**SUTTON HEATH PARISH COUNCIL**

**Communications Policy**

**Introduction**

1. This policy document describes the processes and methods that should be employed in community engagement activities and presents a set of guidelines to the parish council and community about how the parish council will seek to inform, communicate with and involve the community in the work of the parish council.
2. Parish councillors, legally and technically, have no power or authority as councillors outside of official meetings. Therefore, all decisions taken at meetings should be processed through the parish clerk, who is also the Responsible Financial Officer [RFO]. Decisions taken by the council will normally be at council meetings as part of the procedures set out in the parish council’s Financial Regulations and Standing Orders.
3. The parish council will endeavour to show a willingness to openly encourage opinions and suggestions from all individuals and organisations within the community, whether or not these present potentially conflicting, challenging or critical views of the council and decisions taken.
4. The parish council is to make every effort to understand views expressed by individuals and organisations, including ethnic minorities and those disabled, and always respond clearly on matters raised in a timely manner.
5. The parish council will demonstrate, in a format that is readily accessible and easily understood by the community, how the work of the council reflects the views and opinions stated by those with whom the parish council engages, and where those views cannot legitimately be taken into account, explaining the reason(s) for not complying.

**Communications**

1. Letters and E-Mails can be drafted and written by a parish councillor but should always be signed and despatched by the parish clerk on headed parish council paper. The communication must be seen as coming from the parish council and not a councillor within it.
2. The parish website is to be managed and edited by the parish clerk. Councillors can put forward items and articles for the parish clerk to upload. Residents and organisations of the parish may put forward items and articles for inclusion on the website but the parish clerk has the right to approve, edit or disapprove the publication. Council meeting agendas and minutes are to be posted prior to and after meetings of the parish council.
3. The parish notice board is to be managed by the parish clerk. Items for display should be passed to the parish clerk, who is empowered to approve or reject display.
4. The parish drop-box is emptied by the parish clerk who will process letters posted by residents.
5. Following the bi-monthly Parish council Meeting the parish Newsletter will be edited and published by the editor who is appointed by the parish council.
6. Councillors will probably have verbal and written contact with residents. Matters which are parish council related, and not of a personal nature, are to be directed to the parish clerk. No decisions can be taken by a councillor alone or outside of a parish council meeting. A residents wishing to put an issue to the council, which requires a decision or action, has to forward the matter to the parish clerk who will put it on the agenda for the next parish council meeting.
7. Media relations will be the remit of the chairman of the parish council, who will be the voice of the council in all dealings with the media. The chairman may delegate to another councillor. The parish clerk will keep an accurate record and sign off the content of every communication with the media.

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Chair Date

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Parish Clerk Date