September 2025

Merton Parish Council Communication Strategy

1. Objectives

- To ensure all residents receive timely, accessible, and clear updates.
- Cater to diverse demographics and preferences.
- Provide inclusive two-way communication opportunities.

2. Audience Segments

- **Digitally active:** Prefer fast updates via mobile/email/social media.
- **Offline residents:** Need print, phone, and in-person updates.
- **Mobility-limited residents:** Require home delivery or telephone-based updates.

3. Communication Channels

A. Printed & In-Person

- **Quarterly printed newsletter** to every household (with opt-in slips for digital updates).
- **Noticeboards** retained for statutory postings and headline summaries.
- **Community Champions**: Volunteer neighbours covering specific streets/clusters.
    - Share updates verbally or in writing.
    - Provide feedback loop to the council.
- **Pop-up information stalls**: Set up at village hall events, church services, fairs.
    - Promote updates, answer questions, encourage digital sign-ups.

B. Digital

- **Facebook page**: Continue as an engagement hub, cross-promoting opt-ins.
- **Email newsletter** (GDPR-compliant sign-ups via slips and online forms).
- **WhatsApp Broadcast List**: One-way messaging for key alerts.
- **Website refresh**: Central hub with accessible formats and archives.

C. Telephone-Based

- **Telephone Tree**:
    - Residents opt-in to receive urgent updates by call.
    - Coordinated via community champions who cascade messages.
    - Covers emergencies, last-minute changes etc.

4. Consent & GDPR

- All digital/telephone channels require explicit opt-in.
- Opt-in collected through paper slips, website, online forms.
- Data stored securely, limited to clerk/chair access.

5. Phased Rollout

- **0–6 months**:
    - Launch newsletter with opt-in slips.
    - Recruit initial community champions.
    - Trial first pop-up stall.
- **6–12 months**:
    - Build telephone tree and WhatsApp/email lists.
    - Review Parish Website
- **12–24 months**:
    - Expand champions network.
    - Formalise training/guidance.
    - Review effectiveness via resident survey.

6. Measuring Success

- **Reach**: % of households reached by at least one channel.
- **Engagement**: Subscriber numbers, attendance at events, feedback collected.
- **Satisfaction**: Annual survey (paper + digital), champion feedback.

7. Risks & Mitigation

- **Volunteer fatigue**: Rotate champions, offer recognition.
- **Low opt-in rates**: Emphasise value at stalls, in newsletters, through champions.
- **Exclusion risk**: Maintain newsletter and telephone tree for offline residents.

Next Steps

1. Approve quarterly newsletter funding and design.
2. Recruit initial community champions.
3. Draft opt-in slips and privacy notice.
4. Trial telephone tree in one cluster.
5. Schedule first pop-up information stall at a parish event.

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