



Astley Village Parish Council

PUBLICITY PROTOCOL

Scope

The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity 2001 outlines a number of criteria and guidelines for local authorities to consider when publishing information for its public. This Practice document has been referred to when formulating this protocol.

Parish Council

The Parish Council has powers which enable it to produce and circulate publicity regarding its functions and responsibilities. These powers are contained in sections of the Local Government Act 1972 (111, 142, 144 and 145).

At the present time the Parish Council produces a newsletter, website, leaflets, posters, noticeboard notices, press releases (these lists are not exhaustive and may be subject to changes in the future).

1. Purpose for Parish Council Publicity

The Parish Council uses publicity to:

Primary Function

Raise awareness of:

- the services and responsibilities of the Council
- Council activities, initiatives, achievements and successes
- how the Council represents the views of the electorate

Ensure the electorate has information on how to contact the Council:

- contact details for the Council and for Councillors

To consult on issues which it believes affects its community:

- consult on the Council budget and/or policies
- consult on the Council's village plan

To advertise:

- a Council event
- a Council employment vacancy or Councillor casual vacancy
- a Council election

To display or inform the electorate of available information on Council business:

- Council meeting minutes
- responses to planning applications
- annual report and annual return
- Council's budget

Secondary Function

If space allows, to carry local village information for the benefit and knowledge of residents:

- to publicise local groups or organisations events
- an event of another authority/organisation it believes will matter or be of interest or assistance to residents
- advertise local events or initiatives organised by legitimate and/or organised bodies
- planning applications the Council is consulted on
- issues/developments or consultations it feels its community will be affected by

All the above will be published with regards to the conditions set out below.

2. Parish Council's Main Publications

These are not the only, but the two main ways the Council publishes information:

Newsletter

- Publish documents such as the village plan, precept budget.
- Notify residents of forthcoming meetings, activities etc.
- Primarily publicise Council activities and raise awareness of its successes.
- Report on progress made with projects or developments in the area.
- Carry advertising from local businesses, or the Council.
- Ensure items are not published which may be construed to be organised, run or protected by Council insurance.
- If space allows, publish articles from local organised groups on activities in the village which clearly explains, if there is any, what the Council's involvement is.

Website

- As the items above.
- To display information, which has been previously published such as, minutes of meetings, copy of the village plan, precept budget etc.
- To display information which would not normally be published in a newsletter or noticeboard such as, Council policies, Councillor's photographs, planning lists, press releases and project photographs etc.
- Ensure items are not displayed from other organisations or individuals which may be construed to be organised, run or protected by the Council's insurance.

Press releases & media handling

Press releases will be used to publicise the work of the Parish Council and/or to respond to documents/statements/press stories issued by others. They will be normally prepared by the Clerk and approved by the Chair (Vice Chair in Chairs absence) prior to issue for publication. Any media enquiries will normally be handled by the Clerk following consultation with the Chair (Vice Chair in Chairs absence).

3. Conditions for Council Publications

- Council policies and aims should be as objective as possible, concentrate on facts or explanations or both.
- Council should only comment or respond to documents of others in an objective, balanced, informative and accurate way. It should set out reasons for views, not show prejudice or attack, or be party political.
- Service provisions should be reported factually.
- Contentious issues should be handled with care, presented clearly, fairly and as simply as possible.
- Nothing should be published which would attack other authorities or people working for those authorities.
- No personal attacks (or what might appear to be) on any person, or position should be published.
- Public funds should not be used to mount publicity campaigns where its primary purpose is to persuade the public to hold a particular view on a question of policy.
- A general publication should never be limited or exclusively delivered or available to a specific area or group of people. If it is a general publication it should be available to the whole village/electorate.
- It should be minded that some information mechanisms such as a website are not considered to be fully accessible and should not solely be used for certain types or forms of consultations/communication.
- Items written or published for individual Councillors should not be disrespectful or derogatory to others in the Council or other local authority positions.
- Items written or published for individual Councillors should not personalise issues or be written for personal image raising purposes.
- Publicity should not be, or liable to misrepresentation as being party political, or influence public opinion on policy. Material should never contain political slogans, logos or political party catch-phrases.
- An article by an individual Councillor should never campaign for their election or selection on any forthcoming elections, referendums and/or petitions.
- Council should exercise the utmost care in ensuring all items it publishes are legitimate, legal, official and/or organised and do not promote anything unethical, irresponsible or the lowering of moral standards.
- Never publish or display items from other organisations or individuals which may be construed to be organised, run or protected by Council insurance.

4. Process

The Clerk is the editor of Council publications and will work using these protocols to ensure compliance. If there is any doubt as to the content of a submission for any of the Council publications the Clerk will not publish the item and seek further advice, whether that be legal or professional.