



Communications Policy

1. Aim

1.1. The aim of this Policy is to state the requirements of, and provide guidance for, all Normandy Parish Council ("the Council") internal and external communications. This includes, but is not limited to, communications between councillors, the Clerk, employees, suppliers, contractors, external organisations, the press and public.

2. Parish Council Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer

2.1. The Clerk is the Proper Officer of the Council and as such should be the point of contact to whom all correspondence requiring action from the Council are sent and from whom replies should be made to residents on parish matters.

2.2. Moreover the Clerk is the only person as the Responsible Financial Officer who can make binding commitments or contracts on behalf of Normandy Parish Council. For this reason the Clerk should act as signatory on contracts or orders being placed by the Council.

2.3. All official correspondence should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the council using council letter headed paper.

2.4. 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.

2.5. 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.

3. Communications with the press and public

3.1. The Clerk will clear all press reports, or comments to the press, with the Chair of the council or relevant committee.

3.2. 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.

3.3. Unless a councillor has been authorised by the council to speak to the press 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.

3.4. 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.

3.5. Any complaints from the press or a member of public, this should be dealt with under the Council's adopted complaints procedure, or via a council agenda item.

4. Communication with the Parish

4.1. The Council will keep residents informed of its activities, projects, forthcoming events and public information, including County and Borough Council activities through the website, **social media**, noticeboards, annual public forums and minutes.c

5. Councillor Correspondence to external parties

- 5.1. The Clerk should send all Council correspondence where this relates to residents' issues, press communications, contract matters, orders which create any form of commitment or obligation or relates to the official business of Council.
- 5.2. Councillors communication occurring as a result of working parties where the terms of reference have been agreed by the Council and which do not fall within section 5.1 may be sent by Councillors
- 5.3. If a councillor is required to correspond with external parties, he/she must:
 - 5.3.1. Make clear that it is written in their official capacity;
 - 5.3.2. Express the views of the Council
 - 5.3.3. Be authorised or delegated to do so by the parish council.
- 5.4. If not, the councillor must state that the views expressed are their own personal views and not those of the Council.
- 5.5. A copy of all outgoing correspondence relating to the council or a councillor's role within it, should be sent to the Clerk and noted accordingly on the correspondence (e.g. "copy to the Clerk"), so that the recipient is aware that the Clerk has been advised.
- 5.6. The Clerk will keep a copy of all letters. Letters will be scanned and stored electronically

6. Communications with Parish Council Employees or Contractors

- 6.1. 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 or contractor which are inconsistent or conflict with council decisions or arrangements for delegated power.
- 6.2. Councillors must not give instructions to any employee or contractor, unless authorised to do so and with appropriate delegated powers from the council.

7. Electronic communications

- 7.1. Electronic communications, such as e-mails, are subject to the same requirements as a letter or telephone call.
- 7.2. It is the Clerk's responsibility to keep councillors without internet access informed of the Council's business.
- 7.3. Instant replies should not be expected from the Clerk. Reasons for urgency should be stated.
- 7.4. Information to Councillors should normally be directed via the Clerk.
- 7.5. E-mails from Councillors to external parties should be copied to the Clerk.
- 7.6. Councillors should acknowledge their e-mails when requested to do so.
- 7.7. Emails relating to Council business may be subject to Freedom of Information requests.
- 7.8. The Clerk will retain a record of e-mails in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

8. Social Media

8.1. 'Social media' is the term commonly given to websites and online tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Examples of social media websites include:

8.1.1. Social networking (e.g. www.facebook.com)

8.1.2. Video sharing (e.g. www.youtube.com)

8.1.3. Micro-blogging (e.g. www.twitter.com)

8.2 Normandy Parish Council uses Facebook and the Nextdoor Normandy for its social media platforms.

8.3 Social media may be used to:

- Advertise Parish Council events and activities.
- Announce new information from the Parish Council.
- Promote links to news stories on the Normandy Parish Council website.
- Advertise Parish Council vacancies.
- Share information from trusted partner agencies such as principal authorities, police, library, health, weather, utilities etc.
- Post or share information from other Parish Council-related community groups such as schools, sports clubs, community groups and charities.
- Refer resident queries to the Clerk, Assistant Clerk and Councillors. However, a response may not be possible and may require the item being put on the next available council agenda and fully discussed at a public meeting. Social media will not be used to engage in debate.

8.4 Parish councillors and staff must not:

- Hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms.
- Present personal opinions as that of the Parish Council.
- Present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to the Parish Council.
- Post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the Parish Council.
- Publish photographs or videos of minors without written parental permission on a Parish Council photography permission template.
- Post any information that infringes the copyright of others.
- Post any information that may be deemed libellous.
- Post online activity that constitutes bullying or harassment.
- Bring the Parish Council into disrepute, including through content posted in a personal capacity.
- Publish personal data of individuals without permission as this is a breach of Data Protection legislation, GDPR and is an offence.
- Misuse of social media content that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.

9. Meetings

9.1. Councillors are summoned to attend Public Meetings by the Clerk. Only exceptional reasons for non-attendance will be accepted by the Council.

9.2. The Clerk will notify councillors of the agenda, date, time and location of the meeting.

9.3 The meeting is open to the press and public unless the council resolve to enter private session where members of the public and press are excluded. During meetings the public are allowed to film the Council/Committee and officers only from the front of the public gallery, providing it does not disrupt the meeting. Any items in the Exempt Part of the agenda cannot be filmed. If another member of the public objects to being recorded, the person(s) filming must stop doing so until that member of the public has finished speaking. The use of social media is permitted but all members of the public are requested to switch their mobile devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

9.4 The Council must meet all reasonable requests to accommodate the press and respect the privacy of any attending public.

9.5 The Clerk may record a parish council meeting to assist with the preparation of minutes as an aide-memoire. This practice is legal and supported by the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, which establish the right to record, film, and broadcast council meetings. Any recordings made for this purpose must be deleted once the minutes are approved.

9.6 In the situation where Council business is discussed in closed session, the Council may be approached for comment on items discussed, with due respect to the confidentiality issues.

9.7 The requirements and procedures of a meeting are detailed in the Council's Standing Orders.

10. Agenda Items for Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Parties

10.1. An Agenda should be clear and concise and contain sufficient information to enable councillors to make an informed decision.

10.2. The public should be able to understand what matters are being considered and what decisions are to be taken at a meeting.

10.3. Items for information should be kept to a minimum on an agenda.

11. Noticeboards

11.1 Noticeboards are critical in fostering community engagement, keeping residents informed, and promoting participation in local government and social activities. They serve as a traditional yet effective means of communication, particularly for those without easy access to digital platforms.

11.2 Physical noticeboards located around the village will display key information about meetings, council events and activities. They will be updated a minimum of twice a month.

12. Newsletter

12.1 Village newsletters are vital tools for community building, providing essential information, fostering connections among residents, and encouraging active involvement in local events and initiatives. By

effectively communicating and engaging with residents, newsletters enhance the overall sense of community and belonging.

12.2 The newsletter should include a mix of articles, stories, and updates that resonate with the community, and aim to cover a wide range of topics from community projects, local events to profiles of community members.

12.3 Normandy Parish Council has no power to carry commercial advertising in The Villager. Section 142 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 Act enables local councils to carry or provide information (as such, advertising) concerning the services available within the council's area provided by the council or other local authorities or by government bodies or charities and other voluntary organisations, and other information relating to the functions of the relevant council (for example, details of our events). Local councils can advertise community organisations in newsletters but they cannot advertise local businesses or commercial organisations.