

Little Waldingfield Parish Council

Protocol on Communications

Parish Council Correspondence

- i. Official correspondence on behalf of the Council should normally be sent in the name of the Clerk, rather than in the name of a Councillor. It may be appropriate in certain circumstances (e.g. representations to a Government Minister) for a letter to appear in the name of a Councillor, but this should be the exception rather than the norm.
- ii. Correspondence that, for example, create obligations or give instructions on behalf of the Council should never be sent out in the name of a Councillor.
- iii. 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.
- iv. The Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting.
- v. No individual Councillor should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the parish council or working party. In particular, Councillors do not have a right to obtain confidential information / documentation unless they can demonstrate a 'need to know'.
- vi. All official correspondence should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the council using council letter headed paper or via the council's email account.
- vii. 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).
- viii. Where the Clerk or a Councillor wishes fellow Councillors to receive matters for "information only", this information will be copied to the Clerk.

Communications with the Press and Public

- ix. The Clerk will clear all press reports, or comments to the media, with the Chair of the council.
- x. Press reports from the council should be from the Clerk or via the reporter's own attendance at a meeting.
- xi. 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.
- xii. 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.
- xiii. If Councillors receive a complaint from a member of the public on a council decision or conduct of the Clerk or councillor(s), this should be dealt with under the Council's adopted complaints procedure, or via a council agenda item.

Councillor Correspondence to external parties

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

- xvi. Councillors must not give instructions to the Clerk, 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).
- xvii. No individual Councillor, regardless of whether or not they are the Chair of the council, may give instructions to the Clerk which are inconsistent or conflict with council decisions or arrangements for delegated power.
- xviii. Correspondence
 - Instant replies should not be expected from the Clerk; reasons for urgency should be stated;
 - Correspondence from Councillors should normally be copied to the Clerk;
 - Councillors should acknowledge their e-mails when requested to do so.
- xix. Meetings with the Clerk:
 - Wherever possible an appointment should be made;
 - Meetings should be relevant to the work of the Clerk.

Council Decisions

It should be noted that **no decision can be made by Councillors outside of a parish council meeting** unless the appropriate Delegated Power has been given to the Clerk.

This protocol was adopted by Little Waldingfield Parish Council at its meeting on 22 September 2015 and subsequently amended at its meeting on 13 December 2018.