**MERTON PARISH COUNCIL**

# COMMUNICATION POLICY

## Introduction

This policy sets out clear channels of communication between the Parish Council and the residents of Merton.

The Parish Councillors represent the interests of the whole community and are available to help parishioners with matters relating to the Parish of Merton. The Council aims to provide residents with information on matters of importance to the village in a timely manner in order to facilitate informed comment from interested individuals and groups.

## Parish Council Meetings

The Parish Council normally meets on the second Monday of the month in the Village Hall, Merton Road. Meetings begin at 7.30pm and members of the public may attend from 7.45pm to 8pm to ask questions or express their views.

Members of the public who wish to address the Council during the formal meeting or who wish 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 and/or website on Merton Road:

- Parish Council meeting dates for the year
- Contact details for the Clerk
- 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 and/or website will be kept up-to-date.

## Contacting the Parish Council

Residents who wish to contact the Parish Council should do so through the Parish Clerk in the first instance. This will ensure that the matter is recorded and dealt with in a timely and professional manner. The Parish Clerk can be contacted by letter or email as follows:

- Merton Parish Clerk, North End House, Blackbull Lane, Fencott, Kidlington, OX5 2RD
- clerkmertonpc@gmail.com
- pcclerkmerton@mertonparishcouncil.co.uk

## Correspondence

All correspondence to the Parish Clerk will be acknowledged within one week of receipt if at all possible. If email is used, then it will be acknowledged by email.

Councillors will be notified of correspondence but the addressee will not be named in the minutes of meetings unless requested.

Email will 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.

Anonymous correspondence in any form will be recorded as received but not responded to.

If a resident raises an issue with the Parish Clerk or with any Councillor and 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.

When dealing with correspondence it is the Parish Council's intention to meet the timescales detailed above but there may 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.

**Website**
The Parish Clerk will arrange for the agenda and associated papers to be posted on the Merton Parish Council website (https://www.mertonparishcouncil.co.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:

- all items of expenditure above £100
- end of year accounts
- annual governance statement
- internal audit report
- list of councillor or member responsibilities
- Minutes, agendas and meeting papers of formal meetings.

**Annual Parish Meeting**
The Annual Parish Meeting is convened by the Chairman of the Parish Council and is generally held in May each year to provide residents with a summary of the activities of the Parish Council over the previous year and the opportunity to discuss local issues and celebrate local events and activities.

**Adopted**: 14 November 2022
**Minute Ref:** M9/22-2.6-b
**Reviewed:** 10 March 2025
**Minute Ref:** M3/2025-8.6-a
**Reviewed:** To be reviewed within two years or when an update is required.