

# Policy

## Communications Policy

This Procedure is a document that sets out the organization's approved and agreed practices. Any deviation must be discussed with the originating author.

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## 1. Document control sheet

<b>Purpose of document:</b>	The purpose of this policy is to ensure a consistent approach to addressing Council communications
<b>Dissemination:</b>	This policy will be disseminated to all staff and council members and be made available on the parish website
<b>Implementation:</b>	This document will be accessible via the parish council website and is applicable to all staff and council members.
<b>Review:</b>	This document will be reviewed in 2028 unless there are significant changes in legislation or practice in which case it will be reviewed earlier.
<b>Documents replaced or superseded by this document:</b>	Nil
<b>This document supports (enter Standards and Legislation:</b>	Nil
<b>Key related documents:</b>	Nil
<b>Financial Implications:</b>	This document has no financial implications for the Billingham Parish Council.
<b>Key word search</b>	Communication, media, press

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### 3. Introduction

a. It is important that all correspondence received by the Council is correctly dealt with. This policy ensures that replies to correspondence reflect the official council position and there are not possible multiple and conflicting replies.

### 4. Parish Council correspondence

a. 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. The Clerk will forward the correspondence to the appropriate Council representative as required. The correspondence may also be escalated to a full council / sub-committee meeting, as an agenda item, for resolution.

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

c. No individual Councillor 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 do not have a right to obtain confidential information / documentation unless they can demonstrate a 'need to know'.

d. All official correspondence should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the council.

e. 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).

f. If the correspondence relates to a County Council or District Council service then the relevant home page should be accessed for correct recipients:

i. Lincolnshire County Council homepage: <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/>

ii. North Kesteven District Council homepage: <https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/>

### 5. Communications with the press and public

a. The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information the disclosure of which is prohibited by law. The Council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the Council's standing orders, under contract or by common law.

b. 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.

c. 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.

d. 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.

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

## **6. Councillor correspondence to external parties**

a. As the Clerk should be sending most 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.

b. 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 should be noted on the correspondence, e.g. "copy to the Clerk" so that the recipient is aware that the Clerk has been advised.

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

a. 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).

b. No individual Councillor, regardless of whether or not they are the Chair of the council, 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.

c. E-mails. When conducting council business, councillors should use their council e-mail account as opposed to personal e-mail accounts. When using e-mails:

i. Instant replies should not be expected from the Clerk or other councillors; reasons for urgency should be stated.

ii. Information to Councillors should normally be directed via the Clerk.

iii. E-mails from Councillors to external parties should be copied to the Clerk, taking into account paras 4b and 4d.

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