



## Communications Policy

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the Parish Council's Communications Protocol, where the respondent is responding on behalf of the whole Parish Council, is to set out and give guidance on, the standard procedures for dealing with all communications to and from the Parish Council to outside persons (including correspondence, e-mails and social media).
- 1.2 It is the duty of the Clerk to keep all councillors fully informed about communications from the public, Milton Keynes Council and other authorities and agencies.

### 2. Communication with the Parish Council

- 2.1 The point of contact for the Parish Council is the Parish Clerk.
- 2.2 The Parish Clerk should deal with all correspondence as directed by council following a meeting.
- 2.3 No individual Councillor or member of staff should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the Parish Council, a committee, subcommittee or working party.
- 2.4 All communications should be logged, date stamped with date of receipt when not automatic and dealt with within a specified timescale, as agreed by council.
  - 2.4.1 Communications must be acknowledged within three working days.
  - 2.4.2 A full reply must be sent within a maximum of ten working days, or a communication sent explaining why this is not possible.
  - 2.4.3 Communication for individual councillors received by the office, should be informed to them within one working day.

### 3. Agenda Items for Committee Meetings

- 3.1 Agenda items should be clear and concise and follow an agreed format. They should contain sufficient information for members and the public to understand what is to be discussed and/or decided.
- 3.2 Items for information should be kept to a minimum on council agendas.
- 3.3 Where members wish fellow members to receive matters for "information only", this information may be circulated via the Parish Clerk.
- 3.4 Councillors are free to exchange information, ideas and drafts of documents by email when this assists the work of the council but information significantly influencing the decision should be restated at the meeting.

#### **4. Communications with the Press and Public**

- 4.1 Press reports and comments from the council and committees should be issued by the Parish Clerk, the Chair or the Vice Chair or a member nominated by the Chair or Vice Chair, or by a reporter's own attendance at a meeting.
- 4.2 Members who are asked for comment by the press or members of the public should ask that it be clearly reported as their personal view.
- 4.3 If Members have a receive a complaint about the council, this should be presented to the Parish Clerk in written format, to be dealt with under the complaints procedure. An e-mail to a member of staff counts as written for this purpose.

#### **5. Councillor Correspondence to Other Agencies**

- 5.1 All personal correspondence from a councillor to other agencies should make it clear that the views are the expression of the personal opinions of the writer and not necessarily those of the Parish Council unless council has agreed otherwise.
- 5.2 It would be good practice if a copy of all outgoing correspondence from councillors relating to the Parish Council or one's role within it should be sent to the Parish Clerk.
- 5.3 Reports from councillors and staff attending outside bodies should be provided to the Parish Clerk to be circulated on regular basis to keep members informed of local issues.
- 5.4 Where decisions are required by councillors on outside bodies these should be put on a suitable agenda. If it is necessary to give an answer on the spot, the councillor should make it very clear that the opinion given is their personal opinion and may be contradicted by the Parish Council.

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

- 6.1 Councillors, including the Chair must not give instructions to any member of staff, unless authorised to do so by council or a committee of council.
- 6.2 Telephone calls should be:
- Kept to a minimum, and
  - Appropriate to the work of the Parish Council.
- 6.3 Electronic communication and letters should be kept to a minimum, instant replies should not be expected from officers.
- 6.4 Meetings between councillors and the Parish Clerk or other officers should be relevant to the work of the Council, be clear about the matters they wish to discuss and where possible an appointment should be made but staff should acknowledge that the function of the council is to serve the public.

## Change Control

<b>Version</b>	<b>Nature of Update or Approval</b>	<b>Approved</b>
1	In place and confirmed in May 2020	18-5-2020
2	Modified following Peninsula review in 2023	17-4-2023
3	Confirmed in May 2023	15-5-2023

**Review Frequency:** Every 3 years      **Review by:** May 2026

**Other triggers:** Change in the nature of our work attracting more controversy or public interest.