

# Kempsey Parish Council

## Communications Policy

### Document revisions

| Revision | Description  | Adopted    |
|----------|--|------------|
| 2.1.0    | Communications Policy update, approved and adopted   | 01/05/2013 |
| 3.0      | Communications Policy revision, approved and adopted | 13/02/2023 |
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# **Kempsey Parish Council Communications Policy**

## **1. Purpose of the policy.**

- a) The purpose of this document is to describe the Council's policy on communications with the general public via the various forms of media including newspapers, magazines, newsletters, radio, television and social media. This policy also give guidance on conducting correspondence whether between councillors, officers, members of Working Parties, representatives of other organisations and members of the public.
- b) Kempsey Parish Council's objective in this policy is to achieve clear, accurate and consistent communication with all of those with whom it deals. Good communication practice will enable Kempsey Parish Council to:
  - better understand the needs of the community and it priorities
  - develop an effective voice for the community
  - ensure the good reputation of the Parish Council
  - ensure parishioners and community issues are raised
  - the services and opportunities within the Parish are publicised
  - ensure that a record of all communications is retained at the Parish Office
- c). This policy applies to members and officers of Kempsey Parish Council, its employees and to all members of the Council's Committees and Working Parties.

## **2. Correspondence, written and electronic.**

- a) Whilst the official point of contact for the Parish Council is the Clerk as the Parish Council's Proper Officer, this policy recognises that for the work of the Council to be accomplished it is necessary and desirable that individual councillors, other officers and members of Working parties correspond directly with third party organisations and individuals. This policy therefore gives guidance for the above mentioned individuals when initiating and receiving correspondence to or from external sources.
- b) No individual Councillor, Officer or member of a Working Party shall be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of Kempsey Parish Council, its Committees, Sub-committees or Working Parties. All email and other correspondence both between the above mentioned individuals and with the wider public, other authorities or other organisations which refers to Parish Council business should on every occasion be copied to the Parish Office.
- c) Correspondence received directly at the Parish Office will be circulated to the appropriate Committee or individual councillors.
- d) Correspondence received at the Parish Office, whether directly or by copy, shall at the discretion of the Clerk after, if necessary, consultation with the Chair of the Council and or appropriate Chairs of the Council's Committees, be placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the Council or Committee both to inform councillors of important issues and to act as background information for discussions at the meeting.
- e) The Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting, unless it has been agreed otherwise.

- f) No member of the Council or of a Working Party shall issue a communication of any type that would appear to or would in fact commit the Parish Council to any course of action unless the course of action has been agreed by the Council or a Committee or individuals with delegated authority from the Council.
- g) Correspondence should not contain any reference that might be construed as offensive or discriminatory nor should it include negative comments about an individual, including members of the public, councillors, officers, or other organisations with whom the Council does business.
- h) It is advisable to use a Parish Council signature when writing to, or copying to, new correspondents so that it is clear in what capacity you are writing e.g., Kempsey Parish Councillor, or Chair, XYZ Committee, etc
- i) Access by councillors, officers and members of the public to communications retained at the Parish Office will comply with the relevant legislation.

### **3. Communications with the media and via social media**

- a) Councillors, officers and members of Working Parties should not engage with reporters from the press, radio or television without wherever possible first consulting with the Clerk. The Clerk may in turn consult with the Chair of the Council or the Vice-Chair or the Chair(s) of the relevant Committee(s). Wherever possible, a copy of all press reports and comments to the media will be sent to councillors from the Parish Office at the first opportunity.
- b) Unless a councillor, officer or a member of a Working Party has been authorised by the Parish Council or the Clerk to speak to the media on a particular matter, they should, if asked for comment by the media, make it clear that it is their personal view and ask the reporter(s) that it be clearly reported as their personal view.
- c) All posts on social media representing the Parish Council, whether by hardcopy to a notice board, or electronically to a Facebook account or at the Council's website will be approved by the Clerk prior to being posted. The Clerk may employ the consultation process in 2a above prior to approving any proposed post. No other forms of electronic social media other than Facebook and the Council's website shall be used for Parish Council business without the approval of the Council.
- d) In the event of the Clerk being unavailable, or in an emergency situation, the Council authorises the Chair of the Parish Council or the Vice-Chair or a relevant Committee Chair to substitute for the Clerk with regards to this policy.
- e) Any confidential matter, including items discussed at meetings where the press and public have been excluded, must not be divulged to any person to whom the Council's Code of Conduct or another local authority's Code of Conduct does not apply

## **4. Communications with the general public.**

- a) This section deals with communications with individual parishioners and members of the public. It does not apply to communications with Kempsey Parishes District or County Councillors for which the guidance set out in section 2 of this policy applies.
- b) Written or electronic correspondence from parishioners and other members of the public not forming part of the Council's ongoing business should be sent to the Parish Office in the first instance for the Clerk to advise of how the matters raised in the correspondence might be best dealt with as in section 2 above.
- c) Councillors, officers and members of Working Parties should take note of the guidance in section 3 of this policy when employing social media to communicate with members of the public.
- d) When engaged by members of the public in an informal debate, councillors, officers and members of Working Parties should be certain of the Council's position on any matter before stating what that is. Where uncertainty exists, the matter should be referred to the Parish Office or a Committee Chair for clarification.
- e) If councillors and others to whom this policy applies receive a complaint from a member of the public which cannot be resolved informally, the complainant should be advised of the Council's Complaints Procedure on the Council's website and advised to contact the Parish Office if they wish to pursue the complaint.