

Whixall Parish Council



Communications Protocol

Parish Council Correspondence

The point of contact for the parish council is the Clerk, and it is to the Clerk that all correspondence for the parish council should be addressed.

The Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting.

No individual Councillor or Officer should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the parish council, a committee, sub-committee or working party. In particular, Councillors and Officers do not have a right to obtain confidential information unless they can demonstrate a 'need to know'.

Most official correspondence should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the council using council letter headed paper. For correspondence not sent by the Clerk, he/she must be provided with a copy.

Where correspondence from the Clerk to a Councillor is copied to another person, the addressee should be made aware that a copy is being forwarded to that other person.

Agenda Items for Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Parties

Agenda should be clear and concise. They should contain sufficient information to enable Councillors to make an informed decision, and for the public to understand what matters are being considered and what decisions are to be taken at a meeting.

Items for information should be kept to a minimum on an agenda.

Where the Clerk or a Councillor wishes fellow Councillors to receive matters for 'information only', this information will be circulated via the Clerk.

Minutes of Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Parties

Minutes should be clear and concise and should not be a record of discussions during the meeting. They are only required to contain:

- Date and time of the meeting
- Names of Councillors in attendance, arriving late, leaving early or absent
- Interests declared
- A note as to whether any councillor with a declared interest left the meeting whilst the matter was being considered
- The resolutions (decisions) made by the Council.

Communications with the Press and Public

The Clerk will clear press reports, or comments to the media, with the Chairman of the council or the Chairman of the relevant committee.

Press reports from the council, its committees or working parties should be from the Clerk or via the reporter's own attendance at a meeting.

Unless a Councillor has been authorised by the council to speak to the media on a particular issue, Councillors who are asked for comment by the press should make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as their personal view.

Unless a Councillor is reporting the view of the council, they must make it clear to members of the public that they are expressing a personal view.

If Councillors receive a complaint from a member of the public, this should be dealt with under the Council's adopted complaints procedure.

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Councillor Correspondence to external parties

As the Clerk should be sending most of the council's correspondence from a Councillor to other bodies, it needs to be made clear that it is written in their official capacity and has been authorised by the parish council.

A copy of all outgoing correspondence relating to the council or a Councillor's role within it, should be sent to the Clerk, and this is to be noted on the correspondence so that the recipient is aware that the Clerk has been advised.

Communications with Parish Council Staff

Councillors must not give instructions to any member of staff, unless authorised to do so (for example, three or more Councillors sitting as a committee or sub-committee with appropriate delegated powers from the council).

No individual Councillor, regardless of whether or not they are the Chairman of the council, the Chairman of a committee or other meeting, may give instructions to a member of staff which are inconsistent or conflict with council decisions or arrangements for delegated power.

Emails:

- Instant replies should not be expected from the Clerk
- reasons for urgency should be stated
- Information to Councillors should normally be directed via the Clerk
- Emails from Councillors to external parties should be copied to the Clerk
- Councillors should acknowledge their emails when requested to do so.

Meetings with the Clerk:

- Wherever possible an appointment should be made
- Councillors should be clear that the matter is legitimate council business and not matters driven by personal or political agendas

Adopted	November 2022
Review Frequency	Bi-Annually
Reviewed and amended	August 2024
Next Review due	May 2026