Lytchett Matravers Parish Council

Discussion Paper towards a proposed policy and procedures for keeping the Council website up to date.

The content of the Parish Council website falls into two broad categories:

1. Information related to the business and operation of the Council which the Council is obliged to publish to the public. This covers the vast majority of the website content; and the publication of almost all of it is a requirement in order to comply with the Freedom of Information Act and other legislation and rules governing Parish & Town Councils. Examples in this category includes all minutes, agendas, council meetings schedule, list of members and their contact details, policies, rules & procedures, forms & records, etc, etc.
2. Information and announcements which may be related Council business, and / or otherwise matters judged by members to be of interest or concern to the wider community. This is sometimes referred to as “latest news”.

**Observations:**

1. Accuracy and currency of all material items in category (a) is a core responsibility of the Parish Clerk, who works with the webmaster as necessary to achieve this.
2. Material in category (b), of general interest to the community, may benefit from multiple responsibility for posting and updating. However, there are some potential risks, such as:

* Organisations can sometimes have someone who is prolific at producing content, and some of it might not always relevant,
* Inconsistency of messages over time,
* Perception by members of the public of bias or pre-determination of matters the council may at a later date debate and make decisions on.

**Proposals:**

1. Category (a): no change is proposed to the process or responsibilities for management of this material. This is because this type of content does not lend itself to multiple responsibility for posting or editing – due to the compliance requirements and the necessity to maintain personal accountability and a reliable system of version control.
2. Category (b): All members to be encouraged to prepare and offer items up. These items to be reviewed by a single nominated Council member (with a “reserve” as backup) to ensure there is scrutiny to ensure it is appropriate material for publication on the Council’s website.

Defining what is and is not appropriate content should include the following considerations:

• It should not be partisan to any political party,

• It should be consistent with the Code of Conduct and members’ statements of personal interests;

• It should be legal, decent and honest in the widest sense.

• It should not include any commercial advertising, nor promote the personal interests of any individual – neither a council member nor a member of the pubic.

Cllr Keith Norris, 10th August 2016.