



COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Town Council Correspondence

The point of contact for the Council is the Town Clerk and all correspondence for the town council should be addressed to the Town Clerk.

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

Councillors should not contact the press or give comment to the press about the outcome of a procurement process until the bidders for a contract have been formally notified of the award by the council. This is to ensure the integrity of the procurement process.

No individual Councillor or Officer should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the Town 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'.

All official correspondence should be sent by the Town Clerk in the name of the Council using Council letter headed paper, unless by resolution of Full Council.

Where correspondence from the Town 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).

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

The agenda should be clear and concise. It should contain sufficient information to enable Councillors to make an informed decision, 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 Town Clerk or a Councillor wishes fellow Councillors to receive matters for "information only", this information will be circulated via the Town Clerk.

Communications with the Press and Public

The Town Clerk will clear all press reports, or comments to the media, with the Town Mayor or the Chair of the relevant committee as appropriate.

Press reports from the council, its committees or working parties should be from the Town Clerk or an officer 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 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.

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.

Councillor Correspondence to external parties

Individual councillors are responsible for their own ward member correspondence. The Town Council does not provide a secretariat for such purpose. Councillors must ensure they make clear where they are informing on official policy and where they are stating their personal views.

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

Communications with Town 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 Mayor or the Chair of a Committee or other meeting, may give instructions to the Clerk, or to another employee, which are inconsistent or conflict with Council decisions or arrangements for delegated power.

Telephone calls should be appropriate to the work of the Town Council.

Instant replies should not be expected to e-mails from the Clerk; reasons for urgency should be stated;

Councillors should acknowledge their e-mails when requested to do so.

For meetings with the Clerk or other officers an appointment should be made wherever possible, meetings should be relevant to the work of that particular officer and Councillors should be clear that the matter is legitimate Council business and not matters driven by personal or political agendas.