

Communications Policy

As adopted by Council on by Council on 27
September 2021.

Minute ref: 6.3, page 45-2022

To be reviewed annually in September.



This Policy is designed to assist Parish Councillors and staff to effectively communicate with the general public and media.

1. Objective

To provide a helpful response to telephone, or written enquiries (including those formally received through electronic platforms) in an efficient and polite manner.

2. Personal Contact

This can be in person or by telephone.

If it relates to a Parish Council service, then the caller will be dealt with by the Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer. If they are unavailable, contact details will be taken to ensure the caller can be contacted at the earliest suitable opportunity.

If it relates to a County Council or District Council service, the caller will be advised to contact the County Council or District Council by providing them with the following appropriate number / e-mail:

- Lincolnshire County Council
Telephone: 01522 552222
Email: customer_services@lincolnshire.gov.uk
- North Kesteven District Council
Telephone: 01529 414155
Email: Customer_services@n-kesteven.gov.uk

Parish Councillors and Staff are advised against acting as an intermediary with the County Council and District Council Contact Centres; this is not being unhelpful, but to aid the trained staff of the County and District Council and /or their trained call centre staff to direct enquiries to the appropriate department or other public service. No direct dial numbers are to be given for any Officer(s) at either the County or District Council.

3. Written Enquiries

These could be by letter or, more frequently, by email. Wherever possible a detailed reply should be given within 5 working days. If that is not possible, a holding response should be sent within 5 days.

There is no need to respond to unsolicited invitations or spam emails, indeed there are very good reasons for not so doing.

Should the Parish Council receive repeated communications from individual members of the public on the same subject(s), it is permissible for staff to merely acknowledge such emails/letters without having to respond to each point. In any such case, the Clerk to the Parish Council should be consulted.

It should always be remembered that it is possible to recover any electronic correspondence.

4. Parish Councillor's Details

The Parish Clerk to act as a conduit for all such requests for details and contact the Councillor on behalf of the requester.

5. Media Statements

Any media statements, issued on behalf of the Parish Council, are to be submitted by Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Clerk or the Deputy Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer (during the Clerk's absence), in consultation with any other Councillor as required and then copied to all Parish Councillors.

Press releases from the Parish Council need not be formally worded in stilted language, but must not be partisan.

6. Purdah

Purdah is the period prior to an election, once a notice of poll has been officially given by the Returning Officer. It applies to Parish, Town and County Council elections as well as other national elections (e.g. a General Election).

It also applies if there is a local by-election.

During such a period, special care is needed to avoid any impression that the Parish Council, as a body, supports any aspirant for elected office or a particular party.

More specific advice will be issued by the District Council Returning Officer and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

7. Obscene & Abusive Language

Staff and Councillors are not obliged to listen to abusive and obscene tirades or address members of the public in this way. In such a case the caller should politely be asked to desist and advised that if they continue to use such language the call will be terminated. If the abuse or obscenity continues then the call can be terminated.

Care however should be taken as some 'vivid descriptions' are used in the ordinary course of speech by certain sections of the community. A judgement should be made from the tone if that is the position. In such cases a councillor or member of staff can ask for moderation but may choose to continue the contact.