

Communication Policy

Sopley Parish Council



1. Aims and Purposes of the Policy

This policy is designed to provide a framework for effective communication within the Parish Council, and also to provide guidelines for employees and councillors when they are communicating with outside bodies or the public.

2. Legislation and Documents Relevant to the Policy

Localism Act 2011, S27
General Data Protection Regulations 2018
Sopley Parish Council Code of Conduct
Sopley Parish Council Standing Orders

3. General Guidance on Communication.

- I. Councillors should always disclose their identity and affiliation to the Parish Council.
- II. Councillors should not make 'personal comments' which could damage the reputation of the Parish Council or negatively impact on the credibility of the council, its employees, or the parish and people whom they represent.
- III. Councillors wishing to make a 'personal statement', to the media, or any other body, must clearly inform them:
 - that their comments are made as an individual and are not necessarily the view of the parish council;
 - that other councillors may hold a different view, and;
 - that the matter may still need to be discussed or resolved by the parish council.
- IV. In all communication, abide by the Parish Council's Code of Conduct.
- V. Councillors should, in advance, advise the Clerk / Chairman of any invitation, visit, or attendance to any event, that is to be made on behalf of the Parish Council. If the attendance is inappropriate or inadvisable the Councillor will be advised.

3. Communication with the Press / Media;

- I. All media enquiries should be directed to Parish Clerk or Chairman.
- II. If appropriate, The Clerk or Chairman may authorise another councillor to make a statement on the parish council's behalf.
- III. All press/media comment must accurately reflect the parish council's position on a topic, taking note of decisions made within meetings.
- IV. All decisions of the parish council made in a publicly convened meeting can be quoted and made available to the media.
- V. Either Clerk or Councillor responding to a media enquiry should ensure they have the correct information and understanding and communicate any message clearly.

In any event; comment on matters which are or are likely to be, subject to legal proceedings should be subject to advice taken from the Parish Council's Legal Representatives before any response is made.

4. Communication Made to or from the Parish Council.

- I. The Clerk is the first point of contact for the Parish Council, correspondence should be directed to the Clerk for onwards dissemination to Councillors / Full Council or Committee Meeting.
- II. Wherever possible all official correspondence on behalf of the Council is sent by the Clerk, unless resolution at a meeting, or the Clerk using delegated powers, determines otherwise.
- III. Councillors should copy any written communication or provide written confirmation of any verbal communication made by them as a Councillor to the Parish Clerk and, where applicable, the Chairman / Committee Chair.
- IV. Councillors should confer with the Parish Clerk, in the event of any doubt, or in the Clerk's absence the Chairman. In any event, err on the side of caution.

5. Communication Within the Parish Council

In all communication within the Parish Council, employees and councillors should;

- I. Ensure that the content is appropriate
- II. Ensure that it is respectful and courteous
- III. Ensure that it is relevant to the business of the Parish Council
- IV. Ensure that nothing is agreed that should have been resolved at Full Council or Committee meeting.

6. Communication Within Meetings

Councillors and the Clerk should ensure that their communication within meetings between themselves, the members of the public, and County and District Councillors is respectful, courteous and on-topic.

7. Social Media and Internet Forums

Social media includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Blogs and various discussion forums
- LinkedIn

- I. Councillors should ensure that any comments made over social media / the internet reflect the Parish Council's position and meet the requirements the General Guidance in Section 3, i-iv, above.
- II. In the event that a Parish Councillor wishes to make a personal statement they should state clearly that it is their own view.

- III. The Clerk will be responsible for managing and posting on the Parish Council's Facebook page and website and will ensure that posts are relevant to the business of the Parish Council and appropriate in content.
- IV. Any posts considered to be defamatory, breaching copyright or GDPR regulations or obscene will be removed.

8. Emails.

- I. Councillors are advised to create a separate email account for their use only. This separation ensures easier compliance with GDPR regulations and if access to their emails is required in the event of a FOI request.
- II. Councillors should check their emails regularly, preferably daily and should respond when requested to do so.
- III. All email communication should comply with the requirements of Section 5, above.

9. Review.

This policy should be reviewed every 3 years minimum.