenda order to enable the representation of up to three minutes to be made.

Residents, local organisations, the press and other agencies such as the police are encouraged to attend Full Council and committee meetings to bring forward any proposals or comments they may have or to provide an update. District and County Councillors are invited to Full

Council meetings. All meeting participants, including invited guests will be expected to behave with civility and respect to all other attendees of the meeting.

It may be necessary for the Council or a committee to exclude the public if the confidential nature of the business to be discussed means their presence at the meeting may be prejudicial to the public interest.

Agendas for and minutes from Council meetings, including Amenities and Personnel & Policy committees and the Allotment sub-committee will be published to the website and to noticeboards

- a. **Full Council** typically meets on the last Wednesday of every month (except July or August and December when there is not a meeting; and in May of an election due to statutory requirements) at 7pm. There may be other exceptions and where this happens due notification will be provided.
- b. The Council has two other committees, **Amenities** and **Personnel & Policy** plus an **Allotment's sub committee**. Meetings in the immediate term will be called on a 'needs' basis and where staffing capacity allows. Moving forward regular committee meetings are the Council's focus which will be realised subject to availability of Officer resource.

6. Annual Parish Meeting

Town and Parish Councils throughout England are required, by law, to hold an annual parish meeting, which must take place between 1 March and the 1 June (inclusive).

The aim of the meeting is to create a two-way flow, both updating residents with reports from stakeholders, clubs and groups that operate in the parish and to encourage engagement, feedback and suggestions from residents.

The Chair will convene an annual parish meeting to facilitate the gathering of the residents of the village, with reports from stakeholders, clubs and groups involved in the village and the opportunity for all residents to raise questions and ideas for the village.

7. Parish Council Office

The Parish Council office performs a pivotal role in communications between the Parish Council and its stakeholders. Therefore, all correspondence must go via the Parish Council's office. This will ensure that records are properly kept. Where an item of correspondence necessitates the Council's or Committee's attention and action, the Clerk will include it on the corresponding agenda. The Parish Council Office will endeavour to respond where required to correspondence within five working days, either with a full response or with details of when the Parish Council will consider its response (the exception to this will be during periods of absence).

The office will be open on weekday mornings for residents to call in and speak directly to Council staff. At other times and if there is a matter requiring a longer discussion an appointment can be made to meet with the Clerk.

Office Address: Balderton Village Centre. Coronation Street, Balderton NG24 3BD

Office opening times: Monday and Friday 10am-noon

8. Noticeboards

Parish Council noticeboards will be kept tidy and up to date.

a. Noticeboard at Village Centre

The following items will be displayed on the Parish Council noticeboards outside of the village centre and inside the village centre lobby:

- Full Council and committee meeting dates for the year
- Parish Council office opening times and contact details
- Councillor contact details including District and County Councillor and the MP's
- The full Council and committee meeting agendas which will be posted at least three working days in advance of each meeting
- Full Council and committee minutes will be published once approved by the subsequent Full Council or committee meeting
- The Public Rights of Inspection notifications and statutory notices
- Any other statutory notices as required

b. Balderton Parish Council noticeboards elsewhere in the Parish

There are six other notice boards that the Parish Council can make use of :

- Outside Balderton Library, Main Street
- At Balderton Lake x 2
- Mead Way
- At the Allotments on Glebe Park
- London Road (adoption agreed and in progress)

The noticeboards vary in size, some may be shared with the community, and contain notices specific to their location such as the small noticeboard at the allotments. Therefore, the documents across the noticeboards may vary.

9. Correspondence

All correspondence should be addressed to the office in the first instance either by email to office@baldertonparishcouncil.gov.uk or by post. Details will be recorded and passed to the relevant person or organisation as soon as practically possible.

Parish Councillors also have their own Council email addresses allowing residents and other relevant parties to make direct contact. They are published on the Parish Council website at www.baldertonparishcouncil.gov.uk.

Correspondence to the Parish Council office will be acknowledged within five working days of receipt where possible. If the communication is received by email an acknowledgment will be sent by that means.

Councillors will be notified of correspondence, but the addressee will not be named on agenda packs/minutes of meetings unless requested. Anonymous correspondence in any form will be recorded as received but not responded to.

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. Anonymous emails or

those with no subject in the title will not be opened or actioned - this is a security measure to protect the Council's computers and systems against spam and malware.

A resident may raise an 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 to be considered by full Council.

The clerk will reply to Freedom of Information and Subject Access requests within the statutory timeline. If this is not possible, a further holding letter/email will be sent with an expected completion date. Freedom of Information requests and responses and the number of Subject Access requests will be published at www.baldertonparishCouncil.gov.uk

10. Email

The Parish Council email account is monitored by Parish Council staff during our office hours. Whilst email is a popular form of communication and exchanging information it is not used to the exclusion of other forms of communication, for example where a matter could be dealt with more effectively in face-to-face meetings or by phone.

The following guidelines aim to help keep email communications manageable and efficient:

- The Clerk will keep Councillors updated, by forwarding emails sent to the Parish Council, where appropriate
- Some emails which are of general information to the community will be posted on the Council and local Facebook pages in addition to being forwarded to Councillors
- The 'reply all' option will be used thoughtfully, only copying in relevant parties
- Caution should be exercised when forwarding emails to ensure they go only to relevant people. Think security.
- It is not usually appropriate for draft documents circulated by email to be forwarded outside the Parish Council unless to an individual directly involved with the matter under discussion

All Parish Council business will be conducted using Parish Council emailing addresses. i.e. staff and Councillors will only use their Parish Council email addresses to send and receive emails regarding Council business; personal email addresses must not be used for Council business.

11. Post

All post received at the Parish Council office will be opened promptly and dealt with in an appropriate manner.

12. Telephone

The Parish Council office telephone will be answered during our office hours who will deal in a professional manner with all incoming calls. The voicemail system will receive messages when staff are not available, or the office is closed. The staff will check for messages each day and return calls where a number has been left.

13. Website

The Parish Clerk will check that the website at www.baldertonparishCouncil.gov.uk is kept up to date, with the following information:

- Schedules, agendas, and minutes of all Parish Council meetings
- Policies
- Terms of Reference for the committees and sub committees
- Contact details for Councillors and staff
- Finance information including annual reports and audit reports
- Details of any significant ongoing projects updated as appropriate
- Details of Parish Council services

The Clerk will arrange for the agenda and associated papers to be online at www.baldertonparishcouncil.gov.uk a minimum of three clear days before meetings and for the minutes to be posted as soon as possible after approval at the following meeting.

14. Newsletter

The Parish Council will publish two newsletters per year, the content of which will be determined by the Council. This may be part funded by the inclusion of advertising by local businesses.

15. Parish Council Social Media

The Parish Council uses social media which is managed by the Parish Council office.

In addition to posting on the Parish Council website at www.baldertonparishcouncil.gov.uk, information may also be shared to Parish Council and Balderton Village Centre Facebook pages. This is operated on a 'push' basis to communicate information. If residents require clarification, or have a question then they should email: office@baldertonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Parish Council staff have the authority to remove any posts made by third parties from our social media pages which are deemed to be of a defamatory and/or libellous nature. Such posts will also be reported to the hosts (i.e. Facebook) if appropriate to do so.

16. Councillor Use of Social Media

- a. Should Councillors wish to use social media regarding their role as a Councillor, it is advised they set up a separate profile/page for their Councillor activity
- b. Any Parish Councillor who has their own social media accounts whilst free to express their views should use them with caution and always make it clear that their opinions are their own and not those of the Parish Council
- c. Councillors can use their own personal social media accounts to:
 - Encourage residents to attend Parish Council meetings
 - Share Parish Council posts regarding decisions the Council has taken (ensuring they don't duplicate shares leading to overloading local Facebook groups with the same shared post)
 - Advertise events and activities in which the Parish Council is involved
 - Share information on events and activities which may benefit residents
 - Publicise important meetings such as public consultations
 - Signpost residents to the correct point of contact
 - Advertise vacancies
 - Respond to residents' requests for information on the above

d. Councillors should not:

- Share information on Council decisions before it has been issued on Parish Council channels (i.e. draft minutes/Parish Council posts regarding decisions)
- Share personal or confidential information
- Engage in personal attacks or hostile communications
- Post on Parish Council accounts to share personal opinions
- Present personal opinions as that of the wider Parish Council
- Hide their identity when using social media or responding to residents
- Publish photography or videos without permission of those included
- Post content which constitutes bullying or harassment
- Bring the Parish Council into disrepute
- Post offensive language

17. Consultations

The Council will arrange consultations and surveys when appropriate and results will be made available on the website at www.baldertonparishCouncil.gov.uk and when deemed relevant, on social media.

Methods of consultation will be dependent on the topic and timescales. The newsletter will be used to consult when possible but online consultation will be the main conduit for consultations. Topics the Council is considering will appear on its agendas and minutes and residents will be encouraged to make contact to give their views.

18. Media

Local media is welcome to attend meetings of the Parish Council. The Clerk will be the main point of contact for media enquiries and may proactively contact the media if the Parish Council wishes to provide information or make a statement relating to its business. The Clerk will consult the chair, vice-chair, or chair of the relevant committee to clear the content of any press statement before its release. It is important that all information shared with the press is accurate and represents the policies and views of the Parish Council.

A Councillor should not give an interview or provide a comment to the media, without contacting the Clerk in the first instance. Any views expressed should be those of the Council and expressed in a manner that conveys a commitment to civility and respect and reflects the Council's code of conduct. Information of a confidential nature must never be disclosed.

19. What Balderton Parish Council asks of Residents

To actively review the notice boards and/or the Parish Council website at www.baldertonparishcouncil.gov.uk and/or the local newspaper and/or the Council newsletter for information about meetings and events on a regular basis.

To recognise engagement opportunities and utilise them by responding to surveys, letters, questionnaires etc. Residents' views do matter and can help shape important decisions about the future of our community.

To address comments, suggestions, or complaints in writing by email, telephone, or post, using the contact information published on the Parish Council website and displayed on the village notice boards. Alternatively, residents are welcome to attend Parish Council meetings and to speak during public forum agenda item at the start of meetings.