



**Agenda:** 12.1  
**Report to:** Burwash Parish Council  
**Subject:** Communications Plan  
**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> September 2019  
**From:** Betty McBride

A **Draft** Plan for  
Communications

## SUMMARY

This paper follows a meeting of the Community and Communications workstream which took a critical look at Burwash Parish Council's (BPC) approach to sharing and exchanging information with residents. It was felt that, in order to encourage Council to communicate easily and effectively, a template approach would be a useful tool for busy Councillors.

The document is in three parts – an introduction on the benefits of a consistent approach to communications, a table on the “who, what, when, where and how” of good communications and, finally a basic template for a Communications Plan.

Councillors are asked to comment on the draft Communications Plan template.

## Council is asked to RESOLVE:

- 1. To adopt the use of the agreed Communications Plan template for projects which include significant expenditure, the involvement of local residents or require consultation.**

## INTRODUCTION

Engagement with the community we serve is key to the success of Burwash Parish Council. A straight forward communication plan will enable us to convey the facts about the issues we face - and our accomplishments - to the community, and it will give residents opportunities to talk to, and influence us. BPC has a Communications Policy (Adopted 12/01/16) which covers the roles and responsibilities of the Council and individual councillors in this area. The document is available on the Parish Council website. [Click here.](#)

Residents are encouraged to attend our meetings, and there is time set aside for them to ask questions or raise issues. BPC regularly shares information by publishing the minutes of its meetings. We update our website and mobile App regularly and the Chair writes a monthly column for the two local magazines – St Philip's and St Bartholomew's.

Good communication ensures that all parishioners are aware of – and can have input to – BPC projects. Having a Communications Plan to support individual initiatives will make our work and efforts more efficient, effective, and longer lasting. Good communications will get the word out when we need help with a project, renew interest in a long-standing programme, or help attract new funding sources and partners.

Internal communications – councillors sharing information about their activities is also important. The monthly workstream reports from co-ordinators and use of Communications Plans will improve our own information sharing.

**COMMUNICATIONS – a six-step process:**

Purpose	<p>The first step in any Communication process is to agree the purpose of the communication. Burwash Parish Council is communicating and engaging with residents to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let people know what we are doing – and what still needs doing</li> <li>• Encourage people to join in activities that benefit our community</li> <li>• Influence for change where needed</li> <li>• Announce events</li> <li>• Celebrate success</li> </ul> <p>Most events, initiatives or BPC activities should be supported by a brief Communications Plan.</p>
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Message	<p>When we create communications for an event or initiative, we need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• agree clear messages – don't try to do too much: decide which two or three things you want people to take away from the communication</li> <li>• use plain, straightforward language that expresses what we want to say simply and clearly</li> <li>• give people a simple "call to action" and a way to contact us</li> </ul>
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Audience	<p>Be clear who you want to talk to. Residents of Burwash, Burwash Common and Burwash Weald are our Primary Audience. But there are specific segments of that audience we might want to reach – older people, parents at the school, Bateman's, churches, local groups etc. And we have a (<i>small "p"</i>) political audience in the corridors of Rother and East Sussex County councils.</p>
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Channels	<p>We need to put our Communications where people will see and share it. Try to use more than one method to maximise the chances that your message will get out. We are currently seeking a communications partner among residents who will to look at the potential for an BPC e-bulletin.</p> <p>Channels available to us include:</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top; width: 50%;"> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Word of mouth</li> <li>2. Press releases &amp; stories in print and broadcast media</li> <li>3. Digital presence – website, App, e-bulletin &amp; emails</li> <li>4. BPC Notice boards</li> <li>5. Posters and banners</li> <li>6. Brochures and fliers</li> <li>7. Meetings and presentations</li> <li>8. Presence at special events such as fairs</li> </ol> </td> <td style="vertical-align: top; width: 50%;"> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Councillors should take every opportunity to promote or disseminate information about BPC events and shared initiatives. This isn't about blowing trumpets, it's about engaging with our community &amp; telling people how <i>THEIR</i> money is being spent.</li> <li>2. On bigger projects, appoint a press/communications coordinator</li> <li>3 &amp; 4. Keep the website (and any e-bulletin editor) informed about your project.</li> <li>5 &amp; 6. Agree a budget and seek a Council resolution for spending on fliers etc.</li> <li>7 &amp; 8. Agree how and when your project should feature at meetings and local events</li> </ol> </td> </tr> </table>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Word of mouth</li> <li>2. Press releases &amp; stories in print and broadcast media</li> <li>3. Digital presence – website, App, e-bulletin &amp; emails</li> <li>4. BPC Notice boards</li> <li>5. Posters and banners</li> <li>6. Brochures and fliers</li> <li>7. Meetings and presentations</li> <li>8. Presence at special events such as fairs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Councillors should take every opportunity to promote or disseminate information about BPC events and shared initiatives. This isn't about blowing trumpets, it's about engaging with our community &amp; telling people how <i>THEIR</i> money is being spent.</li> <li>2. On bigger projects, appoint a press/communications coordinator</li> <li>3 &amp; 4. Keep the website (and any e-bulletin editor) informed about your project.</li> <li>5 &amp; 6. Agree a budget and seek a Council resolution for spending on fliers etc.</li> <li>7 &amp; 8. Agree how and when your project should feature at meetings and local events</li> </ol>
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Resources	<p>BPC spends £500 a year on its website – councillors should maximise use of the site and our App in all communications. Digital communications like an e-bulletin are immediate, effective and low-cost ... but come with the caveat that not everyone has access.</p> <p>A post office leaflet drop to houses in the parish costs +/- £100 – it’s an effective way to talk to residents but we need to monitor how often we use this method.</p> <p>In addition to event budgets, there is £350 in our 2019-20 annual budget for promotional materials. A PVC banner is c. £30 and a large A0 Poster is c. £25. All purchases need to be agreed by Council and go through the clerk</p> <p>Councillors’ time, partners and volunteers are a resource too – we need to ensure that we thank people and don’t take them for granted.</p>
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Evaluate	<p>Evaluate your communications in terms of both how well you carried it out and how well it worked – that way you’ll be able to make changes to improve it. It will keep getting more effective each time you implement it.</p> <p><b><i>And there’s really a seventh step ... keep at it.</i></b></p> <p><i>Keep listening and keep talking – write another press release, put updates on the website; get people’s views and talk about new developments; update people on changes ... and, finally, wrap things up with an evaluation communication (or a even a pat on the back !) at the end of the project.</i></p>
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## A Draft Communications Plan Template

<b>Name of Event or BPC initiative</b>			
<b>Details</b> <i>Description, event date, venue etc</i>			
<b>Plan drafted by</b>			
<b>Purpose of the Communications</b> <i>To announce an event or recruit volunteers etc</i>			
<b>Messages</b> <i>The main things we want to say &amp; what we'd like people to do on seeing the communication PLUS a contact address or phone number</i>			
<b>Audience</b> <i>Is there a specific target audience – such as parents, car park users or Rother District Council</i>			
Channels:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Press release</li> <li>b) Digital - Website, App &amp; e-bulletin</li> <li>c) BPC Notice boards</li> <li>d) Posters or banner</li> <li>e) Brochures or flier</li> <li>f) Plan for Meetings and presentation</li> <li>g) Plan for presence at special events such as fairs</li> </ul>	Date: a) b) etc	Responsible: a) b) etc
<b>Resources</b> <i>Money, volunteers or partners required – be specific</i>			
Referral to Full Council		Date:	
		Recommendation/Resolution:	
Evaluation		Date for Review:	