

A Communication Strategy for Shotley

Verson 1.0

Adopted by the Parish Council 15 June 2006

Subsequent amendments are *italicised*

To be reviewed September 2006



1. What is Shotley Parish Council?

Shotley Parish Council (SPC) is the first tier in the local government structure for the 2,300 people living in Shotley & Shotley Gate. The second tier is Babergh District Council and the highest, Suffolk County Council.

Nine Parish Councillors are elected every four years, the next election due in May 2007. They are voluntary and unpaid. The Council employs a part time Clerk who has responsibility for managing the meetings and overseeing all matters. There are three other part time posts – a finance officer and two litter wardens.

There are a wide range of powers at the Parish Council's disposal, including giving grants to local organisations, cleaning public places and providing allotments. The most important role is as a statutory consultee on planning matters.

The Council is funded by approximately £37,000 per year through a council tax precept.

2. Why do we need a communication strategy?

There is immense development pressure on the village. Three key developments will have a very significant impact on the community in the coming years. A development has been granted for 150 housing units at Shotley Marina, a government decision is awaited on the 325 dwellings on the former HMS Ganges site in the village, and work will commence in the coming years on Bathside Bay which, together with the existing Felixstowe and Harwich facilities, will create the largest concentration of port and dock facilities in the country. The two housing developments may well double the population of the village, placing a huge strain on the existing social, transport and economic infrastructure and of course environmental sites of international significance.

The Parish Council has recently adopted a Parish Plan, which reflects the views and needs of the local population following the most in depth and extensive consultation exercise ever undertaken with them. The Plan presents an

ambitious set of actions to address the problems and opportunities faced by Shotley, and these are now being taken forward by the Parish Plan Implementation Board.

The 'Quality Parish and Town Council' scheme is designed to provide benchmark minimum standards for councils and enable them to better represent the communities they serve. The scheme also aims to enhance relationships between local councils, principal authorities and community and voluntary sector organisations. To be eligible, a parish council must be able to demonstrate that it is effectively communicating and actively engaging the community it represents. Currently Shotley is not quite meeting all of the mandatory requirements or a sufficient number of those which are discretionary in order to meet the Quality criteria. Implementation of this strategy remedies that.

Shotley already attracts visitors and tourists, but has the potential to attract many more. This can bring money into local business and is therefore in the interests of the Parish Council. There is a power under the Local Government Act 1972 (s144).

All of this reinforces the need to communicate effectively with stakeholders (*a power given to parish councils by sections 137 and 142 of the Local Government Act 1972*). This document outlines the approach that SPC will take to communication, aiming to make sure that everyone is included, involved and informed about our work.

Communicating in this way is the responsibility of the Parish Council, its individual members and the Clerk, as it helps us demonstrate accountability, consistency, and openness. It also helps us to develop strong working relationships with our stakeholders.

Above all, we need to articulate the needs and wishes of our community.

[This draft of the strategy will need to be amended to ensure it reflects the Parish Council's objectives once they are agreed]

3. What are the key messages?

We need to make sure that all of our audiences have a clear understanding about:

- who we are
- what we are here to do (key objectives)
- our values
- what we are contributing to, and achieving on behalf of, our community

4. What are our values?

The way we communicate clearly demonstrates that we are:

- responsive to the needs of our community
- transparent about our decision making
- always ensuring that the population of Shotley are potentially the first to hear news generated or influenced by the Parish Council.

5. How will we monitor and review the strategy?

This strategy will apply to all the Parish Council and related community activities, and be reviewed by the Parish Council on an annual basis. Where possible, there will be an attempt to measure and demonstrate performance against the objectives, and show progress of actions.

This strategy, together with all the public communications materials issued by the Parish Council will be accessible through the SPC section of www.MyShotley.com.

6. Who do we communicate with and how should this be done?

A simple stakeholder analysis is given below highlighting our key audiences, and what we should seek to achieve through effective communication. It also indicates the communication methods we use or should use.

This is followed by a schedule describing each main communication method, and proposes some additions or developments. These changes feature:

- publication of an information directory
- introduction of Councillors Surgeries
- developments of the Noticeboard (newsletter) and MyShotley.com
- improvements to transparency of PC decision making
- establishment of a public information access point
- provision of additional noticeboards
- the purchase of a projector
- publication of a leaflet and annual report
- a digest of key messages from each PC meeting
- *complaints procedure and compliance with Freedom of Information Act*

There are financial implications of some of these developments, which if agreed in principal can be costed and agreed separately by the PC. Some of these proposals are also a little ambitious, and may take some time to achieve.

Jeremy Peters

7. Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder / audience	Objectives	Methods (more details in section 8 below)
Parishioners (residents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of who we are • Build understanding of the PC • People trust the Council to keep them informed about important issues (before via wider media) • Increase access to decision making processes and influence in decisions Managing expectations • SPC to listen to the views of parishioners • Protect and enhance the reputation of the Council • Attractiveness of standing as councillor • Celebrate community success and achievement • Local interpretation of national issues • Pass on and reinforce important news and information from partner organisations • To reach all communities and groups (children, youth, (see below). parents, older, ethnic minorities, socially excluded, physically disabled, mentally ill etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shotley Noticeboard • Website - www.MyShotley.com • Information leaflet & summary of Annual Report • Outdoors: posters, notice boards • Annual Parish Meetings & PC meetings • Shotley Business and Information Directory • Through wider media • Public information access point • Use of public sites and stall at existing events • Via Babergh DC's and Suffolk CC's newspapers • Access to technology • Email bulletins • Digest of key messages • Councillors Surgeries • Accessible language • Integration between methods - consistent and clear
<i>Young people in parish</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Same as for general parishioners above</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Same as for general parishioners, some more than others</i> • <i>Special section of MyShotley.com</i> • <i>Seek their views in innovative ways</i> • <i>Link with the Peninsula Youth Forum</i> • <i>Shotley Youth & Community Project</i> • <i>Proposed after school youth club</i>
Local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as Parishioners • Support economic development • Particularly the larger businesses, including Shotley Marina; two post office / stores; three pubs; two garages; foot ferry; but also the less visible businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as Parishioners • Particularly Noticeboard; MyShotley.com; Business & Information Directory; Annual Report

Stakeholder / audience	Objectives	Methods (more details in section 8 below)
Public sector partner organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> informed of parish council issues & activities Effective working together Form relevant networks Plus same as parishioners Support common ideals Meeting the needs of young people Principal partners: Babergh East Local Strategic Partnership; Babergh DC; Suffolk CC; neighbouring PCs; Suffolk East PCTs; Primary School; Holbrook High School; Kidzone; Babergh Communities Together; Suffolk ACRE; Suffolk Association of Local Councils; Buzabout; other transport providers; Constabulary; Haven Gateway Partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shotley Noticeboard MyShotley.com Digest of key messages from PC meetings PC minutes Annual Report Specific correspondence Participate in multi-agency initiatives where possible Joint meetings on projects / common issues Stories placed in each other's publications Through the Babergh East Local Strategic Partnership All other methods
Voluntary & community organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building community capacity Ensure informed and involved Include all those key organisations based outside the Parish who provide services to Shotley List of organisations is provided on MyShotley.com 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specifically invited to Annual Parish Meeting PC meetings, minutes & Digest of key messages MyShotley.com Annual Report All other methods
County & District Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informed of major issues and decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PC meetings & minutes Annual Report All other methods
MP (Tim Teo)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informed of very major issues and decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letters from Clerk Annual Report All other methods
Parish Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully involved and informed in detail about strategic and local issues and activities, and of the views of parishioners and other stakeholders to enable effective contribution and informed decision making Act as ambassadors for the PC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PC meetings & minutes MyShotley.com All other methods

Stakeholder / audience	Objectives	Methods (more details in section 8 below)
Wider media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a way of communicating with others • Open and honest dialogue; accessible and responsive • Proactive promotion • Use to inform and empower our local people • Media to come to us to verify stories first • Raise the profile of SPC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive media releases where necessary • Invite to Council & public meetings, offer papers / briefings • Digest of key messages from PC meetings • React to enquiries, issue statements • Principle outlets: Community News; Evening Star; East Anglian Daily Times; BBC Radio Suffolk
<i>Public from elsewhere</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Promote Shotley as a tourist destination</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>MyShotley.com</i>

8. Communication methods, and proposals

Tool	Description	Proposed development
<p>Printed newsletter: The Shotley Noticeboard</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produced by voluntary group Shotley 2000 for many years • Independent but carrying Parish Council news and information • Distributed by hand to all homes • Available at public sites across the parish • Gradually increasing link up with MyShotley.com • Currently every two months • Supported but not dominated by advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shotley 2000 are already considering developments including increasing frequency and more interdependence with MyShotley.com • Each issue to include Digest of core key messages from PC meetings • For quality status, the newsletter needs to have sufficient PC generated content, and be published at least 4 times pa. • Need to include information on the names of councillors and the clerk and how to contact • <i>One issue per year to include a synopsis of the proposed annual report & accounts</i>
<p>Website: www.MyShotley.com</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created by Parish Plan Steering Committee in November 2004 primarily as consultation vehicle • Quickly evolved into key community resource, with information on almost every aspect of the community. • Bright and accessible • Growing fast – now c 500 pages of information & 400 pictures • Number of unique visitors (several pages each) is rising rapidly - currently 700 per week • Edited and maintained by a Parish Councillor. • Comprehensive PC section, including dates, agendas, minutes, members, email link to the clerk, standing orders & other docs • Small costs are covered by SPC funds • Site is promoted wherever resources allow • All enquires email through the site are handled and monitored • Additional website on the county web portal – onesuffolk – to increase accessibility and capture visitors • Capture internet users via other sites (SCC, BDC, UKVillages; The Local Channel, etc, and search engines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site design <i>and structure</i> needs to be developed beyond the original consultation purposes • Independent Editorial group to be formed, including PC membership, to produce business plan and steer development • <i>More interactive content required (eg quickpolls, guestbook), and contributions</i> from more parts of the community (eg schools, youth, <i>orgs</i>) • More funds are required, to fill gaps in expertise, technology and capacity • To add photographs and contact details (email address and/or phone number) of councillors • <i>Create @MyShotley.com email addresses for all councillors using email (most done)</i> • <i>Add PC budget; planning register?</i> • More promotion of the site required – to maximise the resource

Tool	Description	Proposed development
Shotley Business and Information Directory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Result of a recommendation in Parish Plan • Intended to encourage local people to use local services. • Produced by a local business on behalf of the Noticeboard and MyShotley.com in partnership • First edition funded 50% SPC / 50% <i>from Cllr Wood's locality budget?</i> • Intended to be annual, and self supporting after first year • Will be delivered free to all homes and businesses; to pick up from outlets; and on MyShotley.com 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First issue currently being produced for publication in summer 2006
Annual Parish Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held in public every May, with written invitations to all groups to attend and present a report of their activities, plus a display • Advertised in press and publicised in every other way • Refreshments provided (by WI) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase professionalism and maximise opportunities for appropriate public involvement
Parish Council Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly, formal, considering high profile as well as routine matters • First quarter of an hour dedicated to questions by parishioners present. • Recent improvements seen in professionalism and organisation • Agendas and minutes have been available on web since Nov 2004 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agenda to be posted on noticeboards etc at least 3 clear days prior to each meeting.</i> • Suggest grouping items on the agenda to increase appeal of the first half of meetings. • Printed agendas and previous minutes to be placed on every seat for all members of public • Digest of key messages from meetings • <i>Consider providing refreshments?</i>
Councillors surgeries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enable councillors to meet more parishioners • Presenting and getting feedback on range of current issues • Advising, answering questions, raising with others • On one Saturday morning and one <i>weekday time per month</i> • At least two councillors to be present at each, on a rota • Possibly in conjunction with other events eg book exchange • Formal records to be kept, ie queries raised, action taken, how reported • Held in Village Hall, printed and web information available • Heavily publicised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be planned and established

Tool	Description	Proposed development
Public information access point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For details on local government services and PC activities • At Village Hall or another public site • Dispenser with copies of leaflet, newsletter, annual report • Notice board • Include printed information from partner organisations • Computer with MyShotley.com as home page, and shortcuts to Babergh DC and Suffolk CC websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be planned and established
Notice boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintained by the Clerk. Currently 4?: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village Hall external wall • The Street outside VH • Opp Shotley Gate Post Office & Stores • Near the Church? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two more are required, as per Parish Plan • To consider dedicating one board in each part of the community for exclusively PC notices, maintained regularly by Clerk • Locations to be identified
Information at local events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PC / public information stall at existing community events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be considered
Internet access points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At pubs and post offices • With MyShotley.com as home page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be explored with the businesses
Email mailing list	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administered by a Parish Councillor • Issues regular news bulletins and breaking news • Users need to register • Linked to MyShotley.com 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To be incorporated into website</i> • Promotion to be increased
Media releases & briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For proactive positive stories, as well as responding to external events if necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be considered more often – linking to other partners and material
Annual Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To update the community on the achievements of the council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be planned and published for 2006/07 • A synopsis of the annual report to be provided to local people, including of the accounts
Information leaflet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the work of the parish council • Very simple – signposting to further information • To be made available at public access point, pubs, shops, GP surgery, mobile library. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be planned and published

Tool	Description	Proposed development
PowerPoint presentations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be used more often at meetings and events • Purchase of a projector (£500)
Corporate Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parish Council logo and the design of printed or published materials • Was revised in January 2006 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be tightened up
Digest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullet points of core key messages from PC meetings • Produced immediately after each meeting • <i>Written by with comms-lead cllr, cleared by Clerk and / or Chair?</i> • Used in Noticeboard; MyShotley.com (<i>linking each item to more information</i>) ; sent to key partners, for Babergh Matters magazine; media, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be commenced • <i>First actioned for 18 May 2006 meeting.</i>
Consultations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To undertake further consultations / questionnaires with parishioners on local issues, as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be considered at specific opportunities
Complaints procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To be established and ensure awareness</i>
Compliance with Freedom of Information Act 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To include Publications Scheme on website</i> • <i>To handle any requests for information in compliance with the Act</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To do. Model PS is available.</i>