



POLICY	COMMUNICATIONS
VERSION	1.2
LAST REVIEWED	05 October 2021

1 POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 This policy provides guidance on how to ensure efficient and effective communications between Councillors and third parties. As such it applies to Councillors, the Clerk and any employees, whether on paper or in any electronic form, or verbally.

1.2 Communications must be relevant and concise, providing a clear and concise 2-way process.

2 Outward correspondence

2.1 All official correspondence must be sent by the Clerk in the name of the Council using Council letter heading or logo.

2.2 The Clerk to the Council is the Proper Officer of the Council and as such is the authorised signatory for all external communications and legal documents, occasionally in conjunction with the Chair wherever this might be legally required.

2.3 Councillors engaged on Council business requiring discussions or communications with outside parties must make it clear that they are speaking as a councillor or an individual as appropriate and not on behalf of Council.

2.4 Emails on behalf of Council, or within Council, must always use the Parish Council mailbox and addresses, together with the agreed Council signature.

2.5 Parish Council mailboxes are solely for Parish Council business.

2.6 Always consider that any communication may in future be called in by third parties and disclosable in court, even if marked private and confidential

2.7 Sensitive information and privacy are always to be respected. Never say anything which might be construed as offensive or discriminatory.

2.8 Councillors receiving approaches from members of the community should seek guidance from the Clerk if in doubt about the response. At no time should Councillors express an opinion or make any promises to the public about any matter raised with them other than to say they will investigate the matter.

2.7.1 It may be appropriate to refer the matter to the Clerk to deal with as appropriate

2.7.2 Request that an item be placed on the relevant Council meeting agenda

2.7.3 Investigate the matter personally, having sought guidance from the Clerk

2.9 No individual Councillor should communicate directly with companies or individuals unless already agreed with the Clerk.

2.10 If a member of the public requests a copy of any correspondence, the matter should be referred to the Clerk.

- 2.11 Any communication with third parties must reflect the decisions and policies of Council. A copy should be sent to the Clerk and this should be noted on the communication. When in doubt, default to clause 2.1

3 Internal communications

- 3.1 Where correspondence from the Clerk to a Councillor is copied to another person, the addressee should be made aware that a copy is being sent to that other person.
- 3.2 Agendas for Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups should be clear and concise. They should contain sufficient information to enable Councillors to make informed decisions and for the public to understand which matters are being considered and which decisions are to be taken at a meeting.
- 3.3 Where the Clerk or Councillor wishes fellow Councillors to receive matters 'for information only' these should be circulated via the Clerk.
- 3.4 Internal communication regarding agenda items and ideas for consideration should have regard to the issue of pre-determination. Decisions are taken by Council as a whole.
- 3.5 Confidential correspondence from the Clerk must not be disclosed to anyone.
- 3.6 Councillors must not give instructions to any member of staff, unless authorised: for example, a committee with appropriate delegated powers.
- 3.7 No individual Councillor may give instructions to the Clerk or to another employee which are inconsistent with or conflict with Council decisions or arrangements for delegated power.
- 3.8 Wherever possible meetings with the Clerk or other officers should be by appointment. They must be relevant to the work of the officer and legitimate Council business.

4 Contact with the media

- 4.1 The Clerk is the first point of contact for the media. Media approaches must always be referred to the Clerk. Councillors are not permitted to issue media releases on behalf of Council and should not respond to requests for interview without first clearing it with the Clerk.
- 4.2 A press release is to make the media aware of a potential story; to provide important public information or to explain Council's position on an issue. The Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, is responsible for issuing formal press releases on behalf of Council.
- 4.3 Proactive media releases may be issued to promote a decision about the work of Council.
- 4.4 Reactive press releases may be prepared and issued in response to a specific question or as a rebuttal to an article already published. They must be timely.
- 4.5 Unless authorised by Council, Councillors should make it clear in writing that any views they express are personal and not necessarily those of Council.
- 4.6 Confidential matters, including items discussed at meetings where the Press and public have been excluded, must not be divulged.
- 4.7 Letters or articles representing the views of Council must be specifically approved by Council. If Councillors choose to express their own opinions on Council matters, they must make clear that the views put forward are those of the individual Councillor and not representative of Council policy.
- 4.8 Councillors and the Clerk should always have due regard to the reputation of Council.

5. Use of the title 'Councillor'

5.1. For Representation:

The title should be used when progressing minuted council resolutions.

5.2. For Identification:

The title can be used as a means of identification, **when views are not being expressed** e.g., when seeking information from partner agencies such as DCC, DDDC, PDNPA.

However, when expressing views at meetings with these partners it is imperative that Councillors clarify whether an opinion is personal or reflects agreed Council decisions.

5.3. Use of the title is not permitted to add weight to personal views or initiatives.