

## SOUTH KYME PARISH COUNCIL

## Communications Policy

**A. Parish Council Correspondence**

- (i) 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.
- (ii) The Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting, unless resolved otherwise by the Council.
- (iii) 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. Councillors and Officers do not have a right to obtain confidential information or documentation unless they can demonstrate a 'need to know'.
- (iv) All official correspondence should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the council using council letter headed paper, unless resolved otherwise by the Council.
- (v) 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).
- (vi) E-mails:
  - a. Instant replies should not be expected however, email responses should be timely especially if reasons for urgency are stated.
  - b. Information to Councillors should normally be directed via the Clerk.
  - c. E-mails from Councillors to external parties should be copied to the Clerk.
  - d. E-mails should be acknowledged when requested to do so.
  - e. E-mail responses should ideally be provided within five working days.

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

- (i) Agendas 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.
- (ii) Items for information should be kept to a minimum on an agenda.
- (iii) Where the Clerk or a Councillor wishes fellow Councillors to receive matters for "information only", this information will be circulated via the Clerk.

**C. Communications with the Press and Public**

- (i) 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, as may be agreed previously by the council.

- (ii) 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.
- (iii) 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.
- (iv) Unless a Councillor is 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.
- (v) 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.

#### **D. Councillor communications with external parties**

- (i) All communication with external parties should be via the Clerk unless the council has agreed otherwise at a previous meeting.
- (ii) Anyone authorised to contact other parties on behalf of the council shall be named in the minutes.
- (iii) As the Clerk would normally send or be tasked with sending council correspondence to all other bodies, where a Councillor is authorised to communicate directly on behalf of the council, it must be made clear that any such correspondence is written in their official capacity and has been previously authorised by the parish council.
- (iv) 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.

#### **E. Communications with Parish Council Staff**

- (i) 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).
- (ii) No individual Councillor, regardless of whether they are the Chair of the council, the Chair of a committee or other meeting, may give instructions to staff which are inconsistent or conflict with council decisions or arrangements for delegated power.