SHALFORD PARISH COUNCIL

POLICY ON COMMUNICATIONS

Adopted: 20th October 2021 [FC61-21/22]
Reviewed: 15th November 2023 [FC124-23/24]

1. Parish Council Correspondence

1.1. 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.

1.2. The Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting.

1.3. 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/documentation unless they can demonstrate a 'need to know'.

1.4. All official correspondence should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the council using council letter headed paper.

1.5. 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 (e.g. copy to XX).

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

2.1. 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.

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

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

3. Communications with the Press and Public

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

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

3.3. 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.

3.4. Unless a Councillor is absolutely certain that he/she is reporting the view of the council, they must make it clear to members of the public that they are expressing a personal view.

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

3. Councillor Correspondence to external parties

4.1. As the Clerk should be sending all 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.

5. Communications with Parish Council Staff

5.1. 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).

5.2. No individual Councillor, regardless of whether or not they are the Chair of the council, the Chair of a committee or other meeting, or are styled "Leader" of the Council, may give instructions to the Clerk or to another employee which are inconsistent or conflict with council decisions or arrangements for delegated power.

5.3. Telephone calls should be appropriate to the work of the parish council.

5.4. E-mails:

- 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;
- E-mails from Councillors to external parties should be copied to the Clerk;
- Councillors should acknowledge their e-mails when requested to do so.

5.5. Meetings with the Clerk or other officers:

- Wherever possible an appointment should be made;
- Meetings should be relevant to the work of that particular officer;
- Councillors should be clear that the matter is legitimate council business and not matters driven by personal or political agendas.