



Kingston Parish Council

Council communication protocol

1. **AIM** To help the Parish Council communicate effectively and impartially
(Add into SO 21)
2. **GENERAL PRINCIPLES (Media and Public)**
 - a) The Council's communications will be open and transparent in dealing with the media. The purpose of press releases is to increase public awareness of the Parish Council's activities. The Clerk will usually be the first point of contact for the media. All press releases must be submitted to the Clerk, who will consult the Chair (or Vice-Chair) or the Parish Council as the corporate body when drafting the press release.
 - b) Unless a Parish Councillor has been authorised by the Council to speak to the media on a particular issue, those asked for comment by the press should make it clear that any views they express are personal and should request that this is clearly reported as their personal view.
 - c) Information bulletins (which are posted on the website and notice boards) will be used when it is necessary to provide vital information to the public quickly, for example during an emergency.
 - d) 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. **COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE (Including with external parties)**
 - a) The first 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.
 - b) The Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting. All official correspondence should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the Parish Council, using Council letter-headed paper or by e-mail.
 - c) No individual Parish Councillor should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the Parish Council. In particular, Parish Councillors do not have a right to confidential information / documentation unless they can demonstrate a "need to know".
 - d) If an individual Councillor needs to respond either by letter or email to an external party, the response should contain a 'holding' statement and an undertaking to raise the matter at the next Parish Council meeting. (See suggested format below)
 - e) Any e-mail to external parties, from the Parish Council, should make it clear at the end of the e-mail that it has come from the Parish Council
4. **AGENDAS FOR PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS**
 - a) In accordance with legislation, agendas will be published no later than 3 clear days before a meeting (this excludes the day of publication and the day of the meeting – Saturdays are included in this calculation).
 - b) Where the Clerk or a Parish Councillor wishes fellow Councillors to receive matters "for information only" in respect of items on the agenda, these will be distributed via the Clerk, no later than 3 clear days before the meeting. This applies to items on the agenda only. Parish Councillors are entitled to share any other information they wish, with their colleagues.

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KPC	1	Council communications protocol	KPC	10 July 2019

5. GENERAL GUIDANCE

Kingston Parish Council is apolitical. There should be no material used which attempts to promote the personal image of a particular Councillor, or promotes an individual Councillor's proposals or recommendations, or personalises issues.

- a) Data protection: avoid publishing the personal data and/or images of individuals unless their written permission has been obtained.
- b) Prejudice and Pre-determination: Councillors should avoid expressing in any way 'prejudice or pre-determination' on any topic due to be discussed and agreed by the Parish Council.
- c) Copyright: placing images or text on the website from a copy-righted source without permission is likely to breach copyright. Breach of copyright may result in an award of damages against the Parish Council.
- d) Code of Conduct implications: Aspects of the Code of Conduct apply as much to on-line activity as they do to other written or oral communication. On-line content should be objective, informative and accurate. The tone should be business-like and polite as befits the role of Councillor, avoiding delicate comments, sarcasm, subtle humour or symbols. Time-wasting should be avoided.
- e) Lobbying in any form related to forthcoming discussions is also inappropriate. The Council meeting is the forum for contributing to discussions. Councillors should be able to come to a meeting with an open mind, prepared to make a decision on the material presented.
- f) E-mail has replaced many traditional forms of communication, both oral and written. The writer of an e-mail must remember that their message may be stored permanently, and that there is no such thing as confidentiality in cyberspace.
- g) It is polite to reply to e-mails promptly: a simple acknowledgement is preferable to 'sitting-on the message'. The Clerk's communication with Parish Councillors is often crucial to the effective management of parish council business. Responses are not always required, but Councillors should respond if requested.
- h) It is rare that that a matter is so urgent that it needs immediate e-mail discussion with the whole Council. If a Councillor feels there is something which needs to be shared with the whole Council urgently he/she should seek advice from the Clerk or (Chair); the Clerk (or Chair) will decide on the most appropriate action and disseminate the information to other Councillors as appropriate.

DM

February 2016

For meeting on 7 March 2016

Suggested reply format for item 3d above:

Thank you for raising your concern/question/request for information about I have taken due note of the issue(s) you raise and its/their urgency. As one of your Parish Councillors, I undertake to raise the matter at the next full meeting of the Parish Council on

Following discussion at that meeting, you will receive a response from the Clerk. Thank you again for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours etc